Transformational Theological Education for the Glory of God

Caleb Davison

God's people need Scripturally grounded theological education more than ever. With the explosion of information, social media and channels, there is a dramatic rise in competing narratives, not to mention the older alternative worldviews of atheism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Animism. The world is accessing more information about trends and philosophies, but that does not naturally lead to more understanding of Yahweh. If anything, there seems to be confusion, deconstruction, deception and apostasy in the Church.

Despite the need for theological education, some institutions are struggling. Christianity Today said, "Many seminaries are facing declining enrollments with the declining birthrates and increased secularization in the US… Evangelical seminaries are also grappling with the tensions and divisions within evangelicalism."[1] There have been many helpful suggestions to change the method and accessibility of theological education. James Emery White, former seminary president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary suggests, "there are things seminaries can do to recapture the attention of students and the trust of the churches who send them."[2]

Beyond structures and strategies, what can the Church do to reinvigorate theological education? First and foremost, I believe the Church needs to recover a fresh vision for the purpose of theological education, which is the study and discovery of our glorious God. Theological education must find its role in that exciting purpose to help reconcile all things through Christ (Colossians 1:20). Therefore, theological education is not boring research about an ancient historical figure. It is the thrilling discovery of a magnificent and wonderful God and Jesus is at the centre of it.

Only from our union with Christ flows love, power, and wisdom that holistically transforms us to engage our increasingly complex world. For that purpose, theological education needs new life, grounded with a vision to transform hearts, heart, and hands through God's words. To begin to reignite that passion, let's examine how theological education changes us and glorifies our Creator.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE HEAD: A VISION OF GOD'S GLORY

Making God's glory the centre of theological education is not about adding more classes on the subject. It is not just a topical study, though that has a place. What I am advocating is far deeper. It must

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1. https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/may/gordon-conwell-sell-campus-financial-enrollment-struggle.html

2. https://www.churchandculture.org/blog/2022/6/6/the-ending-of-seminaries

be the crown jewel and joy of our study and pursuit. God's glory should motivate our study like an archaeologist searching for a great Egyptian treasure. It should cause us to cry out in wonder, "Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). We have to begin there if we want to impact the world.

God's glory, like the sun, is meant to be central because it brings life to all who walk in the light. In fact, God's entire story is about His glory. His glory is not just a part of the greater cosmos, it is the thread that weaves through history. Without that understanding, we will miss the excitement of exploration within God's word and world. The creation of the universe and human history and everything visible can be attributed to the ongoing story of God revealing himself, culminating in the person of Christ. And, this narrative that is far larger (and better) than we perceive. Christ is the centre and we live in this story to show His unimaginable love, power, wisdom, and greatness, which are fortunately poured out on us.

Why a story? To understand someone, we need context, situations, time, and experiences together. We need to observe them in various challenges, successes. How well do you know a celebrity on television? To fully comprehend someone's character and heart, we need to talk with them, hear from them, process life with them. God's story reveals many truths about his heart, character and nature. He is not a God that remains distant. He speaks into darkness, moves in love and leads human history for His glory and the good of humanity. Jesus is proof that God wants to be actively involved. In the same way, he asks us to participate. We are not just watching his story, walk with him and co-labour in it.

If we disregard this, we may miss the connection between theological education and the glory of God. These two, knowledge of God and God's glory, are intimately tied in the Scripture. Biblical education exists so we can properly see and perceive God as He is. This leads to his honour and glory. The angels in close proximity to God endlessly cry out "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Is 6:3). Remember that these angels perceive God in a way we have not yet. They see him more fully than we and their response is complete amazement and awe. The incredible truth is that the closer we get to God, the more enamoured we are with His glory and respond in praise. The more we gaze, the more we praise! And these angels praise God for his holiness or "set apart-ness." He is unique and different from anything else and one of those differences is his wisdom and knowledge, which infinitely surpasses ours. Getting closer to an infinite God does not slow down our joyful pursuit of knowing Him, it hastens it. Let our education fuel this!

We see in Habakkuk that, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). God is revealed through the expansion of the knowledge of His glory. This is key to our role as educators. This is the heart of God for the earth to be filled with increasing knowledge of God's nature, goodness and characteristics and humans are his primary vessel for that to happen. Thus, until this comes true, there is a gap in knowledge of the glory of God and we are called to help fill that gap.

He is more glorious than we could ever comprehend. Like a brilliant author who draws the reader into the narrative, God has created an environment for humanity to ponder, seek answers, and participate along the way. Why? Because he wants us to seek him and know him and the pursuit glorifies Him.

This gives new light to theological education. It is not an isolated topical study, but the foundation that gives life and purpose to all other study. It is not the pursuit of a dry arbitrary goal. It is the discovery of a personal and infinite Being. That is why the study of God, the Trinity, cannot be a one-day seminar or even a 4-year degree. It requires a lifetime of study, learning, reflection, discovery, conversations and most importantly participation.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE HEART: GOD'S GLORY RENEWS US

When we study deeper about who God is, we discover more about ourselves, for we are in His image. That is partly what the story is about- God raising up mature children after His likeness (Genesis 1:26, Malachi 2:15, Ephesians 1:5). There is some debate about the words, "image" and "likeness" in Genesis, but the core lesson is that we are endowed with His image and we are called to grow into his likeness. Adam and Eve were not born fully mature and understanding everything. They needed a garden for growth, learning, incubation, and a tree to test their hearts. Maturity takes a lifetime, maybe eternity, to grow into the likeness of God, just like it takes a child years to be like their parent. A son may be born looking like their father, but that does not guarantee he will think, live, and act like his father. That takes years of observation, walking, talking, and even wrestling. Our spiritual journey begins when the Spirit awakens us and turns us back to the Father through faith in Christ.

We were made for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7). This is not something we should shy away from. The world is desperately searching for answers about identity and the Church has those answers within the pages of Scripture. As Christians grow in understanding God's vision and our identity, we can walk better in our purpose to steward the earth and have dominion (which is intimately connected to God's image and His image in us). We become like Him in our ability to rule and reign on earth as He reigns in the heavens through power, love and wisdom.

The more we walk in alignment with humanity's purpose, the more fruit we bear. And that is the role of theological education- to make humanity fruitful! Fruit, then, is what glorifies God (John 15:8). Fruit is not abstract or unquantifiable; it is the tangible result of being connected to God and living like Him. Fruit is the manifestation of God revealing Himself in us in all areas of life. When we walk with God, we bear fruit through God. Love is the primary fruit of God in us and when we love, it demonstrates to the world that we are walking with Christ (Galatians 5:22, John 13:35).

> When we study deeper about who God is, we discover more about ourselves, for we are in His image. That is partly what the story is about- God raising up mature children after His likeness (Genesis 1:26, Malachi 2:15, Ephesians 1:5).

Facts and information are necessary, but we cannot stop there. Glorifying God is not simply an intellectual pursuit. It is about fulfilling God's vision for the world, which cannot fully glorify God in a state of rebellion. And who better to reconcile that situation than the sons and daughters of God, called and re-commissioned for Genesis 1:26 fruit-bearing?

God wants us to participate in this story, not just watch it or tell it, because that is what manifests His pre-existing glory. Our Christian calling is to put truth into action and bear fruit in God's story. Fruit, the outflow of our inward transformation, jumps out of the pages of God's story and lasts forever as a blessing for the Story Teller. That is why Jesus says fruit is eternal (John 15:16). Fruit goes beyond the pages of this life.

Education and training exist to fuel fruitfulness. This is the same calling of a leader to equip saints for good works, or fruits (Ephesians 4:12). We cannot dismiss the role of teaching to prepare saints for good works and then do everything in our power to ensure fruitfulness. So educators must teach the mind, touch the heart, and target hands.

If we are in God's great story, teachers and educators need to go beyond facts and paint a picture of the future based on what is revealed in Scripture. This future, Gods desire from the beginning, is about God living with His people on earth. This is not just a fairy tale hope, this is an actual future that God has promised, which puts our wrestling hearts at ease.

In the middle of this narrative is a serious heart-level question. Are we wanting to glorify God or ourselves? This goes all the way back to the question for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It needs to be answered in our hearts too. Will we glorify God or seek our own knowledge of good and evil? Education, teaching, and theology steps right into this question and we must unashamedly submit to God's vision of the future based on His truth revealed in the Scripture.

The answer to this question will depend on whether we see God's glory as a good thing or a threat to our glory. That is why vision casting God's glorious future is so important. Humans cannot seek both their glory and God's. Fortunately, history and Scripture affirm that God's glory is good for us. It is what we truly seek like Moses cried, "Show me your glory!" (Exodus 33:18). God's infinite glory truly satisfies our thirsty hearts and allows the world to work in perfect harmony. If God is like the sun, then the light is His glory that brings life and transformation to all who walk in it.

TRANSFORMATION OF HANDS: BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Now, the question is, can teachers help bring transformation outside the classroom? As the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink. God supplies the water that transforms people and we cannot force people to drink what we teach. However, there are ways to make the water attractive! Think about a grocery store with many options for bottled water. The content may be the same and yet people are drawn to pick only one bottle. In that sense, educators can help with the packaging to make sure students continue to drink from God's word.

Transformation of our hands comes when people put God's word into practice. Look at Jesus' words at the Sermon on the Mount. He commands his listeners to put into practice what they heard and whoever does not put his words into practice are like a house without a firm foundation (Matthew 7:26). Thus, theological students must learn to apply the truths they learn. This comes by faith. Satan knows much about God, but does not respond in faith. The Pharisees are another example of those who knew and studied the Scripture but failed to come to Christ for salvation (John 5:39).

The truth is like fuel. It is meant to be used. Like in a car, unused fuel is wasted. It only weighs down the vehicle. Fuel is made to be used to move the car, and then more fuel can be added. Similarly, Biblical information is meant to be used and education is meant to be lived out and put into practice, so that we can be filled again. That is why investing time and truth into unresponsive students is a poor strategy. We should be like the Apostle Paul, teach those who have been faithful with what they have already learned (2 Timothy 2:2).

To that end, there are several Biblical strategies for theological education that centre around God's glory to bring true transformation of head, heart, and hands.

1. RELATIONAL EDUCATION

If what we have said so far is true, then the context of learning matters and how we fruitfully pursue knowledge. God did not simply give humans the Bible and ask us to study it and come back and take an exam when we are ready to be like him. God invites us into a story (full of ups and downs and unexpected turns) that increases our experiential knowledge and builds our character along the way. Knowledge of God is central to that journey.

Educators must first see and behold the glory of God. They must stand in awe of it. They must love it, seek it, and long for it. They must make it tangible in their lives and help others to see the same. What we see in the Scripture is that glorification happens in relationship, when one is within proximity of another. When one beholds another's glory, Jesus wants to be glorified by the Father in the presence of his people (17:24). And, Jesus glorified the Father through his life and obedience (17:6). Jesus is glorified by his people (17:10) and Jesus has given his glory to his people (17:22). It is all very relational.

From the beginning, God said it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). The same is true today and one implication is that fellowship is a tool to glorify God. It is hard to discover truth in isolation. Relationship is necessary for the full revelation of God. Beholders share with each other, learn from one another, and rejoice when they discover more about God.

When people get together, students and teachers get to know each other. It is not just about knowing the information; it is about knowing how others perceive that information that helps us grow and persuades us about the validity of the information. Information can be discussed, challenged, and then go deeper. Not only is this kind of education more effective, it is exciting and inviting. The world is longing for relationship, especially after the years of relational drought during COVID. Relational learning leads to conversations and conversations typically tend to be practical.

2. PRACTICAL CONVERSATIONS

Theory has a necessary place, but eventually education needs to drift into the practical question of, "now what?" Practical does not mean prescriptive. It does not mean a formula for right actions and success. Practical means applicable to the real world and specifically the situations that students are facing. This is not always easy. Practical conversations require time and discovery of nuanced situations.

Practical is necessary because at some point truth must transfer into action. Jesus' Great Commission commands us to teach people to obey (or observe) all of his words (Matthew 28:20). The aim is not for everyone to know Jesus' words. The goal is a world full of fruitful people who glorify God in every aspect of their life. God requires teaching for practical outcomes and so should we!

One way to combine deep truths and practical application is through storytelling. Jesus did this masterfully through parables. Stories are naturally relatable, but can be profound when they hold deeper truths.

3. EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMS

Experiential learning goes beyond the classroom. This may seem outside the scope of education, but remember that education is meant to be holistic, for head, heart and hands. To do this, educators can require that the program include activities. For some ministries, they require students to do their own extracurricular work like discipling Christians, sharing the gospel or planting churches. The ministry that I serve with, Leadership International, is helping Bible students to share the gospel, provide relief, and serve vulnerable women and children. That is Biblical leadership in action. Depending on the education and program, there are various options. It is more than acceptable to require students to put their learning into action and then reflect and share. That is exactly what Jesus did!

This fits into God's design for good works to shine before others and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). When students have an opportunity to do this, they taste the delight of "truth in action" and they will likely want to keep going. There is joy when we obey God's words (John 15:10-11). Joy comes from communion with Christ in his mission, when we walk in his steps according to his desires. Obedience naturally draws us closer to Christ, the source of our joy. Joy is relational and primarily comes from intimacy with God. People are wired to seek joy and it can be a powerful motivator for people to go out of their comfort zone to obey God. For example, the Apostle Paul said that it was the joy before Christ that led him to the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

Some learners tend to be more inward and intellectual. Doing anything beyond the class may seem foreign. Like a static waterwheel, it takes a lot to get moving again. But once that momentum begins, it becomes a lot easier. Obedience is a lifestyle that needs to be observed and followed. Sometimes we need to see it, hear stories and taste it before they begin obeying. Educators can help in that space by reminding students about their greater purpose of glorifying God, which comes from our fruits and good deeds (Matthew 5:16), not degrees and positions.

4. COMPREHENSIVE CONTENT

Biblical education needs to cover Genesis 1 until Revelation 22. Sometimes education focuses too much on certain details and neglects the grand narrative. If a Bible student becomes an expert on the laws in Leviticus but fails to understand how they relate to

the story of God's redemption, they have missed the point. Educators must be excellent vision casters for God's glorious nature, work and plans. Then students will be more likely to register details properly when within the broader framework.

Comprehensive content is crucial because God is meant to be glorified in the whole earth (Habakkuk 2:14), and subsequently in all areas of life and culture. Think about the scope of the practical topics Jesus taught about like money, marriage, taxes, and prayer. When education is comprehensive, it helps students to see how theology affects all of life. Our understanding of God does not just impact church services. It impacts governments, economics, business, and families. When educators broaden their scope of theological education, as well as depth, it accurately portrays the significance tthat theology is meant to have in all of life. And that glorifies the God whom we seek to study and serve.

CONCLUSION

As God's image bearers, humans were created to behold God's glory and reveal it. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Transformation comes when we behold God's glory together and depend on the Spirit to transform our head, heart, and hands. Theological educators are uniquely called to help take the blinds off of students so they can behold what has been there all along and live out their faith. For this end, let us make every effort to plan and practice theological education that is relational, practical, experiential and comprehensive. That is how Christ taught his disciples and we too can experience transformational impact as we "declare his glory among the nations" (1 Chronicles 16:23-25)!

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OUR MINISTRIES

Blockchain Missiology

Enoch Wan & Phillip Metzger

ABSTRACT

Blockchain Missiology is a blend of polycentric missiology and blockchain theory. It values organizational decentralization/distribution over centralization, but some elements require further consideration. Practically, what would it look like to enact a blockchain missiological approach and how does that look different from other approaches? It is relational, and intercultural and values translatability as a means of knowing God and making Him known.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Paper

"Blockchain was created as a response to the trust crisis that swept the world in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis"[1] and it shares similarities with missiology such as basic concepts and implications. The purpose of this paper is to integrate "blockchain" and "missiology" thus the title "blockchain missiology."

Definition of Key-terms

Blockchain - A blockchain is a type of distributed database or ledger. Blockchain is the technology that enables the existence of cryptocurrency (among other things). A blockchain is a decentralized ledger of all transactions across a peer-to-peer network.

Missiology - "Missiology is an academic discipline aimed at understanding and explaining the specifics of the church's missionary calling in light of the missio Dei. Being biblically based, it is historically informed, theologically balanced, and grounded in particular cultural contexts with the ultimate purpose of directing the practice of the Christian mission in its specific settings."[2]

Relational Realism – "Ontologically, "relational realism" is defined as "the systematic understanding that 'reality' is primarily based on the 'vertical relationship' between God and the created order and secondarily 'horizontal relationship' within the created order." Epistemologically, "relational realism" is to be defined as "the systematic understanding that God is the absolute Truth and the Perfect Knowledge, and only in relationship to HIM is there the possibility of human knowledge and understanding of truth and reality."[3]

Relational Transformation Paradigm — transformational change is to be understood within "relational realism paradigm."

Transformational change – The dynamism and process of positive change, originated vertically from the Triune-God and ushered in the relational reality horizontally, through the process of interaction between personal Beings (the Triune God) and human beings (at micro and macro levels) multi-dimensionally, i.e. spiritual, moral, social, behavioral dimensions at personal and/or institutional levels – the opposite of transgressional change.[4]

Transgressional Change – Change caused by the dynamism from the enemy of the Triune God and by nature that is contrary to the attribute of God and His will, His revelation in Jesus Christ and the Scripture: the opposite is transformational change." (Wan & Raibley 2022:7)

Organization of the Paper

This paper will critically assess the potential applications of blockchain in mission by examining its key concepts, such as decentralization, trust, the God protocols, and centralized/decentralized/distributed systems. It will also explore the idea of a fresh approach to mission, informed by the principles of blockchain theory, that values every participant and promotes mutual learning and dialogue.

