

NAVIGATING PIONEERING MISSIONS

A STUDY GUIDE



NAVIGATORS™
A Worldwide Partnership

NAVIGATING PIONEERING MISSIONS

A Study Guide

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Navigating Pioneering Missions: A Study Guide

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ISBN Print: 978-0-9981859-2-7

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Introduction

Since Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators, prayed for many days over a world map, the nations have been on our hearts. But to maintain our focus on the nations and to avoid losing momentum in our pioneering, cross-cultural missions efforts, we need to fully embrace God's calling to take his love and grace to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47). We need to be on guard against only sustaining existing efforts; rather, we need to strengthen our efforts to take the Gospel to under-reached nations.

Before God, we have recognized our need to reinvigorate a pioneering missions culture in our Worldwide Partnership, a culture that is centered on advancing the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom among under-reached nations and among those populations that are extremely difficult to access.

What do we mean by "pioneering missions"? Navigators define this biblical function as follows: "to advance the Gospel into another culture or nation and lay a foundational generation for movements of the Gospel." This definition is rooted in the Scriptures. A primary aim of this study guide is to help current and future Navigator missionaries better understand what the Scriptures reveal about that calling while encouraging us to align our work with God's Word.

By "missionary," we include gift-income and conventional-income laborers. Both forms of work can serve the vital function of pioneering. We are eager to recruit and equip more conventional-income missionaries. These "CIPs," as we call them, are professionals who integrate cross-cultural missions with their mainstream jobs. They are increasingly needed to fulfil the Great

Commission because many under-reached nations can't be accessed by gift-income missionaries.

We also hope this study will foster more teamwork. Pioneering missions efforts rarely (if ever) work well when missionaries “go it alone.” In regard to teamwork, we recognize that our pioneering teams are “thin,” meaning that we often have one couple or individual working alone. As a result, we must collaborate more and avoid working in isolation. We all need more personal support and mentoring as we promote more *interregional* collaboration and pioneering teamwork.

In that light, we can most benefit from this study by working through it *together*. The Scriptures can be a strong catalyst for team formation. And studying the Scriptures *together* can lead to richer understandings of God's Word.

We hope this study will be a guiding compass for existing pioneers and an important tool for equipping new pioneers—for many years to come.

Using the Study

This study is the result of an international collaboration, with lead authors being from Asia-Pacific, Africa, and North America. The first draft was reviewed by about fifty pioneering missionaries from around the world, and by a handful of former pioneering missionaries who are now elders of our Worldwide Partnership.

Our goal has been to address, based on the Scriptures, the *primary and most-critical* issues that pioneering missionaries face. Scripture references have been organized around those themes. We recognize that we have not addressed every subject. In some cases, we have only been able to skim the surface of the scriptural treasures, presenting just enough to inspire readers to go deeper.

For example, some people who reviewed the early drafts understandably thought that the study did not adequately address the kingdom of God, which

is clearly a key aspect of the Gospel message. Although *everything* in this study is related to God's kingdom, we chose not to dedicate an entire section specifically to this vast topic, which merits an entire book. This study does not present a complete theology of every subtopic, but we hope it provides pioneering missionaries with foundational and practical biblical guidance that helps them fulfill their callings in cross-cultural contexts.

As mentioned earlier, we encourage you to use the study together with others, in the context of local, regional, and perhaps even international teams (e.g. via video conferencing tools). The questions we've provided should promote rich, thoughtful discussions.

Questions are provided mainly to prompt thoughtful conversation and reflection. A clear right or wrong answer to some questions might not be obvious, so we encourage you to seek God through his Word and to grow in discernment together.

We also included case studies. These are real-world examples of the tensions, challenges, and successes of pioneering efforts. The case studies are designed to help you consider how to respond biblically (not just humanly) to each situation. As you think about the case studies, you should attempt to substantiate your conclusions based on the Scriptures.

To facilitate your work, we have embedded most scriptural text within the guide. However, it will be important to have a Bible at hand. Long passages were omitted from the study guide. In those cases, you'll need to read them in your Bible. Also, we recommend using a notebook to write out your thoughts as you meditate on God's Word and think about how to apply the Scriptures in your daily efforts.

We sincerely hope that *Navigating Pioneering Missions* will be a catalyst for collaborative action that leads to more people coming to faith in Christ in the most under-reached parts of the world.

If you have questions, need access to the study, or want to connect with others who are working through this material, please contact any of our staff at the International Office.

CHAPTER 1

Laying Foundations

The primary call of a pioneering missionary is to establish a *foundation* of men and women whose identity is grounded in Jesus, who believe and live according to the pure Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom, and who advance that Gospel among the lost in their cultures (and beyond). In this chapter, we'll study each of those crucial factors.

First, let's look at the task of laying foundations. This task is revealed in the Scriptures, of course; it is also expressed in the Navigator Calling and Vision statements. Our Calling says we are, "To advance the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom *into* the nations *through* spiritual generations of laborers living and discipling *among* the lost."

These three prepositions—into, through, among—are important for the role of pioneering missionaries. Donald McGilchrist, a former international vice president of The Navigators, made these observations:

We advance, carrying the Gospel, into the nations. The idea here is reaching deep, entering fully, gaining complete access . . .

. . . We advance, carrying the Gospel, through spiritual generations. The idea here is persistence, longevity, permanence. . . . Generations will come from lasting spiritual transformation. . . . We stay until the seed flourishes and in turn produces other seeds.

We advance carrying the Gospel among the lost. The idea here is to be fully present, socially connected in a web of relationships, integrated within our

contexts, functioning next door . . .

. . . With this at the forefront of our thinking, Navigator pioneers, by the grace of God and in His authority, seek to advance the Gospel across cultures, laying a foundational generation for discipling movements of the Gospel.

Our Vision helps imagine what this can look like: “We see a vital movement of the Gospel, fueled by prevailing prayer, flowing freely through relational networks and out into the nations. Workers for the kingdom are next door to everywhere! . . . Ordinary people, in many walks of life, are joyfully leading integrated lives. They live as fruitful insiders among the lost. . . . The Gospel spreads naturally and powerfully, as believers share Christ . . . life upon life . . . family to family.

Questions

1. How might our Calling and Vision statements bring focus to the primary task of pioneering missionaries, which is “to advance the Gospel into another culture or nation and lay a foundational generation for movements of the Gospel”?
2. Based on your current understanding, what types of investments will pioneering missionaries need to make in people in order to establish them as a foundational generation for Gospel movements?

Vital Elements of a Generational Foundation

To fulfill the pioneering task, Navigator missionaries need a solid understanding of two scriptural principles: A) the nature of the pure Gospel and B) the nature of *ekklesia*. Without a biblical understanding of the pure Gospel, we will end up laying a foundation that is something other than Christ. Likewise, a poor grasp of biblical *ekklesia* will hinder the mobility of the Gospel—its ability to take root and spread in a culture. The purity of the Gospel will be addressed in this section and *ekklesia* will be addressed in a later section.

This section will focus on two types of foundations: (1) the foundation of Christ and (2) the scriptural elements of a foundation that will result in many generations.

The Foundation of Christ

If we don't take this question of Jesus as the foundation seriously, we risk spending our lives on efforts that might not endure across generations. We might be tempted to dilute the Gospel, to make it easier for people to respond. Or we might add human inventions to the Gospel, wrapping it in cultural and religious baggage. Either way, we will end up with a distorted gospel. Jesus will no longer be the foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is,

because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Galatians 1:6-9

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if

we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

Galatians 2:14

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are

a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

Galatians 3:1-3

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the

law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

Galatians 5:2-4

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey

the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Questions

1. What does it mean, in practice, to establish Jesus as the only foundation?
 2. In the 1 Corinthians passage above, Paul used an architectural metaphor. He realized that others would build on his foundation and be responsible for the quality of their work. What does this imply for pioneers who hope to see spiritual generations?
 3. In regard to the passages in Galatians, why do you think Paul was so upset and used such strong language? What might have happened if the Galatians had followed a gospel different from what Paul preached?
 4. What types of things were the Galatians adding to the Gospel and where did those things come from? As you consider your context, are there “wrappings” that you need to throw away to ensure the Gospel’s purity?
-

What Foundational Generations Need

As you study the following scriptures, look for factors that would help a foundational generation impact its culture?

Ephesians 1:17-23

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 3:16-19

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and

deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled

with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:9-14

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have

great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

John 13-17 (please use your Bible)

Questions

1. Referring to the scriptures above, how would you summarize the characteristics we hope to see in the people who comprise a foundational generation?
 2. On the basis of John 13-17, try to summarize the essence of what Jesus said about laying a foundation for generations. Consider those chapters in regard to how the disciples related to:
 - the Father
 - one another
 - the world
 - their mission in the world
 3. We see that Jesus often interacted with disciples who were blood relatives (brothers, cousins) and people from the same region. They often already knew each other and/or were from the same communities. How might this influence the way you think about your efforts?
-

The Christlike Character of a Foundational Generation

The Scriptures call us to become increasingly like Christ. Ephesians 4:13 calls us to become “mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Can we ever reach the fullness of Jesus? What might the character of Jesus look like in our lives?

One way to answer those questions is to look at the character traits that Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13: faith, hope, and love. There are others, of course, but keeping these character traits in mind can help us develop a foundational generation in the likeness of Jesus.

Using your Bible and a notebook, read the passages below and write your observations about helping people grow in the likeness of Jesus.

Faith

Romans 1:5; 5:2

Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. . . . through whom we have

gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

Ephesians 6:16

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

1 Thessalonians 1:3

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hope

Romans 15:5,13

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had . . . May the God of hope fill you

with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father

your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:3

All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason

for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . .

Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it

keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

John 13:34-35

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will

know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Galatians 5:13

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Questions

1. How would you invest in people so that they increasingly develop as men and women of faith, hope, and love?
2. What does faith, hope, and love look like in practice? How might these traits in a community of believers impact non-believers?
3. To help people grow in Christ, what is the pioneer's role, what is God's role, and what is the individual's role?

A Case Study

Jim and Jenny arrived in a mostly Catholic country in 2015 with the hope of establishing a foundational generation of locals who would advance the Gospel among their own people. They hoped to see their work integrated with the normal lifestyles of young people.

Jim and Jenny had young children who attended a school near their home. They prayed about how they might serve at the school. The school's headmaster asked Jim and Jenny to help high school students by offering character education classes.

Jim and Jenny began to volunteer twice a month with students in grade twelve. They led classes on "How to make good decisions," and "Resolving conflict with someone you love," and "Forgiveness." They were free to include biblical principles and even to share the Gospel. They augmented the classroom effort with occasional barbecues and gatherings in their home. Relationships formed

with students in three successive classes.

