

TRANSFERRING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE ON A WORLD MISSION
FIELD IN VIEW OF INDIGENEITY

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"No son, you can't use the car tonight, but I'll be glad to drive you and your date wherever you wish to go." "I know you have good judgment dear, but I think you should let me choose your clothes for you yet, since this is your last year of high school." Not many teenagers would be happy with such statements from their parents. How about: "I'll still teach this Bible class for now, until you can handle it." or "Why don't you pick the subject and I'll try to put together some lessons for you." In world mission work we often hear the comparison or illustration being made between the "parent" church and the "daughter-church". We strive for indigeneity, which means that the "daughter-church" will mature to the point of being able to support, discipline, multiply and teach itself. To reach this goal it is assumed that the "parent-church" will send someone with greater Christian knowledge to be conveyed to those of the "daughter-church". By this process the "daughter-church" will mature and grow to be indigenous. Since other papers are being written about education methods and about "training this generation to teach the next", I would like to concentrate on some of the subtleties involved in the transfer of Christian knowledge that will better enable the daughter-church to become indigenous.

The Missionary's Attitude

One possible problem Mom and Dad had earlier with their teenagers was attitude. Their attitude towards son and daughter was one of mistrust, perhaps even condescending, albeit loving. Maybe they had their reasons. But when are we justifiably restricting the privileges of the children because of their inabilities and when are we being condescending - perhaps a bit frightened to turn the children loose on their own. As parents or as missionaries we face this struggle, knowing when to take over and when to step aside. However, if we plan for "stepping aside" and look forward to that day and successful and blessed progress it is far less likely that we will interfere with or delay that day's arrival. Thus, we begin with the critical part of transferring Christian knowledge to reach indigeneity - attitude. The transfer of knowledge will be swifter, the day of indigeneity will come sooner if we have the kind of attitude that St. Paul showed towards the people he taught. His

example of the proper attitude for a missionary towards the people he is serving is exemplary. Note his words to the Thessalonian Christians: ***"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom."*** (1 Thes. 2:12) If Paul was not telling the truth who better could dispute the statement than the Thessalonian Christians? Instead the acceptance of this statement not only by the Thessalonians but by every other congregation amongst whom St. Paul worked gives evidence to the kind of attitude St. Paul had in transferring his Christian knowledge to them: fatherly, encouraging, comforting, urging. Then, even when he needed to speak harshly to them, to the Corinthians, or to the Galatians, they all could accept it as fatherly correction coming from a loving concern for their spiritual growth.

Certainly a condescending attitude, an arrogant attitude, or an attitude of distrust towards the learner will become a major hindrance in the transfer of knowledge from Christian to Christian. This was clearly stated to me after one class when a student in our seminary told me after class: "When you became angry in class, we weren't sure if you were defending God's Word, or just your own opinion." I hope it was in defence of God's Word, but in reality it was probably more the result of impatience and frustration, mixed with a touch of arrogance towards the "learners". Arrogance that they should question what I'm teaching them, and frustration that even though I had taught them the same thing several times, it still hadn't TRANSFERRED! The worst of all possibilities is that the condescending, arrogant attitude is what will be transferred to the learners! And as we all know there is a ready and willing recipient in each of us called the Old Adam. More on that later.

Correction, perhaps even some anger, has its place as we also need to transfer the knowledge of the Law. Like St. Paul's words to the Corinthians and Galatians, it is proper to admonish the erring brother. However, we need to remember that St. Paul had built a firm foundation of trust, encouragement and love with these new Christians. Think again of St. Paul's reminder to the Thessalonians regarding his behavior and attitude toward them: "we were gentle among you like a mother"; "as a father deals with his own children"; "encouraging, comforting and urging". How powerful and quick the transfer of knowledge can be in such a relationship where there is first encouragement and comfort. This fact I also noted while

working with students/evangelists on the sermons they were writing. Required to write at least one sermon a month, each student was to bring his sermon for review to his advisor/instructor. If I only pointed out the faults and errors, soon the work declined as did the interest. The relationship became more competitive than receptive. But if there was encouragement to grow in the gifts shown and some approval of work done well, the work improved.

The Missionary's Methods

In the best of relationships and with the best of attitudes towards the learner, the best of methods will certainly be more effective. Once again we can learn from St. Paul and remember his encouragement to the Corinthian Christians: **"Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1)** He did not just say "Follow Jesus' example, you can't find a better one." He also set himself up as an example from which the Christians could learn. St. Paul's example, his life, became a vivid, powerful lesson - the transferring of Christian knowledge - from the spiritual father to the children. The impact of a living example would be so powerful that even the younger Timothy could use it effectively in transferring Christian knowledge to those many years his senior: **"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (1 Tim. 4:12)** He knowingly urged the Corinthian Christians: **"...for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy,... He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church." (1 Cor. 4:15-17)** So often it is said that Christianity is more "caught" than "taught". How effective it is to see the patience, the concern, the love and faith of the missionary as he works and lives among the people he is serving. Then, as he speaks of patience, concern, compassion, love and faith in the Bible class, or seminary class, the words will have much more impact.