Theory and Practice of Blockchain

There are several overlapping but relevant definitions for blockchain. A blockchain is a type of distributed database or ledger.[5] Blockchain is the technology that enables the existence of cryptocurrency (among other things). A blockchain is a decentralized ledger of all transactions across a peer-to-peer network. Using this technology, participants can confirm transactions without a need for a central clearing authority.[6]

A blockchain is "a distributed database that maintains a continuously growing list of ordered records, called blocks." These blocks "are linked using cryptography. Each block contains a cryptographic

1. Primavera De Filippi, Morshed Mannan, and Wessel Reijers, "Blockchain as a Confidence Machine: The Problem of Trust & Challenges of Governance," *Technology in Society* 62 (2020): 101284, doi:10.1016/j.techsoc.2020.101284.

2. A. Kravtsev, "What Is Missiology? By A. Kravtsev - Social Theology," Social Theology, Last modified December 2012, https://socialtheology.com/docs/What_is_Missiology_An_Introductory_Paper.pdf.

3. Enoch Wan, "The Paradigm of 'Relational Realism'." Occasional Bulletin 19, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 1.

4. Enoch Wan, "Relational Transformational Leadership: An Asian Christian Perspective." Asian Missions Advance, April 2021:2-7.

5. "What Is Blockchain?," McKinsey & Company, Last modified December 5, 2022, https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-blockchain.

6. "Making Sense of Bitcoin, Cryptocurrency and Blockchain," Price Waterhouse Coopers, accessed July 15, 2023, https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/financial-services/fintech/bitcoin-blockchain-cryptocurrency.html.

hash of the previous block, a timestamp, and transaction data. A blockchain is a decentralized, distributed, and public digital ledger that is used to record transactions across many computers so that the record cannot be altered retroactively without the alteration of all subsequent blocks and the consensus of the network.7
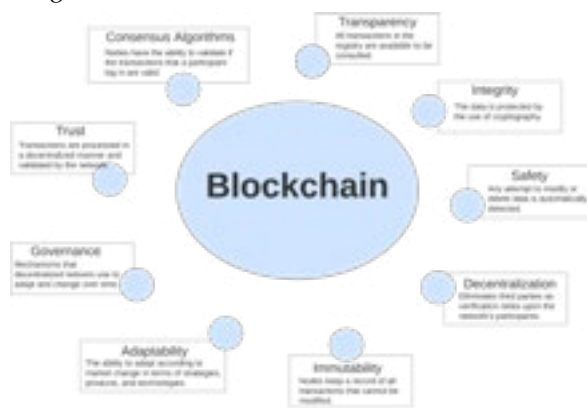
Not without irony, one of the best definitions of blockchain comes from the book *Blockchain for Dummies*. "*Blockchain* owes its name to the way it stores transaction data—in blocks linked together to form a chain. As the number of transactions grows, so does the blockchain. Blocks record and confirm the time and sequence of transactions, which are then logged into the blockchain, within a discrete network governed by rules agreed to by the network participants. Each block contains a hash (a digital fingerprint or unique identifier), timestamped batches of recent valid transactions, and the hash of the previous block. The previous block hash links the blocks together and prevents any block from being altered or a block being inserted between two existing blocks."8 Below is a brief description of the characteristics of blockchain:

> *Blockchain characteristics are classified into functional characteristics and emergent characteristics. Functional characteristics are those which are mandatory for functioning, without which the system may not exist or function properly. Functional Characteristics of Blockchain are Decentralized network, Distributed Ledger, Consensus, Immutable (Finality) and Security.*

Blockchain Characteristics Transferable to the Practice of Christian Mission

The figure below shows blockchain characteristics transferable to the practice of Christian mission.

Figure 1 – Blockchain Characteristics and Benefits[9]

7. "What Is Blockchain and How Does It Work?," Synopsys, accessed July 15, 2023, https://www.synopsys.com/glossary/what-is-blockchain.html#:~:text=Definition,a%20timestamp%2C%20and%20transaction%20data.

8. "What Is Blockchain and How Does It Work?"

9. This information for this figure was primarily taken from "The landing of Blockchain in port management." @ https://piernext.portdebarcelona.cat/en/technology/blockchain-logistics-and-ports-present-and-future/
Accessed August 24, 2023. There is a characteristic added to the original figure (adaptability.)

Christian Missiology and Polycentric Missiology

Joseph Handley Jr and Allen Yeh have written important books on the topic of distributed/decentralized leadership. Handley wrote *Polycentric Mission Leadership* and Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology.*

We have chosen to use the term blockchain missiology rather than polycentric, though there are several similar touchpoints. Handley writes,

> *"I envision a model of leadership that is polycentric, collaborative, taking input from a rich diversity of sources to achieve better and more representative outcomes than the traditional top-down hierarchical or managerial approach to leadership that has been prevalent for decades. Over and above collaboration, decentralized leadership allows for each region of the world and every sector of a company to make decisions that are just in time and appropriate for the local context. In this way, agency is empowered through different centers, allowing better choices to be made that are relevant to the local situation."[10]*

Yeh sees the move from monocentric to polycentric as a direct result of world Christianity. "Today, in light of the phenomenon known as world Christianity, the mission is polycentric and polydirectional: "from everyone to everywhere."[11]

Mary Lederleitner gave this definition of polycentric missiology in her plenary address at the 14th Global Consultation in Panama for the World Evangelical Alliance in 2016. "Polycentric mission is a holistic perspective and strategy that values multiple centers of power and influence engaged in mission around the globe and actively seeks collaboration with them in ways that address marginalization and prioritizes decision-making shaped by a growing number of diverse voices and perspectives."[12]

Overcoming marginalization is a high priority for those promoting polycentric leadership and missiology. Yeh emphasizes this in saying that the days of the gospel going from the West to the rest ended when the gospel had been going out from multiple centers since the disciples fled persecution in Jerusalem in Acts 4.

There are other fields of research using the idea of polycentrism including the area of governance. Michael McGinnis defines polycentric and polycentric governance like this: "Polycentric: connotes multiple centres of decision-making authority which are de jure independent or de facto autonomous of each other. Polycentric Governance: governance that has polycentric attributes, where governance is a process by which the repertoire of rules, norms, and strategies that guide behaviour within a given realm of policy

10. Joseph W. Handley, *Polycentric Mission Leadership: Toward a New Theoretical Model for Global Leadership* S.l.: Fortress Press, 2023, 7.

11. Allen L. Yeh, Polycentric Missiology: Twenty First Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016, 6.

12. Mary Lederleitner, "Plenary Address Polycentric Missiology: the 14th annual Global Consultation in Panama," October 3-7, 2016.

interactions are formed, applied, interpreted, and reformed."[13]

This use of polycentric governance is significant in that McGinnis avoids a strict use of the word polycentric since the government is technically connected by one system. If we were to use a strict definition, we would conclude that government can only really be a monocentric or unitary government. In McGinnis' understanding, polycentric governance shares key attributes of polycentrism while stemming from one government and this is enough to define it as polycentric.

One of the major differences between polycentric missiology and blockchain missiology is in how we define polycentrism. We are using the stricter definition given by Lederleitner where she envisions multiple centers of power, as opposed to the spirit of polycentrism adopted by McGinnis. Both have value, but for the sake of the research, we will use polycentric more literally as multiple centers of power.

Integration of Blockchain and Missiology

The figure below highlights 6 areas and 14 elements where blockchain theory can be integrated into mission. This table highlights elements of blockchain that can provide a fresh perspective on Christian mission.

Blockchain is an immutable database that operates in a decentralized framework. It has unchanging principles with constantly changing methods. As such, blockchain shares many qualities with Christian mission while providing new, fresh language that missiology can benefit from.

Figure 2 Integration Rubric for Christian Mission and Blockchain

Groupings	Elements	Integration of Christian Mission using Blockchain
Community and Relationships	Decentralization	Implement decentralized decision-making structures within mission organizations, involving believers in key positions of leadership and participation using blockchain's decentralized network structure.
Ethics and Accountability	Transparency	Foster transparent communication methods within communities to build trust, mirroring blockchain's transparency that enhances trust in transactions.
Ethics and Accountability	Trust	Cultivate a culture of trust among believers by encouraging reliance on God and mutual support, aligning with blockchain's trust mechanisms and consensus principles.

Groupings	Elements	Integration of Christian Mission using Blockchain
Global Impact and Adaptability	Global Reach	Leverage digital platforms to globally spread the Christian message, paralleling blockchain's global accessibility.
Foundational Principles	Foundation	Blockchain is rooted in immutable, cryptographic principles. Mission is rooted in the Word of God. The principles of both serve as foundational building-blocks. You cannot build blockchain outside of its principles and similarly, Christian mission must remain properly rooted.
Community and Relationships	Network	Foster a supportive network of believers, encouraging a sense of community and shared purpose, like blockchain's network of nodes.
Ethics and Accountability	Validation	Encourage validation and affirmation of beliefs within the community, creating a space for deeper discussions, like validation in blockchain's consensus mechanisms.
Ethics and Accountability	Consensus	Seek consensus on doctrinal matters and mission objectives, fostering a shared understanding, similar to blockchain's consensus mechanisms.
Operational Aspects	Distributed Framework	Apply a distributed approach to mission efforts, involving believers across regions and roles, similar to blockchain's decentralized structure.
Community and Relationships	Relational Nature	Enhance relationships through contextualization to effectively bring the gospel, reflecting blockchain's reliance on relationships for network success.
Operational Aspects	Interdisciplinary	Synthesize various fields like cultural anthropology and theology within mission strategy, akin to the interdisciplinary nature of blockchain's technology.
Operational Aspects	Structure	Employ organizational structures within mission endeavors, analogous to the organized structure required for efficient blockchain networks. Establish organizational structures for mission projects to ensure effective development, governance, and scalability, similar to blockchain's need for structured protocols.

13. Mark Stephan, Graham Marshall, and Michael McGinnis, "An Introduction to Polycentricity and Governance - IU," McGinnis Pages, accessed July 19, 2023, https://mcginnis.pages.iu.edu/Stephan%20Marshall%20McGinnis%20Intro%20to%20Polyc%20Gov.pdf.

Groupings	Elements	Integration of Christian Mission using Blockchain
Global Impact and Adaptability	Responsive	Emulate responsiveness in addressing problems through Christian mission, mirroring blockchain's problem-solving nature. Apply blockchain's responsiveness in quickly addressing vulnerabilities and network issues to enhance the effectiveness of Christian mission efforts.
Global Impact and Adaptability	Adaptable	Implement contextualization strategies in Christian mission to adapt to cultural contexts, much like blockchain's continuous adaptation to technological advancements. Employ blockchain's adaptability to evolve mission strategies and technologies, enhancing the scalability and relevance of mission efforts.

Nodes

For the sake of this research, we are limiting nodes to full and partial nodes. There are super nodes and miners, but for the sake of my research, I will not include these. A node is defined as any "device connected to the blockchain."[14] "The full node is a computer that will have the entire blockchain. The full node is responsible for storing very large amounts of data. This full node has one more task: it verifies the blocks which are being added to the blockchain. So, every time there is a new block, the connected node will pass on the signal to the full node. The full node will then verify the entire blockchain and, once it verifies the node, it will store the block. The second type of node is known as a partial node or light node. For example, let's say you want to use Bitcoin or any wallet and you want to do that on your mobile phone. Of course, your mobile phone will need to have that software and interestingly, we will call it a node as well because the moment you install the software, your mobile phone becomes a node. But then this will be a partial node because it cannot simply download the entire blockchain."[15]

Blockchain Missiology Analogy

Let us flesh out this whole idea. We will start zooming in and work further and further out. Analogously using blockchain, a partial node represents those who come to Christ through the ministry of a missionary. They carry within them the identity of the "block," but they don't need to carry the weight of the full "block." In this sense, we mean that a new believer is born again, but not necessarily carrying the full DNA of the missional framework

of the church or mission movement. He or she is beginning a new relationship with Christ.

The full node would be the missionary who carries the DNA of the church or mission with him/her as they go out to the world, representing the Lord Jesus Christ and their group. In blockchain, the difference between a full and partial node is clear. A full node carries a complete list of transactions and the partial node only a partial list. Using this analogously, new believers carry in them a new heart in Christ, redeemed to know Jesus. Missionaries are the same. They also carry a new heart in Christ with a hunger to grow and know more of Him, while also carrying the mission of God in the context of their church or mission framework.

The blockchain is the Global Church represented by individual churches around the world. Ultimately, every church that is in Christ Jesus is a block on the chain of the Global Church. We could also see every mission movement and church movement as individualized blockchains within the great Blockchain of the Global Church. In this way, Calvary Chapel[16] is its blockchain, as are the Southern Baptists[17] or CRU.[18]

Blockchains serve as guardians of the store information. The digital concept is that by sharing the exact DNA across multiple blocks, the information becomes immutable. Even if one block were to be destroyed or taken offline, the other blocks remain intact.

As churches and mission movements grow, they pass on their DNA. In Acts 2, Jesus told the apostles to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, but not to stop there. They were to be intentional about being His witnesses to the ends of the earth and everywhere in between. As the gospel went out, churches were established as centers and places of discipleship and gospel witness. Using our analogy, churches became (and remain) blocks where nodes get their vision and clarity. The church is a place where the gospel is preached, and the Word of God is declared so that God's people can grow in their faith and be equipped to do the work of the ministry.

Imagine a piece of paper and on that paper is a visual of the Calvary Chapel Blockchain which shows all their churches, missionaries around the world, and the impact of each of those missionaries in their respective areas. Around the Calvary Chapel Blockchain was a lined box enclosing the entire blockchain. This frame would be the theoretical framework of mission in Calvary Chapel I am proposing in my dissertation. The paper would represent the *missio Dei*. While each blockchain fits within a frame, representing the *missio Dei* within each church or mission movement, the missio Dei is greater in scope, purpose, and vision than any one blockchain.

Trust and Interculturalism

14. "Classification and Importance of Nodes in a Blockchain Network," Seba Bank, accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.seba.swiss/research/Classification-and-importance-of-nodes-in-a-blockchain-network/.

15. Jura Protocol Media, "Let's Talk about Nodes!."

16. For a general understanding and history of Calvary Chapel, see https://calvarychapel.com/history/

17. Southern Baptist Convention, https://www.sbc.net/.

18. Campus Crusade for Christ International, https://www.cru.org/

"Trust can best be understood as a relational attribute between (1) a social actor and other actor(s) (*interpersonal trust*) and/or (2) actors and institutions (*institutional* or *systemic trust*) and (3) institutions and (trusting) actors (*trust as shared expectations*), where institutional frameworks define the nature and strength of trust relationships between different actors."[19]

In the Bible, the word trust is most frequently used in connection to the response of humanity towards God. We are invited to trust God. This kind of trust implies trustworthiness in God. He is worth trusting because He is faithful. Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." This Hebrew word for trust is more commonly used for confidence or boldness. Trust is not an emotion as much as a response. Trust in the Lord. Why? Because He is worthy and therefore, we can come to Him confidently and boldly. We are not guessing if God is worthy, we are leaning our whole being into His trustworthiness.

We hope it is obvious that the Bible's understanding of trusting God is not the same as the concept of trust in blockchain. It is important to remember that this protocol was established after the US financial crash of 2008. Blockchain technology was appealing simply because it offered an alternative to the banking crisis of the time. People had lost faith in the financial system and blockchain offered a viable alternative. This alternative was not rooted in the trust of the financial systems' board of directors. In a blockchain, trust is shared directly between those of the chain.

Trust in the blockchain is not trust per se as much as an alternative to the need for trust. In blockchain, information is shared from blocks to nodes equally and this creates a system that does not rely on institutional or governmental trust. Modern technology allows for large amounts of information to be distributed and shared across multiple blocks, taking away the need for a singular system that holds said information and distributes it at will.

Blockchain trust is established by the fact that each node and block have access to the same transactional history as the rest. There is a relational nature to trust in blockchain that is established by shared information. As an example, those who own Bitcoin are part of a distributed ledger that handles billions of dollars in the form of cryptocurrency. Each node has access to its part of the blockchain. And the blockchain carries within it the whole transactional history of every bitcoin. In this way, those who have Bitcoin share a relational connection with everyone else who has Bitcoin.

Paula Schriefer gives an excellent intercultural definition by contrasting cross-cultural and intercultural. She writes, "In cross-cultural societies, one culture is often considered 'the norm' and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture. Intercultural describes communities in which there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures."[20]

Interculturalism values human connection across a two-way bridge, rather than a one-way bridge. This is a shared trait with Blockchain trust, which operates on similar principles of mutually shared information and value. In missiology, gospel and discipleship contextualization thrive in an intercultural environment. Timothy Tennent prefers the word translatability to contextualization. The gospel must and can be translated culturally and theologically. Tennent defines theological translatability as, "the ability of the kerygmatic essentials of the Christian faith to be discovered and restated within an infinite number of new global contexts."[21] As we consider interculturalism, are inclined to see the value of the word translatable over contextualized.

