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**The Role of Education
in Mobilization**

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hello@missionarymobilization.org

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SENIOR EDITOR

David P. Jacob

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Gil Rodriguez

David Wilson

Lorene Wilson

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Zach Crowe

JOURNAL DESIGNER

Timothy Jacobson

COPY EDITOR

Cameron Hirst

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The Story of the *Missionary Mobilization Journal*

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Missionary Mobilization Journal*. My hope and prayer is that this resource encourages and equips you to mobilize more missionaries. Published each January and July, we aim to produce practical and theoretical articles related to missions mobilization within the context of the missionary, church, agency, and academy. Though not an academic, peer-reviewed journal, our goal is to provide reputable content such as best practices, trends and issues, and other concepts relevant to missions mobilization. Thanks to our ministry partners, Assemblies of God World Missions and Trinity Bible College and Graduate School, we're able to provide the journal free of charge in digital format.

Someone once told me that the best teachers are the best learners. And that's why, for our first issue, we've chosen to focus on the topic of education and mobilization. Personally, my life has been changed in the classroom, by books, by teachers, and by my fellow learners. Education is not separate from spiritual growth. In fact, education done well is discipleship. It is deeply spiritual. So let's journey together to do all we can as mobilizers to learn and grow closer to Jesus.

David and Lorene Wilson understand the value of intentional education and have written our first article on, "Intentional Education for Missionary Mobilization Outcomes." They ask the question, "What would it look like if every local church took the Great Commission mandate seriously and fully engaged the body of Christ in mobilizing the next generation of missionaries?" Dr. Jolene Erlacher then presents ways to mobilize Gen Z in her article, "How to Engage and Educate Generation Z for Missions Mobilization." We've also included an article that first appeared as a chapter in *Mission in Motion* by Jay Matenga and Malcolm Gold. They investigate how God often uses education to mobilize believers to the field. Finally, we've transcribed a lecture given by Dr. Paul Alexander on the importance of higher education for mobilizers.

Please feel free to print and share this journal with those on your team and other missions advocates. Those interested in receiving future issues can visit our website to subscribe: <https://www.missionarymobilization.org/journal>.

Together for His Kingdom,



Rev. David P. Jacob, PhD. (Cand.)

Senior Editor

Founder and Director, Center for Missionary Mobilization and Retention

Since 2008, David P. Jacob has been an Assemblies of God missionary to a sensitive country in Northern Asia. He currently serves as the missionary in residence and chair of the Intercultural Studies department at Trinity Bible College and Graduate School in Ellendale, ND. David is the author of *It's Your Call: To a Missional or Missionary Life*, has a Master of Arts degree in Missional Leadership, and is currently an Intercultural Studies PhD candidate. He can be reached at: djacob@trinitybiblecollege.edu.



Intentional Education for Missionary Mobilization Outcomes

David and Lorene Wilson

Why do many local churches struggle with engaging in the Great Commission? Why are we not seeing more people being called out to go to the nations? Perhaps our consumer and spectator mentality in the church may be a critical factor.

Consider this: Recently, a pastor in church on Sunday morning asked the question, “How many of you know what was special about the ‘sons of Issachar?’” Right away, a few hands went up. They were people who had previously taken the time to study this little-known tribal band of people in an obscure portion of our Scriptures. But the pastor waited about 15-20 seconds, and another group of hands went up almost in unison. They were those who typed in a query of a search engine on their mobile device and got a quick answer, (along with the corrected spelling of the name and biblical reference - I Chronicles 12:32) *“Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do...”*

Both of these groups of people had the answer to the pastor’s question. Both had access to information and were able to fill in the blank in under a minute. One group was educated, and the other group had a work-around knowledge. Many pastors and ministry leaders have bemoaned the growing biblical illiteracy in our churches, but the more access we have to a work-around knowledge, the larger the gap will continue.

Now, let’s consider a third group – the rest of the people in the church who did not bother to search the Scriptures (either the printed version, the memorized version, or the Google version), but simply waited for the pastor to fill their minds with the knowledge about this amazing group of people in the Old Testament. It seems like the Lord left us some inspiration in this passage that will hopefully lead us to seek something more for use in our day and time. Perhaps in addition to our prayers for the Lord to send workers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38 and Luke 10:2), we should also be praying for the Lord to raise up men and women who understand the times - the “People of Issachar” within our local congregations, *to help the church with knowledge of what God’s people should be doing.*

Our mandate as the Church is mobilizing disciples of Jesus to the nations, so that we can make disciples from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9). We know from the prophecy, as foretold in the book of Revelation, that this will happen one day. Scholars can debate whether we can accelerate that day or not, but for us in the church, we have a clear directive for the task that is ahead of us. We are to go, to make disciples and baptize them, to teach them to obey everything He has commanded us to do. Our purpose is to proclaim His gospel and to send His witnesses to all nations in all the world, even to the ends of the earth, until the end of the age (John 20:21, Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:8).¹

The need for simplicity is paramount since we are surrounded by a very complex world, so the Apostle Paul provided us with a simple structure in Ephesians 4 that may help our local churches reach their full potential as a Great Commission sending church:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.²

¹ For the chronological sequence of these 5 Great Commission passages, see Marvin J. Newell, *Commissioned: What God Wants You to Know as You Go* (Bloomington, MN: ChurchSmart Resources, 2010).

² Ephesians 4:11-14, ESV.

Each of these offices within the church requires different types of training. A **teacher**, for example, would do well to study adult learning styles and to know how he/she has been gifted by the Lord for this specific task in *equipping the saints for the work of ministry*. Likewise, a **shepherd** would do well to learn strategies in leadership and caregiving, so that he/she can fully participate in *equipping the saints for the work of ministry*. In the same fashion, the **apostle** (*one who is sent out with authority to accomplish a task*), would do well to learn from a mentor to discover cross-cultural outreach methods so that they can *equip the saints for the work of ministry*.

There seems to be a simplicity within Scripture that we often make more complicated by over-thinking the process. We have all heard that discipleship is best caught, not just taught. So, a disciple's education within the context of a church is more than what a teacher can provide. It requires an "all-hands-on-deck" mentality. Everyone is needed in the Great Commission enterprise of the local church, using all the Lord's gifts with a focused and intentional outcome in mind. We are to be engaged in sending fully-equipped saints across the street and around the world, until the end of the age.

A disciple's education within the context of a church is more than what a teacher can provide. It requires an "all-hands-on-deck" mentality.

Here are some fun facts to consider as we seek to apply ancient wisdom to our modern context.

1. The word "missionary" does not appear in the Bible.
2. The word "discipleship" does not appear in the Bible.
3. Jesus only mentions the word "church" twice (Matthew 16:18 and 18:17).
4. The first Christian church building was built between 293 and 303 in Aqaba, Jordan.
5. The word "disciple" only appears in the Gospels and Book of Acts - not in any of the Epistles.
6. The Gutenberg Bible was first printed in 1455, and the King James Version translated the Scriptures into common language in 1611.

Differences in the Church Model: Then and Now

With these facts in mind, let us think through what Jesus may have had in mind as He gave his followers (the Church) the Great Commission... was it something like this?

We take our family to a church building on Sunday morning for 1-3 hours every week. While we are there, we say "hello" to friends and neighbors while sipping hot coffee before we go take our seats when the music starts. People on stage draw our attention to a specific passage of printed Scriptures in our hands, and we all follow along in the reading. We are taught about that passage by a paid teacher with appropriate credentials, and are encouraged to go out and practice what was just taught in our community. The following Sunday, we do the same thing all over again. And the next Sunday, and the next Sunday, and the next.

This scenario would have been so foreign to the followers of Jesus' day, yet it is very common for us today. What did "church" look like for the first 300 years after Jesus, when there was no building to collect the saints? How were non-literate Christians disciplined for 1,600 years before they could "spend time in the Word" on their own? At what point does a convert become a disciple, and then when does a disciple become one of the officers of the church?

The concepts of meeting in church buildings, providing systematic discipleship education and training, as well as sending missionaries through a process, are all part of our modern expression of the Great Commission. It has not always been practiced this way, and it will likely not always be this way in the future, but this is where we are today. We need to understand the times, just like the sons of Issachar, but not just for the sake of knowledge, but to help the church with *knowledge of what God's people should be doing*.

A Caution Against “Knowledge Addiction” in Missions Education

True discipleship education is not just acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge. It must be more than a program or class. One of the primary culprits of missions education in the church is called, “Knowledge Addiction.”

Irving Biederman, professor of Neuroscience at the University of Southern California describes the feeling we all get when we grasp a new concept as, “a click... a biochemical cascade that rewards the brain with a shot of natural opium-like substances.”³ Have you ever felt that sensation when you acquire a new insight, or a new skill, and you feel a tingling sensation or a warmth deep-down inside? It is a very good feeling and we want to repeat it over and over again. The problem is that we can become addicted to that need to gain more and more knowledge, until it becomes a substitute for not using the knowledge we already have to do something productive. Education then becomes the end goal, and not a means to a productive end. Just like in the opening illustration of a church full of people waiting to hear the pastor tell them what was special about the “sons of Issachar.” Unlike those who had studied, or those who looked up the information, our churches are filled with people who sit back passively and wait for someone (a professional teacher) to feed them with the addictive substance that their brains are craving, but their bodies refuse to act upon.

The problem is that we can become addicted to that need to gain more and more knowledge, until it becomes a substitute for not using the knowledge we already have to do something productive.

Therefore, the teacher and the shepherd from Ephesians 4 need to work together to develop a proactive and intentional strategy within the local church to teach and lead disciples/saints by walking alongside of them in moments of applied learning - on the street, in the neighborhoods, in the marketplace and everywhere outside of the building (remember, Jesus did not imply that the church is a building). When the teacher and the shepherd start working together in a unified approach, it would be beneficial to invite the evangelist to participate as well.

The Role of the Evangelist in Mission Education: A Marketing/Sales Model

We all know Evangelists. They are the salesmen of the church. The gift of evangelism is real and those who have the gift are infectious. They may know how to share the gospel and call someone to repentance (like salesmen closing the deal), but their greatest asset is the ability to see the fruit of their labor. Most people can be trained to share the gospel and lead someone to a saving knowledge of Christ, but evangelists can see the bigger picture when the person says, “No, not right now. I need to think about it for a while.” The evangelist does not take this as rejection like many believers, but as an opportunity to follow up on their next meeting. That is what our saints/disciples need to embrace, especially those who are going to unreached people groups.