During the first year of this effort, Jim and Jenny realized that about half of the high school students planned to attend a local university while the other half planned to leave the country. That meant that about twenty students who knew and trusted them would enter an in-country university each year. These students could potentially open doors to college students who were often closed to the Gospel and difficult for outsiders to reach.

Before each of three successive groups graduated from high school, Jim and Jenny attempted to start investigative Bible reading groups in their home. With the first class, the group did not last long. With the second class, a year later, the group lasted for a few months and then died out. But with the third class, a breakthrough occurred.

The third group was open to the Gospel, loved to spend time with Jim and Jenny, and were open to exploring the claims of Christ. As the students' final year of high school ended, Jim and Jenny invited them to meet in the fall to read the Bible and to consider its relevance for life.

Fall arrived and the invitation went out. Several students, now in their first year of college, accepted the invitation and invited friends. A few had Evangelical backgrounds, but most were culturally Catholic. A few had no Christian background at all. People started coming to faith.

After about two years, a true *community* of about twenty young people emerged. Some had trusted Christ and some were on the way. Regardless, Jim and Jenny could see an authentic commitment to and concern for one another. In fact, they began to study the "one another" passages in the New Testament. The group was growing as a local expression of an *ekklesia*. The rest of the story is yet to be written.

Questions

1. In your view, what will this fledgling group need in order to become a “foundational generation”?
 2. What role should Jim and Jenny play as the group matures in Christ and gains a deeper understanding of the Scriptures?
 3. Looking to the future, how will strong bonds between the students impact the establishment of a lasting foundational generation?
-

CHAPTER 2

Foundations for Pioneering Servants

The work of pioneering missions, for many reasons, requires men and women who are grounded in Jesus and his Word. To find strength to persevere and avoid many complications. Guidance from the Scriptures and many years of Navigator experience give us an understanding of three areas that are vital to beginning well.

- God's character and promises
- Prayer
- Team vision and identity

God's Character and Promises

God is a creator. He called into existence that which did not yet exist, creating *ex nihilo* (Revelation 4:11). He is an entrepreneur, a pioneering God. He first envisioned all of creation and then took the necessary steps to see that it would come to pass.

As Donald McGilchrist wrote in *The Entrepreneurial God* (GCN Press, 2018), "An entrepreneur is, literally, one who under-takes. He or she first has a vision. Then the entrepreneur launches the enterprise. It is sustained by the persevering commitment of the entrepreneur and the team. We are God's team."

God invites us to know him, experience him, love him, worship him, and follow him. As his people, we are invited to be like him and to project his nature into our realities. We bear his image. We are invited to advance his kingdom alongside him, as “God’s fellow workers” (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Seeking to create something that does not yet exist is a God-like trait that is congruent with being one of his image-bearers. At the heart of pioneering missions is a call to reflect the heart and character of God. It is there, in God, that we begin. Consider the attributes of this God we serve.

The Character of God

Study Psalm 145 in your Bible. Consider what the psalmist declared about God’s character. Take some time to reflect on how you have experienced these attributes of God in your own life.

- 1) What are the implications of these truths about God, and how might they shape your view of pioneering missions?
- 2) In your journal or notebook, write about God’s character beyond what you see in Psalm 145. How might these characteristics of God encourage and guide you in your work?

The Promises of God

God’s promises are inseparable from his character. They are aspects of his essence. Because they extend from his nature and his heart, they are absolutely dependable. Nothing in the universe is more certain.

The Bible is full of God’s promises, and they are available to his people. All believers need to stand on the promises of God. For those in pioneering ministry, it is vital to rely on God’s promises. The work of pioneering missionaries can be difficult. Obstacles, resistances, internal struggles, and life circumstances can impede progress. There will be times when the character and promises of God are all we have.

Mike Treneer, one of our past international presidents, has remarked that we don't claim the promises of God; rather, they claim us.

It is as if a great river of the promises of God relentlessly and beautifully carves and weaves its way through history, claiming us and sweeping us into its current. We are then swept up into the great purposes of God which cannot be thwarted and of which we become willing participants. His promises capture our hearts and draw us toward God, himself. When we view the promises of God this way, it can help protect us from a 'name it and claim it' mentality where we presumptuously read our own desires into the will of God. If our focus remains on the purposes of God and on his character, his promises come to life to us and in us.

The promises of God are not "little guarantees" that we can manipulate to get what we want when we want it. They are statements of who he is. His magnificent artistry appears as he fulfills his promises in our lives and ministries *as he sees fit*.

As you read the following scriptures, consider how God has fulfilled his promises and how people have responded.

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name

great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Galatians 3:7-29 (with omissions)

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along

with Abraham, the man of faith. . . . Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does

not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. . . . Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

Romans 4:16-21

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the

father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

2 Corinthians 1:18-22

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you

in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Questions

1. When God gave Abraham these promises, Abraham had no idea how they would be fulfilled. God launched him into the unknown with a generational vision. What might have compelled Abraham to embrace God’s promises and step out in faith?
-

2. What do the specific promises given to Abraham reveal about God's heart, character, and plans?
3. If every promise is fulfilled in Christ, what does that imply for you and your pioneering efforts?
4. Abraham and others never saw the fulfillment of the promises they received. When that occurs in our lives and work, what can give us assurance that God's promises will not fail? What might this imply about the connection between faith in God's promises and perseverance?
5. What promises from the Scriptures are important to you? Why? How has God used them in your life?

Prayer

We could devote an entire book to what the Scriptures say about prayer. For our purposes, we encourage you to consider how your life and work can be grounded in God's character and promises, and how prayer helps us live according to his promises. In prayer, we humbly accept what the Lord has said and *ask* him to make his promises a reality in our lives and pioneering efforts.

Daniel 9:1-19 (use your Bible)

Nehemiah 1 (use your Bible)

Questions

1. What do you notice about how Daniel and Nehemiah prayed. What motivated them?
 2. How did knowledge of God's nature influence the way these men prayed?
 3. What is the relationship between God's promises, prayer, and faith-in-action?
-

The Pioneering Team's Vision and Identity

Pioneering teams, to work well together, benefit from having two bonds: a shared mindset (or vision) that is rooted in the Scriptures, and a shared identity. In this section, we'll look more closely at both, first addressing scriptural principles for the team's vision.

All Things to All Men

There can, of course, be many facets to a team's vision, but the Scriptures reveal a crucial principle, one that Jesus modeled for us.

In John 1, we see the amazing truth that Jesus, the *logos* (Word) who "was God" and who "was with God in the beginning" and through whom "all things were made" *emptied himself* and "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:1-3, 14). Jesus gave up his own life, dwelled among us, and became like us.

Paul conveyed this same idea in Philippians 2, saying that we should have the "same mindset" as Jesus "who, being in very nature God . . . made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (vs. 5-8).

John 12:24-26

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who

hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made 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 people 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.

Galatians 1:10

Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to

please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Questions

1. What should Jesus' approach look like in practice for pioneering missionaries?
2. As you consider your pioneering role, what tensions and challenges does this model present for you?
3. If we "become all things to all men," what happens to the identity we have inherited and developed from birth, including our cultural history, ethnicity, political leanings, language, food preferences, etc. If we "die" to all of that, who are we?
4. In your opinion, what would have happened to the advance of the Gospel if Paul hadn't had the mindset of Jesus?
5. Compare what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9 (above) with Galatians 1:10. Are these statements in conflict?

All Things to All Men in Practice

In addition to the scriptures above, the New Testament records numerous examples of how the first-century apostles struggled to apply the "all things to all men" principle in their pioneering ministries. We can learn from their experiences.

Acts 16:1-5

Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that

area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Galatians 2:1-5

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be

circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Using your Bible, compare Acts 13:13-52 and Acts 17:16-34

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the

power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about

God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so

that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

2 Corinthians 3:5

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

Questions

1. What circumstances caused Paul to take two different positions in regard to the religious practice of circumcision? How might that influence your thinking in relation to your own cultural and religious practices as you seek to carry the Gospel into a new context?
2. What can we learn from Paul about his knowledge of local cultures? What might that imply for pioneering missionaries? How do we balance that with the humility that Paul described?
3. Summarize your convictions about language and cultural learning/engagement for your pioneering endeavor.

The Pioneering Team's Identity

In the Scriptures, we see that a team's identity has multiple layers. Each of us has a *cultural* identity, a *family* identity, a *social* identity, a *professional* identity, a *religious* identity, and a *spiritual* identity. As we enter a new culture with the Gospel, all of these interdependent layers of identity can be called into question. Moreover, pioneering teams will experience these questions collectively. At some point we need to discern who we are *as a team* within the culture?

In the previous section, we saw that Jesus and Paul "let go" of, or "died to" various elements of their cultural, family, and religious identities in order to

fulfill a broader vision of reaching those who did not yet know Jesus and the Gospel of his kingdom. But they also would not abandon their deepest identities. Jesus never denied his identity as the Son of God, nor did he turn away from the will of his father—even at the cost of his life. Likewise, Paul adapted his ways of communication and cultural interaction, but he always did this to fulfill his apostolic calling in Christ.

In the following passages, we see examples of how the disciples' various identities interacted with each other as Jesus entered their lives. As Jesus forged their deepest identities in a relationship with him, how did they interact with the broader society?

John 1:40-49

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in

the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

Luke 5:27-32

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything

and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and

the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a

doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 6:12-16

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip,

Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

John 6:53-69

Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

“Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.” From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them,

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Matthew 10:22-25 (Jesus to Peter)

You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. “The student is not

above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

Matthew 16:17-20 (Jesus to Peter)

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom

of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Matthew 26:69-75

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said. But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!” After a little while, those

standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man! Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

John 21:15-19

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Questions

1. What happened to the cultural and professional identities of the disciples, and how did those layers of identity fit within the cultural context of the time?
2. What do you observe in these passages about the interaction between spiritual identity, cultural identity, professional identity, etc.?
3. What might be applicable from these accounts for you, your team, and those you serve?

Working in Teams

As Navigators, we believe that it is best for pioneering missions to be accomplished in teams rather than as individuals. Many scriptures, such as 1 Corinthians 12, speak to the importance of a “body of Christ,” in which there are people with diverse spiritual gifts operating together in unity under the lordship of Jesus. In isolation, we are weaker. Working together, we offer a more robust reflection of God.

In practical terms, a pioneering team must serve in a unified manner as they engage with the culture. The following case study helps to illustrate the issues that often arise for teams working in cross-cultural contexts.