A contextualized method or theology begins from our side of the bridge as we figure out how to cross the bridge to another culture. Translatability begins on both sides of the bridge from the beginning. The God of mission is already at work by His Holy Spirit, making Himself known. The missionary is not the originator of the gospel or discipleship context, they are the physical manifestation of God's heart and love for the world. As such, the heart of God is not needing to be contextualized. That would be adding an additional step from God to His world, through a missionary.

Since God is already at work everywhere, the need is translatability from God to His world through a missionary. The missionary will have already done the important work of intercultural self-reflection bringing awareness of personal biases, blind spots, and other ethnocentric cultural hindrances. They go out to the world God has called them to and invest in relational equity, learning from the new culture through relationship, and as the Lord opens doors, the missionary translates the heart of God to the people with an awareness of their culture and the one they are intending to reach. This approach to mission is built on mutual trust and respect.

The God Protocols[22]

In 1997, Nick Szabo wrote these words. "Imagine the ideal protocol. It would have the most trustworthy third party imaginable – a deity who is on everybody's side. All the parties would send their inputs to God. God would reliably determine the results and return the outputs. God is the ultimate in confessional discretion, no party would learn anything more about the other parties' inputs than they could learn

19. Moritz Becker and Balázs Bodó, "Trust in Block-chain-Based Systems," *Internet Policy Review*, Last modified April 20, 2021, https://policyreview.info/glossary/trust-blockchain.

20. Paula Schriefer, "What's The Difference Between Multi-cultural, Intercultural, And Cross-Cultural Communication? - Spring Institute", Spring Institute, Last modified 2016, https://springinstitute.org/whats-difference-multicultural-intercultural-cross-cultural-communication/.

21. Timothy Tennent, Theological Translatability in the New Global Context, Last modified 2010, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/anvil/27-2_020.pdf.

22. Dan White, "The Moment of Disruption & Decentralization."

from their own inputs and the output."[23] Szabo was looking for a programmable math god that could facilitate processes involving an exchange of value between multiple independent parties without bias or error. His ideas were ahead of their time in 1997, but not so anymore. The God protocol Szabo described does exist in varying forms across distributed systems.

There is a lot that could be said about the philosophical meaning of the God protocols by Szabo. They share a similar ideology to the blockchain trust factor in that the point is not trust or God. It is a mathematical, digital solution replacing the need for trust or the concept of God. It is a digital Babylon where the need for God is replaced by technological advancement. So why include this in my work?

The mission of God relies solely upon a God of mission whose heart is for the world and who is sovereignly leading His people into their giftings and callings. In this way, His redeemed people share in His mission. Any such God protocol as defined by blockchain is imaginary. It is attempting to connect to the idea of a true and living God who reigns over His creation. While the very nature of the God protocols in the blockchain is anti-God, we are reminded that regardless of whatever system humanity builds, it will always come back to a need for God, even if that God is their ingenuity. In missiology, we lean upon the Triune God who is sovereignly working all things according to His purposes, even when those purposes are unknown to us.

At the foundational level of all healthy, proper missiology is a firm conviction in the immutability of God and His Word. Whether the focus is on theology, praxis, anthropology, ecclesiology, or any other area of missiological research, the Christian must anchor their learning in the God of mission. In missiology, the God protocols remain as they always have since eternity past, rooted in the eternal God who has revealed Himself in the world and through His Word.

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Relational Interactionism is a narrative framework describing the theo-dynamism of the Triune God (personal Beings) who is graciously interacting with the created order (including angelic beings and human being)) in terms of creation and providence as common grace and salvation, sanctification, and glorification of His own as special grace.[24]

23. Nick Szabo, "The God Protocols," The God Protocols | Satoshi Nakamoto Institute, Last modified 1997, https://nakamotoin-stitute.org/the-god-protocols/#selection-3.0-7.297.

24. See Chapter 2 of the publication by Enoch Wan and Jon Raibley. Transformational Change in Christian Ministry. Western Academic Publishers. 2022:9-24.

The figure below shows individuals (actor/being) at human level (blockchain state) can experience "God working in us" **individually** (A/ B) and separately in terms of salvation (personal transformational change). Those who are recipients of God's saving power (individual "**BEING**" with salvation as transformational change), being in Christ they then are children of God, members of the Kingdom and the household of God ("**BELONGING**"). "X" shows the connection/context/closeness where interaction takes place in terms of BELONGING (God working among us). They form the ecclesia and in the **context** of local congregation, they can enjoy **koinonia, interacting** with one another in **unity** and shalom. A+B+ others having experienced "God working among us" in the transformational process through the convergence of dynamic interaction of the Trinity (vertically) and Christian *koinonia* (horizontally = God working among us). "Y" (INFLUENCE) shows "A+B+C+Others to be agents/channels of God's transforming power and grace in terms of "God working through us" and that is the outcome of implementing blockchain missiology.

Figure 3 - Integration Rubric for Christian Mission and Blockchain

Process	Elements	Integration of Christian Mission using Blockchain
INTERACTION/BELONG God working AMONG us	Decentralization: Community and Relationships	Implement decentralized decision-making structures within mission organizations, involving believers in key positions of leadership and participation using blockchain's decentralized network structure.
	Ethics, Accountability & Transparency	Foster transparent communication methods within communities to build trust, mirroring blockchain's transparency that enhances trust in transactions.
	Network	Foster a supportive network of believers, encouraging a sense of community and shared purpose, like blockchain's network of nodes.
	Trust	Cultivate a culture of trust among believers by encouraging reliance on God and mutual support, aligning with blockchain's trust mechanisms and consensus principles.
	Validation	Encourage validation and affirmation of beliefs within the community, creating a space for deeper discussions, like validation in blockchain's consensus mechanisms.
	Consensus	Seek consensus on doctrinal matters and mission objectives, fostering a shared understanding, similar to blockchain's consensus mechanisms.
	Structure	Employ organizational structures within mission endeavors, analogous to the organized structure required for efficient blockchain networks. Establish organizational structures for mission projects to ensure effective development, governance, and scalability, similar to blockchain's need for structured protocols.
	Relational Nature	Enhance relationships through contextualization to effectively bring the gospel, reflecting blockchain's reliance on relationships for network success.
	Distributed Framework	Apply a distributed approach to mission efforts, involving believers across regions and roles, similar to blockchain's decentralized structure.

Process	Elements	Integration of Christian Mission using Blockchain
INTERACTION/BELONG God working AMONG us	Responsive	Emulate responsiveness in addressing problems through Christian mission, mirroring blockchain's problem-solving nature. Apply blockchain's responsiveness in quickly addressing vulnerabilities and network issues to enhance the effectiveness of Christian mission efforts.
	Adaptable	Implement contextualization strategies in Christian mission to adapt to cultural contexts, much like blockchain's continuous adaptation to technological advancements. Employ blockchain's adaptability to evolve mission strategies and technologies, enhancing the scalability and relevance of mission efforts.
INFLUENCE God working THROUGH	Global Reach	Leverage digital platforms to globally spread the Christian message, paralleling blockchain's global accessibility.
	Responsive	Emulate responsiveness in addressing problems through Christian mission, mirroring blockchain's problem-solving nature. Apply blockchain's responsiveness in quickly addressing vulnerabilities and network issues to enhance the effectiveness of Christian mission efforts.
	Adaptable	Implement contextualization strategies in Christian mission to adapt to cultural contexts, much like blockchain's continuous adaptation to technological advancements. Employ blockchain's adaptability to evolve mission strategies and technologies, enhancing the scalability and relevance of mission efforts.

Figure 4 - Blockchain Missiology and Relational Interactionism
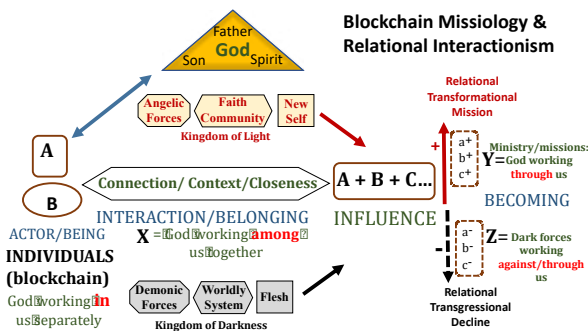
In the figure above, dynamic influence of the kingdom of darkness (i.e. demonic forces, worldly system and the flesh) might have negative impact ("Z" = dark forces working against &/or through Christians individually and collectively (as in the case of church split of a congregation) that led to relational transgressional decline.

The table above shows the integration of blockchain with Christian mission in X -"interaction" (God working among us) and Y - "influence" (God working through us)

CENTRALIZED, DECENTRALIZED, AND DISTRIBUTED SYSTEMS

It is important to consider the operating framework that drives systems. The development of such frameworks dramatically influences the effectiveness of an organization. The three systems shown in the

figure above represent three of the most common frameworks in blockchain.

Figure 5 Centralized, Decentralized, Distributed[25]
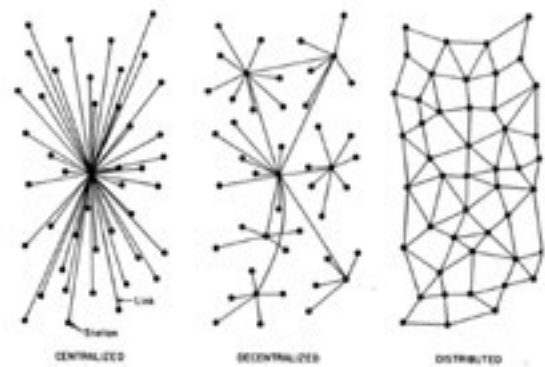
Centralization

Parikshit Hooda gives great definitions of these three frameworks or systems. "Centralized systems are systems that use client/server architecture where one or more client nodes are directly connected to a central server."[26] In organizational structures, centralization is "when a single leader or small group of people makes all decisions."[27] There are plenty of pros to this form of leadership and not a few cons. It depends on the business, church, or mission. One of the strengths of centralization is the ease and speed of decision-making. For those mission movements or churches focused on humanitarian aid during natural disasters, centralization can and is a benefit. Decision-making lies in either one or just a few people who can quickly react to the needs. A decentralized or distributed framework would slow the process of aid and possibly cause more harm. On the other hand, that same centralized system can experience limited scalability because it rests on the skillset of the leader or leaders.

We see a clear example of a centralized framework in Exodus. God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Leadership was concentrated on one person, and this ensured that God's message was communicated to Pharoah through one messenger. This same centralized framework remained effective for communicating direction to the millions of Israelites fleeing Egypt.

Later, when the Israelites were free of Egyptian bondage, that same centralized system became a liability to the growth and health of the people. In Exodus 18, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro visited his

25. Smart Content, "Completing the God Protocols: A Comprehensive Overview of Chainlink in 2021," Medium, Last modified October 21, 2022, https://smartcontentpublication.medium.com/completing-the-god-protocols-a-comprehensive-overview-of-chainlink-in-2021-746220a0e45.

26. Parikshit Hooda , "Comparison - Centralized, Decentralized and Distributed systems," GeeksforGeeks, Last modified April 20, 2023, https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/comparison-centralized-decentralized-and-distributed-systems/.

27. MasterClass, ed., "Centralization Explained: Pros and Cons of Centralization - 2023," Master Class, Last modified May 9, 2022, https://www.masterclass.com/articles/centralization.

family where he witnessed the ineffectiveness of Moses' centralized leadership structure.

"So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"...So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves."[28]

A centralized framework of leadership was not only effective at one time, it was ordained by God, but as circumstances changed, so too the structure needed to change. The impact of that change would bring important growth among the Israelites.

Decentralization

The topic of decentralization extends to multiple spheres of life, from business to governance to cryptocurrency. I will give several different definitions and then use these to create my definition within the context of missiology. The definitions of "decentralization" is informative and helpful:

"Decentralization, or decentralizing governance, refers to the restructuring or reorganization of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional, and local levels according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance while increasing the authority and capacities of sub-national levels. ..."[29]

"Decentralization refers to a specific form of organizational structure where the top management delegates decision-making responsibilities and daily operations to middle and lower subordinates. The top management can thus concentrate on making major decisions with greater time abundance. Businesses often feel the requirement of decentralization to continue efficiency in their operation."[30]

In the above definitions, decentralization is expressed in exclusively positive terms. And while we believe there are figurative and analogous ways to utilize decentralization theory within missiology, there will be heavy limitations. In the Christian mission, ultimate governance comes from the Lord. We believe decentralization theory can provide fresh language to polycentric missiology on the organizational level, but

in the end, mission happens from the heart and will of God. This is core to our missiology.

This is an important element of decentralization that we will explore within missiology. As businesses decentralize for the sake of efficiency, so too missiology benefits from a decentralized mindset. As an example, technological advancement has allowed for much better global communication than ever before and this needs to be used in greater ways. Mission praxis does not need to be determined thousands of miles away. Decentralization encourages the elevation of decision-makers around the world.

This next definition comes from the Economist, a British newspaper. They offer a simple but important definition. "Decentralization is the process of distributing power away from the centre of an organization. In the case of a corporation, this usually means divesting authority away from the head office and out to operators in the field."[31] For decentralization to occur and thrive, those in power will have to relinquish control. This will be the most difficult adjustment in Christian mission, not because Christian leaders are necessarily controlling people. We would suggest that what makes decentralization difficult in mission is not the power dynamic so much as the view that there are not enough viable leaders within any mission movement.

Global leaders are often held to criteria specific to the movement's base culture. They are often expected to know the DNA of their mission movement, as well as the culture of the majority leadership. Most Christian mission leaders want to divest authority but feel hindered by the lack of global leaders who think as they do. This is why we believe that an intercultural approach grounded on the relational realism paradigm by Enoch Wan, is the best approach to modern mission.

The Climate School at Columbia University in New York describes the three major forms of administrative decentralization.[32] They are deconcentration, delegation, and devolution. For the sake of this research, we will only discuss delegation.

Delegation is a more extensive form of decentralization. "Through delegation, central governments transfer responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the central government, but ultimately accountable to it....Usually, these organizations have a great deal of discretion in decision-making. They may be exempt from constraints on regular civil service personnel and may be able to charge users directly for services."[33]

Delegation may be the most common approach

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28. Exodus 18:14-26

29. UNDP, Decentralized Governance Programme: Strengthening Capacity for People-Centered Development, Management Development and Governance Division, Bureau for Development Policy, September 1997, p. 4.

30. "What Is Decentralization?," People Hum, accessed July 15, 2023, https://www.peoplehum.com/glossary/decentralisation.

31. "Decentralisation," The Economist, Last modified October 5, 2009, https://www.economist.com/news/2009/10/05/decentralisation.

32. Decentralization Thematic Team, ed., "What Is Decentralization?," Different Forms of Decentralization, accessed July 15, 2023, http://www.ciesin.org/decentralization/English/General/Different_forms.html.

33. Decentralization, "What Is Decentralization?,"http://www.ciesin.org/decentralization/English/General/Different_forms.html.

in Christian mission. Authority remains with the governing board and is delegated down to global leaders. The distribution of power is only so much as the governing authority deems. Decentralization is the authority of power given, while delegation is granted authority. Delegation still holds to a central authority but grants others' roles and levels of authority that go with those roles.

The Blockchain Council expresses the importance of decentralization to the blockchain in these ways. It facilitates a trustless system, improves data recovery, reduces the degrees of shortcomings, and it optimizes asset dispersion. "In a decentralized blockchain system, trusting other members is not required. This is because every member in the network has a duplicate or precisely the same information as a disseminated record."[34]

The value of decentralization in missiology is not decentralization itself but how value can be redistributed among global leaders and churches. Putty Putman describes the Church as being on a sliding scale between centralization and decentralization. In other words, the Church historically, culturally, and sometimes specifically should be seen on a sliding scale rather than a fixed point of either centralized or decentralized. Putman writes that "over the course of history, the church lives in different places on a centralization-decentralization spectrum at different times and in different contexts."[35] He goes on to write about the Church in the West learning towards a centralized system, whereas underground house churches in China lean heavily decentralized. There are several reasons this would be true.

We have to consider the strong Western culture mindset that is both programmatic and individualistic. These fit better with a clear, centralized structure of leadership and organization. On the other hand, the Chinese mindset is relational and community-minded which leans toward a decentralized model. Most significantly, the underground house churches of China exist and can only thrive below the radar of the Chinese government thus a decentralized model is safest. When one house church is shut down, while it must be discouraging, it does not necessarily hurt the other house churches from continued operation.

Dan White writes, "Embracing the decentralized shift is not choosing the opposite of centralization, it is finding the tension that does not stymie and stall movement outside Church walls."[36] The challenge in missiology will be to avoid the extremes of one or the other. If a movement has been highly centralized and

sees the need for change, it must avoid the urge to quickly move to the far extreme of decentralization. White describes this as, "reacting against extremes."[37]

Figure 6 Centralization to Decentralization Linear Scale [38]

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) caused Christian leaders across churches, denominations, and missionary movements to reconsider their organizational structure. Regardless of whether or not their system was centralized or decentralized, there were incredible obstacles to overcome. The pandemic did not force Christian leaders to move their structure along the sliding scale of centralization/decentralization, but it did force them to reconsider the foundation those systems are built on. Can we have church online and still be who we are and faithful to the Lord? What are we willing to give up to keep a solid Christian witness in our community or mission?