³ Irving Biederman, “Knowledge Addiction,” *American Scientist Journal* 94, no.3, May-June 2006.

Those areas of the world are unevangelized for a reason. All of the easy fields for ministry have already been reached because they had receptivity. But the evangelist can train our future missionary candidates in the skill set of “customer cultivation.”⁴

Taken from the field of business marketing, our sent-ones need a broad approach with a long-term goal in mind for establishing the church in restricted access countries. The evangelist is a natural when it comes to “performing a market analysis of his potential customer.” When he/she engages with a person for the purpose of presenting the gospel, the evangelist intuitively listens for cues, waits for openings, and builds bridges from the person’s current position to the place where the gospel is most relevant in their lives. Taking these concepts of an evangelist/salesperson, our apostolic saints can learn how to do “research and development” for people in unengaged communities. When they experiment with various gospel presentations, they are not bound by the metrics of failure if at first they do not succeed. They learn to put less attention on the sale (conversion) and more attention on the CLV (customer lifetime value), thus building a relationship with the person for the value of the relationship itself, not necessarily the outcome of conversion (which hopefully comes later after cultivation).

These business concepts actually come from the corporate world looking into the religious world. There are many large corporations in the USA which use the title “Evangelist” for their sales staff. They are reflecting what they see in our evangelism training, since the company’s long-term health is best served by retaining valued relationships that endure beyond the sale. They are seeking customer converts to their brand, and will invest heavily to maintain those relationships over their lifetime.

An Outcome-Based Education Will Produce Unconditional Disciples

David Ruiz is a missiologist from Guatemala and served as the Executive Director and International President for COMIBAM (Cooperación Misionera Iberoamericana). His book, *Transformación de la Iglesia* is a seminal work to rethink the idea of the Great Commission sending church model in Latin America.⁵ In his book, Ruiz performs a deconstruction of the church as we know it, and he highlights 1 Peter 2:4-5: “*As you come to him (Jesus), the Living Stone - rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*”⁶ In this passage, Peter is recalling the time when Jesus commended him as the “rock on which I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Jesus did not imagine a church built with construction materials, but one that was built with what Ruiz calls “unconditional disciples.” There are three resources in this church made of living stones:

1. Authority as ambassadors of Almighty God’s kingdom, which is not of this world
2. A gathering of saints, which is greater than the sum of each part
3. The abiding presence of the Lord Jesus, which is until the end of the age

Therefore, the job of “unconditional disciples” is to go and to do the will of the One who sends them. In Matthew 16:19, Jesus says to Peter, “*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” This begs the question, “Why are we, as disciples of Jesus, always looking for open doors when we already have the keys?”

⁴ Roland T. Rust, Christine Moorman, and Gaurav Bhalla, “Rethinking Marketing,” *Harvard Business Review*, January 2010, <https://hbr.org/2010/01/rethinking-marketing>.

⁵ David Ruiz, *Transformación de la Iglesia* (Bogota: Editorial Desafío, 2017).

⁶ NIV translation.

Maybe the 1970's rock band, The Eagles, had it right in their song *Already Gone* when they wrote: "So often it happens that we live our lives in chains, and we never even know we have the key." That is what many churches are experiencing and why taking proactive steps of faith is so important. They sit back passively waiting for the Lord to raise up workers to send into His harvest, but never make intentional steps to prepare people for what to do when they answer His call. They focus on reacting to issues that come up in the local body, without being proactive in establishing a pipeline of training and education in evangelism, discipleship, and cross-cultural ministry. All the while, they are holding the keys, squandering a precious gift of salvation for the nations.

Your church can build a missionary-sending pipeline that will transform your local community and extend its influences around the world.

Missionary-Sending Pipeline

Your church can build a missionary-sending pipeline that will transform your local community and extend its influence around the world. There are two extremes to consider. The first is to focus so heavily on the teaching ministry of the church that it becomes a guilt-induced motivation to focus on results. People will answer that kind of provocation, but they may not endure because they have not been equipped with an enduring mindset. The other extreme is to focus heavily on prayer and then passively wait for God to produce results. In this scenario, people will accept God's calling on their lives, but without a proper training and equipping ministry, they will fail to withstand the rigors of cross-cultural ministry.

A third option, in between the two extremes, is where intentional education for missions mobilization outcomes will thrive. It is the place where disciple-making disciples cultivate a robust strategy that brings together all the necessary offices of the church from Ephesians 4 and engages them in a ministry of alignment. This is not just about creating a missionary-sending strategy, but a disciple-making strategy where some disciples will minister locally, and others will be sent globally.

What would it look like if every local church took the Great Commission mandate seriously and fully engaged the body of Christ in mobilizing the next generation of missionaries?⁷ They earnestly pray for more workers to be sent to the harvest and the Lord begins to answer that prayer. Then what? An intentional and proactive education model is the beginning to answer this question. *

⁷ See David & Lorene Wilson, *Pipeline: Engaging the Church in Missionary Mobilization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Press, 2018).

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David J. Wilson (DMin.) and his wife Lorene, have been serving the local church as mission leaders since 1996. They live in Kansas City, MO and serve as the Director of Church Engagement at Avant Ministries. They have written 3 books together: *Transforming Missionaries: A Short-Term Mission Guide*, *Mind the Gaps: Engaging the Church in Missionary Care*, and *Pipeline: Engaging the Church in Missionary Mobilization*.

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How to Engage and Educate Generation Z for Missions Mobilization

Dr. Jolene Erlacher

The oldest members of Generation Z (b. 1996-2010) are now graduating from college and beginning their careers. As they do, the church and missions organizations are facing new challenges and opportunities in mobilizing a cohort of young adults with characteristics and perspectives that often differ significantly from older Millennials. In the following discussion, we will look at some of the unique challenges we are facing as we seek to engage Generation Z in missions. We will also consider some of the opportunities inherent in this task and conclude with strategies for effectively engaging and educating young people today for missions mobilization.

Challenges in Missions Mobilization

Challenge #1: Post-Christian Context

As we seek to engage young people today for missions, we must understand the cultural context in which they live. Most experts agree that for the first time in America, we are mobilizing individuals out of a post-Christian generation. James Emery White, in his book, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, states, “As the first truly post-Christian generation, and numerically the largest, Generation Z will be the most influential religious force in the West and the heart of the missional challenge facing the Christian church.”¹ Members of this post-Christian generation

For the first time in America, we are mobilizing individuals out of a post-Christian generation.

must be understood in the midst of broader changes in Christianity. Pew Research Center reports the continued trend in the decline of Christianity in America, with larger percentages of the population identifying as “nones” or having no religion in 2019 as compared to 2009 and other earlier studies.² Generation Z is reflecting this trend as the youngest generation to enter adulthood. Barna reports that “the percentage of people whose beliefs qualify them for a biblical worldview declines in each successively younger generation: 10 percent of Boomers, 7 percent of Gen X and 6 percent of Millennials have a biblical worldview, compared to only 4 percent of Gen Z.”³ Young Christians with a strong faith who would potentially engage

in missions often confront opposition to their faith or calling that did not exist in our culture a couple of decades ago. It is important to understand this dynamic as we seek to support, encourage, and mobilize this generational cohort.

¹ James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 11.

² Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, June 09, 2020, accessed November 01, 2020, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

³ Barna Group, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation. A Barna Report Produced in Partnership with Impact 360 Institute* (USA: Barna Group, 2018), 25.

Challenge #2: Post-Missions Age

As our culture has changed, so have views on global missions. A post-Christian culture is contributing to what some have called a post-missions age in America.⁴ Perhaps one significant indicator of this change was seen in the responses to the death of missionary John Chau in 2018. Ed Stetzer describes how many critics and supporters compared Chau to Jim Elliot.⁵ However, the response to Chau's death differed greatly from the response to Elliot's death 60 years earlier. Stetzer explains,

On Jan. 8, 1956, Elliot and four other Christian missionaries were, like Chau, killed by the people they were trying to reach. Elliot and his team ended up on the front page of Life magazine, prompting a surge in modern missions. Chau's story is in countless media feeds that have prompted a missions backlash. There are certainly differences between Elliot and Chau, but what has really changed is our culture. People are much more negative about missions, partly because of mistakes that missionaries have made, such as colonialism, a lack of cultural awareness and more. But, for many critics, it is the core goal of conversion itself they object to.⁶

In their report on *The Future of Missions*, Barna Group explains the perspectives Generation Z must confront as they consider missions in this new cultural context. "There is a stereotype... that has taken hold in the North American cultural imagination, of a 'white savior' evangelist who exports their narrow, Western-centric version of faith with more passion than cultural competence."⁷ While this stereotype, like many stereotypes, is based on isolated instances, it has influenced the perspectives of many on missions today. Young adults considering missions often grapple with a history of Christian missions that has sometimes been associated with colonialism or failure to respect local cultures. As a result, young adults want to have honest conversations about missions, its history, and what we can learn and improve as we look to the future.

Sometimes a post-missions culture extends into the church. Recently, in speaking to a group of long-term missionaries on engaging the next generation in missions, I was discussing this phenomenon of a post-missions culture. Back in the U.S. on furlough, missionaries in the group reported finding that a post-missions culture exists in the church as well. The task of educating, engaging, and mobilizing individuals within the American church for global missions often falls to visiting missionaries. While the research indicates that a relationship with a missionary is significant for young people to say they will give to missions, pray, or go themselves, it is indicative of a post-missions culture when this task falls to a visiting missionary, rather than a passion for and understanding of the importance of missions being cultivated continually within local congregations.⁸ Michael Brogden, in his research on Assemblies of God churches and pastors, found that "the most common number of missionaries allowed to speak at a church is 1-4 per year."⁹ If this is the most significant missions exposure that a young person attending a local church will receive, then it is less likely they will be mobilized. Living in a post-missions culture, young people today need a local church that is actively cultivating a heart for missions.

⁴ Ed Stetzer, "General Session: Ed Stetzer," Missio Nexus, September 24, 2019, accessed November 03, 2020, <https://missionexus.org/general-session-ed-stetzer/>.

⁵ Ed Stetzer, "Slain Missionary John Chau Prepared Much More than We Thought, but Are Missionaries Still Fools?" *The Washington Post*, November 28, 2018, accessed November 02, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2018/11/28/slain-missionary-john-chau-prepared-much-more-than-we-thought-his-case-is-still-quandary-us-missionaries/>.

⁶ Stetzer, "Slain Missionary John Chau."

⁷ Barna Group, *The Future of Missions: 10 Questions about Global Ministry the Church Must Answer with the Next Generation* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2020), 17.