Team Identity: A Case Study

In late 1985, Jim and Harry and their families arrived in Colombia to open a Navigator ministry. They had strong relationships with each other and unity in their vision to minister among under-reached Colombians. Visas were restricted, so while gathering counsel from Navigator leaders and bank officials, they explored options for a viable business. They soon launched a leather products business.

Jim was a natural entrepreneur. His office was called “The Office of Dreams.” Harry tried to keep their feet on the ground. His office was called “The Office of Reality.” They launched the business by identifying local leather manufacturers and then buying and distributing those products through their relational networks in the US.

Orders soon accelerated as they connected with some large-volume buyers. Quality control became a serious issue, so they decided to manufacture the products themselves, first in a large home that they converted into a factory. As business boomed, they developed and maintained satellite factories.

God was also fulfilling their dreams of influencing people for Christ. They and the team had a legitimate and attractive professional identity that took them deep into the mainstream Colombian society.

As people came to faith, their spiritual growth occurred within the intense daily business affairs. Jim and Harry integrated a discipling environment within the business. They saw transformed lives and the emergence of a biblical community, with people applying the Scriptures in every aspect of life. The business was not a distraction from the disciple-making; rather, the business propelled and multiplied their work with people. Today, the leaders of the ministry are all Colombians who grew up in this business.

However, the business eventually suffered some setbacks. The government significantly increased commissions on repatriated earnings from exports and cut subsidies to the leather industry. Furthermore, the Colombian peso began to strengthen uncharacteristically against the US dollar. Availability of raw materials dropped because of guerrilla activity, thereby raising business costs.

Competition from China was heating up. Profits began turning into losses.

Harry called a meeting to discuss an exit strategy. But Jim felt that God was still in the venture. He decided to inject more capital into the business. So, despite Harry's concerns, they pressed on together. Although several members of the team were emotionally drained, the ministry continued to flourish until the business finally closed with substantial financial losses.

Clearly, the business yielded enormous dividends that are still bearing fruit many years later.

Questions

1. How would you describe the interplay between these men's professional (gifting and skills), personal (personalities), cultural, and spiritual identities?
 2. In what ways did being business professionals help Jim and Harry as they sought to pioneer a new work among Colombians? What factors made this legitimate business successful as a platform for discipleship? Do you see any disadvantages?
 3. What is applicable from Jim and Harry's experiences in your pioneering context? What isn't?
-

Identity and Authenticity

A pioneering team's identity, whatever it is, should be consistent, credible, and *honest*. People can easily detect disingenuousness. If that occurs, distrust grows and the Gospel loses its appeal. How might the scriptures below help us make good decisions?

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made 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 people 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.

Acts 20:17-27, 32-35

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen

to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. . . . Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who

are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I

showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Philippians 3:7-11

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but

that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Questions

1. What do Paul's descriptions of his approach reveal about his attitude toward the various layers of his identity?
 2. How might you and your team maintain authenticity and integrity while also seeking to gain access to the mainstream culture?
 3. Are you and your team unified in your vision (mindset) and identity?
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CHAPTER 3

Living and Discipling Among the Lost

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Jesus came to seek and save “the lost.” But who, specifically, are those people?

In this section of the study, we will look at what the Scriptures say about helping people to know Jesus and to gain maturity as his followers.

Jesus died for all. By his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Revelation 5:9). Paul was set apart for the Gospel. Through Christ he received grace and apostleship to call the gentiles to faith (Romans 1:1-5).

As pioneering missionaries take the Gospel across cultures and into new contexts, our focus is primarily on the lost, especially those who have had little or no access to the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom. Just as Jesus had a heartfelt concern for those who were distant from him, our hearts should be deeply moved by the spiritual condition of the lost today. We, too, should always be growing in Christ along with those we serve.

Study the following passages and write about what “lostness” looks like in the culture where you serve. How does life *without* God impact society and families?

Matthew 9:35-36

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and

sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Romans 1:21-24, 29-31

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for

the degrading of their bodies with one another. . . . They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.

(For more on “the lost,” see Luke 15:1-31; Luke 19:1-10; John 4:1-38.)

Questions

1. In what ways does “lostness” appear in your cultural context?
 2. Based on the passages above, what leads people into this condition and what does it take to help them?
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Our Response to the Lost

Paul's heart for the lost was evident in the following scriptures.

Romans 9:1-2

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could

wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race . . .

Romans 10:14-15

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can

anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ,

not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Questions

1. As a pioneering missionary, what factors of the heart do you think are crucial for igniting and fueling our work among the lost?
 2. What might threaten our heart, love, and compassion?
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3. To live and disciple among the lost, what life choices will pioneers have to make? What does it mean, in practical terms for you, to live among the lost? How might living among the lost be different for pioneers serving in politically or religiously “closed” nations compared to “open” nations?
4. Is there a difference between “living and discipling among the lost” and “evangelizing”? If so, what is it?

A Case Study: A Pioneering Team in a Closed Country

What would the Christian faith look like if there were no church buildings or religious gatherings? What if there were only a network of devout Christ-followers who loved and served nonbelievers in *their* contexts?

In an Asian nation, where there are strong cultural and political barriers to Christian activities, one of our pioneering teams has abandoned the model of forming Christian communities and then trying to invite nonbelievers into their circles. Instead, working together as a body of Christ, they take their faith into the homes and cultural environments of their existing family and friendship networks.

As the believers in our work first made this transition, everyone wondered how they could live the Christian life without establishing a Christian environment and activities. One of our leaders clarified that everyone would still be together, but that they would be together in the homes of their lost friends and relatives. Importantly, they would strive to be known for love and service, not for meetings and activities.

This simple approach has helped to facilitate the natural spread of the Gospel. Because new believers remain in their normal contexts, rather than shifting to typical Christian environments, they are less frequently marginalized by their non-believing families and friends. Thus, the Gospel faces fewer barriers.

Questions

1. How might this example of living together among the lost influence the way you envision your work?
2. If you were helping to lead the effort in the work described above, how would you give new believers the opportunity to grow in the Scriptures? How would you develop new leaders?
3. In the cultural context described above, where the Bible is seen as a “Western” holy book, how would you help believers share the Gospel message within their relational networks?

Who among the Lost?

Understanding the depth of human lostness and having a heart of compassion leads us to the next critical question. Which groups of people within a society should we reach in order to establish a foundational generation?

If we look to Jesus, we see that he interacted with a diverse array of people, including religious Jews (pharisees); the poor; working-class men (Peter et. al.); tax collectors; prostitutes; military officials (the centurion); the sick; large crowds; and individuals. As you read the scriptures below, notice the types of people Jesus served. (Please do your own search through the Gospels for more examples.)

Matthew 15:24 (Compare with other passages)

He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

Mark 7:24-30

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he

could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by

an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia.

Matthew 8:5-10

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly." Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?" The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man

under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

Luke 19:1-7

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

Mark 1:40-42

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and

touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

John 4:7-15, 25-30

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman

said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If

you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?” Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” . . .

. . . The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Questions

1. In addition to the encounters shown above, what other interactions between Jesus and people would you add?
2. Do you see any commonality in the various types of people Jesus worked with?

Receptive Hearts vs. Hard Hearts

Beyond the socio-economic and cultural profiles of people with whom Jesus interacted, we can also learn from the way he related to people who were receptive to him and, by contrast, opposed to him.

John 12:37-46

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.” Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

Matthew 21:31-32

Jesus said to [chief priests and religious leaders], “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John [the Baptist] came to you to show you

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God. Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Matthew 9:10-11

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

John 8:2-11

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach

them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the

group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who

heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Questions

1. In addition to the New Testament records of Jesus above, what stories about his interactions with hard-hearted and soft-hearted people would you add?
2. Considered as a whole, how do these stories influence the way you think about the task of establishing a foundational generation in your cultural context?

With Whom to Begin: the Saved or the Lost?

Should pioneers begin among the saved or the lost? Or both? At an international forum, we asked fifty pioneering missionaries from around the world to consider the following questions while imagining themselves in a primarily non-Protestant context.

- Would you begin among the saved or the lost?
 - What might be some implications and unintended consequences of your choice?
-

For your comparison, the responses we received from forum participants are shown below.

Begin among the Saved

Advantages

- Like-minded local Christians can be equipped quickly to work with pioneers.
- Local Christians can be culturally closer to the lost than expats and at times they can be more effective, especially when there is no language barrier.
- A loving, believing community can be formed more quickly, especially in a context where it takes a long time to see fruit among the lost.

Disadvantages

- Local Christians might not embrace our Calling and Vision.
- Local Christians who are already part of a Christian subculture and are generally cultural outsiders to the lost might extract new believers out of their indigenous contexts (intentionally or unintentionally) and then lead them into a subculture. This would disconnect them from their existing relationships and hinder the flow of the Gospel.
- Pioneers might end up living and discipling among the saved at the expense of the lost.

Begin among the Lost

Advantages

- It might be easier to help guard the purity of the Gospel because the lost would likely have less cultural baggage from Christendom.
-

This would help the Gospel be more mobile in the local mainstream culture.

- The resulting *ekklesia* could be more culturally relevant.
- Pioneers living and discipling among the lost could be good models for local Christians to do the same; they would “walk the talk.”

Disadvantages

- Pioneers might lack an understanding of local realities without the guidance of local believers.
- It could take years for a local believing community to emerge. Early responders might feel isolated and discouraged.
- In some contexts, expat pioneers have no natural access to the lost they want to reach. In other cases, being an expat is a liability. Pioneers need local Christians to bridge this gap.

As you consider the real-world tensions above, which are often faced by pioneering missionaries, discuss the questions below.

1. Is it possible to live and disciple among believers and nonbelievers simultaneously in your context?
 2. How might the professional identities of pioneers influence their decisions about who to reach among the lost?
 3. Should we expect to see more than one expression of *ekklesia* in a complex context?
 4. In cases when pioneers are working among believers, how should they determine which Christians to invest in? And how do pioneers ensure that they do not neglect unbelievers?
 5. If pioneers choose to live and disciple among the lost, how should they relate and not relate to local Christians?
-

Seeking God's Wisdom and Discernment

The Scriptures reveal God's heart and vision for the lost. As we share God's compassion, we will have to make practical decisions about where to work and whom to serve. Waiting on and listening to the Lord is central to discerning his will. It is wise to seek counsel from mature believers and mentors. Understanding current realities (contexts, times) is important for shaping a pioneering team's strategies. ". . . from Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chronicles 12:31).