Questions like these forced our churches and missionary movements to rethink the foundations of our systems. Can we change became an important question. Not just what can we change, but can we change at all and still be who God has called us to be?

In a sense, it is this foundational thinking we would like to challenge. Missiology will not enter a new era of success by leaving centralization for decentralization. The answer is not one or the other. For that matter, it is good to remember that mission exists because we serve a missionary God. Different systems of organizational leadership are neither the answer nor the problem. An intercultural, relational approach will force us to reconsider our foundational systems and adjust according to God's Spirit and what makes the most sense in a global context.

Distribution

"A distributed system is a collection of computer programs that utilize computational resources across multiple, separate computation nodes to achieve a common, shared goal."[39] Distributed systems have the potential to be a positive medium between centralized and decentralized systems. In a distributed system "the processing is shared across multiple nodes, but

34. Anshika Bhalla, "What Is Decentralization in Blockchain?," Blockchain, AI & Web3 Certifications, Last modified December 13, 2022, https://www.blockchain-council.org/blockchain/what-is-decentralization-in-blockchain/.

35. Putty Putnam, "Centralization, Decentralization and the Future Church," Centralization, Decentralization and the Future Church, Last modified November 2, 2020, https://www.puttyputman.com/post/centralization-decentralization-and-the-future-church.

36. Embracing the Decentralized shift is not choosing the opposite of Centralization, it is finding the tension that does not stymie and stall movement outside Church walls.

37. Dan White, "The Moment of Disruption & Decentralization," V3 Movement, Last modified August 25, 2020, https://thev3movement.org/2020/08/27/the-moment-of-disruption-decentralization/.

38. Decentralization Thematic Team, ed., "What Is Decentralization?," Different Forms of Decentralization, accessed July 15, 2023, http://www.ciesin.org/decentralization/English/General/Different_forms.html.

39. Hooda , "Comparison - Centralized, Decentralized and Distributed Systems."

the decisions may still be centralized."[40]

In Exodus 18, Moses appoints other men to lead. He gives them authority while still retaining leadership so in this way we see a distributed system. It is not fully centralized anymore in the person of Moses, but it is not fully decentralized across all other leaders. There is common DNA seen in the qualifications required to be a leader, but a submission to the authority of Moses still exists. Authority was distributed and, in this way, true responsibility was passed to these men to lead and oversee disputes among the people. There are elements of centralization and decentralization while leaning heavier towards practical decentralization.

"Distributed governance is the specification of principles and methods which enable scalable coordination for forming consensus and to legitimate decisions. In such systems, all participants are treated equally without the presence of a central actor in the hierarchy. They are scalable, so efficiency is not reduced but steady or increased by an increasing number of participants."[41] The value of a distributed system for churches or mission movements is that the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, the missio Dei, and whatever specific theological and practical issues exist can serve as the guiding principles for decision-making.

This is different than a fully decentralized church where consensus cannot matter. And it is different than a centralized system that places one or multiple people in total authority. Distributed governance lets the principles guide leadership so that it is scalable. Ultimately, the Church is centralized if we consider the Triune God as the Supreme Leader of His Church. Beyond His leadership, the Church can and should operate from a distributed framework where God's Word, Spirit, and will guide our steps.

Vitalik Buterin created the second most popular cryptocurrency, Ethereum. He wrote this about distributed governance. "Instead of a hierarchical structure managed by a set of humans interacting in person and controlling property via the legal system, a decentralized organization involves a set of humans interacting with each other according to a protocol specified in code and enforced on the blockchain."[42]

This is an area of ecclesiology that missiologists should further explore. Are there other examples of distributed governance like in Exodus 18 or Acts 6? When Paul exhorts Timothy and Titus to establish elders in the churches, is he centralizing leadership around himself, decentralizing it across the churches, or distributing leadership under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

We have sought to define blockchain terminology by showing concepts that apply to missiology. David Bosch believed that the world was entering into a postmodern paradigm[43] and into that new paradigm, missiologists will need new terminology and models. We believe that emerging blockchain technology can provide a fresh approach for missiologists to consider, therefore, in this exploratory study we propose blockchain missiology.

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Growing Impact of Orality in a Digit-Oral Era

Charles Madinger

The term "orality broke into mission circles in the early 1980s while I studied at Fuller Seminary trying to grow a US Anglo church in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. Getting a grip on this orality thing to the help of some black pastor friends that taught me about through their "oral culture turned into a long and sharp learning curve that took twenty years and working in over twenty-five countries. It is so simple. It is so overwhelmingly complex. Missionaries and pastors tend to generalize much of it to the point of making it simplistic. Hopefully, this lengthy article can serve as a short primer in orality that can potentially change the way we do mission and ministry.

A DIGITORAL DIVIDE

A decade ago, Jonah Sachs dubbed this the "digitoral era:"[1] An age closing the backside of the 400 years of the Gutenberg Parenthesis.[2] The supremacy of print/text morphed into one that reharnessed the power of narrative as a spoken word through multiple expressions – animation, anime, clay art, virtual reality entertainment (VR), and holograms.[3] This digitoral seismic shift moved us beyond the Enlightenment era – itself a shift out of Medieval frameworks—four centuries promised that human reason, science, and literacy were the pathways to human progress. To some degree, they were right.

Then Gutenberg and his competitors capitalized on all that pathway but mostly literacy. Numeracy (another literacy) took us into the abstractions of arithmetic to "imaginary numbers"[4] that make the internet work with all your apps! Reading and numeracy could lift more people economically, socially, and spiritually as they learn to leverage information and knowledge. At the same time, it further marginalized others – the new "have nots."

The Enlightenment dredged a canal, taking us places the mainstream could not, but left others behind. The excluded majority of the world did not read (access) or could not read and write (learned skill) to express their thoughts or understand the thoughts of others. In all this, the era of Gutenberg paved the way for the digitorals. Moreover, according to Cliford Geertz (The Interpretation of Culture) prior to the Enlightenment reading existed as a collective activity and personal reading and reflection was reserved for monks and hermits.

In the digitoral age, we brought print/text expressions to another level and returned to enjoy performing our thoughts: viewing, listening, and narrative in all art forms. It gave us short sensory experiences. MTV flashed words, images, and sounds so rapidly that it literally captured attention in concentrated encounters. Affordable digitized film and audio platforms were 8-tracked, cassetted, CD'd, Beta-maxed, VCRed, VCD'd, and downloaded for personal binging. Newspapers and programs shifted radically to chase the trends of reading less to learn more[5] that felt more tabloid than "newsish.." We kept adding new apps and dropping old ones. Moreover, somewhat irritatingly, Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram, and other chat groups demand attention on electronic devices, one-upping each other in endless marketing campaigns.

Nevertheless, even the latest greatest tools and toys can never grant full expression of interpersonal human communication—our feelings, intentions, attitudes, and thoughts. Technologies cannot go there – even AI. They never have. They never will. In William Power's Hamlet's Blackberry: Building a Good Life in a Digital Age[6], you can trace the evolution of communication innovations. From the walls of caves to stone tablets, vellum & and parchment, to moveable type and mimeographs, notebooks, and sticky notes, then smartphones (of which The Blackberry was the first branded "have to own" gadget of the era), generations simultaneously loved and bemoaned an addiction to the screens of their age.

The digitoral era, at some points, narrows the gap between the "haves and the have-nots." At other points, they are galaxies apart.[7] The digitally affluent possess the expensive technologies and literacies to use them for communication. The digitally disadvantaged – the Excluded Majority – lack the gadgets, skills, and access (connectivity, bandwidth, subscriptions, and

1. Sachs, Jonah. *Winning the story wars: Why those who tell (and live) the best stories will rule the future.* Harvard Business Press, 2012.

2. Petit, Thomas. (2012) The Gutenberg Parenthesis. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-zzkgsKOBk

3. CBS News. Assisting surgery with 3D organ holograms.

4. This is NOT for the mathematically challenged! https://www.khanacademy.org/math/algebra2/x2ec2f6f830c9fb89:complex/x2ec2f6f830c9fb89:imaginary/v/introduction-to-i-and-imaginary-numbers

5. Barnes, Renee, Harry Dugmore, Peter English, Rosanna Natoli, and Elizabeth J. Stephens. "'This is ridiculous–I need to start a paper…': An exploration of aims and intentions of regional print proprietors of post-COVID start-up newspapers." *Media International Australia* 184, no. 1 (2022): 21-34. And, Bokesoy, Deniz. "E-newspapers: Revolution or Evolution?." (2008).

6. Powers, William. *Hamlet's Blackberry: A practical philosophy for building a good life in the digital age.* Scribe Publications, 2010. For those who never saw or owned a "Blackberry" it was THE device at the turn of the century. A phone, all your email and text messages in one – no need for a pager anymore. Moreover, if you are unfamiliar with pagers, read the ancient history of communication gadgets!

7. Madinger, Charles. "A literate's guide to the oral galaxy." *Orality Journal* 2, no. 2 (2013): 13-40.

data upload/download capacities). Yes, billions own and use modern technologies and apps, but not at the commonly believed and advertised proportion of the world we claim.[8] Yes, we need to keep pushing the boundaries of communication, AND at the same time ensure that the digitally impoverished or marginalized somehow move forward on the coattails of the affluent without being left further behind.

INTERTWINING WORLDS: ORALITY AND DIGITALITY

Nimrah grew up in a comparatively affluent family and developed a heart for serving women in the oppressive grips of the national religion early in life. Her compassionate father recognized that gift and that formal education could take her down roads that he could never travel as a man to bring hope and joy. So, she advanced through all her formal studies, including a master's degree, and enrolled in a well-recognized Asian Ph.D. program. She is a digitoral.

The digitoral era, at some points, narrows the gap between the "haves and the have-nots." At other points, they are galaxies apart.[9] The digitally affluent possess the expensive technologies and literacies to use them for communication. The digitally disadvantaged – the Excluded Majority – lack the gadgets, skills, and access (connectivity, bandwidth, subscriptions, and data upload/download capacities).

She works with an NGO specializing in ministry empowering women. These are bright, intelligent people. Yet, they remain poor and lack the technology, access, skills, and funds to cross the digital divide. They could start a business but need more training. Their children get sick with preventable and treatable ailments and all too often die for lack of information. They represent the bottom (socio-economically) 2 billion[10] of the world and another 2 billion not far removed. Many in the cities were well-educated, like Namrah. Large numbers went to school, but a disproportionate number never learned to read and write. ALL lived in oral tradition cultures with little understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Nimrah and her friends live intertwined lives. They all feel the weight of Islamic oppression and express that burden to each other when they can meet up. The difference is that Nimrah and her digitoral tribe expand their secret conversation into their WhatsApp Group. She travels with her team to the interior, bringing training and encouragement to 20-30 marginalized women gatherings. The tribe planned it on a Zoom call since they work together while spreading out from one border to another. The solutions are complex. The digitoral affluent of the region capture the thoughts and emotions of their sisters off the grid and carry them forward.

Digitality[11] almost defines itself. We learn to express ourselves and understand others through reading & writing literacies and then bump it into digital communication and even the metaverse. The digitoral era requires learned skills that, with regular use, connect three parts of the brain. One part of the brain visually takes in images. Another part makes some sense of those images and groups them as letters and numbers. Another part of the brain assigns meaning to those letters in words and phrases. Still, another part of the brain interprets them for real life.

Reading and all other literacies distinguish the "haves from the have-nots." Fluent readers, musicians & artists, code-writers & app developers' literacies and skills connect synapse pathways. They begin learning numbers and ABC songs, recite them, write them, put them together in words, sentences, and entire messages (papers) and equations, and use them in software and apps to receive, process, remember, and pass on thoughts. That is the world of digitality.

BUT WHAT IS ORALITY?

A Good Discussion with Unintended Limitations. When Walter Ong and Marshal McLuhan sparked the orality debate in the 1970s, they did so from a literary and media-centered perspective. From a literary perspective, Ong notices cultures that do not need text and writing and rely exclusively on hearing a message. He called that "primary orality."

Eventually, those cultures discovered the use of textuality that advanced into reading, writing, and the ability to mediate their messages electronically. This he called "secondary orality." Ong, McLuhan, and others related to the Toronto School were on to something important: they saw the impact of reading skills on the rest of human communication. However, the resulting definition of orality drastically limited the discussion to where they started it: "a reliance on spoken communication over textual." Here is another: A communicative basis in speech rather than writing.[12]

8. Lythreatis, Sophie, Sanjay Kumar Singh, and Abdul-Nasser El-Kassar. "The digital divide: A review and future research agenda." *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 175 (2022): 121359.

9. Madinger, Charles. "A literate's guide to the oral galaxy." *Orality Journal* 2, no. 2 (2013): 13-40.

10. Ortiz, Isabel, and Matthew Cummins. "Global inequality: Beyond the bottom billion–a rapid review of income distribution in 141 countries." Available at SSRN 1805046 (2011).

11. An invented word here is used for those with advanced reading literacies and numeracy skills.

12. A Dictionary on Media and Communication

ORALITY CLARIFIED

Understanding orality requires more than a cursory understanding of Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan.[13] Ong's filters began first as a Jesuit priest. Roman Catholics, who modeled the church after Jewish forms and functions, get orality by communicating the Gospel through all five senses. Second, he was an extraordinary multi-disciplinary scholar, most notably in literature (hence, his focus on orality and literacy). He also cultivated the relationships of anthropology, psychology, religious history, and philosophy and connected them all in communication. However, from beginning to end, orality is about communication.

"Orality" is misused and abused in mission conversations, and in doing so, we inoculate leaders from developing higher-impact communication. Those conversations usually gravitate to 3 things: literacy, Bible storytelling, and products. Literacy is undoubtedly an essential factor in orality. Bible storytelling often brings more orality-centric principles and practices of orality. Furthermore, ministry products from films, technologies, and new media employ them to one degree or another. To say any of these is orality is like saying the Four Spiritual Laws are evangelism.

When Ong published his seminal work, he defined and confined the discussion among the overlapping fields of anthropology and psychology. Anthropology led him to explain cultures regarding the impact of literacy – or lack of literacy. Primary orality describes peoples with no existing print/text literacy (no alphabet or reading-writing-comprehension systems). Cultures evolving into literacy he dubbed as living in secondary orality. These peoples continue developing their skills eventually to electronically mediate them (radio, television, drama scripting, and now in all communicative expressions of the digitoral era).

Ong tried to help us understand the differences between these two extremes. He took the psychology term psychodynamics (8 dimensions of people and how they affect communication)[14] that further clarified what it meant to be in the world of primary or secondary orality. These helped unveil the dimensions overlooked prior to the discussion and, at the same time, kept the focus on literacy.

The orality discussion is still adolescent. More observation and reflection led us ten years ago when we described orality as "a complex of how oral cultures best receive, process, remember, and replicate (pass on) news, important information, and truths."[15] Even though seven descriptive disciplines informed that complex, that also did not dig far enough. What

is "oral communication?" Is it different than writing? Both begin with thoughts that people want to express. One uses breath, throat, tongue, teeth, lips, and ears. The other uses sight, hand, fingers, and muscle memory. They are simply different routes from the mind of one person to another. Deaf people have thoughts shouting in their minds, but they do not use aural speech forms tied to hearing world sounds.

ORALITY: Communication Rooted in the Image of God

We need an extended definition of orality that sees the whole person communicating through a reflected image of God. He exists in a community of three persons communicating with one another. God thought of a universe filled with people to love and who could love him (his mind/inner speech), then spoke those thoughts into realities. He further expressed his mind and heart to us through all five senses. Example of The Passover Feast. God shared his mind and heart to pass over the sins of his people, who sprinkled the blood of a sacrificed animal over their doors. He prescribed a meal eaten together while wearing traveling clothes. All these were replete with symbols and metaphors. He expressed his mind in preferred ways and means by the "target audience" – the Jews, Greeks, slaves, and women. He framed the message in ways they could best receive, process it (mind, heart, and actions), remember it, and pass it on to others most naturally.

We deeply engage people in the Word by matching The Message to their preferences. Those preferences can be observed if we look hard enough. These preferences construct a communication framework developed early in life based on a few shared common traits of orality.

ORALITY FRAMEWORKS

Everyone enters the world the same
We have inner speech crying to get out – literally! Then we learn the appropriate words to describe the world around us and our wants. We learn songs, move rhythmically to music, and learn our mother tongue (heart language). A framework begins. Some get very good at remembering things in the literacies of song, dance, stories, folktales, and riddles. They live in a world of high orality reliance. Others expand their framework by learning other literacies – their ABC song, letters, counting, classifying shapes, reading, texting, computing, and digital cross over the digital fissure in the ground to live among the Dominant Minority of the world.

This is a world of low orality reliance. They are the global information gatekeepers, tech-savvy teachers, politicians, successful business owners, and more. They live in their world with genuine concern for others on the other side of the fissure, but something happens when they cross over.

13. Walter Ong (1982). Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. Marshall McLuhan supervised his master's thesis, and they became lifelong friends sharing their thoughts and publications.

14. Ong, p.37-49.

15. Charles Madinger. (2012). A Literate's Guide to the Oral Galaxy." p. 16.

Swarms of small seismic quakes opened the fissure into a nearly impassible canyon. On the other side of the chasm, those living in a world of high orality reliance are the Excluded Majority – 80% of the world. They retain their advanced literacies, just not the ones related to reading and writing. Yet, we work as if the 20% are the ones that really matter. The curricula we write and expect others to use, evangelism programs, Bible school and seminary teaching methods and values, how we structure our organizations, and how we communicate our ideas through outlines, bullet points, PowerPoints, concepts, and principles. They come from and relate to the Dominant Minority. People like us.