With this in mind the council meeting is not just another drudgery, the special services are not just another formality, the visits to the members' homes are not just another job requirement. Instead every time the missionary mingles, communicates, meets with the people it is an opportunity to transfer his knowledge of

Christ by example. How we relate to our family during church gatherings, how we speak about others, and about our Lord. Is our tone, our attitude, one of continual thanksgiving or continual complaining? This will be transferred from "father" to "child". This became more evident as we were able to start a program of hospital visitation for our seminary students. Once or twice a week they make calls on selected patients at a nearby Christian hospital. The real joy for me was being able to take the students in the beginning, and show them by example how to comfort the ailing by bringing them God's Word. Granted this was a staged example, but nonetheless, an example. I wasn't just telling them to "Go get'em guys!" and waving good-bye from the classroom. They heard the compassion, they felt the concern and they too were thankful for the requested return.

Of course, we also seek formal opportunities to transfer knowledge with the goal of indigeneity - spiritual maturity. The usual seminars and classes either in the seminary or the local congregation are still our primary ways of transferring this knowledge. However, to strive for indigeneity, the local church, the national worker needs to be involved. For instance, in the past it was often left to the missionary to develop and present seminars or lessons. If a topic was to be discussed it fell to the missionary to develop it and present it. Thus, the missionary continued to be considered the premier source of spiritual knowledge and information. And perhaps there was an unspoken feeling that the missionary knew better than the nationals anyway. However, our goal must not be to impress the nationals with our knowledge or our speaking and teaching abilities, rather to share with them what they may yet lack, so that they might grow and become built up, mature in the body of Christ. To reach this goal of growth, maturity, there needs to be involvement. To achieve this we might involve them more and more in the development and presentation of training sessions - seminars and classes beyond the local congregation work. By this involvement the national workers and lay leaders of the national church are encouraged and urged on in their leadership roles, and the church matures.

Another method of transferring knowledge that is very important in Indonesia for the local congregation is the weekly or bi-weekly "persekutuan doa" - prayer fellowship. These take place in the homes of the members who usually invite not only other members of the congregation, but also neighbors on occasion.

Unfortunately the lack of materials usually causes these meetings to be unfocused and rather shallow as well as repetitious in subject matter. We hope to make more effective use of these gatherings by offering some short, topical series. The leaders - both lay and called - need guidance in leading a discussion to obtain spiritual insights. Again, the missionary can guide, advise, observe and even give examples, but best that the actual work be given to the national worker or layman to achieve the goal of indigeneity.

The Missionary's Materials

Another important area of the missionary's work as "Transferer of Knowledge" is without a doubt the production of materials to be used by the national church. In the early stages, before trained and gifted leaders who can produce the materials themselves, it will be the missionary's task to provide materials for Sunday school, Bible classes, Adult Doctrines classes, and Catechism classes. Again, with the concept of indigeneity in mind, it would be best to involve the national leaders even at the early stages of producing materials. Taking a little time to explain why a certain passage was used, or why a certain order was chosen for the lesson will be a natural transfer of knowledge in such matters. The benefit will be even greater in the presentation of the materials by the worker/lay leader himself.

One of the greatest benefits in involving the national workers, seminary students or lay leaders in the early development of materials is that the materials will be more effective because they are linguistically, grammatically and culturally correct. The importance of this was demonstrated for me recently as we prepared tracts and message cards for the hospital visitation program. I used Isaiah 40:11 - "He tends his flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." (In the KJV it's translated "...and carry them in his bosom...") - as the key verse for one of the tracts. In a short prayer on that tract I used the word in Indonesian from that verse which I thought meant "carries them close to his heart" as a request for the patient. In studying these tracts together, one of the students pointed out that the wording is generally used as a euphemism for someone who has died - like being "in the bosom of Abraham". Although a mother who has just given birth may be comforted with the request that God hold her and her child close to His heart, asking that they both die and go to heaven

may not be appropriate at the time. Certainly we have all had such experiences and become learners ourselves in the foreign culture. I only hope that those experiences have not only helped each of us to grow in understanding, but more importantly have given the national worker, the seminary student, the lay leader the encouragement to take our place, to lead his people, and to become one who will transfer Christian knowledge to others for the rest of his life.

It is likely that this paper has not offered any new methods of Christian education for the world mission field, nor any new "buzz words" for missiology, but that wasn't my intent anyway. My intent was merely to remind us all of some of the basics that I feel are critical in being transferers of Christian knowledge on the world mission field: our attitude, our personal example, and our spirit of working together. When these are in tune with St. Paul's and our Lord's instruction, and we make use of the many methods and techniques of education, the mission fields we serve will certainly grow to maturity, becoming indigenous and no longer needing any of us!

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