Factors often considered by pioneers include:

- ethnicity
- religion/belief/worldview
- socio-economic class
- vocation
- social structure
- age
- urban vs. rural
- politics and laws
- the mainstream
- spiritual receptivity
- neglected/least reached
- strategic impact
- cultural history between Christian subculture and mainstream society

Other considerations include the vocations, giftings, and experiences of the pioneers. We've listed below some nuggets of wisdom from experienced pioneers.

- Begin with the end in mind (i.e., establish a foundational generation that can carry the Gospel deeper into the mainstream culture, not just deeper into a subculture).
 - Beware of simplistic concepts, such as "a thriving local ministry will
-

automatically result in ministries among all sectors of society.”

- Beginning among wealthy, educated people does not automatically mean that some of those you reach will later serve among the poor, marginalized, and outcasts of society (trickle-down theory). Intentionality and sacrifice are required to see the latter happen.
- Be sure to ask, “Who is *mainstream* in this society?”

The New Believers’ Identity

Earlier we discussed important questions surrounding the layers of a pioneering team’s identity. In this section, we focus on the identity of new believers, the people who come to faith in Christ. The following case study will help to open the discussion.

A Case Study

Kim Hong is a young ethnic Chinese man from an Asian country where 43 percent of the population is Buddhist-Taoist. He, like many of his generation, identifies himself officially as a Buddhist-Taoist, but he does not believe in or practice the religion. His parents and extended family members are practicing Buddhist-Taoists, as were their ancestors.

For many in Asia, Christianity is a Western religion founded by a Westerner. Thus, Jesus Christ is for Westerners. Embracing Christianity is considered to be a betrayal of one’s cultural roots, community, and family. This is a major stumbling block to faith in Christ.

To make things worse, many Christians in Asia embrace Western religious practices, festivals, church forms, and jargon while abandoning indigenous ones. This reinforces a distorted understanding of the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom.

Questions

1. If Kim Hong comes to faith in Christ, how should he identify himself within his family and community? Should his new identity in Christ replace or affect his cultural, religious, and social identity? Why or why not?
2. What factors should guide him as he navigates possible tensions between his faith and culture?
3. How might Kim Hong's choice of identity impact the advance of the Gospel within his own community?
4. How should Kim Hong relate to other believers in Christ who embrace Western religious forms?

Our First-Birth Identity

Each one is assigned by God a place and time in history that determines his or her cultural, social, and religious (if applicable) identity. This is the identity assigned to us at birth. The Scriptures give value to this birth.

Acts 17:26-27

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their

lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

1 Corinthians 7:17

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has

called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

Galatians 2:14-16

When I saw that they were not acting

in line with the truth of the gospel, I

said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not

justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Questions

1. Is cultural and ethnic diversity an obstacle to faith? How have you seen faith in Christ expressed by people who stay within their first-birth cultural context? Describe what this looked like.
2. In the Galatians passage above, we see that Paul defended his friends there from an effort to impose Jewish customs that came from outside the local culture. However, what boundaries might define the extent to which a believer can continue in first-birth practices? In your context today, what gray areas have emerged?
3. How did the apostle Paul refer to himself and to his fellow apostle, Peter?

Our Second-Birth Identity

Each one who believes in Christ inherits a new spiritual, kingdom identity. This identity has profound implications for the way we see ourselves, our community, and the world. Carefully study the scripture references below, which reveal aspects of our identity in Jesus. How might a deep understanding of these truths encourage and equip a new believer to grow in Christ and to be influential for him in the world?

Who Am I in Christ?

John 1:12

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Galatians 3:26-28 and 4:7

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free,

nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. . . . So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Ephesians 1:4-8

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which

he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.

Philippians 3:20

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

Who Are We Together in Christ?

Romans 12:5

. . . so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together

and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once

you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Who Are We in the World?

Matthew 5:13-14

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything,

except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

John 17:15-20

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into

the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message . . .

2 Corinthians 2:15-16

For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one

we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

1 Peter 2:11-12

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that,

though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Language and Identity Labels

Note: In this section, we will present more guiding text and fewer scriptural references than usual. Our goal is to bring clarity to some important issues that are often under-considered. However, we are not attempting to be dogmatic and we encourage you to do your own study on this important topic.

Any person's identity comes with a name. We have family names, professional names, ethnic and national names, and even political names. These names, however, often have connotations that mean different things to different people. As a result, true communication can break down.

Using the Label "Christian"

The term *Christian* was used only three times in the Scriptures: Acts 11:26;

Acts 26:28; and 1 Peter 4:15-16. What did the term mean in each case? Who used it? And how was it used?

Paul never described himself as a Christian, not even as a Christian Jew or Jewish Christian. He never renounced his first identity. (Neither did the other apostles and early believers, both Jews and non-Jews.) Rather, Paul said that Tertullus had called him and others “Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5), and a member of “the Way,” which the Jewish religious leaders labelled as a Jewish sect. “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14, ESV).

Although the Jewish religious leaders regarded the Way as a sect, to them it was nevertheless still Jewish. Being a member of this sect did not rob a person of his or her Jewish identity. Likewise, for a follower of Christ in most Muslim contexts it is better to be regarded as a “bad” or “misguided” Muslim than to be regarded as a Christian.

Questions

1. As a pioneer in a cross-cultural context, working among people of a major non-Christian religion, would you (or do you) identify yourself as a Christian? Why or why not? How would you (or do you) refer to yourself?
 2. Would you encourage the fruit of your ministry to identify themselves as Christians? Why or why not?
 3. What problems might emerge if a follower of Christ identified himself or herself as a different kind of follower of a local religion? For example, what might happen if a man in a Muslim context tried to define himself as a different kind of Muslim? Would he have more freedom? Why or why not?
-

Converts and Conversion

Some English Bible translations use the terms “conversion” or “convert” in ways that can distort how we think about cross-cultural missions, leading us to think about changing people from one set of religious or cultural practices and rituals to another set. We next look more closely at the original Greek words that were, in the NIV, translated as “convert.”

Proshvluton (*prosylutos*) refers to a gentile who embraced Judaism as his religion.

Matthew 23:15

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and

when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

Acts 2:11

... (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them

declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!

Acts 6:5

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip,

Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

Acts 13:43

When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas,

who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Neophyton refers to something that is “newly planted,” or that lacks deep roots in the faith, similar to a neophyte or rookie.

1 Timothy 3:6

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

Epistrophé refers to “a turning about” or “a turning to.” It pertains to gentiles who were turning to God, not necessarily changing their cultural practices or relational networks for different ones.

Acts 15:3

The church sent them on their way, and as they travelled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad.

Aparchē refers to a beginning of sacrifice; the first fruits, or best produce.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

1 Corinthians 16:15

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people.

Romans 16:5

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

Questions

1. When you think of the words conversion or convert, what comes to mind?
2. Common religious jargon includes Christian, Protestant, Evangelical, convert, conversion. Common phrases include, “You should accept Christ,” and “Have you prayed the Sinner’s Prayer?” and “Are you a baptized member of a local church?” Without using this type of language, how might believers in your context describe their second-birth experience and new life in Christ?

Worldview: Religion vs. the Kingdom of God

A worldview is like a lens through which we look at the world. If the lens is distorted, our view of reality will be distorted. Similarly, a worldview is like colored glasses. It colors everything we see.

Jargon such as *converts* and *conversion* come from a religious worldview, not a perspective based on the kingdom of God. This is not merely a trivial quibble over semantics. This is about the *purity of the Gospel*, the central and essential message that we communicate to our non-believing friends.

As pioneering missionaries, we are called to offer the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom, not a certain set of Christian traditions or a different religion. God’s kingdom is not bound by Christian traditions. His kingdom transcends cultural expressions of Christian faith. Read the following scriptures through a kingdom lens (world view).

John 14:6

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Mark 16:15

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Matthew 28:19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .

John 3:3-5

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they

cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he

might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Colossians 1:12-14

...and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and

brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Questions

1. What changes when people follow Jesus?
2. How did Paul describe the condition of the Ephesian and Colossian believers before and after they had come to faith in Christ?
3. How would you help new believers in a secular context, or in the context of a major religion, navigate their new identities in Jesus in relation to their cultural/religious context?

Remain in Your Context

Salvation is not about changing religions. It is rather about a change of allegiance, from the dominion of Satan to the kingdom of Jesus, the king of kings. It is a change from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and the kingdom of the Son.

With this mindset, new believers can remain embedded in their first-birth contexts and better influence their natural relational networks for Christ. Paul encouraged his friends in Corinth to remain engaged as models for Christ within their normal spheres of influence.

1 Corinthians 7:17-20

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called

them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become

uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's

commands is what counts. Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

Mark 5:18-20

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had

mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Questions

1. What is the essence of Paul's exhortation in the 1 Corinthians passage?
2. Corinth was rife with immorality and pagan religions. Why did Paul still exhort his friends there in this way?
3. After healing the demoniac, Jesus sent him home to his own gentile people, even though the man begged to join Jesus and his Jewish disciples. Why did Jesus do that? And what happened as a result?

Case Study: Considerations for Post-Christian Cultures

A conventional-income Navigator who works as a mechanical engineer in Madrid has developed strong friendships with postmodern, agnostic Spaniards. Although he is a foreigner, he has done a great job of embracing Spanish culture and he has found ways to integrate his daily affairs with investments in people.

Spanish culture, with thousands of years of history, has been dominated by Romans, Arabs, and Catholics. Today, the nation is still culturally Catholic, but most people are agnostic and hesitant to be involved in organized religion.

This Navigator says that his friends and colleagues have been open to brief conversations about faith in God. They haven't usually been interested in Bible study, but they listen sincerely when he shares briefly about how a passage of scripture has helped him, or about a personal experience with God. The key, he said, is to be personal. He has compared this approach to the way first-century Christians shared their faith—before anyone had Bibles.

He and his wife, who runs a private educational academy, saw how the 2020 pandemic softened hearts. They knew people who nearly died of Covid-19, and they knew many people whose relatives died alone. Many Spaniards lost their jobs, which added financial anxiety. In this context, they frequently told their friends that they were praying for them, or they shared some scripture.

“Suffering brings opportunity,” he said, adding that they have relied on the Holy Spirit to soften hearts and open doors for the Gospel.

That said, it hasn't always been easy for them. They have wondered if they should be seeing more “fruit,” and they wish more people were reading the Scriptures. They have questioned if they are doing something wrong, or if only God can overcome the culture's resistance to faith in Jesus.