⁸ Barna Group, *The Future of Missions*, 15.

⁹ Michael Brogden, *Finishing the Unfinished Task* (Master's Thesis, North Central University, 2020), 59.

Challenge #3: Generational Differences in Ministry Values

Several trends that began with Millennials are continuing with Generation Z as we look at generational values in ministry. One of the most significant is regarding evangelism. While “winning souls” has been at the heart of global missions historically, young adults in post-Christian culture often struggle to embrace evangelism. Growing up in a society where relativism and tolerance are high values, young people today have learned to respect and not question the perspectives of others. O.S. Hawkins explains, “Tolerance is the new buzzword and the new law of the land, and it has a different definition than it did just a few years ago. Tolerance used to mean that we recognized and respected other people’s beliefs and value systems without agreeing with them or sharing them. Today tolerance means that everyone’s values, belief systems, and lifestyles should be accepted.”¹⁰ If you are conditioned to accept everyone’s values and beliefs, it can be very hard to share truths that may require others to change their beliefs. As a result, Barna reports that 47% of practicing Christian Millennials “agree at least somewhat that it is wrong to share one’s personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith...though Gen Z teens were not included in this study, their thoroughly post-Christian posture will likely amplify this stance toward evangelism.”¹¹ Evangelism requires many young people to violate cultural norms they have been taught. In addition, a sense of connectedness to the world and broad exposure to the needs and injustices that exist today have given younger generations a passion for social justice and humanitarian aid. As young people seek to engage in missions, they may bring different priorities or approaches than those held by leaders, mentors, and organizations they work alongside.

As young people seek to engage in missions, they may bring different priorities or approaches than those held by leaders, mentors, and organizations they work alongside.

Opportunities in Mission Mobilization

While a number of challenges exist as we seek to engage and mobilize young people in missions today, there are also some significant opportunities. We will consider a few of these here.

Opportunity #1: Increased Commitment

As young people today navigate a post-Christian world, they do not adhere to Christianity by default, just because others around them are Christians, as perhaps occurred in previous generations. Gen-Zers who want to follow God are making intentional, and often difficult, choices to do so. In many instances, they are facing social persecution for their decisions. As one godly young leader told me, “I cannot tell other students at my school that I believe in God without losing all credibility.” As a result, the young people who do choose to commit to God and his purposes are often more committed than previous generations. Barna reports in *The Future of Missions* that “when it comes to men, as the cultural influence of Christianity diminishes, those who continue in pursuit of Christ—perhaps especially those who are male—tend to mean it.”¹² Despite the trend we are seeing in many young people today leaving the church, Kinnaman and Matlock report that “there is a countercultural 10% of young Christians whose faith is vibrant and robust.”¹³ In my book, *Daniel Generation: Godly Leadership in an Ungodly Culture*, I refer to this group of young people as the remnant, similar to Daniel

¹⁰ O. S. Hawkins, *The Daniel Code: Living out Truth in a Culture That Is Losing Its Way* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 72.

¹¹ Barna Group, “Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong,” Barna Group, accessed November 2, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism/>.

¹² Barna Group, *The Future of Missions*, 80.

¹³ David Kinnaman, Mark Matlock, and Aly Hawkins, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2019), 32.

and his friends, that God is using in these uncertain times.¹⁴ We have an incredible opportunity to engage, encourage, and equip these resilient young believers whom God is raising up in this moment in history.

Opportunity #2: Honest Conversation

It is commonly understood that younger generations today want to know “why?” They have grown up in a period marked by the deconstruction and questioning of culture, history, identity, and ideas. As a result, they are conditioned to want to understand the “why” behind activities and perspectives. As mentioned earlier, many members of Generation Z are struggling to understand the role of the church and missions in history and identify where mistakes have been made and what we can learn as we go forward. This creates a wonderful opportunity to engage young people today in honest conversation as we learn together from the past and consider its implications for the present and future. This conversation requires humility, reflection, and courage. It provides opportunities to learn about missions, but also a chance for young leaders to see godly leadership modeled by experienced leaders as we engage in these discussions.

Opportunity #3: Innovative Collaboration

Young people today are connected via technology to the world in unprecedented ways. They have also been taught to value others and their perspectives. This results in young people who are open to new ideas and collaboration. As we look toward the future and a global age of missions where God is raising up missionaries from around the world to go to the world, Generation Z is well positioned to engage in this collaborative missions effort. I believe God has uniquely equipped them for the emerging season in missions. We can affirm these characteristics of innovation, connectedness, and collaboration as we seek to engage them in ministry.

Strategies as We Engage and Educate Gen Z for Missions Mobilization

As we seek to engage a new generation in God’s global work, there are several strategies that can help us relate to the needs, challenges, and values of Generation Z.

Strategy #1: Foster relationships. Respect and trust today are not earned through titles, positions, or experience, but rather through relationship. Young people respond to those who have proven that they care about them and who are honest and sincere. This relational leadership requires more time and energy than simply preparing a lesson and presenting it, but it is much more rewarding. As we invest in young people, we earn the right to be heard and to encourage them in their gifts and calling. Young godly leaders today need experienced leaders to walk with them and help them process their questions, doubts, and hopes in a world that is increasingly post-Christian.

Strategy #2: Provide experiences and stories. In their book, *Marching Off the Map*, Elmore and McPeak discuss how to engage a new generation of students in inspirational ways. They recommend an EPIC model of teaching; one that is experiential, participatory, image rich, and connected.¹⁵ When we can engage young people in experiences that allow them to participate in ministry and learn about missions, there will be opportunities for new passions to be birthed in their hearts. Seeing pictures or hearing stories as they connect with missionaries will allow the needs to become real and for understanding to grow.

Strategy #3: Engage in honest conversations. Ask young people around you their perspectives on missions. Encourage their questions and ideas. Avoid defensive responses that might shut down the conversation. Create opportunities for dialogue regarding the past, present, and future of missions, as well as the purpose of missions. As we navigate mobilization in a post-Christian, post-missions context, God is birthing fresh insights, ideas, and passion in this emerging season. We must engage young leaders in this process of discerning what God has for them and His heart for global missions. *

¹⁴ Jolene Cassellius Erlacher, *Daniel Generation: Godly Leadership in an Ungodly Culture* (Southern Pines, NC: Vigil Press, 2018).

¹⁵ Tim Elmore and Andrew McPeak, *Marching Off the Map: Inspire Students to Navigate a Brand New World* (Atlanta, GA: Poet Gardener Publishing, 2017).

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Dr. Jolene Erlacher grew up as a missionary kid. She has spent the past decade studying generational trends in ministry contexts. An author, speaker, and coach, Jolene works extensively with churches, mission agencies, schools, and other organizations on engaging the next generation. She also teaches graduate courses at North Central University and Bethany Global University. For more information on Jolene's books, speaking, podcast or blog, visit www.leadingtomorrow.org

Education: An Excerpt from *Mission in Motion*

Jay Matenga and Malcolm Gold

Education is a mobilization ideal-type and can be used by mission recruiters to lead people into greater involvement in mission. We (the WEAMC’s Mission Mobilization Research Task Force) detected many references to educational devices throughout our data of global voices and grouped them into categories or subthemes under the overarching theme of education. Education rightly belongs in the category of mission accelerants because according to the data, it is clearly a key factor in promoting mission. However, we will also note where education fails to meet the expectation of accelerating mission interest.¹

Education is only as effective as students want it to be. “You get out of it what you put into it,” as they say. Another popular Western saying is, “You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink.” In the context of this section that means education is most effective when there is a desire to learn. If the desire is there, any number of educational means, models, methods, or mechanisms can enhance a person’s mission understanding and involvement. As we did in the mobilization ideal-types section, we look again at education with very broad strokes, starting with more formal means of education and then on to informal and promotional ways of educating.

Academic Institutions

For many of the missionaries we conversed with in our study, training and education was an assumed process, either through attendance at a Bible college or taking a mission-oriented course. Study in theology and/or missiology as a prerequisite to service was described positively by many of our respondents as necessary preparation for the work they went on to become involved in. Although challenging for some, the experience of educational preparation was beneficial on a number of levels. A missionary from the United Kingdom was “a little put off” by the idea of formal training at first but they soon saw the value of it.

It seemed a long time to be preparing; even the training itself, we were a little put off to be honest because it is so long. But since we’ve got to the field, every little bit we’ve needed and has been incredibly important. So many times we’ve been out in the middle of the jungle and words come back to us—things that we learned on our training and it’s just been invaluable, so we would do it all again.

A church leader from East Asia ministering in the United States expressed that mission education helped correct their understanding and pursuit of mission. The fact that mission-experienced people were teaching them was also a significant factor.

But studying missiology at (*school name*) made me realize how narrow my perspective was and how wrong my understanding on church growth was. Learning and reading about missions were influential in my case. Lectures by professors with rich mission experiences as well as sharing of various missionaries taught me the spirit and purpose of mission as well as its biblical basis. My paradigm eventually shifted from local church perspective to that of world mission.

Also revealed in our interview data were secondary benefits from more formal courses of study and the environment of educational institutions. One East Asian missionary spoke of their experience in a formal education setting as being instrumental in their spiritual development and future calling, “I asked myself how specifically to serve the Lord. God led me to missions through the influence of a campus ministry.” A minister, also from East Asia, was deeply influenced in a similar way even though they did not attend a Bible college as a student but as a teacher on a temporary basis. They told us, “Spending one full year teaching there convinced

¹ This article is taken from chapter 16 of Jay Matenga and Malcolm Gold, *Mission in Motion: Speaking Frankly of Mobilization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library). The first paragraph has been adapted from the original publication. Used by permission.

me that I could be involved in mission in a meaningful way.” They described this as the “most crucial impact” in the forming of their understanding and conviction for missions.

From India, this missionary spoke of the influence of a Bible college context for their mission vision.

I applied to attend the Bible college of (*location name*) because I wanted to spend two years studying the word of God deeply and I applied and I was accepted by the Bible college. After two years in the Bible college, in my second year, through many Scriptures and many challenging messages, I heard the Lord make it very clear to me that his call was on my life to come to India.

Besides being in a place where you can hear the voice of the Lord, other benefits resulting from a Bible college experience were shared with us by this mission mobilizer in the United Kingdom.

It was the context, the fellowship, it was the opportunity to grow as a disciple, that was the crucial thing of Bible college; growing to maturity as a believer, starting to integrate my faith with my life. So, that was really, really very stimulating, very encouraging. I got lots of opportunities to develop there so one of the nice things about Bible college, and I think it is often the case, that you get the opportunity to start to develop your giftings wherever they are, there are often ways of doing that.