Now try to remove the Minority lenses through which we see the world and do our work. How? Focus on the traits of orality that clarify and differentiate how all people communicate. They range from high orality-reliant ways and means to low orality-reliant ways and means.

Traits of Orality[16]

Traits of orality describe the things that influence how we express our inner speech. These are not meant to rigidly ascribe or pigeonhole individuals or groups. Rather, they give general descriptions based on previous research and literatures. Look at one or two, and begin to connect the dots. First, the traits can be seen in clusters of similar observable things. One of those is how people "structure" their realities: how they view the status quo and change, how they categorize or classify things in their world, and how they view time. One type of structure (a specific trait) is how we view time. Some groups view time as measured in well-defined increments (seconds, minutes, hours). If the meeting time is 1:00 PM, a person might be considered late at 1:15 and need to offer an apology. Others see time as whatever is happening in the moment that requires my presence. If we call a meeting for 1:00 PM and someone must finish their work, they may show up at 2:00 with only an explanation of "I was finishing." Church starts when we get there and ends when we leave.

A relational cluster describes traits that include how people relate to their environment ("we are the land" to "we use the land"), how they show respect to one another, and their identity as part of the group to see themselves primarily as individuals. If my identity weighs heavily toward being, first and foremost, a group member, I might say: "WE are; therefore, I
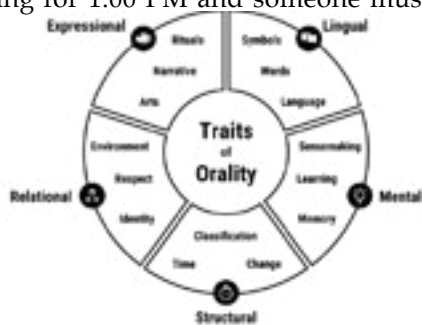
AM." If I come from the other end of the spectrum, I might say: "I AM; therefore, we are."[17]

The orality survey created for the Global Orality Mapping Project[18] goes further into all the clusters and traits. It also generates a report on any target audience that reveals more about how to create projects and training tailored to the needs of their orality quotient (OQ) of a people.

Real Example: Filipino Pastor Jonathan (Tan) Aronton received the assignment from our senior pastor to preach Luke's account of the "Feeding of the 5,000." He read the story multiple times from his ESV You Version Bible app. The Spirit of God prompted Luke to summarize and record events in writing. Others copied those documents throughout the centuries, and from 1997 to 2001, the ESV translation committee finished it for publication by Crossway.

Pastor Tan learned fluent English yet is most comfortable in Tagalog, so when he reads, he immediately hears and receives the words of Luke to study further. The Spirit brings new insights as he reads. His years of formal education then prompt him to take all these "learnings" from Luke and condense them into a catchy and memorable acrostic. Tan is the king of acrostics – second nature to him! At the same time, he realizes all that is communicating concepts and principles that need translation into real life – the stories people connect with and remembers from Sunday sermons.

He asked the worship team leader for songs to drive home his learning from this transforming event in Galilee, where Jesus "taught about the Kingdom of God and healed the people." Tan asked another to perform a specific song as well. For the "reading of the passage" in our Pentecostal liturgy, he called some Next Gen leaders to choreograph and "dance the story." Still, he wanted the church to grasp that Jesus meant to meet ALL their needs fully, and he wanted to do it using all five senses. So, he purchased 500 ensamadas (small Pinoy cheese-toped buns), put them in baskets, and told the ushers to distribute them at the prescribed time of the service.

The auditorium rippled with the crinkling sound of cellophane, the smell of fresh bread permeated the aisles, and people delicately fingered and tasted their morsels with smiles. It does not take much to imagine the delight on people's faces as the 12 disciples/ushers put the tasty bread in outstretched hands. Then Ptr. Tan connected the dots about the Kingdom. "God wants to meet your every need. "Will you believe his Word and follow him in obedience? When you hunger and thirst for his Kingdom, he will unexpectedly surprise you with his provision!"

To close the service, he called for commitment. All

16. The "traits" similarly describe Ong's psychodynamics and characteristics shared by William Parker and others (James Slack, Lynn Abney, Jay Moon, Chuck Madinger, and a language worker in a restricted country.
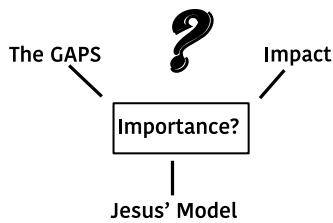
17. An interview with Dr. Barje Maigadi, former provost of the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary, and senior pastor of the JETS Seminary Church, and now retired as the Senior Pastor of the ECWA Wuse II church of Abuja, Nigeria. He described these two traits as the difference between Western and African views of life and our worlds.

18.] Access the survey from Global Orality Mapping Project at: https://gomap.pro/#content

who would surrender their will and follow Jesus as Lord, he will take up your burdens. He can heal and restore. He can use your life for great things as his servants." The front of the church filled. He called others to stand where they were and pray together, asking the Lord to provide all they needed. 'He is our Shepherd. We shall not want!'"

Why It Matters

Modeling Jesus. Jesus drew crowds like the Jewish leaders only dreamed of seeing. The Temple courts buzzed with reports of Lazarus getting called out of the tomb four days after he died. The incensed priests and Jewish leader prepared bold steps to kill him and Lazarus as soon as possible! Just a day or so ago, David's son Jesus rode victoriously through the Jerusalem gates in a Messianic processional with shouts of joy from throngs coming to reenact the Passover. They had no clue that this Lamb of God would be offered on the actual altar – not simply the facsimile staged in Herod's remolded Jerusalem. That temporary version only reflected the one in heaven. The sermon that turned so many people off from following Jesus about eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood (John 5-6)? Everyone would soon reenact in the Passover Meal in a day or two.

He moved about through the city. Sometimes confronting the Pharisees, sometimes the Herodians, and even the Levites and priests. Then God gave one more testimony that Jesus IS the Son of God. He audibly thundered the VOICE in a declaration that everyone heard. Then on that same day, he confronted their unbelief one last time. They refused him and his message, and he finally said, "My message is not my own, for my Father commanded me what to say and how to say it. (John 12;48-49 NLT).

Ask someone, "How did Jesus teach?" The immediate response comes back: "with stories and parables." Nevertheless, his communication model gave us so much more. He made up proverbs on the spot.[19] He Spoke poetically throughout the Sermon on the Mount (beatitudes and the model prayer).

He framed his message in cultural images and practice, employing the language and terminologies everyone understood. Hearing Jesus teach gives us glimpses into their everyday life. He most frequently taught in groups – huge crowds to very intimate conversations, and those conversations hearers immediately shared with others. He used all the arts and all our senses. He was looking at the grainfields, touching the blind man's eyes, tasting the bread and wine, smelling the permeating fragrance of the nard,

and calling out fishing lessons to some men on a boat.

Communication Model of Jesus
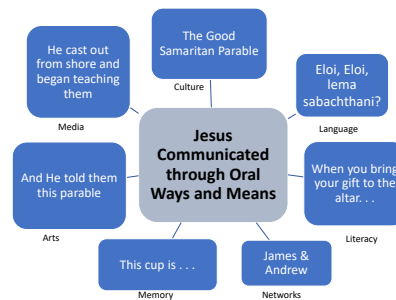
- Culture: Feels like "US"
- Language: Sounds like us
- Literacy: Words we use
- Networks: Through people we know
- Memory: with tools we use
- Arts: Packaged the way we like it
- Media: Delivered through multiple platforms

This is orality. Learned expressions of inner speech. Jesus communicated using all seven of the descriptive disciplines and he had to learn them from infancy to adulthood. God, the Son, spoke the world into existence, but learned to speak, how to dress and behave as a Jewish man, learn symbols and metaphors, and how to communicate with people in ways they could receive and understand his message.

Jesus received the mind (inner speech) of the Father – He commanded him what to say – and expressed it in multiple ways using all five senses. The Godhead showed us in the flesh how to communicate the Gospel of the Kingdom. Compare that teaching with contemporary teaching and preaching in modern churches, classrooms, publications, and products.

Bridge the Gaps

The Excluded Majority. The early work of Dr. James Slack[20] highlighted the gap created by literacy levels showing only 10% of the world as highly literate. Loosely translated, that means only 1 out of 10 people in the world read to learn, and 80% of the world does not relate to our teaching the way we assumed they did.[21] Grant Lovejoy later elaborated on the global statistics[22] that confirmed those same claims – 80% of the world are what some classify as "oral learners."[23] Another way of describing

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19. Luke 7:47 'The one who loves much is forgiven much. The one who loves little is forgiven little."

20. https://i-ostrat.com/research/

21. Abney, Lynne L. "Orality assessment tool." *International Orality Network* (1992).

22. Lovejoy (2011).

23. "Oral learner" is a convenient term that describes those who do not prefer to read. They range from entirely non-literate from a reading literacy perspective. These unveil our (including myself)

the Excluded Majority.

The modern Kingdom mission movement relates overwhelmingly to the 20% of the world, neglecting the other 80% of the world. It is like saying the only people we will equip ourselves to reach are the Chinese – 20+% of the world. If we reach others in the process, that is even better.

No student of Scripture would ever intentionally take that tack for our mission. It violates our understanding of the Great Commission. Yet, our training curricula, evangelism methods, preaching styles, "critical thinking" paradigms, and we even gear our kind of storytelling to the Global Minority. By default, our mission principles, practices, methods, and materials relate primarily to those who think like the minority, communicate like the minority, and relate to others and their environment like the minority. The 80% are the Excluded Majority.

Preaching, Teaching, and Training. We have done a pretty good job on the "what to say" regarding the message of the Bible. At least our particular view of those "what's.".

But the "how to say it?" Not so much! We got stuck in the Enlightenment canal (diverting the navigation of a river to places merchants want to go), and now the digitoral generations are leading to a way out to where the river current is flowing again. They show us that we can use short videos to get our message out. They use stories and all sorts of narratives. They develop games, apps, and fast-paced, action-packed, nonsensical messaging. They get the point that other generations miss.

From informative to transformative. The Enlightenment Canal promised that with more information, we get more progress. So, our curricula and classrooms specialize in "data dumps" that educate students beyond their ability to obey and learn. Jesus, the omniscient God the Son, knew ALL truth. He could have just delivered informative sermon after informative sermon to get us back on track and make "real progress." In doing so, he chose to tell stories and ask questions rather than tell or sell people on the Kingdom of God. He engaged them. He allowed the disciples to be the center of learning.

The modern era educated and trained people out of the reliances needed by the Excluded Majority. Many even believe that the 80% living in HOR must acquire literacy skills (reading comprehension) to live a complete life in Christ or accurately teach his Word. If following Christ means reading the Scriptures to know the Word, then the first three centuries of the church lived as sub-standard Christians. Only 12% of the world of the New Testament could read and write.[24]

Expanding standard operating procedures. We

outsider perspective of people and our colonial mindset rooted in the fallacies of the Enlightenment. However, as this chapter sets forth, orality is for ALL learners of all literacies, including reading/writing comprehension kinds of literacies that are only one of many.

24. Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina (2016) - "Literacy". Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: 'https://ourworldindata.org/literacy' [Online Resource]

assumed for the last 500 years that good preaching followed the Greek style of rhetoric. We state and support our main point (proposition or thesis) with good arguments or explanations. We even throw in a story, illustration, humor, or a song to keep people awake to support the points. The pastors at my own Manila church usually say they have 3 or 4 points, but then for each point, give an acrostic with several more points to remember! All of this is very low orality reliant as far as mnemonics (memory tools) go. The difference in the pastoral team in our church is that they are also retooling themselves to tell the stories of the Bible more than talking about the stories. They use object lessons, commission artistic expressions of all kinds, and turn hearers into doers of the Word.

When instructors embrace orality for learning, things change. Lectures last only 10-15 minutes, followed by interactive active learning and engagement. Student assignments include finding social media examples of the teaching. They do things like PhotoVoice taking pictures of people, places, and activities that tell the story of what they are learning. Projects include modeling clay figure action videos, song compositions, dramas, and other artistic expressions that tell the story of their learnings. Theological educational pioneers are doing just that. Connect with Calvin Chong at Singapore Bible, Jay Moon and Ellen Marmon at Asbury, Neil and Doreen Benavides in Mindoro, Eric Assland and Roberta King at Fuller, and Bauta Motty, recently retiring from a Nigerian Seminary; they all teach for transformation and not just information.

They all get it. Moreover, their students get it and practice it in the churches. People remember sermons for weeks and months. An African seminary class on Paul's letter to the Romans unfolded it using memory tools of hand gestures, songs, and stories from their culture. The stories taught all the theological concepts without first using the Western systematic theology jargon. Faith, redemption, justification, sanctification, adoption, sovereignty, predestination, mercy, and grace – All taught with stories, songs, and proverbs. They needed no literature review, although they received one to file away. Fifteen years later, I met students that retold the message and added that their church members could do the same thing. They still apply it to their lives and share testimonies of transformations. Things are changing. However, to get back to the river from the canal requires intentional navigation out of the smooth waters of textuality and lectures and into unpredictable currents of higher orality streams of practice.

Revisit Pastor Tan

Follow the process as an experiment in orality. Tan's assignment came from the senior pastor via an email to the staff (inner speech expressed electronically). The sermon came from Luke's account of the feeding miracle Jesus used to express the multidimensional nature of the Kingdom for all who would have faith.

God spoke his mind & Heart to Luke, who expressed it in writing for Theophilus and his friends. Ptr Tan read the words and stimulated his mind and thoughts to summarize the message and meaning in an acrostic expression because that kind of memory tool is now expected when he preaches. He also needed to engage the congregation through all five senses by including songs, dance, and the tasty aromatic ensamadas heard cascading through the room. He gathered people in small groups to talk and pray about the implications in their life as others moved to the front with specific prayer and counseling needs.

All of these followed the communication model of Jesus as they were set in a Pinoy cultural context, speaking mainly in Tagalog, explaining it all in things from their everyday life, gathered to learn collectively, using memory tools they have learned to love and expect, filled with the arts, and taught through mass media (Facebook Live and a large crowd) down to micro-casting as we received his instructions in our 3-5 person groups.

Seeing Is Believing

A church in Hong Kong regularly donated to a ministry committed to promoting orality and reaching "oral learners." Eventually, budgetary pressure forced a prioritizing decision that redirected their resources to things they saw as making Kingdom progress. They were right in doing so. Most ministries lag in pursuing oral strategies because they have never seen them demonstrated in the flesh. This article concludes with all the proof that anyone needs to take some bold steps into the practice of 21st-century orality. (See Appendix 1 Case Studies). Objective research demonstrates that implementing the principles of orality multiplies impact.

Why Such a High Impact? What were similar contributing factors for success or limited success? What things do they share that can lead us to more fruitful work? Each concluding case study in the appendix also comprised a meta-analysis. We asked each of the country directors and leaders the question: "What made this program successful? What can others learn from it?" Leaders identified the following eight elements that significantly contributed to the success of each program. More surprisingly, we discovered that Jesus used these same things to communicate his Kingdom messages.

Acceptance/Resistance

Engage in the language and dialects of the people. The programs in Nigeria were all in the Hausa language but had to be re-recorded by those with a different accent and changing some of the words.

Language and dialect – in country regions, we can always tell "us from them" by the nuances of language. The Show Love & Care program was recorded in the Hausa language but with the speech rate used in the South. People in the north said they did not trust those "Middle-Belters." So, we edited the

recordings and increased the speech rate, and to the surprise of all, it was immediately accepted as their own!

The regional literacies. Not only the sound of the words makes a difference in receiving and accepting a message, but so also do the words themselves. Word literacy is simply that we either use that Word in everyday life or not. A program in Namibia to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS among truck drivers started but had to be completely changed because of using words and phrases that made a loud statement: "THIS is NOT us!" It advertised the program as Stop Multiple Concurrent Partners. We changed the program and let the truck drivers develop the theme and title. Now they were ready to receive it on their terms.

Jesus: used the language and dialect he learned in Galilee and Nazareth. At least once, he may have used a Greek word (Hades) as he sat teaching his disciples at the headwaters of the Jordan, where a temple Pan guarded the entrance to the underworld – the gates of Hades. He spoke his w final words from the cross in Hebrew and Aramaic.

He used familiar terms and expressions of the people to help them understand the Kingdom – watchtowers, walls, seeds on the path, hidden treasures in a field, crosses for self-execution, swallowing the gnat, the camel and a needle, sheep & goats, mustard seeds, and leaven in the dough. He never cited a famous Rabbi. He taught about preparing for his coming like a bridegroom, processing unexpectedly to surprise his bride.

Culturally Contextualized

The Taliban dictated the roles and opportunities available to women. Men, therefore, had to intervene in the oppression of women if things were going to change. The men met, listened to well-known leaders' recordings, discussed it in their traditional jirga council, and redefined how women would gain personhood status. They framed the conversation for change among elders in the local jirga who identified their cultural breakthroughs. No governmental mandate could do that. Fathers should not sell their daughters to pay off a debt – they were his children made in the image of God under their care. Wives should be allowed to go to the market by themselves just as men and boys could do whenever they pleased. The jirga, in their appropriate systems, led the way for community change.