Questions

1. How would you advise the engineer and his wife in relation to their concerns?
 2. Based on your understanding of the Scriptures, how should this engineer and his wife define “success”?
 3. How should we assess our pioneering work without turning people into “projects”? What would be a wrong way?
 4. When new believers from a post-Christian context come to faith in Christ, how should those new believers describe their faith in ways that make sense to family and friends and that will lead to movements of the Gospel?
-

CHAPTER 4

The Spread of the Gospel

How, exactly, does the Gospel take root in the lives of people and then spread through a culture?

To what extent does the success of pioneering missions depend on the qualifications, methods, and understanding of the missionaries? How much depends on God's role? How much depends on the culture's receptivity to the Gospel?

Many pioneering missionaries, lacking a clear understanding of how the Scriptures speak to these questions, can become disillusioned or discouraged. Others, who happen to see a rapid spread of the Gospel, might think that their ministry methods should be applied in every context.

In this section, we'll discover what the New Testament says about the growth of the Gospel in a culture and across generations.

God's Work, Our Role, and Cultural Receptivity

In previous sections of this study, we looked at our calling to be embedded in the culture, and to live and disciple among the lost. Within that framework, we are called to invest in people. Consider what the scriptures below say about our role, God's role, and the individual's freedom to respond to God.

Matthew 13 (please use your Bible)

John 4:34-38

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop

for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

1 Corinthians 3:5-9

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything,

but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.

John 16:7-11

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness

and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Acts 17:24-27

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man

he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

2 Corinthians 3:2-6

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence we have

through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Hebrews 1:1-3

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The

Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

1 John 1:1-3

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim

to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

John 12:37-43

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their

eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them." Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

Questions

1. What do these scriptures teach us about:
 - God's role?
 - Our role and responsibility?
 - Individual responsiveness to the Gospel?
2. What do these passages reveal about the time it might take for God to work in a person or culture? How can we be sure that we're doing our best as Christ's coworkers today?
3. How should the reality of God's work in people influence the way we work among the lost?
4. What factors in human nature might lead people to turn away from Jesus?
5. What does the John 12 passage tell us about reliance on our "ministry methods"?
6. Spend some time thinking, writing, and discussing with others the whole picture presented in this section: God's powerful work, our role and responsibility, and the receptivity of people to the Gospel. What does it all mean for you as a pioneering missionary?

Toward a Deeper Understanding of Gospel Movements

In the New Testament, we can see that the Gospel moved within the Jewish culture before it was embraced by non-Jewish (gentile) cultures. In both cases, Gospel movements happened primarily within and through the *oikos* (households, relational networks) as relationships were healed and people's lives were transformed.

The apostles planted the Gospel within a culture and the resulting foundational

community of believers carried the same Gospel into their own cultures. As Jesus worked in and through believers, he transformed culturally endemic sins and built an *ekklesia* that increasingly radiated his character. Believers turned their world upside down as the Gospel radically impacted the mainstream culture!

In this respect, New Testament movements of the Gospel were organic, natural, transformational, and generational. The continual movement of the Gospel was sustained by four leadership functions: pioneer leaders, local leaders, local laborers, and mobile alongsiders.

The early Gospel movements were culturally diverse, but they reflected the same aroma of Jesus. Likewise, pioneering teams around the world can expect to see diverse expressions of Gospel movements, but the beliefs, values, and character traits will share commonality in Christ.

Gospel movements occur by the work of God. The Book of Acts has been called “the acts of the Holy Spirit.” It is God who enables pioneers to lay foundations, and it is he who gives growth to these foundations. Such anticipation enables us to live with hope amid discouraging experiences, enabling us to prevail in prayer—even if we have labored for years without seeing spiritual generations.

A key to Gospel movements is to remove cultural/religious barriers so that Jesus can be received as good news. It is the nature of the Gospel to freely move within any culture. It is infectious!

New Testament Gospel movements happened through men of peace who opened their households (*oikos*) to the Gospel. Pioneering teams can trust God to lead them to men and women of peace, the people who will connect them to others. These people are catalysts for the movement of the Gospel. Pioneering teams can work so that good soil will continually emerge and by helping new followers of Christ remain within their sociocultural context. (A few local believers may be called to serve cross-culturally.)

We must also realize that there will be opposition. The New Testament records forty years of the *ekklesia* in Ephesus, from the time when Paul planted the

Gospel there to the time when Jesus sent a letter to Ephesian believers (in the Book of Revelation). The Ephesians faced several obstacles, including false narratives that denied the sufficiency, supremacy, and sacrifice of Jesus. These false ideas had implications for the purity of the Gospel and how later generations would be disciplined. This lesson is important for pioneers who hope to establish a foundation for spiritual generations.

There are many definitions of “Gospel movements.” What do we mean by movements and how we can foster them? To set the stage, let’s consider two case studies.

Movements of the Gospel: Case Study 1

A tribal fishing community in a predominantly Muslim country has strictly followed that religion for generations. The people have been hostile to foreigners and anything not linked to their religion.

A small Navigator team decided to conduct a survey trip to the region. They gathered information about demographics, lifestyle, response to foreigners, geography, and natural and human resources. They also connected with several key people in a nearby region who became an additional source of information and a relational link to local tribal leaders.

After the survey trip, the team prayed and evaluated the information they had gathered. They decided to send a pioneering team to the region by setting up a missional enterprise. They developed a business plan that included local residents as employees, so as to empower them economically. They hoped this economic contribution would make the good news attractive.

Next, a Navigator pioneering team comprising people from the country and several Western families was formed to launch the business. The first task was to build a facility while establishing relationships within the local community, including by hiring local construction workers. Upon the facility’s completion, many indigenous people were retained as employees. The business also provided a platform for these employees to befriend Navigator-disciplined

employees. As standard policy, the company connected as much as possible with the employees' family members.

After seventeen years, the company had grown significantly. They held annual family gatherings during which hundreds of local people attended. In the same period, many communities were impacted by the Gospel, primarily through the lives of the indigenous employees. Hundreds of people had their lives uplifted. Six students received college scholarships. About thirty indigenous teenagers joined the company's camp program for high school patrons. The people responded positively to attending company seminars about life, marriage, family, and stewardship. These efforts were culturally natural while also being anchored in biblical principles.

As increasing numbers of indigenous employees observed the lives of believing colleagues, they also embraced the good news. Some believing employees boldly shared their faith.

Ali (not his real name) believed the good news in this way. Early in his faith, and at great risk to his life, he proclaimed his belief in Jesus to fellow worshippers in his local mosque. He even contemplated becoming an itinerant evangelist in the region. However, his mentor counseled him to remain in his current situation, to serve as a fruitful insider and to provide for his family through his job at the company. This, the mentor said, would enable Ali to live productively, gain the community's respect, and enhance the credibility of the Gospel. Ali, in response, wondered how he could credibly support himself and freely move as an itinerant evangelist at the same time.

Questions

1. What are the pros and cons of the pioneering team's strategy for planting the Gospel in this unreached people group?
 2. What counsel would you give the pioneering team going forward, in regard to sustaining a Gospel movement across generations?
 3. Do you agree with the counsel offered to Ali? Why or why not?
-

Movements of the Gospel: Case Study 2

(All names have been changed.) Solomon is a veterinarian in a predominantly Muslim city. He is part of a pioneering team committed to seeing the Gospel planted among Muslims.

One of Solomon's clients referred him to a senior local government accountant named Said who seemed interested in the *Injeel* (New Testament). At first, Said was suspicious of Solomon's motives and ignored his attempts to make contact. After Solomon and his wife prayed that God would make a connection, they miraculously linked up and gradually developed a good friendship.

Solomon soon discovered that Said was a seeker who desperately wanted to know more about Isa (Jesus) from the *Injeel*. Said also discovered that Solomon respected the Quran. They quickly began a regular meeting in Said's office to read and discuss the Gospel of Mark. Sometimes they referenced the Quran.

Said's messenger, Suleiman, sometimes listened to these discussions. After a few weeks, Said declared, including to his wife, that he believed in Isa as his savior. They soon invited Solomon to their home to continue the studies there. Said's wife and several children soon believed the Gospel and an *ekklesia* of Jesus emerged in the local community! Said's wife testified that she had seen a change in her husband's attitude toward her, which prompted her to also believe.

Meanwhile, Suleiman told Said that he also had secretly believed in Isa while he listened to the two men's discussions. He had begun going every weekend to his village home to share what he had learned from Said and Solomon with his two wives and children. As a result, they also believed in Christ. Emboldened by this, Suleiman shared the message of Isa with his uncle, a village chief. The uncle also believed and followed Isa. An *ekklesia* of Jesus also emerged in the village!

Solomon and Said began visiting this village household to strengthen the people in the faith and to lead a study of the Scriptures. Both Said and Suleiman today are committed to helping their Muslim families, friends, and colleagues understand and believe in the Gospel.

Questions

1. What do you think enabled the Gospel to move within these family networks?
2. What counsel would you give Solomon about how to sustain the movement long term?

New Testament Elements of Gospel Movements

God obviously has no limits on the ways he can make himself known in the world. His ways are far greater than anything we can imagine. Just a few examples in the New Testament demonstrate that his pioneering work in the nations is far beyond any human strategy. However, we find some helpful essential elements of Gospel movements in the New Testament.

New Testament Examples

Study the scriptures below with an eye on some of the ways that the Gospel spread in the first century.

Acts 2:5; 8:1-2; 11:19-21

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. . . . And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. . . . Now

those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 13:2-3, 44-49

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. . . . [In Pisidian Antioch] On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly:

“We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

Acts 14:1

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed.

Acts 16:13-14

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was

a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.

Acts 17:1-4

When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and

proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-8

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model

to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.

Questions

1. What do you learn from the historical events described in the scriptures above?
2. What factors led to the spread of the Gospel?
3. What are your views about the bold proclamation of the Gospel in comparison to the individual conversations that we see among the first-century pioneering apostles?

The Character of Local Believers

The most defining elements of the kingdom's first-century expansion were the character and relationships of believers. The early *ekklesias* sought to imitate Jesus in their relationships, work, families, and communities. The quality of how they lived was infectious. They were full of hope and selfless. When nonbelievers interacted with them, they experienced love and mercy and wholeness. Historian Rodney Stark stated that followers of Jesus constituted an intense community. They gave to the ancient Roman culture nothing less than their humanity. The scriptures below give us a portrait of how the local *ekklesias* were called to live.

Philippians 2:14-16

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars

in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

1 Peter 2:12

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the

appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Ephesians 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one

another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

John 17: 20-23

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we

are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Questions

1. How can pioneering missionaries develop local communities that represent the character of Jesus in every aspect of life?
2. What character traits would most stand out to the mainstream of your context if your pioneering team lived them out?
3. Why do you think the quality of our relationships (love, unity, forgiveness, etc.) is so important and powerful for the advance of the Gospel among nonbelievers?