While most spoke encouragingly of their theological education and the way it accelerated their mission vision, some expressed concerns, the focus of which centered on the curriculum. This mission organization worker in Oceania lamented the inadequacy of the intercultural element of their postgraduate course at a Bible college (in the United States the institute providing a qualification at this level would be considered a seminary).

Respondent: I’m very grateful that I studied, did the MDiv program. However, the intercultural component of that, which was my major, has actually proved to be less than helpful.

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: Because I realize now what I didn’t know then, which was that the curriculum, the people, perhaps with one exception that I remember really quite clearly ... were very much what I would call “old school.” It was from a previous era of mission. It was the way things were done, you know, and that’s good to understand, the history of mission, but not when the history is taught as the present reality. To be fair, I mean, I’ve been out, I’ve been in (*field location*) for little over nine years and things have changed in nine years. The preparation you need is how to stay up with what’s the current reality. It’s not modules from ten years ago, even today’s modules, because in ten years from now, those are going to be out. So you’re looking for the timeless principals and I don’t feel like that was necessarily what I received during that training.

This mission mobilizer in East Africa recognized a similar problem with institutional curricula in their experience. Their emphasis is on the training of future church leaders, but their concern for what it means for mission resonated with the voice from Oceania.

We may have to trust God for change of heart, in fact, a divine interruption of the curriculum in the Bible schools and the seminaries because, ideally, the graduates from these schools are the ones who are running the churches, the emerging urban churches who are well endowed with human and financial resources. But, as you say, if they did not develop biblical convictions of missions there is no possibility that they cause this to happen within the thousands that they control. And to me they are controlling God’s people, the church, which exists primarily for missions. So in the short term and medium term, perhaps it is to trust God to interrupt those curriculums. I have talked with a number of professors who are involved in missions; they can see it, but they are in a curriculum which is fixed, given, it’s like this is the truth. It exists like this, we have never seen it before that way. And of course it comes with the challenge of who will write the books, and I say there are no new books being written. It is to reorganize the existing materials perhaps inject more of missions and also alter the philosophy of education for it to be more of a discipleship experience than an academic exercise.

Another East African, a researcher at a theological school, was critical too of the perceived status of the faculty in some Bible colleges, “You know there are professors in theology who are not even Christians, professors who are not practitioners; they are not engaging the real things. We need to rethink theological education.” And although somewhat less forthright in their critique, one church leader from the United Kingdom, when asked about the quality of the missions curriculum in their college experience, summed things up by saying, “It wasn’t brilliant.” A church leader from East Asia spoke of there being a complete absence of any mission component offered by their institution, “The seminary’s role? Well, it’s difficult to answer, as my seminary had no input about global mission.”

It is appropriate to pause briefly here to discuss formal theological training with regard to mission. These few quotes represent a much larger undercurrent of frustration concerning theological institutions’ lack of mission intention as perceived by those passionate about mission. Many of our respondents saw the potential for these places to accelerate mission interest and involvement, but it was not realized. There are many reasons for this, some of which are evident in the quotes above. Power politics get involved with staff wanting to preserve influence and aging lecturers wanting to teach what they have always taught. But also many training institutions exist to teach abstract theology or applied local ministry rather than mission studies as such. Would it not be unfair to expect them to teach a specialization that is not part of their vision or value system?

At the beginning of the twentieth century, systematic theologian Martin Kähler laid claim to mission as “the mother of theology” and this has been used to argue for a mission flavor to infuse all theological training (Bosch, 1991, 16).

Mission enthusiasts have developed a theological understanding that integrates mission. This can cause them to struggle to understand a Christian academic institution’s lack of overt cross-cultural or intercultural training as part of its curriculum. At the beginning of the twentieth century, systematic theologian Martin Kähler laid claim to mission as “the mother of theology” and this has been used to argue for a mission flavor to infuse all theological training (Bosch, 1991, 16). Most Christian colleges and seminaries would testify that their training does, in so far as all theological training, have a place in the “real world,” but mission specialists tend to view mission with greater definition and applied theology can fail to meet their expectations.²

Church Education

Many of our respondents noted a general lack of mission knowledge in their experience of Christian community. From their observations we conclude that it is because mission is largely missing from the Christian education congregants receive within their churches. Although most of our respondents made mention of it in a negative sense, we mention general Christian education at this point for the same reason we put formal education in this section—because it is not exactly a retardant of missions service; on the contrary, it has great potential to be an accelerant of mission interest. The fact that many of our respondents lamented that it was not indicates this potential. We saw hints of church education’s potency for accelerating mission interest in our section on the influence of ministers.

We hope you can see some logic forming in our presentation here. General Christian education happens in the local church and is taught by leaders of the local church. If those leaders are formally trained at all, chances are it was in academic institutions such as those referred to above. If those institutions are not teaching mission, we

² For a very helpful historical overview of the missiological foundations of theology, see Gailyn Van Rhee’s article in [missiology.org](http://www.missiology.org). In it he claims, “Theology was done in missional contexts in response to missional questions as Christian ministers planted new churches and nurtured existing churches to maturity.” You can read the rest of the article here: <http://www.missiology.com/blog/mr-21-the-missiological-foundations-of-theology>

should not expect the ministers or other church leaders to do so. Nevertheless, our respondents clearly wanted them to.

From our data it was very apparent that our mission-involved respondents were concerned about the omission of mission from their experience of church. They articulated a disconnect between a Christian's understanding of the Christian life, directly related to what is taught in their church, and the convictions of missionaries, mission workers, and mission organizations. For example a mission mobilizer in Oceania told us flatly that, "When it comes to overseas mission most people really have no idea."

An East Asian mission leader spoke of a situation that many mission recruiters in the West would love to have—"many knocking at the door"—but this respondent was wise to the fact that future missionaries need to be well prepared and the local church was not providing a good enough example.

The struggle is there are not many people we want to send while so many are knocking at the door of (*mission organization*). Many of them are either lacking in preparation or improperly prepared. Most prominently, their perspective in mission is very weak. Instead of thinking deep about the nature of mission, they simply pursue doing what local churches have been doing. Often times, such people make more trouble than contribution on the mission field.

Similarly, a number of the people we spoke with directed their concern for the lack of mission knowledge at the local church. A church member in South America told us, "I personally think that pastors don't have a clear vision of missions and its importance. Therefore, the congregation is not aware of the reality. There isn't any teaching about missions." A different church member in South America expressed frustration at their church leaders' inability to apply mission knowledge even if they have some.

The leadership shares the mission but they do not know how to carry it out; how to send and to support. There is no training, no vision lines expressed with clarity, because people who should do it are not qualified.

This sentiment was repeated a number of times. From East Asia a minister shared this opinion of the situation in North America.

Most (*East Asian*)-American churches lack the knowledge and know-how of missions, so they tend to lose out potential human resources such as the (*short-term experience*) participants who return to their local churches, warmed up and committed to missions. They don't know how to handle or follow up missionary prospects and candidates, these precious human resources are eventually wasted.

Also from an East Asian perspective, church leaders hindered this church member's zeal to resource mission well from within the church. Thankfully they felt their persistence was finally starting to pay off.

I've personally had problems working with elders as they really don't know much about missions. I wanted to build data and do various things related to missions, but elders would say the only thing our church should do is to send out short-term mission trip teams. But now, finally, some elders are interested in missions education.

If a church does not provide adequate mission education for their congregation those who sense a draw toward mission involvement may satisfy their felt need elsewhere. That could happen in a formal academic environment, but this mission mobilizer from the United Kingdom identified a more common route as that of the parachurch organization.

What comes first the chicken or the egg? If the local church was doing what it should be doing in terms of teaching, I think that is the key, (but) the parachurch has to play such a role because the local church is not doing it.

Another mission influencer from the United Kingdom expanded this idea further from their experience. They identified “movements” as providing opportunities for mission-oriented education and service. In this case movements differ from parachurch organizations in that they remain connected to denominations or within defined church structures rather than outside of those structures altogether. The respondent saw some advantages to these movements, but they would still rather see local churches taking up responsibility for mission education.

I think both in the new churches and in the old churches, there is still a failure to understand the centrality of mission to the purpose of the church. There are movements in denominations in the UK which have grasped that and it’s exciting to see. But I do feel that the structural problems are normally because mission is no longer seen as being what the church is about. It sometimes isn’t taught that way, sometimes the teaching is that mission is central but the reality doesn’t line up.

From East Africa we heard similar complaints about mission education at the local church level. This voice calls for a change, starting with the church leaders.

Interviewer: You are talking about many people not understanding missions, so that still makes me wonder where is the missing link, is it teaching in church or what is it?

Respondent: I think they need to, church education needs to take place, so that people, starting with the leaders, the pastors, they need to understand what missions is.

The longing for better mission education in the church, encouraged by leaders of the church is obvious in our data. That lack of it was clearly expressed by our mission-active respondents as frustration. Such frustration will not be readily eased because the idea of mission can threaten the comfort levels of a congregation. As we noted in chapter two, Christians can resist being inconvenienced and mission involvement has a tendency to interrupt this world’s wonderful plans for your life. Nevertheless, as the East Asian promoter of mission persisted with their elders, we encourage others to gracefully persist with encouraging a better understanding of mission, via appropriate training, within their Christian communities.

A need for *appropriate* training was evidently desired by missionaries, mission agencies, and mission recruiters seeking to facilitate prospective missionaries into mission service. One South American missionary told us, “We both desire and promote a lot of the training of young people with a missionary calling,” but as our voices above pointed out, sometimes the training provided is not adequate for the tasks the trainees find themselves doing. They can too easily end up unhelpfully involved in mission in ways the East Asian mission leader described as “more trouble than contribution.”

It is in the best interest of the evangelical missions community to ensure that mission training is relevant for the global context in which missionaries find themselves ministering and appropriate for the competencies needed for mission today. We have seen how academic institutions can struggle to adapt to contemporary needs and that churches can too easily ignore teaching about mission altogether. Christians also receive mission education in the context of courses and conferences. However, if that is the only education future missionaries receive should we be concerned? Should we keep the East Asian mission leader’s voice echoing in the background, “Such people make more trouble than contribution”?

It is in the best interest of the evangelical missions community to ensure that mission training is relevant for the global context in which missionaries find themselves ministering and appropriate for the competencies needed for mission today.