Jesus taught "how to love your neighbor" by telling an all too familiar story of a culture war – Jews and Samaritans. He drew upon characters from social networks like priests, Levites, and other Jerusalem pilgrims. He could have just started and stopped where the Bible did: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Lev. 19:18). "You have heard it said." End of story. We get the picture only when we see ourselves IN IT. We need messages in terms people know and use (our "literacies"). Moreover, the message must come from

and be endorsed by people like us.

Community Dialogue

We learn best when we learn together. And, people most readily change when they talk about something together and come to new understandings and do new things. The work of researchers like Icek Aizen showed that when we try to lead people into new things, it requires confronting what everyone else in our community thinks or values. Are we willing to go against that? Is this new message worth it?[25]

All the case studies gathered local people in groups to listen and discuss content their leaders deemed necessary. We used audio player rather than video because it forces the brain to work more creatively and prompts people to give their opinions and thoughts. The methods were also easily replicable for diffusing a message with a short explanation of how to use the simple technology. When a drama, song, interview, or other content led to a good stopping point, we embedded an audio alert in the recording that led to questions for synthesis, evaluation, and collective decisions. Unless we help people through their commonly held values, they may not move beyond them.

Here again, Jesus interacted with people at dinners, synagogues, seashores, mountain inclines, watering holes, and walks along the highways and byways – talking about his Kingdom. He almost universally asked penetrating questions that drove people to understand better his radical alternative to "religion" described in the Sermon on the Mount. "They were amazed at his teaching with authority, and not like their religious leaders;" "Who is this man that can even forgive sins?" "They went away grumbling" about his "eat my body and drink my blood" sermon. Following this lead from Jesus, one of our pastors began having a Call for Discussion after the sermon as the altar call. People will talk if we give them the chance and direction.

Viral Communication Networks

Each case study represents a partnership inaugurated with the highest recognized leaders of the area. The highest was the national minister of communication. That led to a village chief or a local jirga at the lowest level. Pastors, paramount chiefs, imams, emirs, denominational executives, Muslim association directors, and ministry leaders endorsed and promoted the works before they started. The cascading effect of the most respected people opened the door for all those under their authority.

The nature of the programs facilitated replicability. Local leaders produced the content with guidance from experienced outside experts. They learned to commission, record, and edit songs, drams, and interviews to address needs. They connected the dots

that this approach could be used with cassettes, CDs, and SD cards. They sent them downstream to relatives and nonboring districts, churches, towns, and villages. Find and diffuse the message through known and trusted networks. Those are the "nets that work."

Jesus did it from the beginning of his work, starting early on with the Jewish leaders amazed by his understanding at an early age. He met with tax collectors, ate with leading Pharisees, and connected with and transformed notorious outcasts that spread the Word, women of influence, and people he healed – like Simon the Leper.

Memorable

Each program developed memory tools. The West African program used a familiar logo and theme recognizable in the community. The Afghan and Iraqi programs tied the message to famous Quranic quotes. The Zambians used hand motions and gestures to remember the steps for removing potential abusers. Most of what the Global North call memory tools are for low orality-reliant people – acrostics, alliterations, or the bulleted main points of the sermon. High Orality Reliant people put it in proverbs, songs, dance, and other creative art forms.

Jesus got painfully graphic to make the point: the cross seen along the roads, the planting of the seed, living water from the genuine Spring of Life, drinking wine, and eating bread, the "born again" image, go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor! The more senses we use, the more people remember – like the feasts of Israel. The Jews may not have accepted his message, but they caught what he was saying and never forgot it!His use of symbols and metaphor became synonymous with his teaching style – bread & wine, a pearl of great price, faith as a mustard seed, the sign of Jonah, to prime the pump.

Artistic Expression

When Marshall McLuhan said, "the medium is the message,"[26] he understood the power of images – verbal and non-verbal. He was not affirming us as the medium/message. In expressing ourselves through art, those expressions become the message. They are not just add-ons or illustrations to our actual message. They ARE the message. Each of the programs developed a theme song that summarized the entire message. The Zambian program assigned a group to drum and dance one of the episodes – something they previously thought might be inappropriate in the church. The Afghan program hired a professional comedian to add humor so that it lowered defenses and resistance to an incredibly challenging message.

Again, Jesus took the Passover Meal (culinary arts) to explain further what God meant through the ages about the need for a perfect sacrifice to turn away his wrath. He sang with his disciples after the upper room experience and as they walked to the Garden. He

25. Aizen, Isac. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. He says that there are three significant factors in behavior change (impact): Beliefs, shared values, and if we think the change is worth it, and I can actually pull it off.

26. McLuhan, Marshall, Quentin Fiore, and Jerome Age. 2001. The Medium Is the Massage. Hamburg, Germany: Gingko Press.

drew upon the architecture of the Temple to foretell the coming destruction of the Jewish sacrificial system that he embodied. He celebrated at weddings – which meant he danced!

Multiple Media Platforms

At its roots, all communication is interpersonal. Jesus spoke to the masses but intended it for individuals. After the Body & Blood sermon, he asked his disciples for their response. One person's inner speech is expressed in multiple ways and means. Some seem more remotely associated with the original "sender." Printed materials, social media, websites, games, and the latest clay art and animations share this principle but use alternative platforms.

In our case studies, the same is true. We designed and produced messages broadcast through mass-mediated outlets. The audio players (Muria) were entrusted to local stewards (Muria Agagi's), who shared them with local people and surrounding villages and towns. In the Nigerian village of Akwanga (Nasarawa State), they listened together so frequently that they could share the entire 4 hours from memory. They no longer needed the player. THEY became the media platform!

If a communication strategy is built to pass on the message (program) through replicable means, the message will go viral.

In Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan, people from surrounding areas heard about the program and sent delegations to "borrow" the players so they could memorize the messages, songs, and discussion questions and move out to other villages. In Zambia, the ZAMCOM NGO asked to train community radio stations to reproduce the Holding Esther radio drama and program in local languages and art forms.

The Parable of the Soils/Seed/Sower illuded the disciples. Jesus told it to the masses, who were not to understand it. Next, he told it again with further explanation to the 12. He preached to the masses his famous sermon on the Mount and Plain. Did he only tell the parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son only one time? He preached in houses, synagogues, and grainfields. At dinners, breakfasts, and suppers. He preached some of that so often that when he sent out the 12 or the 70, they felt comfortable preaching the Kingdom of God as he did.

The point: Use platforms that take the message virally. The other key to high impact: is that the best and highest impact message speaks to individual hearts. Jesus spoke simultaneously to many people, but some took it personally. Lepers asked for personal healing. Blind men cried out for Messiah to heal them. Jairus pleaded for healing.

Draw people into a narrative if we want them to connect at a deeper level for longer. Using radio drama-type messages, we develop what Arvind Singhal calls para-social relationships where listeners love or hate the characters. They identify with and develop an attachment to them or their issues.

When people feel connected to characters (even fictitious), a good storyline opens them to new realities. If the storyline shows them a positive way forward (positive deviance)[27], listeners stand an even better chance of adopting the positive beliefs, attitudes & values, and behaviors. Messages gain impact.

CONCLUSION: HACKING DIGITORAL SUCCESS

Last year I attended a De La Salle University event sponsored by Lufthansa Airlines. They gathered around 250 bright students to come up with solutions to big problems. Many related to the airline and transportation industries, while others were humanitarian. My role was to keep asking questions that forced things to go beyond the surface and find realistic and marketable answers. The solutions were so good that angel investors sponsored some student projects to take from concept to market.

The digitoral era needs hackers like that. How do we bring along the Excluded Majority into the benefits of where we go? How do we help low orality-reliant people relate to higher orality-reliance worlds? How do we include all people in the hacking process? How do we train digitorals and other techno-affluent Christians to communicate life-changing information and truths anywhere and with anyone worldwide? Furthermore, do it in ways that HOR people best receive, process, remember, and pass on that message.

Expanding discussions. Get beyond the 50 years of Ong's literacy discussion. Literacy certainly affects this discussion since it is one of the markers differentiating higher and lower orality reliance preferences. One's reading comprehension level and regularity of using print-text and digital archives train and even untrains our brain and long-term memory.

Nevertheless, orality involves the whole person and the totality of how we communicate. The discussion integrates the voices from anthropology to further integrate each dimension of culture. Total communication is cultural. Psychology sheds light on understanding the mind, emotions, and cognitive functions. Educators specializing in andragogy and learning theory speak into the discussion from their expertise on how people learn, especially adults. Include also experts in linguistics and literacy. The world of the arts, like that of musicology and ethnodoxology, unleashes creative expression within the human race. Theology has only recently begun to build a theology and missiology of orality. They have generally done so from the standard low orality reliance starting point of concepts and principles rather than an examination of the songs, proverbs, and stories. Biblical Studies and church historians make the connections beginning with the Holy Spirit speaking to the prophets of all times, reducing it to text from oral sources to pick up and read publicly again. Communication Studies tie them all together as they did for Ong and his kin.

27. Singhal, Arvind. August 20, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DMGbxxBX9U

Hear the Global South

Include Exluded Minority leaders. It may carry a significant price tag for affluent digitorals. Let them define the problem and bring solutions to the table. As one oft-quoted leader said, "We do not want to be at the table. We need to be in the kitchen!" Orality conferences and seminars have been going on for decades, as well as in Canada (first nations) and Australia and their indigenous peoples. Africans live the orality. Western missionaries talk about it. The Philippines was ground zero for Westerners to learn how again to connect the Gospel through stories and the arts.We need more research, practitioners, and scholars from those places leading the Dominant Majority that practice orality as an add-on to programs, curricula, and sermons.

Continued education and training. New training beyond Bible storytelling is emerging.

A movement is afoot developing orality studies programs in leading seminaries like the Asian Graduate School of Theology and the Saleng Leadership Institute (SLI) mentioned in the case studies appendix. Two of its member schools offer master's and doctoral studies in orality. The Asian Theological Association introduced orality in its breakout. Find seasoned experts that can lead others into higher impact, and a book project is underway to describe and prescribe orality in classrooms and curricula. African theological educators are gathering 25-50 leaders to study the state-of-the-art resources for their programs. Another group of pastors and schools in Central America know they cannot reach the indigenous peoples without understanding and

Some go-to sources for orality include good training:
- The Global Ethnodoxology Network (https://www.worldofworship.org/organizations/)
- Artists in Christian Testimony (ACT). (https://www.actinternational.org/)
- Payap IUniversity (https://www.facebook.com/LLLatPYU/)
- South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (https://www.saiacs.org/master-of-arts-in-worship-and-music/)
- The Institutes for Orality Strategies (I-OS). (https://i-ostrat.com/training/)

The Enlightenment dredged a canal, taking us places the mainstream could not, but left others behind. The excluded majority of the world did not read (access) or could not read and write (learned skill) to express their thoughts or understand the thoughts of others. In all this, the era of Gutenberg paved the way for the digitorals. The degree to which we discover our orality is the degree to which we may impact the Digitoral Era.

APPENDIX 1. Seeing is Believing: Oral Strategy Case Studies

West Africa: How can the church affect the HIV/

AIDS epidemic?

Nigeria: Show Love & Care. National leaders asked Voice for Humanity for a communication strategy to enhance their HIV/AIDS programs: ECWA, the Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN), and the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN). They addressed the ravaging HIV/AIDS epidemic, but with little effect on slowing it even in the church, helping those who tested positive, and reducing the stigma on families with sick relatives.[28]

First, we engaged community, church, and mosque leaders to give direction for a program to reduce the HIV prevalence in 2 states – Nasarawa (Middle Belt) and Kano (northern belt). Second, we helped nationals develop their messages incorporating the principles and methods of orality. Third, we gathered local people to collectively listen to recorded messages on MP3-type technology and discuss the content and questions provided in a group setting to develop their solutions.

We established a baseline threshold for the local knowledge, values, and behaviors surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic with a pre-intervention survey. Next, we gathered local people in groups at their community's and religious larders' direction to listen and discuss the messages about HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and stigma reduction. Groups listed to the audio messages on easy-to-use audio technology that they could pass on to surrounding communities.

The most challenging area of Nigeria for Christians to promote the teaching of the Bible is in the epicenter of Nigerian Islam: Kano. The people recognized the Emir of Kano as their supreme authority, even above the governmental authorities, and the Emir endorsed the program. He called together the paramount and local chiefs to participate, and they all acknowledged that prostitution and marital unfaithfulness contributed to the epidemic in the capitol and the surrounding districts. HIV/AIDS spread as fast or faster in Kano than in other regions of the country.

Results: The pre-intervention survey revealed that 396/600 individuals incorrectly answered questions about the disease, transmission, stigma, and care for positive people.

The program launched with the same approach of recorded interviews of well-known leaders and indigenous content that included music, drama, interviews, testimonies, and discussion questions.

The post-intervention survey showed that from the 396 individuals answering the questions incorrectly, after going through the program, 394 answered accurately. The overall communal increase in HIV/AIDS literacy increased by nearly 27%, with 10% as the benchmark for USAID's success. No other program came close to these results verified by researchers led by Dr. Igho Ofotokun of Emory University's Grady

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28. The standard rate of success by USAID Nigeria. The Show Love & Care rate: 26.8%.

Ponce De Leon Health Center in Atlanta, Georgia.[29]

Focus groups shared that previous "open communities" for sex workers now banned prostitutes from entering. HIV/AIDS prevalence dropped, and the Emir of Kano produced a nationally televised program of thanks and celebration. The Christian program directors (Rev. Dr. Bauta Motty and Rev. India Maggagi) and their Muslim counterparts were invited to the principal mosque of Kano. That visit was the first known invitation of pastors inside that sacred place. The Show Love and Care initiative rolled out to2 other northern Nigeria states.

East Africa: How do we change harmful sexual practices?

The ROADS[30] HIV/AIDS intervention engaged church and community leaders in a multi-sectoral program. It sought to slow the spread of the disease along the transport corridor from South Africa to Sudan. Truck drivers stopped at each country border to complete the necessary entrance and exit documents, usually taking three days. The drivers and their "road-boys" waited with very little healthy entertainment to pass the days and nights, so young girls from surrounding villages came (often sent by parents) to "service" the men who gave them a little food and small compensation. The problem involved multiple sectors of society – from income generation, farming techniques, driver support services and education, a biblical storyline, and health care that included HIV/AIDS testing and awareness training.

A significant component of the program was a communications strategy that involved national, regional, and community radio programs as well as a solar-powered/rechargeable MP3 type player that contained a variety of programming, including music, radio drama, discussion questions, interviews with truck drivers and assistants, and the families of the infected.

Results: a relatively small number of truck drivers (n.75) completed a pre and post-test survey about the disease and its spread.[31] Of those initially answering 50% of the questions wrong (n. 32), their post-intervention scores rose dramatically. Of the 32 scoring 50% or lower, after listening to the dramas, songs, interviews, and discussions, 21 got all the questions answered correctly.

Afghanistan: How do we address deep-seated beliefs and values?

29. Ofotokun, I., Binongo, J., Easley, K. A., & Favaloro-Sabatier, J. (2006). *Voice for Humanity HIV/AIDS education program using small media-based technology for oral communicators at the community level to enhance HIV/AIDS awareness and promote risk reduction.* Dr. Ofotokun reported unofficial Word from his supervisor that Emory had never seen these dramatic results. They began using some of the lessons learned from the program and the subsequent interviews and focus group discussions.

30. Regional Outreach Addressing AIDS through Development Strategies. HI360; https://www.fhi360.org/projects/regional-outreach-addressing-aids-through-development-strategies-roads-i-and-ii

31. The survey was not program-wide, only included truck drives, and therefore could not be used in the official reports.

Civic Education Programs involving voter registration, Constitutional, Parliamentary, and presidential elections. Warlords rule. The Taliban controls anything related to fundamentalist Islamic tradition. The elections were about to fail in 2003/4 because very few and hardly any women were registering to vote in fear of retribution. UJS and Afghan agencies asked Voice for Humanity and its mission partners to engage people in 16 critical provinces to promote voter registration, a vote on an Afghan constitution (requiring three seats reserved for women), and the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Dr. Arvind Singhal[32] (University of Texas, El Paso), Dr. Corrine Sheffner-Rogers (University of New Mexico), and Dr. Ether Long served as the 3rd-party evaluators. National and local jirgas embraced and endorsed the programs, including 8 hours of radio drama, interviews, roundtable discussions with well-known experts, personal testimonies, music, comedy, children's programming, and discussion questions. The MP3 units went to local regions that shared them with others who sought them out from as far as 50 kilometers.

Results. Singhal, Long, and Rogers reported that: 1.) In some cases, after hearing the messages about the need for women to register and vote, local women banded together, walked to the voter registration office, and publicly registered to vote. 2.) Focus group interviews revealed a pattern of women stating: "This is my golden moment. My husband called me a person for the first time – not his property. He even lets me go to the market unaccompanied!"

Men reported reversing their practice of giving (selling) a daughter in marriage (usually early teen to older men), allowing daughters to attend school, and being part of choosing their husbands. Voter turnout in the places of the VFH programs was three times other locations.

Mindoro (Oriental), Philippines. How do we train pastors who cannot read to learn?