Expansion through Physical Generations

In the New Testament, we also see the Gospel moving through *physical* generations of parents and children, as we discussed earlier in the section on families, households, and relational networks.

The accounts of the Gospel movements in the New Testament only record about seventy years. Paul indicated that the Gospel moved within his extended family before he came to faith. Several times we read that a man and his entire household (*oikos*) believed the Gospel. Once we are told that a woman and her *oikos* believed.

The Old Testament covers close to two thousand years, enough to see the good news of the kingdom being passed to succeeding physical generations. God expected succeeding physical generations to receive and live out the promise of the good news.

Therefore, pioneering teams should envision the Gospel moving through physical generations. This vision will influence how pioneering teams work as the Gospel takes root within the host culture. It will help to consider the cultural factors today in your context that could enable or hinder the good news to move through physical generations.

Pioneers with Generational Vision

Jesus and the apostles disciplined foundational believers with *generational* movements of the Gospel in mind. They intentionally worked to that end.

Matthew 13:31-33

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the

birds come and perch in its branches.” He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Mark 4:30-32

Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all

seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

John 4:35-38

Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the

reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of

severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves

report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and

to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Questions

1. What do these scriptures teach about the advance of the Gospel across generations? For pioneering teams, what should the “end in mind” be?
2. As we seek Gospel movements today, what implications do these scriptural accounts have for discipling foundational communities?

Gatekeepers and Gospel Movements

The New Testament documents several instances in which a pioneering team encountered someone who served as a gatekeeper to the broader society. Sometimes called a man or woman of peace, these people were used by God to give the pioneers initial access into a relational and family network. They served as seeds for a long-term movement of the Gospel.

Matthew 10:11-14

Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest

on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.

Acts 10:19-27, 44-48

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”

Peter went down and said to the men,

“I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?” The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have

to say.” Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.” While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people . . .

Acts 16:12-15

From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from

. . . While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Questions

1. What are the characteristics of the gatekeepers described above, and how can they serve as catalysts for the Gospel?
 2. What implications do they have for pioneering?
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CHAPTER 5

The Nature of *Ekklesia*

A generational Gospel movement requires a community of believers who labor together throughout life as fruitful insiders with a generational impact. Gospel movements don't occur individualistically. Thus, establishing, equipping, and encouraging communities of local believers is a primary task of a pioneering missionary.

In this study, we will look at the essence of *ekklesia* and the implications for pioneering teams as they raise foundational communities in cross-cultural contexts.

Many terms are used to describe these communities, including “transformed communities” or “missional communities.” In the New Testament, they are referred to as *ekklesia*, which is often translated as *church*. The word has two root meanings, namely *ek* (out of) and *klesis* (a calling) or *kaleo* (to call).

In the Greco-Roman world, *ekklesia* was used for a legally convened assembly called to discuss public issues. An *ekklesia* was a political gathering (Acts 19:32, 39), and a term used by Jesus and the apostles to describe the people God called out for himself. Just as the Romans called people out of their homes and summoned them to an assembly, Jesus called his people out of the world to himself and to one another.

Various terms are used in the New Testament to describe the people of God.

John 10:27

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 1:12

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God . . .

John 13:34-35

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Acts 9:32

As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda.

Acts 9:2

...and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way,

whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Acts 9:31

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the

fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Acts 8:1-3

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly

men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church.

Romans 16:4-5

They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles [ethnon, non-Jewish ethnic groups] are

grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Questions

1. How do the diverse descriptions of God's people shape your thinking of *ekklesia*?
2. In your ministry context, and in light of what the Scriptures state about our purpose in the world, what shape and form should *ekklesia* present to the surrounding culture?

Jesus and *Ekklesia*

There are only two instances in the gospels where Jesus used the word *ekklesia*. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised he would build his *ekklesia*, presumably as the apostles made disciples (Matthew 28:19). Then, in Matthew 18:17, Jesus gave directions for how his *ekklesia* would treat the unrepentant sinner. In the scriptures below, study how Jesus and the apostles generally thought about *ekklesia*, the people of God.

John 17:6-10, 25-26

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they

have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you

gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come

John 14:15-21

If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see

John 15:4-5

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the

John 13:12-15, 34-35

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you

John 17:15-19

My prayer is not that you take them out of

to me through them. . . . Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. . . . “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

the world but that you protect them from

the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent

me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

John 15:18-21

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than

his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.

Ephesians 1:3-10

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we

have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

Questions

1. In what ways is an *ekklesia* different from a normal group of friends? What factors make the *ekklesia* unique in the world?
 2. In what ways were they called to a relationship with one another?
 3. In what ways were they called to relate to the lost world?
-

Forms of *Ekklesia*

The Scriptures are full of insights about what some call “form and function.” When thinking about form and function, consider a car. The basic function of a car is to transport people from place to place, but a car can have many forms (engine size, shape, color, etc.) to meet specific needs.

In the case of an *ekklesia*, a primary function is to advance the Gospel deeper into a culture, to be in the world for the sake of the lost (John 17). Thus, certain forms of *ekklesia* might help or hinder that function within each cultural context. So, in this section, we look more closely at what is revealed about the generational advance of the Gospel in the Old and New Testaments.

Historically, the form of an *ekklesia* was essentially inseparable from a family and household. Following Jesus as a disciple and as a community occurred within the normal family and relational network structure. Before we study the Scriptures, an overview of families and relational networks will provide a helpful framework.

Families and Relational Networks in the Old Testament

The work of God often occurs within families and households. The Old Testament begins and ends with family. Family was the first social unit that God designed. Family appears at the end of the Old Testament when Malachi spoke about the prophet who would turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, thereby preventing the Lord from striking the land with destruction.

In the Old Testament, the family is presented as the primary vehicle for God’s purposes.

God promised Abraham that through him all families of the earth would be blessed. God also said that Abraham would teach his household, which was a large network beyond the nuclear family, to keep the way of the Lord and walk justly. Some servants in his household, including Eleazar and Hagar,

became believers. The good news of the kingdom was passed to succeeding generations within his relational network, including to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Families were a key part of the Israelite identity and culture. God commanded fathers to teach their children the Word of God. Names identified which family and clan each person came from. Newborn sons were circumcised as a sign of belonging in the community. Proper records were kept of family lineages and genealogies. Family land and inheritances could not be permanently sold.

In some instances, non-Israelite families were grafted into the household of faith. Rahab, the harlot, and her household were saved from destruction because she had given friendly welcome to the spies. The widow of Zarephath was saved from famine together with her only son when the Lord sent the prophet Elijah to her. God used Elijah to raise this son from the dead, an act for which the widow expressed her faith in the God of Elijah.

Families, Relational Networks, and the Ministry of Jesus

The New Testament documents the Gospel's advance within families, households, and relational networks. Jesus used household and relational networks as a primary vehicle for the expansion of the Gospel among the Jews. Early in his ministry, Jesus called to himself two sets of brothers (John and James; Peter and Andrew) and some friends (Philip and Nathaniel). After Jesus called Peter and his fellow fishermen, he went to Peter's home where he healed Peter's mother-in-law. Matthew took Jesus to his home, where he hosted a feast for Jesus. In attendance were his tax-collecting friends. Jesus brought the Gospel to a widow in Nain, whose only son had died, when he raised the son from the dead before a large crowd.

The official in Capernaum and his household believed after his son was healed by the words of Jesus. Jesus visited the home of another reviled tax collector, Zacchaeus, and brought salvation to his household, calling Zacchaeus a "son of Abraham." Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were siblings whom Jesus loved and who opened their home to him. Before another large crowd, this time

in Bethany, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, thereby comforting Martha and Mary. Jesus was often a guest in someone's home, including the home of Simon the Pharisee.

Jesus' own brothers did not initially believe in him, but at least James and Jude became believers. His mother, Mary, showed glimpses of her faith when he turned water into wine and when he appeared among believers gathered for prayer after his ascension.

The Oikos: Families and Relational Networks in the First Century

As the church expanded into the Greco-Roman world, the household was a primary vehicle for the Gospel's mobility. The message tended to flow within an *oikos*, and then from household to household, reaching the whole social spectrum and across multiple generations.

Contemporary Families and Relational Networks

All over the world, family structures and roles have been affected by globalization, industrialization, and urbanization. How does the culture where you serve define a family and household? Consider the following factors as you think about your context.

Child Rearing. In many cultures, broader family networks that include grandparents, aunts, and uncles still perform important functions, such as child rearing, inheritance, and family rites. Polygamous marriages are also acceptable in these cultures. How are factors such as child rearing, inheritance, and family rites practiced in the culture to which God has called you?

Power Structures. Some cultures have hierarchical systems, and some are egalitarian. In some contexts, the younger tend to defer to the older. In others, young people readily question the authority of parents and the elderly. How do power structures affect the family networks in the context in which you are serving?

Communal vs. Individual. Some cultures are more communal and others more individualistic. How does each cultural tendency affect the nature of relational and family networks where you work?

Location and Dispersion. Geographic proximity affects how ideas flow in society. In affluent families, young people are able to move farther away from parents and grandparents for work and studies. Wealthy individuals may not continue to live in multi-generational households. What role does geographic proximity play in the families where you serve?

How the Gospel Moved through Household *Ekklesias*

In the previous section, we focused on how the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom spread into cultures and across generations. Here we look more closely at the way the family/household form of *ekklesia* enabled the Gospel to move naturally into a culture, across the generations, and into the nations.

Donald McGilchrist said this: “In expanding the Gospel, apostles related with [people in] households. The household became the basic setting of *ekklesia*. The *oikis* [leader] then easily became the elder (*presbuteros*) or the *episkopos* (supervisor, also translated as overseer). These local leaders were to continue to run their homes with Christ-like relationships.”

The Scriptures reveal how God uses *ekklesias* in the form of families and relational networks as primary vehicles for movements of the Gospel.

Genesis 9:7

As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”

Genesis 17:1-8

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am

God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my

covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from

Genesis 18:19

For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing

Deuteronomy 4:9-10

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and

Luke 1:17

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children

you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.

before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, “Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.”

when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

John 4:52-53

When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” Then the father realized

that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.

Acts 11:13-14

He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, “Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He

will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.”

Acts 16:32-34

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were

baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

Acts 21:4-6

We sought out the disciples there and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All

of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray. After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home.

Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“so that it may go well

with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Philippians 4:2-3

Greet all God’s people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. All God’s people here send you

greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.