Courses and Conferences

A number of our respondents spoke favorably of specific courses utilized by various mission organizations. The most prominently mentioned were versions of the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course (using the official US Study Guide designed and edited by Ralph Winter and Steve Hawthorne, as well as a modified South Pacific guide, popular in Oceania among other places) and the much more condensed *Kairos* course (developed by Max Chismon) originally derived from *Perspectives* material.³ Other courses specific to an organization or church were mentioned at times as well.

A mission mobilizer from Oceania who teaches the South Pacific version of the *Perspectives* course described it as “way ahead” of other mission-oriented courses and in their experience it produced a life-change in many of the students who have gone on into career mission service,

A lot of them came in without any real interest or desire, but just thought it’s a course worth doing, and have gone further on; and it’s taken them, you know, just wherever God wants them in the mission realm.

A mobilizer from the United Kingdom told us that the *Kairos* course, which they described as “the old condensed *Perspectives* course” was becoming “increasingly important.” They described *Kairos* as “a course thinking about mission in a slightly more reasoned and filled out way” and likened its style and format to that of the *Alpha* course but with a mission emphasis. These examples indicate the potential value of preservice training and education, at an exposure level anyway. Courses such as these provide an opportunity for awakening Christians to their mission-related responsibility and some awareness of the opportunities available for them to engage in mission service.

While mission courses can be effective catalysts for mission involvement they can suffer from lack of demand. Those who run the courses still need to attract people to the course, whether through clever promotion or the recommendation of enthusiasts who have had their lives changed by the course. This leads us to what we consider to be *the mobilizer’s dilemma*; how do you capture Christians’ interest in such a way as to reorient their view of the world and God’s purposes for us in it for the cause of mission? The courses mentioned seek to achieve this in different ways, but the overwhelming majority of our respondents pointed to a different experience as being far more effective at birthing an interest in mission—the Christian conference.

The mobilizer’s dilemma; how do you capture Christians’ interest in such a way as to reorient their view of the world, and God’s purposes for us in it, for the cause of mission?

The rest of this section will explore the conference phenomenon. As we do so, we are conscious of the relationship between the conference effect and the final theme of this Accelerants section. As with all our data, themes easily interact and overlap. Nevertheless, the volume of comment regarding the ability of a conference to incubate and enhance a desire to investigate mission deserves special attention as an educational subtheme.

Its impact belies the length of time invested. As we saw above, taking people through a systematic course can be influential, but the conference experience seems to have a different level of dynamism.

We launch our exploration of conferences by considering why people attend, what is the attraction? Here is how one mission mobilizer in the United Kingdom described why they ended up at a mission conference, and the unexpected impact it had on them.

³ For more concerning the *Perspectives* course see their official website: <https://www.perspectives.org/> Jonathon Lewis’ three-volume *World Mission* manual was the basis for the original versions of the *Kairos* course, however Lewis’ material and approach was largely drawn from Winter and Hawthorne’s work. Source: <https://www.kairoscourse.org/about-kairos>

There was a mission conference, and there was a (person) I liked and (the person) was going to this mission conference so I decided to go because (the person) was going. I never saw (the person) the whole of the conference but that was a minor detail because by the time I got there, there wasn't anyone other than (the person) and I who were under twenty-five. Everyone else was about thirty-five to sixty. But it felt like (a hand in) glove. I got on so well with everybody, what they were saying, what they were thinking and it was exactly as I was thinking, how I felt in terms of commitment: it was all or nothing. It was the ethos, and it was the value of prayer and obedience and sacrifice; these were the things that spoke a lot to me and that made a connection with me in regard to mission. I remember thinking—this is amazing, this fit just like a glove. I had never felt so at home, it was just incredible. I had only been a Christian for a couple of years and the thought of going to a mission conference where there were mission organizations of all sorts was strange, but it was interesting. I just loved it. That was the start for me.

Obviously not everyone attends a conference chasing a romantic interest! Our point is there are all sorts of weird and wonderful reasons why people attend conferences that have some degree of a mission component. Large gatherings have their own appeal and power to influence. As we explore the impact further, perhaps all we need to do is record this response from a missionary, also from the United Kingdom. They seem to sum up what many others observed about conferences (also called conventions or congresses). We will of course triangulate this concept with multiple voices but this testimony speaks for many of our respondents.

I went to a Bible convention in Northern Ireland in a place called *(location name)*—*(location name)* Mission Convention—and it was there that I remember in the missionary meeting, the Lord just got a hold of my life. I was just really challenged by the reports that had been given in that meeting. I remember at the end of the meeting just praying and saying to the Lord, “My life is yours, wherever you want me to go, whatever you want me to do, I’m available.” I came home from that convention to *(the UK)* and, just in my own quiet time I was reading in Jeremiah chapter one. I remember saying before I read that, I was basically praying saying, “God my life is yours but I’m only fourteen, so I’m still really very young,” imagining that at some later point in life God would make his will known where he wanted me to go. Really saying, “I’m young now; show me in a few years time.” That night I read Jeremiah 1 and it says “Say not I am a child, for behold I am sending you.” There are so many Scriptures but that particular chapter spoke to me; the Lord confirmed it to my heart—I knew that night that I was going to be a missionary.

Among the many remarkable things about this experience is the age of the respondent at the time—fourteen years old! The impact of the encounter they had at that conference was so significant that it set the very course of the rest of their life.

Our two United Kingdom respondents present different views of the typical age range of mission conferences and we acknowledge that there are a lot of variables involved with each of their experiences. Nevertheless, if you can get them there, the mission impact of conferences on younger people seems significant. Mention of the influence of a mission conference on teens was not limited to the United Kingdom. A South American missionary hit on it straight away.

Interviewer: What events, programs, etc., influenced you?

Respondent: Since my teenage years, the missionary conferences.

Another South American missionary shared similarly,

In my teenage years, when I was defining much of what I believe and did later, the key elements were the missionary conferences and evangelistic campaigns.

For others, an awareness of mission emerged at conferences during their late teens or twenties, most often while they were in a context of higher education. Let us hear from some in succession.

- During my junior year, I had a chance to attend an international (student) conference where I experienced the beauty of multinational worship for the first time. A friend of mine, who later became a missionary, influenced me toward mission. During my senior year, I attended Mission (*country name*) conference where I learned about the need and fact of world mission, and especially through the exposition of Colossians I decided to invest my life in what God wants—i.e., a value-driven life rather than what I want. *Mission Mobilizer in East Asia*.
- During my MSc I attended one mission conference and in that conference lot of need in the north was projected. The tentmaking concept was so much applicable to me and I felt that God called me at that time to be there as a tentmaker. So in that three-day mission conference I decided that. *Missionary, India*.
- So God actually called me for missions when I was at teacher's college ... I went to a (student) conference and there were mainly mission speakers throughout the whole conference. *Missionary from Oceania*.
- When I was a second year student I went for a conference ... organized by FOCUS (Fellowship of Christian Unions) in 1997 and the theme was, "Who can but speak?" And as the issues were raised as where you can speak, how you can speak. I remember one of the sessions by (*a pastor*) speaking about speaking out in the urban poor, he called it the jungle, and very challenging issues raised for the need for involvement. And given time to reflect on what had been going on this afternoon, given time to investigate what is the deeper calling? Why has God called me? —to serve as a student. I had just been elected as a (*student ministry*) treasurer at that time; and then we went home because of a strike, but I managed to come to attend the conference and it was very challenging—that I have a responsibility to speak—and that changed how I lived. *Ministry Director in East Africa*.
- I attended a missions conference in my first year in university, and it was the decisive point of my life because in that conference I was exposed to issues in missions. Many issues, which nobody had really told me about: Christian life. So that exposure to mission issues, but specifically as a student, I was challenged on how I could see my life as a student as God's calling for me at that particular time and how I could effectively use it. *Christian Educator from East Africa*.

While it could have been placed above, as an example of the potential impact of courses, we have chosen to place this next quote from a South American missionary here because they express something that is more often experienced in a conference setting—"vision and seeds of passion for Jesus."

The seminars or missionary conferences with "workshops of awakening." It is true that a workshop does not make a missionary, but it will if the vision and seeds of passion for Jesus are sown, and this teaching tool is used with ability and good purpose. It should focus on those aspects more than in covering a lot of information or theoretical knowledge.

We like the term our interviewer translated as a "workshops of awakening." Awakening expresses well what other voices experienced in a conference setting. One of our East European voices testified to this sort of awakening at a mission conference. As a result, they are now actively engaged in promoting mission.

Four years ago I went to one of these conferences for the first time. To be honest, I'm almost ashamed to say this, I hadn't heard of these conferences until then, although it was already in its fifth year I think, or the sixth, if I remember rightly. And for me it was extraordinary to hear the information, to realize what cross-cultural missions actually means, what it means to invest the resources God has put in me—what God has invested in me—to invest that in his kingdom. I think it was the key moment of motivation and of challenge for me to find out and to offer myself for missions, and to pray for missions. At least that's all I could do at that point.

Awakening can also be described as the emergence of a vision, which is what this missionary in Eastern Europe spoke of regarding certain mission conferences.

There's been lots of missionary conferences. The Pentecostals for about four years had a partnership with the (*European country*) Pentecostal church and they did pastors' conferences for like four or five days. They had lots of high-powered foreign speakers and some (*Eastern European country*) speakers that came in. And I know that a few pastors caught a vision from that and went back and started implementing things.

Awakening expresses well what other voices experienced in a conference setting.

A missions-promoting churchgoer in South America described their commitment to running mission conferences as a way to challenge people afresh. This could also be considered “envisioning.”

A missionary conference is organized as a special event every year where new projects are presented; we have first-hand news directly from the missionaries, people are challenged to commit with the new missions both praying and giving and getting involved as workers.

Another South American, a minister, saw such worth in these sorts of conferences that they listed them among the most significant thing their church could do for mission mobilization.

Interviewer: What processes, activities, and events are significant to mobilization?

Respondent: Carrying out missionary conferences, missionary congresses, and missionary training workshops

This is further confirmed by this missionary from South America.

Interviewer: When did you make a commitment?

Respondent: At a missionary conference where I received the calling.

And this minister in East Asia.

Then I attended Mission (*country name*) Conference in 1992 which made me to commit myself for world mission.

As with all of our themes much more could be said but we will conclude this subsection with this voice from India who was challenged at a mission conference about their priorities in life. While it could seem a relatively small thing to others, God used a challenge of tokenism to arrest this person who went on to give themselves to lifelong missionary service.