The Mangyan tribe has been the focus of numerous outsider missions. Mangyan pastors serve with little or no formal education or reading literacy skills and rarely enter or finish a high school education. They highly admire and attempt to follow the teaching and preaching principles and methods of Bible schools and seminary-educated national leaders. In other words, they preach propositional sermons or exegetical sermons, sing Western missionary hymns or Hillsong, and read the text in Tagalog (the third or fourth language of local people.

Drs. Neil and Doreen Benevides began working in 2009 among the tribe to help bring Kingdom transformation and development. They eventually recognized the futility of imposing Western-style seminary/Bible school training. Churches remained

32. Most noted for his work in Entertainment-Education, para-social relationships (identifying with characters in radio/television drama), and positive deviance (using positive stories to change behaviors instead of the negative consequences and power of fear).

economically poor, rarely began new churches, and the Biblical literacy of the pastors remained relatively low.

Neil pursued more study in the space of orality after completing most of his Ph.D. work at the Oxford Center for Mission Studies (OCMS) and found a solution for the limited success of their pastor training. He launched a new kind of Bible school that did not require reading assignments or text-based assessments. He taught a narrative approach to theology, hermeneutics, and homiletics. Although they prepared for an enrollment of 40 students that might be qualified to begin the program, the demand was so great that they expanded it to 60.

Results: In two years, the SLI pastors multiplied churches by starting 17 more in their region. The narrative approach to learning and teaching translated into church members who increased understanding, application, and memory of the Scriptures.

A survey conducted by the lead pastor (Nestor) asked members of his church at the beginning of the program: "What was the sermon passage from the previous week? What did it say? How did you specifically apply it? Did you share it with others? As a "pre-intervention survey" the answers were predictable: 1. They could not recall the passage, 2. Could not recite anything from it, 3. had not figured out specific things to do about it, and 4. had not shared the sermon or passage with others.

Ptr. Nestor experienced narrative teaching and preaching in SLI coursework, then preached and taught in his churches using the same principles and methods. After three months, he surveyed the church with the same questions but with different outcomes:

1. They remembered the sermon passage from the previous week and recalled the previous three weeks.
2. The people could tell the story from the Scriptures he preached.
3. They reported what they did to put it into practice.
4. They testified of retelling the story or sermon to others.

Zambia: Radio Drama as Transformative Learning

Holding Ester (Program) envisioned gentle caregivers of African orphans. Social norms saw that kind of gentleness as harmful to develop responsible teens and adults. On the contrary, exploited or abused orphans in Africa generally need to experience gentle, loving care from adults – especially men. When this happens, a surprising number of these traumatized children find healing and openness to accept the love of God, their Father. If this does not happen, the probability plummets for these children ever to know Jesus as a loving Savior.[33]

33. Crawford, Christa. (2012). So you want to rescue child sex slaves: What you need to know before you begin https://booke.pub/book/so-you-want-to-rescue-child-sex-slaves-what-you-need-to-know-before-you-begin-xln6v1go48 Crawford, Christa., & Miles, G. (2017). Finding our way through the traffick: navigating the complexities of a Christian response to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Regnum Books.

The Program: Susan VonOlszewski, an American teacher, heard of the plight of these kinds of orphans. She attended an orality conference that inspired her to take action by creating a new kind of caregiver training. The male caregivers grew up in a male dominant society that especially demanded strict obedience to the voice of a "father figure." If a child does not comply, it is often thought the best (and caring) response is to physically hit, verbally scold, or severely punish a child – "Do not spare the rod."

Susan worked with an orphan care organization with operations in Zambia that employed more than 50 caregivers. They sponsored a 3-day workshop using a professionally produced radio drama that captured the story of 2 orphaned girls and their flight to find healing from the abuse of an aunt and uncle who took them in after the parents' death. The research question explored the transformative effect of using a radio drama in a workshop to see if getting absorbed in a story would affect knowledge, values, and practices.

Measuring for change. All participants completed a quantitative pre-intervention survey with questions linked to the program learning goals and outcomes. The survey was retaken (matched numerically to their pre-survey) at the end of the program two days later. Second, following the workshop's conclusion, we administered the Transportations Imagery Model (TIM) Survey to quantitatively measure the degree to which a listener was drawn into the story and identified with the characters.

Mr. Pete Doughtery (a BBC producer) conducted and recorded interviews during and after the workshop to capture the thoughts and attitudes of the participants. The qualitative methods confirmed the findings of the quantitative pre/post-intervention surveys and the TIM survey. Focus group interviews asked similar discussion questions about learning goals and outcomes.

The workshop. The 3-day workshop brought 108 leaders from 25 organizations and churches. The participants took the pre-intervention survey at the outset of the first session. Several interviews were recorded, all related to the learning goals and outcomes. Participants listened to the seven episodes of the radio drama multiple times with discussion and active learning experiences during the process. Homework assignments included composing songs, and poetry, forming a drama troupe, or drumming & dancing performances to reenact an episode.

Results: Significant increase in knowledge/beliefs, attitudes/values, and behaviors/practices (KAP). The post-intervention matched survey compared to the pre-intervention baseline showed a 40% increase in KAP. Even more significant is that most answered the pre-survey questions with around 60% accuracy and then went on to over 90% accurate answers. 100% of the participants could perform one of the skills used

in the drama to de-escalate emotional outbursts in children gently.[34]

Narrative Transportation Effect

A large percentage of people who scored higher on the post-surveys also scored high on the "transportation" survey indicating they were highly transported into the story. Comparing all the other factors (age, experience, education), the only factor that explained the high score on the post-survey was their narrative transportation. People absorbed into a story tend to change KAP.[35]

Focus Groups and Personal Interviews

First, the participants gave unsolicited comparisons between learning through listening dialogues or with other workshops and in-service training. Narratives were more compelling to everyone. Second, participants reported developing a connection with the children personally for the first time. They felt the pain.[36]

The learning experience unveiled and clarified things at work in their ministries. After the workshop, participants gathered to form a social media support group to keep learning and encouraging one another. They discussed their experiences with children in light of what they had just learned and committed to future strategies.

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34. The learned skill: "Breathe deep and count backward from 10 to 1." For more complete results, see: Madinger, C. 2010. Coming to terms with orality: A holistic model. Journal of Missiology, 38(2), 201–213.

35. Green, M. (2004). Transportation into narrative worlds: The role of prior knowledge and perceived realism. *Discourse Processes*, 38(2), 247-266.

36. Murphy, Sheila T., Lauren B. Frank, Joyee S. Chatterjee, and Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati. "Narrative versus non-narrative: The role of identification, transportation, and emotion in reducing health disparities." Journal of Communication 63, no. 1 (2013): 116–137.

Mission Training at PTS-CAS in View of Jesus' Discipling Approach
with Special Reference to Online Learning and AI Chatgpt

Laurence Gatawa

INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many theological institutions, including PTS College & Advanced Studies (PTS-CAS) in the Philippines, shifted to online learning due to the closure of schools. While numerous schools in the Philippines were unable to make this transition and had to shut down,[1] PTS-CAS persevered and continued its mission through digital platforms. The use of various online tools and platforms like Moodle, Zoom, and Google Groups facilitated instruction delivery in different formats, including self-paced learning, real-time interactions, and blended approaches. But did PTS-CAS effectively fulfill its mission through online learning during the pandemic?

Starting in November 2022, PTS-CAS implemented a hybrid approach to mission training, combining both online and face-to-face teaching and learning methods. This approach ensures that at least 50% of the teaching-learning experience is conducted in person, as required by the Philippine Commission of Higher Education (CHED). As the government seeks to retain the critical elements of traditional classroom instruction, PTS-CAS has also embraced this principle in its mission training program. Personally, I prefer attending face-to-face mission conferences, whether domestic or international, recognizing that the online modality, though helpful and convenient, falls short of capturing the full benefits of face-to-face interactions.

It was also in November 2022 that a groundbreaking digital tool known as ChatGPT became publicly accessible, and I utilized its assistance in composing this presentation. ChatGPT stands as a remarkable digital instrument harnessing the power of artificial intelligence and natural language processing to generate text. Engineered by OpenAI, this exceptional language model exhibits a diverse range of applications, including language translation, writing assistance, and conversational agents. Its emergence marks a critical point in the technological and theological realms, which may bring about significant changes in seminaries and reshape the landscape of mission training. Nevertheless, the adoption of this cutting-edge tool also invites a critical examination of the ethical challenges it presents (e.g. data privacy, algorithmic bias, dehumanization of the learning experience).

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the adaptability of theological institutions in providing mission training through technology. However, the shift to online learning has resulted in the loss of the unique benefits of face-to-face theological education and mission training, which is crucial in following Jesus' model in training his disciples. The integration of digital platforms, including AI ChatGPT, has brought about both challenges and opportunities in mission training. So, this presentation suggests that while theological institutions, including PTS-CAS, navigate the technological landscape of the new normal, it is essential to consider how they can address their mission training in view of Jesus' model. It seeks to answer the following question: In what manner can theological institutions, like PTS-CAS, effectively incorporate Jesus' discipling model with online learning, encompassing various digital platforms such as AI ChatGPT into their mission training programs? In other words, I'm exploring the challenges and opportunities of incorporating Jesus' discipling approach, online learning, and AI ChatGPT in post-pandemic mission training at PTS-CAS.

My presentation adopts Jesus' approach of calling and training the twelve disciples as the framework for analyzing the challenges and opportunities facing mission training in theological institutions in the post-pandemic context. In light of the significant changes brought about by the technological revolution, it is crucial to determine the ideal framework that will guide our reflections on the most suitable approach to mission training. In this regard, Jesus' model remains as relevant today as it was two millennia ago. The discussion will feature the mission training experience of PTS-CAS in the current context, which may resonate with other theological institutions engaged in mission training. It may also inspire others to grapple with the best ways to follow Jesus' model while adapting to the ever-evolving technological landscape.

Embracing God's Call in the Digital Age: Mark's Portrayal of the Twelve Disciples

While attending an Artificial Intelligence (AI) seminar, I was deeply moved by the presenter's prediction that writers, graphic designers, and others could potentially lose their jobs due to the impact of AI. I was even troubled when I remembered browsing through the so-called "Last Bookshop" in Oxford, serving as a symbol of technology's rise and its impact on many traditional systems, jobs, and industries, leading to their closure. As I reflect on the implications of these for theological education and mission training, I question whether many of us (who are tutors in mission training schools) would fall victim to a similar fate. Will our students prefer to be trained by famous lecturers via YouTube or podcasts rather than

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1. A Google search shows multiple news articles discussing the closure of schools in the Philippines during the pandemic.

us? Will others prefer to be tutored or counseled by AI ChatGPT making us irrelevant? However, amidst this technological revolution, I remain confident that those called by the Lord for mission work—even in theological education— will flourish until He comes.

So, in the context of rapid technological advancements and the proliferation of digital platforms, it is crucial to reflect on the enduring significance of Jesus' call. While online learning, artificial intelligence, and other technological tools offer undeniable value, they cannot replace the individuals chosen by the Lord for His mission, weak and unremarkable they maybe, just like those early disciples of Jesus. Of course, God can use anyone and anything, even angels and stones and trees, but none can replace those whom He calls for His mission work. Mark presents the disciples' flaws, highlighting their unfaithfulness, lack of understanding, and selfish attitudes, yet called by the Lord to be with Him and to be sent by Him for His mission (Mark 3:13-19).

In their journey alongside Jesus, the disciples exhibited obvious instances of unfaithfulness. Their faith wavered amidst a storm (Mark 4:35-41), revealing their frailty and lack of steadfastness. Peter, one of the closest disciples, infamously denied Jesus three times (Mark 14:66-32), betraying his earlier assertion of unwavering loyalty (Mark 14:29). All the other disciples also faltered in crucial moments, failing to keep awake and pray with Him in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42) and fleeing at Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:43-50). They were notably absent during Jesus' crucifixion and burial (Mark 15:33-47), which was not typical because it was customary in those days for disciples to bury their master or teacher (like when John's disciples buried him, Matt. 14:12).

Mark's account also showcases the disciples' intellectual limitations and inability to grasp Jesus' teachings. They struggled to comprehend his parables (Mark 4:13), remaining perplexed by His profound teachings. Their failure to comprehend Jesus' explanations regarding what defiles a person (Mark 7:17-23) and the implications of the Pharisees' leaven (Mark 8:14-21) further exposed their intellectual shortcomings. Jesus often asked his disciples, "Are you so dull?" (Mark 7:18) Or "Do you not understand?" (Mark 8:17) showing the disciples' ongoing intellectual struggles. Moreover, the disciples struggled to grasp the necessity of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection (Mark 8:27-30, 9:2-6, 9:30), displaying a significant lack of insight into the core tenets of Jesus' mission.

In addition to their faithlessness and limited comprehension, Mark portrays the disciples as exhibiting a self-centered disposition. Their quest for personal greatness and status within the kingdom of God led to disputes among themselves (Mark 9:34-41). They demonstrated a sense of entitlement by attempting to hinder someone from ministering in Jesus' name (Mark 9:38-41). Furthermore, they displayed a misguided perception that being in the presence of Jesus was an exclusive privilege for adults, obstructing children from approaching Him (Mark 10:13). This recurring selfishness underscored the disciples' imperfection and their need for transformation.

Remarkably, Jesus called and appointed the Twelve, despite their inherent flaws and weaknesses, to accompany Him and to be sent by Him for a mission (Mark 3:13-19). Their selection was not predicated upon personal qualifications or deservingness but rather stemmed from an act of divine option and grace (John 15:16). The Lord deliberately chose individuals who were frail and unimpressive in the eyes of the world to shame the so-called "wise" and "strong" (1 Cor. 1:27). Within Mark's narrative, the disciples' deficiencies are vividly depicted, encompassing their unfaithfulness, limited comprehension, and self-centered dispositions. These shortcomings resonate with the imperfections and limitations of contemporary individuals whom the Lord calls, thereby emphasizing the reality of their inherent limitations, yet the Lord opts to call and use such weak and frail individuals.

From Mark's narrative, a principle in connection to the current technological revolution emerges: regardless of technological advancements, it remains incapable of replacing individuals called by the Lord for His divine service. This recognition is crucial when considering mission training, following the model of discipleship set by Jesus. While online learning and AI ChatGPT provide conveniences and resources, they inadequately capture the essence of personal presence and relational connections inherent in discipleship. Jesus' call encompasses profound spiritual formation, character development, and transformative encounters that cannot be easily replicated or substituted by technological platforms. Consequently, in this digital era, it is imperative to approach online learning platforms and AI ChatGPT as supportive tools that enhance educational processes and broaden accessibility, while always prioritizing the significance of personal presence and relational connections in fulfilling the Lord's call.

Jesus' Model of Training the Twelve for Their Mission—For the Current Context

This section shifts the focus from highlighting the calling of the twelve disciples to emphasizing their training. What sets Jesus' instructional approach apart is its singular uniqueness compared to contemporary pedagogues of his time. While philosophers, law interpreters, prophets, and visionaries followed structured frameworks within schools and educational systems, Jesus relied on his inherent qualities of personality, style, and adaptability to impart his teachings and way of life to his disciples.[2] While it was

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2. See the different associations during the time of Jesus in Pheme Perkins, Jesus as Teacher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Michael, J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospe*l; Laurence Gatawa, "Comparative Characterisations of Jesus and the Disciples in the

customary for disciples to choose their own mentors, Jesus departed from this practice by personally calling and training the twelve disciples. Through this deliberate selection, he not only transmitted his teachings but also bestowed the Holy Spirit, ultimately aiming to disseminate his message to all nations and establish his church on earth.

T.W. Manson posited that Jesus was an adept educator who employed a range of pedagogical strategies tailored to the needs and dispositions of his diverse audiences. In his interactions with the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus employed polemic, while he used parables when communicating with the masses, and he delved into the deeper mysteries of the Kingdom of God when instructing and relating to his disciples.[3] Jesus' approach empowered his followers to wholeheartedly embrace his teachings. His love and guidance infused his instructions with extraordinary power and inspiration, distinguishing them from those of his contemporaries.

Sylvia Wilkey Collinson sheds light on Jesus' exceptional approach to educating and preparing his disciples for their mission work. She presents Jesus' approach to teaching incorporating both formal and informal elements, grounded in the model of discipling.[4] While he utilized a formal approach, involving lecture-style teaching which is the dominant approach in contemporary schooling, his teachings were not limited to a classroom setting. In fact, the four Gospels are replete with Jesus' teachings, solidifying his title as Teacher or Rabbi. As Robert Banks noted, Mark employed an abundance of teaching-related terminology to describe Jesus (like *didaskalos*, *didaskein*, *euangelein*, *didache*), whereas Matthew and Luke devoted more space to the content of his instruction and intimately linked preaching and teaching.[5] Jesus' multifaceted approach to teaching offers a compelling example of his adaptability and dedication to his mission.

Throughout the course of Christian history, the predominant mode of transmitting Christian doctrine and training mission workers has been through formal teaching, as Collinson notes,

> *The stories of the faith have been told, the critical faculties of learners have been developed. Ministers and church leaders have received a large proportion of their training and qualifications for Christian ministry under the schooling model. Its value is undeniable.*[6]

Notwithstanding its success, eminent scholars, including Sylvia Wilkey Collinson and Robert Coleman, have acknowledged the value of an informal method of discipleship, as epitomized by Jesus. Collinson has underscored the importance of incorporating both formal and informal elements into the discipleship paradigm,[7] while Coleman has emphasized the significance of informal approaches in his seminal works, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* and *The Master Plan of Discipleship*.[8] Both Collinson and Coleman have advocated for a holistic approach to discipling that combines formal instruction with informal mentoring to foster spiritual growth and personal transformation in the lives of believers.