1 Timothy 3:2-4, 14-15

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner

worthy of full respect. . . . Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Questions

1. What elements of families and households in biblical times made them an excellent vehicle for advancing the Gospel into a culture and across generations (movements of the Gospel)? What about in your cultural context today?
2. As you think about how to proceed in your pioneering missions work, what ideas might help you work among families and households?
3. Do you agree that a family and/or household can be a legitimate, biblical *ekklesia*? If so, what needs to be in place and how can you equip them to reach more broadly into the culture?

Ekklesia and Family: A Case Study

(Names have been changed.) Teresia has known Fatma and her family for more than fifteen years. They first met when Fatma, a Muslim, came to the center that Teresia set up to care for poor families in the neighborhood. Fatma was in an abusive marriage and her oldest son was living on the streets, addicted to drugs and alcohol. The second son was on the verge of joining him. Fatma had been suffering from TB, hypertension, heart problems, and depression.

These struggles led Fatma to pursue help from Teresia after she heard from

neighbors about the center. In response, Teresia invited Fatma to participate in the center's support for mothers and children, including tuition assistance for elementary and high school students. She brought two of her youngest children, Jihan (daughter) and Hussein, to take part in the center's activities, which included life skills and Bible teaching.

Initially, Teresia decided to adopt Jihan so she could attend a local school. Later, she also adopted Hussein. Teresia and her team were also called to address spiritual and physical infirmities afflicting Fatma's family, some of which were tragic, including the deaths of Fatma's oldest sons.

Fatma was deeply touched by the love she received. She declared that Jihan and Hussein belonged to Teresia, and that she wanted them to follow God just like Teresia!

God in his grace transformed her family. She and her two surviving children, Jihan and Hussein, became believers. They are now growing in the faith and continuing their education; one finished high school in the US and the other graduated from a local university as a biomedical engineer. And Fatma's health is better. They all have a burden to see more families from their poor neighborhood transformed!

Questions

1. What enabled the good news to flow in this family? What did it cost Teresia and her team?
 2. What implications does this story have on the way you think about advancing the Gospel in your context, especially among relationally and emotionally broken people?
-

Threats to *Ekklesia*

In the scriptures below, we see that Paul and John spoke and wrote forcefully about potential threats to the local *ekklesias*. (Other passages in the New Testament speak about how the *ekklesias* faced persecutions, economic hardships, and cultural opposition.)

Acts 20:27-32

For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to

draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Galatians 1:6-7

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel

at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 3:1-5

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really

was in vain? So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

Galatians 5:1-4

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I

declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on

themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories.

1 John 4:1

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Questions

1. In his talk with the elders of Ephesus and in his letter to the Galatians, what was Paul most concerned about? Why?
 2. How did Paul counsel them to protect against dangers to the *ekklesia*?
 3. As a pioneering missionary, how do these passages (and others) influence the way you see your long-term relationship with the people you serve?
 4. Why do you think that Peter and John were so concerned about deception and false prophets as primary threats to the *ekklesia*?
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CHAPTER 6

Developing Laborers and Leaders

Foundational generations of believers should increasingly reflect the nature and character of Jesus. Otherwise, our message won't match our lives.

History is full of people who claimed to be Christians but whose lives did not reflect the nature of Jesus. As Jim Petersen stated, "There were many people in church history who were just barbarians carrying crosses." Paul, in Romans 2:17-24, addresses the hypocrisy of the Jews "who boast about the law" but "who dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'"

So, as imperfect humans, this implies a vital need to grow and change, to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit to access our hearts, to help us become more and more like Jesus. We need the "fruits of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23) to become increasingly evident in our lives, which in turn can impact the people with whom we relate.

We need foundational generations of believers who are committed to imitating Christ, people who are being transformed more and more into his likeness. Thus, pioneering missionaries need a biblical understanding of how to help the people they serve to grow in Christ throughout their lives.

The Dynamics of Spiritual Transformation

We start this section with a study of spiritual transformation based on Jim Petersen's book *Church Without Walls* (second edition, 2018, GCN Press). Jim identified six sequential factors in the Scriptures that help us progress toward Christlikeness.

Life Experiences

Everyday life is our schoolroom. Change does not occur in a vacuum. Godliness is not gained on a mountaintop, but in relationship with others and experiences in the world.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our

ability to endure... But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Romans 5:3-5

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's

love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

The Scriptures

We can either be trained by the experiences of life, or they can leave us bruised and bewildered. If we did not have the Scriptures, we would have a much harder time making sense of our experiences.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

John 3:20-21

Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever

lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

James 1:23-25

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and

spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Humility

There can be no deliverance without humility. That is because we cannot really be honest without it. Humility brings us out into the open, before God and others. And once we are there, we can be healed. In fact, humility leads away from self-help methods. Recognizing we need help from God, the Holy Spirit has access to our hearts.

James 1:21

Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Psalm 32:3-5

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat

of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Isaiah 66:2

This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the one who divides Christ's way from all other ways. Almost any religion or philosophy will help bring order, or structure, into a person's life. But the Holy Spirit brings life itself.

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those

who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Philippians 2:13

"... for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Self-Control Born of the Spirit

As we gain insights into our needs through the Scriptures, and as we respond with humility, the Holy Spirit empowers us to act differently the next time the old patterns come around. It is a self-control born of the Spirit. We are not condemned to spend our lives in a losing struggle against our old behaviors.

John 8:34, 36

Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. . . . If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

2 Timothy 1:7

. . . for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

One Another

The Scriptures describe communities of believers who have an accepting environment, where sins could be shared and in which people encouraged each other. Honesty and mutual spiritual support heal. We need to place spiritual transformation in a context of true community.

Hebrews 3:13

But encourage one another daily . . . so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

Questions

1. What do you think it means for Christ to be “formed” in someone?
 2. Within the context of the culture where you serve, how can the elements of spiritual transformation shown above be implemented? What barriers might you encounter and how can they be overcome?
 3. What is your role in the process of helping someone grow in Christ?
-

The Role of the Spiritual Parent

Spiritual parenting involves helping young believers grow in the knowledge of Jesus and his grace as Christ is being formed in them.

As Paul wrote in Colossians 1:28-29, “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” (See also 1 Peter 2:1 and Galatians 4:19.)

Spiritual parenting is often referred to as *discipling*. A disciple is an apprentice of Jesus. The person imitates the way Jesus lived and related. The parent may be ahead of the young believer, but the parent also needs to be growing in Christ. It is a lifelong journey.

The Aim of Spiritual Parenting

Spiritual transformation is not just about “sin management.” It is about seeing our *identity* in Christ increasingly expressed in the way we live. We are in Christ and one with him. We are deemed righteous by him through faith. God is our Father and we are his children. We are his beloved. This identity should lead us to live in alignment with who we are in Jesus.

The following scriptures provide the foundation of God’s grace and our identity in him. From this secure foundation of grace, people can grow in Christlikeness.

2 Corinthians 5:17, 21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through

whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Romans 8:1, 15

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus . . . The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again;

rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba*, Father.”

Romans 9:25

As he says in Hosea: “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one . . .”

Ephesians 5:8

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.

Questions

1. Based on these passages, what might happen if a person tried to grow in Christ without being certain of God’s grace?
 2. Why is it important for new believers to understand that God is their Father, that they have received a spirit of sonship?
-

Jesus as Lord

Jesus is also our Lord. Our identity in him involves *allowing* him to lead us. We respond to our identity in him through Spirit-empowered obedience. Christ is at the center of every aspect of life: time, money, relationships, work, etc. The next set of scriptures refer to his lordship in our lives.

Luke 9:23

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

John 13:13-14

You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed

your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in

the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 5:22-26

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us

keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Ephesians 4:22-24

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the

attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Questions

1. What would be the outcome if a person identified as a believer but did not see Jesus as Lord?
2. What would you tell a person who thought that following Christ as Lord required perfect obedience?
3. How would you help a new believer understand what it means to “take up the cross daily” and to “keep in step with the Spirit”?

Our Relationship with Jesus

Many Christians equate discipleship with the spiritual disciplines (prayer, reading scripture, memorizing scripture, meditation, etc.). These are valuable practices, but discipleship is much deeper. Discipleship is about inward transformation, becoming like Jesus through a relationship with him and his people. As we come to him, the Holy Spirit brings about the “fruits of the Spirit.”

As Dallas Willard stated, “Spiritual formation in the tradition of Jesus Christ is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being formed (really transformed) in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ.”

Therefore, the focus should not be on the disciplines (habits, practices), but on becoming increasingly like him through his work in us. If we stray from that central truth, we can easily become too reliant on methods, which can become legalism or a self-help program. Therefore, we should encourage new believers to understand the spiritual disciplines as an expression of the grace already given to us, not as a requirement to be accepted by God.

The passages below display what Jesus promised would occur—beyond our salvation and a new identity—as we come to him in humility and live with him.

Matthew 11:28-29

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for

I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

John 7:37-39

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living

water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

John 4:10-14

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. . . .

Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

John 15:5

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear

much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

1 Corinthians 1:5-7

For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written

not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Galatians 3:1-5

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you

experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But

he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those

who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Ephesians 3:16

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that

you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Questions

1. Based on what you see in the Scriptures above, what does a person need to do in order to be inwardly transformed by God?
2. How do these passages influence your view of disciple-making and establishing a foundational generation?

Avoiding Legalism: A Case Study

A young couple had recently arrived in a new culture to pioneer a ministry in a Muslim context. They had two children under age three, which made it difficult to manage the home. They were also attending language school, which added to the challenges.

Then a young, single woman joined the team. As she started language school, she struggled to adjust to the heat, strange foods, and customs.

Everyone on the team knew that they should be reading the Scriptures, meditating, praying, etc. But they struggled to find the time and energy. Soon, the wife began to feel like she had lost the “music” in her heart (Ephesians 5:19). She felt like she was just trying to make it through each day. Then, heaping even more burdens on her, someone talked about raising foundational generations! Everything seemed stressful.

Questions

1. What do you think happened to her joy?
 2. How might you encourage new believers to pursue spiritual disciplines without leading them into legalism or religious self-help methods?
-

The Four Contributions

In addition to helping believers grow in Christlikeness, we as spiritual parents should be cognizant of the capacities that a foundational generation will need to advance the Gospel into future generations. As spiritual parents, we can help people grow in these ministry capacities. In Navigator circles, we call these capacities the “four contributions.” They are, in fact, types of leadership that appear in the Scriptures. We mentioned them briefly earlier in the study.