In one of the mission conferences in (*location name*)... I received the call of God, I know this is the voice I heard. That, “I’m not interested in your token ministry,” means, you know, when we go to hotel or restaurant to eat and after eating we give some tips, the Lord said, “Whatever you have done so far is like a tip, I want you.” So I responded to the call of God.

Literature

Not everyone has the luxury of access to a course or is able to attend a conference. Courses require a significant investment of time and resources to run and conferences can be even more resource-dependent to hold. But education need not be limited to life-on-life interaction, whether as a discipleship process or as part of participant learning alongside others. The desire to learn can lead us to follow myriad paths and along the way we can happen upon less personalized material that still speaks to us in holy ways.

In this section we will briefly highlight examples of non-personalized educational material that our global voices spoke of as being significant to them. You might be surprised that some of those things we mention are considered educational, but every means of delivering information has the power to add to our body of knowledge and understanding if we are willing to expose ourselves to it. The onus is then on us to discern what is relevant and what is not, and sometimes that depends on timing.

For example, these two South American voices spoke concisely about the impact of non-personal information on their mission interest.

Interviewer: People who influenced you?

Respondent: My pastor, spiritual advisers, materials about missions that I started to read. *Missionary from South America.*

Interviewer: What processes, activities, and events are significant to mobilization?

Respondent: Missionary conferences, visits from missionaries, workshops, the constant preaching, and printed information so that each person can have it at home. *Pastor in South America.*

Education need not be limited to life-on-life interaction, whether as a discipleship process or as part of participant learning alongside others. The desire to learn can lead us to follow myriad paths and along the way we can happen upon less personalized material that still speaks to us in holy ways.

Books

Books mentioned in our data that most often influenced our respondents were true stories of missionary adventures, but other types of non-fiction were mentioned as well, particularly those that influenced people with a more strategic mind. Here are some examples.

I could say that I began preparing before leaving in 1996—I read Hudson Taylor’s biography and about the work of George Mueller and it affected me a lot. I wanted to see God at work in my life like he worked in their lives. *Missionary in Eastern Europe.*

In some ways, being exposed to different missionary biographies, I realized God wanted me to get involved in missions. The biography of Jim Elliott was a tool that got used for me to get involved in missions. Another *Missionary in Eastern Europe.*

Back when I was a student I was training at university doing a degree in land surveying, and during those years just a real strong sense, two or three prophecies, but really something developing inside ... I was absolutely taken every time I read anything by Brother Andrew in a book. I don’t read much, but every time, still the same thing applies, every time I pick up one of his books I’m consumed I can’t put it down. And just, in his terms I guess, a heart for the suffering church. And then just a sense of maybe being able to outwork that somehow in the nations. *Former Missionary, now Mobilizer from Oceania.*

I think that mostly I was motivated by books. I read about pioneer work. Even when I was young I read missionary biographies and I, I think that motivated me from when I was very young. *Mission Mobilizer from Eastern Europe.*

I was very blessed through reading the Amy Carmichael book called *God’s Missionary*, and she spoke about missionaries who came. Some of the early missionaries used to be very official, think they were

very special and they used to put Indians at a distance, and she spoke very clearly that we should not do that, we should be one with the people and love the people and move with them very freely. *Missionary in India.*

I was hospitalized for six months. There I came across this small booklet titled *Pineapple Farm*, which directed my sight to world mission for the first time. That booklet turned out to be God's clear call to missions. Thereafter I've never looked back or doubted about my commitment to world mission. *Missionary in East Asia.*

I've also read lots of books about missionaries who went to dry places. One of the books I read was *Afghanistan—My Tears*. It made me see people's need for God. And see this through their wild behavior. *Missionary from Eastern Europe.*

Interviewer: Who, what, or which, was the factor that influenced you in your commitment to missions in general and then to your current ministry?

Respondent: It was God's dealing with us through the book *Prioridad Uno*. This was the beginning of our ministry. *Missionary from South America.*

I listened to missionaries, I read books about missionaries, I studied strategies, etc. *Missionary from South America.*

God put a burden in me, but when I was (about sixteen) there was a team from the OM ship who came to my school and my church. On both occasions I was very challenged by the young people who had evidently given up a lot to follow Christ. George Verwer's book *Revolution of Love* really challenged me. *Missionary in the United Kingdom.*

Magazines

Mission magazines were also influential, non-personal sources of information for some. The next respondent, a missionary from Eastern Europe, shared a particularly powerful and tragic example of the importance of magazines to those with little access to other mission training material and service opportunities. The follow-up by those referenced in the magazines could have been a little more positive, and unfortunately this missionary's story is unlikely to be an isolated case.

Give me materials, a magazine, something! I want to go but I don't know anything. I don't know how to start; I don't know what to do. Nobody in my country is helping me, nobody knows anything. And they sent me magazines, and brought them for me from England. Someone brought me a load of magazines. I looked, and I started to write to all that I saw there. "I want to go to Africa but I don't know what to do ... tell me, can I go with you? Can you help?" And only two or three answered. "We're sorry, we're merging with others. ... We can't do anything at the moment. The Lord help you."

What follows are some other examples of magazine use.

I became involved in missions because of some information in (a) magazine which is about involvement in world mission, and I got information from there, information about the mission school, because I was interested in missions. *Missionary in South America.*

I used to read a lot of magazines published by (*organization name*). I began to have a burden to pray for missionaries, to raise funds. Most missionaries struggle for even basic needs because they are not paid well by missions. So that is how I started to get a burden where I need to do something for the missionaries; that is how I got into missions. *Minister in India.*

And I enjoyed reading periodical magazines published by mission agencies such as (*organization name*) and (*organization name*) which further directed me to mission. *Missionary from East Asia*.

My (spouse) had been receiving monthly publication by (*organization name*) since 1985; a Christian colleague used to encourage me to consider Bible translation; and I was deeply impressed by editor's columns of (*organization name*) monthly magazine. *Missionary from East Asia*.

We conclude this brief mention of magazines with quotes from two different mission mobilizers ministering in the United Kingdom. The quotes did not specifically deal with the outcome of magazines for mission, but they did indicate the potential that mission recruiters see in magazines to cross-pollinate stories that can make an impact for mission.

My biggest issue is how can I help the churches who are not connected with us and have got to work with other networks, which are more church networks, to actually see the fantastic stories that there are; and I would like to see magazines like (*magazine name*) going into every single Christian's hand in this country, possibly with better stories of how churches are doing things, not just how agencies are doing things within the missional lifestyle.

We advertise (*course name*) in our magazine, so people who already feel that they identify with (*organization name*) are reading about that course. We try to advertise it a lot in the magazine and make a big thing of it so we get people who are already interested or praying and try to draw them in further, using that.

Promotional material

The previous quote serves as a bridge between sections. Non-personal information is rarely neutral. Books and biographies are more often than not published to promote the work of a particular organization through the life story of its founder or some other impactful example; and magazines are produced to promote the work of a specific organization or network, or to promote the ideas of one particular way of looking at mission. One way or another missions publications involve advertising. We touched on marketing techniques in our chapter on "Creating Mission Momentum" and the effects of those techniques are illustrated next by a few diverse examples.

Note the variety in means of promotion, whether real or desired, referenced by our global voices: email, word of mouth, electronic documents (PDFs), printed booklets, etc., as illustrative of the relational mobilization ideal-type. We include this Indian missionary again because they also mentioned a few promotional devices.

Awareness is definitely a must. To build up awareness, we need to use technology, teaching, writings, the visual media. (But) it's hard-core spending of time with people for nurturing into direct mission work ... that's what we need to do for people who are willing to give their lives to missions. *Missionary from India*.

Interviewer: How do people hear about this? Is it again through the churches?

Respondent: Yes, we send out invitations to all the email contacts we have; we talk about it in presentations; we try to get people through the contacts we have in Bible schools and in churches to put up posters so people can read about it. People talk about it and tell others. In 2006 when we organized it we did very, very little about making it known basically. We sent out this invitation to all the email contacts we had. There was no advertising really done in any magazine or anything. We had twenty-five participants, paying participants because it's not free. So that was very encouraging. *Mission Mobilizer in Eastern Europe*.

There is a lot of literature on theological training in missions but so little practice. A digital publisher should be developed in order to distribute materials in PDF format created by “anonymous Latin Americans” who are working in missionary mobilization from local churches. There are unknown fabulous things that would be very good to share. *Mission Mobilizer in South America*.

But also I was working as a secretary in the (*organization name*) Hospital and they’d produced a booklet and it gave an outline of all the different mission organizations and the kind of people they were looking for and I went through it because I had this idea that missionaries were doctors, nurses, and teachers and that was it. And I also had the idea that most missionaries were old people, you know, very old fashioned idea because our church wasn’t into missions. Then I went through that booklet and it was almost like every mission organization or about fifty percent of the book they were looking for people skilled in office work—secretaries, and I just couldn’t believe it. It blew my mind. I went through the book and I circled every one. *Missionary from the United Kingdom*.

They were doing a weekend outreach in (*location name*) in evangelism, person to person involvement, and we boarded the ship; we had some time with them, we ate with them, they showed us some videos, and in one of the videos they showed us, I can’t even remember the title of that video, it basically

was speaking of the needs of the world, what is going on in the world, the people who are in needy places; and as I listened to that video something broke in me and that night I wept out my heart and just rededicated my life to the Lord. “God what would you want to use me to do with the area of missions reaching these people who were not yet reached?” So in that ship I bought a map of the world and I bought cards ... to seventy needy nations and majority of them were Arabic countries but there were some that were not necessarily from Arabic countries, countries that were considered, so to speak, closed countries. *Minister in East Africa*.

Interviewer: You’ve been involved in cross-cultural ministry as well; do you think that the marketing out there is an accurate representation of what missions is like?

Respondent: No. Um, I think often our marketing is too, um, self-absorbed. It’s hard because you are trying to connect with your audience, but at the same time there’s some realities on the ground, so bring those two together I think can be really, really difficult. And then I think often what connects with the people that we’re trying to mobilize isn’t actually the thing that’s going to help them reach the least reached. But it might get them started. *Mobilizer in Oceania*.

Artificial coloring of the narrative in promotional material or brightening the shadows (omitting important negative details) can establish unrealistic expectations in the reader and lead to much disappointment with their mission experience.

We deliberately closed the promotional material section with the above cautionary quote from a former missionary and current mission mobilizer in Oceania. While we agree that mission promotional material is important, the temptation to inflate stories to accentuate the positives of missionary service is great. Perhaps we should call this temptation mobilizer’s license. Artificial coloring of the narrative in promotional material or brightening the shadows (omitting important negative details) can establish unrealistic expectations in the reader and lead to much disappointment with their mission experience.

Missionary reports

Mission promotional material is not the only medium prone to the temptation of artificial elaboration. It can happen in missionary reports as a way to encourage giving. Thankfully, most of our respondents viewed missionary reports as a positive accelerant of mission interest and involvement. Like this minister from South

America who was thrilled with reports from their church's missionaries and saw them as motivating future mission interest in the church, "We have two people in different countries. And their reports are encouraging, motivating, mobilizing."

We heard this in our mobilization ideal-types exploration, but it is worth hearing again from this minister in Eastern Europe who felt that missionary reports (that show results) actually breathe.

So there is that "breath" that comes through reports, that "breath" that comes from results. I'd say there is a very strong connection between the church which supports spiritually and materially and the people on the mission field who communicate things to the local church; concrete things, precise things, moments when they saw that the hand of God saved them—let's say—from the intention of being kidnapped, or other plans against them, very precisely at the moment the church was interceding.

We suspect the missionary reports that this missionary from East Asia responded to did not include such drama as a kidnapping or near-loss-of-life experience, but the impact was quite dramatic for them.

I think I received the calling in two stages. The first was when I heard a missionary's report and got a burden for Africa.

These final few examples harken back to the impact of the missionary as much as the reports sent by those missionaries.

I think that the mobilization carried out by the missionaries is the most powerful one. In fact, our strongest challenge came from the missionary's life and not by the missionary conferences we attended! Visual reports are very good and regular and fresh news too. *Mission Mobilizer in South America.*

I can remember hearing folk coming back on furlough and talking to us about different things they were up to and how God had been working and what God was doing across a global perspective. So I suppose that I started to get an awareness and an interest in what goes on out there and how different the church might be, what God might be doing in different countries and continents. *Church Leader in the United Kingdom.*

The monthly letters of missionaries have to be shared with the congregation so they know how to respond to them. Not only the missionaries who are far away do the task, we also have the workers who work in the extension projects inside the country. *Minister in South America.*

This brings us to the end of our short survey of data that references literature as a means for educating people about mission. Books, magazines, sundry promotional material and missionary reports were the most frequently mentioned references to literature, but they represent most kinds of printed material promoting mission.

We think this is the best place to note that we were surprised by how little the Internet was spoken of by our respondents beyond the occasional mention of email or electronic documents or incidental mentions of website use. There were not enough common references to the Internet across our interview groups to make up even a microtheme. There could be a number of reasons for this, chief among them being the fact that most of our interviewees did not specifically probe the use of technology for promoting mission and educating people for mission. Instead, our aim was to invite the respondents to discuss whatever seemed relevant to them. We cannot say much more about this without speculating, but it provides a great opportunity for further research into the effects the Internet and other electronic means of education might have with regard to accelerating mission awareness. Perhaps this voice from South America will inspire further research. The late Ralph Winter would rejoice. It will help dramatize this quote for you if you add Latin linguistic flare and cultural passion to this mission mobilizer's accent.

I am a fanatic and I am very convinced in marketing. Young people today are used to see and to have everything at hand with the TV, the radio, the email, and the Internet. So we have to use all the means we have at hand because we have to reach the young. They are swimming in this world, and if they do

not find anything while they swim, we lose them. We have to introduce things in this river of marketing that will be useful for them. But if they do not find it in their world, like the Internet, if they see a black and white leaflet, it will not be attractive to them. They are used to another level and we have to improve and do everything to impact them through our materials and what we can offer.

Hardship

Before we move on to the final major theme in our exploration of accelerants, we feel we must make mention of a remarkable means of mission education and mobilization that took us by surprise. This is somewhat parenthetical because this theme did not appear often in our data as an accelerant. Nevertheless, these quotes leave us with much food for thought. We are confident you will agree. They are accounts of mission learned from difficult experiences, in contexts of hardship and trial.

Our first example is voiced by a missionary from Eastern Europe speaking of doing mission under the weight of communism. The resistance they experienced only served to spur them on to engage in more mission activity.

We did good things with our money and we were treated as if we'd done a bad thing. We went to do mission. And the spirit of adventure, the fact that ... maybe if there had been freedom and they'd left us alone, maybe we wouldn't have gone, but the fact that there were restrictions fired us up, it encouraged us more. And that spirit. ... it was the only thing good.

Then this church planter from India tells of their perseverance in the face of much opposition. They too were motivated by the struggles they experienced, in which they learned much. Not to be deterred they remained faithful to their calling and lived to tell this story of hope and fruitfulness born out of hardship.

So through all these difficult times, hunger, rejection, I've been rejected back and forth and from every angle. Of course today's scenario has changed because I led all of them to Christ and I'm well respected in the family, but I went through all these struggles. So the call of God in the student conference, struggling, pain, rejection, hunger; and the third thing is ministry of winning people in the college campus and through the Bible correspondence course and in the slums of Calcutta, mobilized me. It gave me enough impetus to be motivated and to know that God has called me to do his ministry.

If mission promoters are tempted to add a little too much gloss to their stories of mission, let these voices remind them that sweetness is not the only flavor pleasing to the palate. As any chef will testify, bitter ingredients add a world of possibility to the culinary experience, tantalizing the taste buds. In keeping with this metaphor, God is the master chef of mission, mixing all manner of ingredients together to produce the most wondrous of dishes, the fruit of Christ's kingdom purposes. *

Jay Matenga is Executive Director of the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission. He also serves as Executive Officer at Missions Interlink, the national association of mission-passionate people and organisations in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Jay holds a Doctorate of Intercultural Studies from Fuller School of Graduate Studies (USA).

Since 2015 Malcolm Gold has been Chair of the Department of Sociology at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. He holds a PhD in Sociology from Warwick University (UK).



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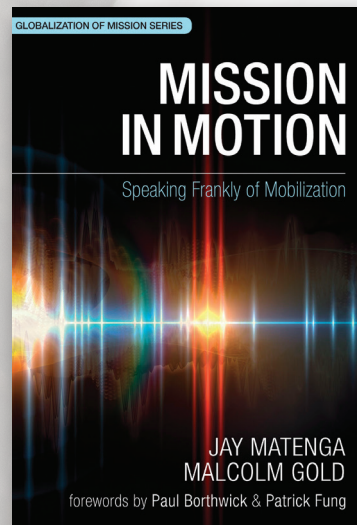
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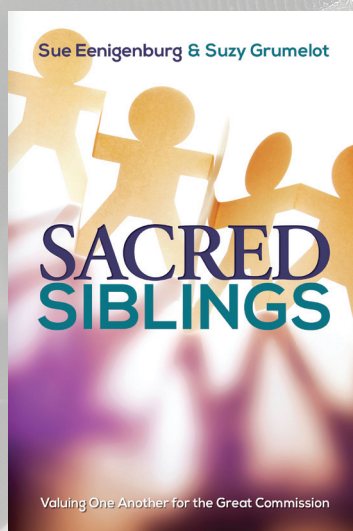


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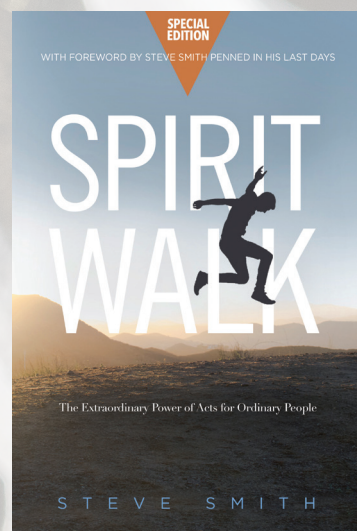


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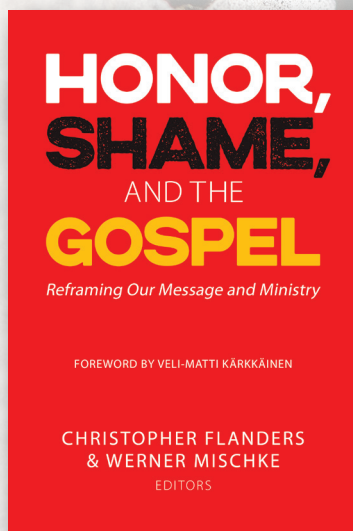


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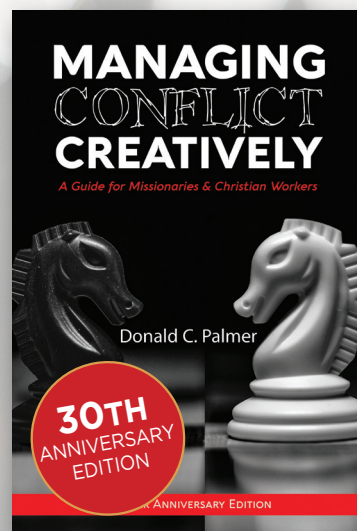


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The Value of Higher Education for Mobilizers¹

Dr. Paul Alexander

For much of my life, I have been deeply invested in ministry training and especially in the advantages that come to us through graduate level study. I was a mature student, yet had not had the opportunity as a younger person to really follow my passion, which was to get some higher education. It was only as a result of some wonderful open doors that developed when I was already in a fairly advanced stage of ministry, did I get the opportunity to do a master's degree. I earned a Master of Theology degree since my passion was mission and I went on to complete a PhD in Theological Higher Education. Formal, higher education is something that I am deeply invested in and very passionate about. I am going to give you a few reasons why I think it is important and helpful for people to formalize their studies. If you are a Christian leader and involved in Christian ministry of any kind, you should be a student. I have often argued that it is worthwhile for people to formalize their studies, yet the trouble is often that higher education is either inaccessible or very unaffordable. At Trinity Bible College and Graduate School, we have worked to try to make both of those reasons go away by making education both accessible and affordable. Let me share five reasons why I think a formalized accredited higher education program such as a graduate level program, is beneficial to mobilizers and people involved in various forms of intercultural studies.

1. The Development of Critical Thought

Critical thought is very central in most educational programs today, and I am not really using the term in the way that it is used in a secular context. Almost inevitably in the secular context, the term *critical thought* is often code language for deconstructing history, deconstructing the narrative, deconstructing the story, and trying to tell the story through the eyes of the oppressed rather than the oppressor. While I have great sympathy and insight to that, I am using the term in a much more classical sense of the word – the sense of the word that means that we process thought. We work out what people are saying about a subject. We do not simply generalize around what we are wanting to talk about. We allow people to speak into the subject. We seek out opinions and viewpoints that maybe have different aspects of a subject. I often say to students that one of the most classical skills that you can develop is the ability to look at Scholar A, and then look at Scholar B and say that Scholar A writes this for these reasons, and Scholar B writes this for those reasons, and then possibly throw in something from Scholar C. It is important to look at their background, what the context is that they are writing from, and only having given yourself to that kind of objective overview of a subject can you then begin to draw some kind of conclusion. Critical thought enables people to be much more economical in their use of words, much more careful in the expression of ideas and thoughts, and much more gracious in the way in which they deal with the subject. There is nothing like a good rigorous postgraduate degree that will push you to become more adept at critical thought.