The four contributions are not leadership positions or titles; they are leadership functions. For example, Erastus was the treasurer of Corinth (his position and title). He earned his income by conventional means. But what was his contribution to the advance of the Gospel? Timothy left his hometown to accompany Paul in his travels. He was primarily, but not exclusively, supported by gift income. But what was Timothy’s contribution (or contributions) to the advance of the Gospel?

Identifying and understanding each of the four contributions below can help us determine how to develop these capacities in a foundational generation.

Pioneering teams are laborers and leaders who move into new contexts to plant the Gospel and to lay the foundations of a generational ministry.

Local laborers are “insiders” who serve within local relational networks in ways that are integrated into normal work and family life.

Local leaders are people who care for, lead, and build community among laborers in a local context.

Mobile alongsiders are leaders who travel to support all three functions above.

(You can watch a short film about “The Four Contributions” at this link: vimeo.com/116715363.)

The Four Contributions in Thessalonica

The first-century work in Thessalonica provides a good view of the four contributions. In all of 1 Thessalonians, we see that Paul, Silas, and Timothy came to Thessalonica as pioneers. They were committed to planting the Gospel among local people. Later, believers began to serve as local laborers, as insiders in their own contexts. When Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians was written, there were already local leaders to whom Paul referred as "those who work hard among you and are over you in the Lord."

Paul also referred to Timothy's work to "strengthen and encourage" them in the faith. Timothy's contribution was to provide leadership as a mobile alongsider. We know that Paul and Timothy (and others such as Titus and Tychicus) exercised a mobile alongsider function to support the local ministries that had been planted.

Using your Bible, study the following passages while looking for the contributions that individuals made.

Acts 17:1-9 (In Thessalonica)

Acts 16:11-40 (In Philippi)

Acts 19 to 20:13-38 (In Ephesus)

Ephesians (In Ephesus)

1 and 2 Timothy (In Ephesus)

Questions

1. How did these contributions relate to and complement each other?
 2. How might these insights inform and clarify your role as a pioneering missionary?
-

The Four Contributions: A Case Study

Mary and Philip had been serving for ten years in Southland, pioneering a ministry among the indigenous people. They loved the people, served them, and openly shared their faith in ways that the local people could understand. They saw many young people come to faith.

However, as the young people entered their professions, got married, and had children, they met less frequently with Mary and Philip, and they didn't know each other very well. Community became weaker.

Mary and Philip eventually decided to return to their sending country so their children could begin college.

Questions

1. Imagine that you were going to Southland as a cross-cultural missionary to replace Mary and Philip. In light of the four contributions, what role (or roles) would you need to develop in the local group of believers?
 2. How would you go about helping to develop these contributions among the people you are serving?
-

CHAPTER 7

Transitioning to Local Leadership

Transferring leadership demands more than just passing ministry functions and titles to nationals. This is especially true in our Navigator work, which is based on deep relationships, not positions. Our roles are not always easily transferred, nor can the people we serve be abandoned.

However, at some point, stewardship of a growing work usually needs to be transferred to local leadership. This includes handing over decisions, finances, forms of ministry, and spiritual authority. Moreover, something needs to happen in the hearts of emerging local leaders that prompts them to advance the Gospel among their own people. But how does one get there? And what do the Scriptures reveal about the importance of transferring leadership to local leaders?

As we begin to think about these questions, we offer a case study.

Transferring Leadership: A Case Study

Teams from four nationalities started a Navigator work in a large East Asian city. Each team used its own initiatives, philosophies, and approaches. They were independent of one another due to security realities. The expats (from four different countries) knew about the other initiatives, but no one mentioned The Navigators because locals were extremely sensitive to outside religious organizations.

As these fledgling efforts took root, challenges emerged. Mutual respect existed among the expats, but acceptance of other ministry approaches was shallow. It became difficult for people serving in diverse initiatives to work together or even to meet each other. In addition, expat workers found it hard to “let go” of “their” people. The leaders often thought that those they had reached were still too young in the faith and not ready to assume leadership. As a result, it became hard to cultivate ministry trust, unity, and cooperation between different Navigator expressions. These issues were not limited to the work in the city, but also occurred in other neighboring cities.

In order to unify and synergize the nationwide work, a common identity and direction had to be formed by the locals. They had to know that the work was shaped by them, not by the expats.

A weekend study of 1 Peter was held with some influential nationals. Their home-grown sense of calling accelerated from that time forward.

To bring alignment to the diverse expressions, an *oikos* (household) ministry model that made sense to the locals was established. Various ministry approaches could apply this model. Regular meetings occurred between local leaders who were coached by a rotation of expats. These local leaders became the city leadership team and began to pray together.

Naturally, locals began serving together in citywide events. Overseas trips exposed key local leaders to other ministries in the region, which strengthened camaraderie and team unity. Throughout this time, the locals were encouraged to assume stewardship of this growing work.

From the city team, potential local leaders naturally emerged and developed. Through a consultative approach, a team leader and team were appointed in 2016. Today, the citywide ministry continues to be coached, mentored, and encouraged by expat workers. The expats’ role is to help locals accomplish the Navigator Calling in their city. The citywide work is led by a committed team of locals who trace their spiritual heritage to diverse, multinational starting points within the city.

Questions

1. What elements stand out to you as most important in this case study in the transition to local leadership?
2. What factors could have derailed the process?
3. How did the role of the expats evolve over time?

Jesus and Paul: Efforts to Transfer Leadership

Jesus and Paul actively worked to equip local leaders and then pass leadership to them. Their efforts give us insights into how to proceed today.

John 16:7

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

John 14:12

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

John 17:6-8, 15-19

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew

with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. . . . My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent

me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that

Acts 20:17-21, 27-28, and 32

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks

they too may be truly sanctified.

that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. . . . For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. . . . Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

1 Timothy 3:1-13

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into

the devil’s trap. In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Titus 1:5-9

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not

given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Questions

1. Looking at the examples of Jesus and Paul, why did they work to transition leadership?
 2. What concerns did Jesus and Paul have about future leaders, and how did they handle those concerns?
 3. In the scriptures above, what qualifications did Paul establish for overseers, elders, and deacons?
 4. Do you think local leaders should be appointed, or do they naturally emerge within an *ekklesia* by demonstrations of character and service?
 5. In what ways will this brief study on leader transition shape your pioneering work now? Are there cultural notions of leadership that might influence your long-term transition efforts?
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The Post-Transition Role of Pioneering Missionaries

When we consider the post-transition role of pioneers, there are at least four possible scenarios to avoid:

- Staying and maintaining control
- Staying and publicly surrendering control while maintaining “back-door” control through relational channels
- Leaving, but maintaining *control* from a distance
- Leaving and cutting off relationships (abandoning the locals)

Questions

1. How would each of the scenarios above affect the advance of the Gospel among the locals?
2. What does it look like for someone to be led by those they used to lead? What elements are important for such a thing to happen well? What obstacles can prevent it from happening?
3. What are some possible risks of transitioning to local leadership too soon? What are the risks of transitioning to local leadership too late?
4. What does it mean for a pioneering leader to “leave?”

A Case Study: When Should a Pioneering Team Leave?

A pioneering team had worked for about ten years in a mostly secular, postmodern context to establish a foundational generation of new leaders in two large cities. God blessed their pioneering efforts, giving them six or seven couples who, as emerging local leaders, became firmly grounded in the Scriptures and in their walks with God.

As the new generation of leaders matured, a number of regional leaders suggested that it might be time for the pioneering team to transfer the

responsibility for the local work to the emerging leaders. The regional leaders believed that the emerging local leaders needed space to grow and to better advance the Gospel into the local culture. If the pioneering team stayed, they said, the local emerging leaders might never have the opportunity to develop. Everything would remain too centralized around the pioneering team.

However, the pioneering team, upon prayerfully considering these suggestions, felt concerned that the local emerging leaders were not yet able to stand on their own. The local emerging leaders had strong relationships with God, but there were minor relational conflicts between them. In addition, the local emerging leaders were busy professionals with children. All were struggling to stay afloat in a difficult economy.

For these reasons, the pioneering team told the regional leaders that leaving would put too many burdens on the local emerging leaders, in terms of time and finances, to keep the Gospel moving forward.

Questions

1. If you were part of the pioneering team in this situation, what would you have decided to do? What scriptures would guide your decision?
 2. What would be the best approach, in your opinion, for making this decision with all the parties involved?
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Epilogue

We conclude this study with some thoughts from Mike Treneer, a former international president of The Navigators. Mike pointed out several crucial factors for pioneering leaders who are transferring leadership to a new generation.

Point People to the Father

Jesus lived and ministered among lost people. He disciplined them in depth. Then, after three years of ministry together he sent them into the world to repeat the process. His prayer in John 17 reveals his intentional, generational strategy. "I have revealed you [his Father] to those whom you gave me out of the world."

Jesus was intentional about revealing the Father to them. He did this by constantly teaching them, including through his parables, about the Father. And, as John 1:14 makes clear, he revealed the Father to them by the way he lived among them. As he said in John 12:49-50, "I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father told me to say."

If this emphasis was so important to Jesus, then we must make sure that what we are leading from the Scriptures and not from some human concoction, however well-intentioned.

Prayer

We must also pray for the next generation of leaders. Jesus said, “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me . . .” And Luke 5:16 tells us that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Paul’s letters are full of his prayers for those he discipled.

This prayer is vital for the spiritual protection of those we serve and develop. In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus said, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you all as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

The hostility of the world into which we are sent requires of us a commitment to “protect” those we disciple, not by extracting them from the world, but by praying defensively for them and by building community so that if one falls his friend can help him up (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

Send Them into the World

Jesus prayed this in John 17: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” He sent his disciples as carriers of his love and his message into the lost and broken world of Galilee, with a vision for Judea and Samaria, and ultimately to the ends of the earth.

We too should prepare and send those we disciple into a lost world. As the Navigator Core states, we “advance the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom into the nations through spiritual generations of laborers living and discipling among the lost” . . . until we see “workers for the kingdom next door to everywhere.”

Jesus let his disciples know that his investments in them had a generational purpose beyond just them. “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.” Jesus’ prayer looks forward to the generational impact of their ministry. They were not an end in themselves, they were the beginning, the foundational generation of a Gospel movement that continues to ripple out to this day.

Everything Is Relational

“That the love you have for me may be in them.” Jesus’ prayer in John 17 reveals not just a generational vision but a relational vision. It is a prayer for a movement characterized by love and unity. Our *love*, he said, would convince those to whom we are sent that God did indeed send his Son to be the savior of the world.