"I suddenly realized the value of being able to find unfriendly sources and allow them to speak towards a subject and help me to develop layers of argument and well-presented positions."

I received an email recently from somebody who had really struggled with this whole concept. They were coming from a confessional background like most of us do, trying to compare and to allow people to speak into a subject. This particular student had struggled with that for a while and I have seen this happen

¹ This article was first given in the form of a lecture the author presented during a recent graduate class titled, Trends & Issues in Missions Mobilization at Trinity Bible College and Graduate School.

again and again. All of a sudden, it is like the lights went on and I got this wonderful email saying, “I suddenly realized the value of being able to find unfriendly sources and allow them to speak towards a subject and help me to develop layers of argument and well-presented positions.” He then thanked me for enabling him to do a postgraduate course. The development of critical thought is an amazing skill, one that God can use. It is not just an academic skill; it is an important part of being able to be more proficient in the way in which we share our ideas and our thoughts.

2. The Exposure to Wider Concepts and Ideas

It is a reality and part of our human experience that we tend to cluster our ideas together. We tend to read one genre of literature very often and do not broaden that genre of literature. It is just part of who we are. Most of us live busy lives. We have got things going on all the time and so even just to read one or two volumes is quite a discipline for many people. But to be held accountable in a rigorous higher educational postgraduate degree program – to be able to expose yourself to a wider perspective of writing – is really a significant part of the value of a graduate degree. To be exposed to people who have written from a slightly different confessional perspective and be able to dig a little bit deeper into the development of ideas and thoughts and how things actually have come down to us is extremely beneficial. We sometimes adopt ideas and embrace them fully; we propound them constantly and we might not even know what the origin or the background of that thought is. To be able to dig a little deeper is a really helpful skill and a wonderful benefit.

I know a pastor from a significant church who started his graduate studies with us. We gave him a list of recommended and required reading which is all part of the discipline of a graduate degree. He wrote to me some time afterwards and we have since had several conversations around this very subject. He said, “I’ve suddenly met a whole bunch of friends that I didn’t even know I had.” Of course, he was referring to the books that he started to learn from. Under normal circumstances, he was never going to be exposed to that kind of reading, and today he is very grateful in leading a significant ministry. So just being able to deal with people who otherwise might be out of the orbit of our normal reading or the normal kind of confessional lives that we live in is extremely helpful, wonderfully good, and it helps us be more considerate in the way in which we present our position and are able to persuade people regarding what we believe. An exposure to wider concepts and ideas must be part of a good graduate program, and we are very committed to that kind of rigor in the programs that we offer.

3. The Opportunity for Meaningful Research

I have already hinted at this, but let me state it again: anybody who has a responsibility in Christian leadership understands that they need to be informed. They need to study, as the Bible says, to show themselves approved to God. I find it almost inconceivable that somebody can aspire to Christian leadership and not at the

We learn to ask, "So what? What difference does this kind of information make?"

same time learn, grow, read, be exposed to other ideas, and have good vigorous conversations with other people. The fact is that a lot of that can go on in an informal context and over time you do not accumulate a body of work to show the research that you have done. That is resolved of course, by completing a formal graduate degree. Our degrees at Trinity are very deliberately structured almost exclusively around research. We have short-taught module intensives and then we require research assignments. There are no comprehensive exams and some people might question why. The

reason is that I am personally persuaded that there are far more long-term benefits to being able to accumulate a broad base of research, bring that down to a narrower form of research, and then ultimately write a substantial piece of work in the form of a dissertation or a thesis. Having the ability to string your thoughts together,

knowing how to follow the logical progression along the way, and being able to express yourself well, are crucial skills for mobilizers and other Christian leaders. We learn to ask, “So what? What difference does this kind of information make?” Then, being able to actually write about the value of the information that you are receiving, there is almost nothing that I know in our contemporary world that so pushes you into learning to research and write well and then present yourself well, than a formal rigorous graduate degree. How does this affect us in mobilization and in intercultural studies? You are forced to understand things like social context, history, and background. You are able to explore why we think the way we do and where the origin of our ideas come from. Just in the last number of years, one of the programs we have launched here is an MA Global Theology. It was an effort to try to understand the trajectory of theological thought over the 20th century. I remember having the inclination that perhaps we do not put enough emphasis on some of the dramatic, what I call, hammer blows of the 20th century. As I began to research and uncover the huge impact of the end of empire following the Great War of 1914-18 and explore some of those historical threads that have impacted our theological thought, even as a person who had completed a PhD, it was like I entered a whole new world. It is important for mobilizers to be able to speak about the needs of the world and the community that we serve, by understanding people groups that are desperately in need of the message of Jesus, being able to put together in good language demographic studies and the needs of people who we still need to reach. That is a part of why we learn and why we grow the way that we do. Formal graduate study provides the opportunity for meaningful research.

4. The Ability to Advocate more Effectively

I remember in my Christian leadership as a younger person, I was often asked to speak at conferences or events and I have to be honest, as I look back, there was always that slight little nervousness about whether my position was well-argued enough and whether I had been able to bring enough weight to bear on that which I was sharing. There was always a slight insecurity about the way in which I put together seminar material or workshop material or even preaching material. Then the opportunity came to do some advanced study and research, and I will never forget that feeling when I completed my first graduate degree. I understand how to research. I understand how to appeal to the sources. I know people have made valuable contributions in this field. I can quote them; I can quote people who have made alternative positions or adopted alternative positions, and it was a very deep personal experience of reassurance. I had done the work and earned some credibility behind what I have to say. Yet it was much more than that. It equipped me to be an advocate. I am advocating today from a position of strength and knowledge and looking back over a life that has been deeply enriched by being able to have the privilege of higher education. So, I would suggest to you that one of the reasons why an advanced degree and the credentials that it gives you is valuable in missionary mobilization is that we need advocates. The church needs advocates. We need people who are going to stir the hearts of men and women – people who are going to be able to engage pastors across the nations and be able to talk to groups of churches together and inspire mission activity. Mission involvement and mission work needs advocacy, and an advocate is somebody who feels reassured in the knowledge base that they have been able to develop, and then adding to that the ability to string words together to combine concepts. Our toolbox is words and ideas and the best way to get good tools into our toolbox is through good research, good interaction in the classroom, and a formal degree that gives us credibility. I can speak from my own experience and say that I have no difficulty whatsoever in being able to advocate for missions mobilization, for missionary service, or for anyone going into God’s work and getting the advantage of a higher degree behind them.

5. It Opens Doors to the Mission Field

There are teaching opportunities all around the world. You could add English language skills or other language skills to your learning, but there is no doubt that even the sort of confined degree of an MA Intercultural Studies compared with an obvious skill could be used globally in the marketplace. Higher education opens

doors to church groups that recognize that you have done the work. It also opens opportunities to teach. I have said many times that some of the best potential teachers for Bible colleges are not available to teach in our Bible colleges. These are capable pastors; they are people who have profound preaching gifts, but have never added to their journey with an advanced degree. In our current world, no organization or institution of higher learning can really exist with credibility without some level of accreditation. Accreditation varies from country to country, but it has become increasingly rigorous and demanding.

A few years ago, a pastor friend of mine was invited to go to Angola because there was a Bible college there, but he soon realized he could not get a visa to enter the country and teach unless he had an advanced degree. Fortunately, he had that, so submitting those qualifications opened the door and this pastor was able to go and teach at a Bible college in Angola. Around the world, there are dynamic Bible colleges and ministry training centers. There are literally thousands of Christian institutions all over the globe and the need for educated teachers is always there. The opportunities exist for people to go and teach, to do an intensive or a semester course. The reality is that because of the requirements of accreditation and sometimes even in a non-accredited institution, along with the standards that the institution has set internally, they would require somebody with an advanced degree. The rule of thumb is that you can teach a degree below the degree that you have achieved. If you want to teach in either an associate, certificate, diploma, or a Bachelor of Arts degree program, you would need a master's degree of some sort, especially in the area that you are teaching. If you are wanting to do some graduate study or teach at a master's level, you would need a doctorate or a PhD. I am deeply passionate about people, especially those who have perhaps not had the opportunity to formalize their studies at an earlier stage in ministry, doing the hard work of earning those degrees and then spending perhaps the best years of their lives being able to teach in colleges and institutions around the world. One of the great delights that I have had as president of Trinity Bible College and Graduate School is to see people such as district superintendents and those who are already in a senior position of ministry but did not have the luxury of getting an advanced degree, doing so and finding themselves in such a strong position to continue teaching with the added benefit of great experience behind their name.

I hope that I have made a case today, just through these five points, that there are significant benefits to formalizing a degree. Do the hard work, get into the research, read the literature, develop a good skill set in terms of language and ideas and concepts, and then you will be better positioned to advocate for mission and mobilization and be able to teach in ministry environments and contexts all around the world. I would encourage you to look into opportunities for further study, whether with us or with any other credible institution, and please add to this, this great body of people in the academy who are helping church leaders all around the world.

It does not take a very detailed study of church history to discover that in almost every major sustainable (and that is a key point) move of God throughout history – going all the way back to the patristics and the early church fathers, through some of the enclaves of learning in the Middle Ages, into the Reformation, continuing with the great 18th century revival, coming into the 20th century with the Student Volunteer Movement and other similar organizations – in every one of those sustainable church revivals or primary movements, there has always been a key role played by the doctors of the church, either through a link to strong institutions of learning or simply through the input of people of learning who have been able to contribute. So, I encourage you to give careful thought to continuing your studies. Thank you for the opportunity of sharing and God bless you all. ✨

Dr. Paul Alexander has served as President of Trinity Bible College & Graduate School since 2012. Under his leadership, the college has seen tremendous growth. He and his wife, Dr. Carol, have led churches and institutions of higher learning on four continents, and are passionate about training servant leaders with a commitment to church planting and mission. This commitment informs their leadership, sets their priorities, and defines the spiritual tenor they aspire to see evident in the Trinity community.

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