In his classical work, The Training of the Twelve, A.B. Bruce underscores that Jesus' teaching style was not limited to formal lectures or sermons, but rather was a multi-sensory approach that involved both hearing and seeing. Bruce further observes that Jesus trained his disciples not only in knowledge but also in spirituality, which included prayer, fasting, inward purification, and Sabbath observance. In addition to the theoretical aspects of discipleship, Jesus also exemplified character development through practical application, teaching his disciples the importance of humility, self-sacrifice, and serving in love through various situations.[9] According to Bruce, Jesus' own life was the most potent example of these teachings, as he willingly gave himself up to death, was resurrected, and bestowed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, empowering them to go out and make disciples of their own.[10] Through his distinctive and comprehensive approach to teaching, Jesus not only conveyed knowledge but also transformed the hearts and lives of his followers. Bruce's work stands as a testament to the profound influence of Jesus' teachings, which continue to inspire and guide mission workers to this day.

Drawing upon the insights of diverse authors mentioned above, some key elements surface, which constituted the core of Jesus' discipling methodology in preparing His twelve disciples for their missionary endeavors. These elements can also serve as a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of mission training programs, particularly in light of the current technological landscape. Firstly, Jesus emphasized the transfer of content and context, tailoring his teachings to meet the specific needs and understanding of his disciples. Secondly, Jesus focused on developing the conviction and faith of his disciples, challenging them to think critically about their beliefs and to seek truth through a personal relationship with God. Thirdly, Jesus prioritized the formation of his disciples' character and spiritual growth, modeling a life of

Gospel of Mark, with Special Reference to Ancient Oral Narration" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Middlesex University, 2017).

3. T.W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.1963), 17-19.

4. Collinson, Sylvia Wilkey Collinson, *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church* (Milton Keynes: Patternoster, 2004).

5. Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 103.

6. Collinson, 185.

7. Collinson, 241-43.

8. See Robert Coleman's *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1993) and The Master Plan of Discipleship (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1987).

9. Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901), 411-455.

10. Bruce, 455.

integrity, humility, and sacrificial love. Fourthly, Jesus emphasized the importance of compassionate and evangelistic ministry (usually termed together as "holistic ministry" or "integral mission"), modeled by a life of service and sacrifice. Finally, Jesus placed a strong emphasis on communal and relational living, modeling the importance of healthy and authentic relationships.

Mission Training at PTS-CAS: Integrating Jesus' Training Model and Online Platform

Johan Ferreira asserts that "Theological education fulfills the Great Commission both directly as it 'makes disciples' and indirectly as it equips the church to 'make disciples'."[11] Thus, PTS-CAS is committed to fulfilling its mission in the current technological context. Despite CHED's (Commission on Higher Education) reservations, PTS-CAS will offer an exclusively online Master of Arts in Biblical Exposition (MABE) program and seek accreditation from ATA. Drawing from the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to online learning, we have crafted a structured course framework spanning 2 or 3 years, featuring 16 sessions for each subject. These sessions incorporate a balanced mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities, with four real-time sessions for interaction and twelve flexible sessions for accessing course materials. Personalized mentorship by assigned faculty, facilitated through communication technologies, will ensure effective guidance and support, fostering a dynamic and interactive online learning environment that meets students' evolving needs within the realm of advanced communication technologies. However, I am contemplating the integration of a fully online program into blended learning and how it aligns with Jesus' model of discipleship.

In addition to the above, I have had three recent experiences that have prompted me to contemplate the existing mission training at PTS-CAS. The first one occurred in November 2022, when I traveled overseas for the first time during the pandemic to attend a workshop in Chiang Rai, Thailand that promoted community and church mobilization (CCM). It was a refreshing break from attending online seminars and lectures, allowing me to meet like-minded theologians and practitioners in person. This was also the month when the Philippine government required at least 50% face-to-face classes in schools and eased pandemic restrictions, prompting PTS-CAS to adopt a hybrid approach to classroom learning in compliance with the Department of Education's guidelines.

Then in February 2023, PTS-CAS took a significant step forward in its mission to provide innovative and quality mission training by launching the Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies program. The first two modules of the program were entirely online, leveraging the latest technology and communication platforms to

provide an engaging learning experience. Dr. Park, however, preferred face-to-face interactions and the unique benefits of in-person instruction while welcoming those who could only join via the online modality. He, therefore, implemented a dual learning approach, allowing some students to attend classes on campus while others participated remotely. This hybrid model enabled students to take advantage of the best of both worlds, leveraging the convenience and flexibility of online learning while also benefiting from the richness and depth of in-person interaction.

My third experience involved contemplation of the potential benefits of digital tools, particularly ChatGPT, in augmenting the quality of teaching and learning. In my assessment, ChatGPT appeared to have played a facilitating role in improving the quality of some of the theses I reviewed and evaluated recently either at PTS-CAS or elsewhere. Additionally, I utilized the same tool to abridge each chapter of a thesis that I was evaluating to comprehend its essence easily. The incorporation of digital tools with traditional educational techniques could likely yield an effortless yet efficient learning experience for both learners and instructors. However, I am mindful of the ethical considerations implicated in employing such technologies for mission training and theological education. Therefore, I present this matter as a pertinent subject for deliberation and discourse, even at this current mission conference.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuous advancements in technology have presented both opportunities and challenges for theological institutions, including PTS-CAS. These circumstances necessitate a comprehensive re-evaluation of theological education and mission training strategies. In response, this presentation seeks to identify relevant principles derived from the discipling model of Jesus that can be deliberately applied within the context of our current technological landscape. Based on the identification of five principles derived from Jesus' training of His twelve disciples, this study poses five pertinent inquiries that are specifically directed and applied to PTS-CAS, potentially carrying implications for other theological institutions as well.

1. To what extent are the lessons at PTS-CAS deliberately contextualized (considering the current technological landscape) to address the varying backgrounds and specific requirements of the students?

While emphasizing academic excellence, influenced by its Reformed heritage and the guidelines of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Asian Theological Association (ATA), PTS-CAS is continuously striving to adapt and contextualize its curriculum. The formative impact of Presbyterian American and Korean missionaries has shaped the academic content of the PTS-CAS curriculum,

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11. Johan Ferreira, *Theological Education in Asia: Discipleship and Suffering* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020), 36.

fostering a formalized approach to theological education that emphasizes content transfer through classroom lectures. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in the field of education, leading to the adoption of digital platforms and other innovative teaching methods by schools, including PTS-CAS. Additionally, the emergence of AI ChatGPT technology has opened up new possibilities for theological education and mission training, offering alternative avenues for exploration at PTS-CAS and other theological institutions. These developments align with the recommendation put forth by ATA prior to the pandemic, urging the inclusion of contextualization as a key element in the curriculum of PTS-CAS.

2. To what extent do mission training programs at PTS-CAS prioritize the development of personal conviction and the cultivation of a relationship with God, both of which are deemed crucial for effective mission and ministry even in the current technological age?

The academic framework of PTS-CAS goes beyond knowledge transmission to instill unwavering conviction in the Reformed faith, drawing inspiration from influential figures like John Calvin, St. Augustine, and the apostle Paul. This approach aligns with the discipling model exemplified by Jesus Christ and His disciples. Throughout the challenges of the pandemic, PTS-CAS demonstrated adaptability by transitioning chapel services online and later resuming face-to-face services while offering live worship streaming. The institution places great importance on nurturing students' personal convictions and deepening their relationships with God through active participation in chapel services, which provide valuable opportunities for worship, reflection, and spiritual growth. However, there are areas where PTS-CAS may need improvement, as some students have chosen paths diverging from Christian ministry or become involved in false cults. Instances involving faculty members from diverse faith traditions have also caused confusion among students, raising concerns about integrating one's faith and teaching when non-believing teachers lack personal faith in Christ.

3. To what extent do mission training programs at PTS-CAS acknowledge the fundamental significance of fostering a profound and genuine relationship with God to augment the effectiveness of ministry, and how do they prioritize the cultivation of character and spiritual growth in their students within the current technological context?

Even within the current technological context of online or blended learning, the institution emphasizes character development and spiritual growth. Drawing inspiration from Jesus appointing twelve disciples, the approach aims to align one's character with virtues exemplified by Jesus, develop spiritual gifts, and manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Despite the shift to online and blended learning, PTS-CAS maintains discipline and spiritual activities that contribute to a Christ-like character and Spirit-filled life. The daily routine includes morning prayer, regular chapel services, and evening prayer meetings. Each semester incorporates designated days for prayer and fasting, dedicated Bible reading, and revival meetings. Church placements, even in an online format, are valued for students' spiritual and character development. The institution remains cautious to prevent a self-righteous attitude, emphasizing humility, love, and a servant's heart. The focus is on authentic and transformative spiritual growth rooted in the teachings and example of Christ.

4. To what extent do mission training programs at PTS-CAS effectively prepare their students to engage in holistic ministry that addresses the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of individuals in the context of advancing technology?

Mission training programs at PTS-CAS demonstrate intentional efforts to prepare students for practical ministry by incorporating activities into various subjects, such as homiletics, counseling, Christian education, and mission, while also recognizing the importance of addressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of individuals. Students engage in practical training through church ministries or placements, and some participate in short-term mission practicums locally or abroad. These experiences, along with team-building activities, leadership roles, and organizational duties, contribute to their holistic preparation. However, in the current technological context, PTS-CAS faces the challenge of effectively integrating technology into its training programs to equip students for ministry in a technologically advancing world. This includes harnessing online learning platforms and AI technologies like ChatGPT to enhance practical and hands-on training. Furthermore, the institution acknowledges the need to adapt its approach to reach out to the nominal Roman Catholic population, which represents a significant portion of the Philippine population. By leveraging technology, PTS-CAS can develop targeted strategies and approaches to engage and minister to this specific group effectively. Additionally, the institution recognizes the importance of training workers for compassionate ministry among underprivileged individuals in the technological age. This calls for the development of specialized programs and activities that equip students to engage in both evangelistic and mercy ministries while leveraging the benefits of technology. By addressing these challenges and integrating technology effectively, PTS-CAS can enhance the holistic preparation of its students for ministry, equipping them to address the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of individuals in

today's technologically advancing world.

5. To what extent do mission training programs at PTS-CAS prioritize the cultivation of communal and relational living among students, faculty, and staff, while acknowledging the role of collaborative partnerships in enhancing the effectiveness of ministry, particularly within the current context of advanced technology?

While the traditional in-person setting cannot be fully replaced, there is an acknowledgment that community-building can also be fostered through digital platforms. The goal is to create a learning environment where individuals interact and relate with one another, not only drawing knowledge from lectures and opinions but also learning from each other's lives. However, the cultural barrier poses challenges to fully realizing the potential of this communal approach. Many Asians are influenced by Confucian philosophy, which places the teacher in a higher position than the student, creating difficulties for both students and lecturers to adjust. Some professors maintain strong boundaries that students find difficult to overcome, while others are more accessible but still operate within their own cultural frameworks. Furthermore, the student body itself comprises individuals from diverse cultures and languages spanning different countries. As a result, the PTS-CAS community cannot be strictly modeled after the community of Christ and his disciples. Nonetheless, PTS-CAS implements the principle of gathering in small groups for learning and fellowship which contributes to the cultivation of communal and relational living.

IN RETROSPECT

As a theological educator and mission trainer, am I indispensable? Of course not, for the Lord will call others to replace me in the future. But will the new technological tools replace me in doing the mission God has called me to do? For sure not. But to effectively incorporate Jesus' model of training His twelve disciples with online learning and encompassing digital platforms (such as AI ChatGPT) into their mission training programs, theological institutions like PTS-CAS must navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the post-pandemic technological landscape, with special consideration to the ethical dilemmas they may bring. At the same time, while online learning may help institutions to continue their mission, it is important to recognize the valuable aspects of face-to-face education that may be lost in an online modality, especially if we try to model our mission training programs after the way Jesus called and trained His twelve disciples.

Incorporating Jesus' discipling approach into online learning and mission programs involves drawing inspiration from His methods and personal investment in His disciples. Just as Jesus tailored His teaching strategies to different audiences, PTS-CAS should contextualize teachings, emphasizing personal conviction and relationship with God. Prioritizing character formation, spirituality, and compassionate ministry is essential in equipping students for ministry in the current technological age. Additionally, fostering a strong community and promoting holistic ministry are crucial elements to consider at PTS-CAS.

But how can PTS-CAS embrace these principles when it launches an exclusively online Master of Arts in Biblical Exposition (MABE) program? This program combines synchronous and asynchronous activities within a structured framework, providing personalized mentorship for effective guidance and creating an interactive online learning environment. My recent experiences of attending face-to-face workshops, participating in the start of the new Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies at PTS-CAS via blended learning, and exploring the potential of AI ChatGPT have prompted my reflection on the opportunities and challenges of a fully online mission training program at PTS-CAS. How may these developments call for a reevaluation of theological education and mission training strategies, with a focus on contextualization, personal conviction, spiritual growth, holistic ministry, and communal living?

As theological institutions embrace technological advancements and navigate the changing landscape, it is essential to anchor ourselves in the reassuring power of Jesus' model of discipleship. Through the integration of Jesus' principles that emphasize one's calling and training within theological education and mission programs, alongside the embrace of the opportunities afforded by online learning and digital tools like AI ChatGT, institutions can proficiently equip prospective leaders and ministers to actively engage in mission work and faithfully serve God's Kingdom within this ever-evolving technological landscape.

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CHILDREN: The Future And The Present

Jobs Tolentino

INTRODUCTION

I believe that when Jesus Christ said to His disciples to let the children come to Him, He meant more than just their salvation. He intended for children to be active participants in the kingdom's work, not merely its beneficiaries.

There are numerous instances in the Bible where God used young children in the ministry. For instance, Eli began serving in the temple at around 3 to 4 years old and formally received his calling at about 12 years old. Another example is the boy who offered Jesus loaves, and fish, which Jesus then used to feed the multitudes. That young boy evidently participated in that miraculous work for the kingdom. Jesus Christ, our Lord, also exemplified this. At just 12 years of age, he was already in the temple, engaging with the teachers of the law, demonstrating his capacity as a child to do the ministry of the Word. These examples are enlightening and inspiring, showing that we can start engaging or empowering children in kingdom work from an early age.

CHALLENGE THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH

The conventional approach in many Christian communities has been to regard children as the 'future of the church.' This perception fosters an environment where the spiritual and ministerial contributions of children are often overlooked, undervalued, or postponed until adulthood, or adolescence, at least. It implies a waiting period, a sort of spiritual incubation, where children are to be prepared, molded, and educated until they mature into their 'real' roles within the church. Such a viewpoint, albeit well-intentioned, inadvertently relegates children to the periphery of church life and ministry.

However, a growing number of churches are embracing a more inclusive and active role for children in their congregations. This evolving mindset recognizes that children are not merely on a trajectory towards future usefulness but are capable and valuable members of the church in the present. It acknowledges that children, with their unique perspectives, talents, spiritual insights, and influence over the adults, especially their parents, can significantly contribute to the life and ministry of the church.

By viewing children as an asset rather than a burden, these churches are tapping into a vibrant source of energy, creativity, and faith. Children, in their simplicity and earnestness, bring a refreshing and often profound understanding of faith, which can inspire and rejuvenate the entire congregation. They embody a purity of heart and a willingness to learn and serve, qualities that are essential for any thriving ministry.

The involvement of children in various ministries within the church is not only beneficial for the church community but is also crucial for the children themselves. Active participation in ministry allows children to develop a sense of belonging, responsibility, and purpose within their faith community. It empowers them to realize that they are not just passive observers but active participants in their spiritual journey and in the life of their church.

Furthermore, involving children in ministry challenges and reshapes the adult congregation's understanding of faith, service, and community. It encourages a more holistic, intergenerational approach to worship and ministry, fostering a deeper sense of unity and mutual respect among all age groups. The active participation of children in ministries serves as a vivid reminder that the church is a diverse body, where every member, regardless of age, has a vital role to play.

WHY DON'T MANY CHURCHES UTILIZE CHILDREN FOR THE MINISTRY?

If that is how churches should involve children in ministry, then why don't many actually empower them? A prevalent view among many churches is that children's ministry is seen more as a liability than an asset. This is often because they don't see immediate results from prioritizing it.

This perspective, where children are seen more as a liability than an asset, impacts how churches prioritize funding for children's ministry. According to a 2021 report, there is a notable lower prioritization of children's ministry compared to adult ministry.[1] The 4/14 Movement also highlights that the average church allocates only about 3% of its resources to children's ministry.[2] This ties in with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Applying its principle in this context, it reflects what many churches truly value. If they invest little in children's ministry, it indicates that their heart is not fully committed to it, which is unfortunate. This trend is evident in the way the church's allocation of resources to children's ministry is disproportionately low, revealing that

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1. Dr. Lawson Murray, Developing a New Plan for Children's Ministry, November 9, 2021, https://childrensministrybasics.com/2021/11/09/new-plan-for-childrens-ministry

2. https://414movement.com

many churches do not value children's ministry as much as adult ministry.

Even when many churches do spend in children's ministry, they often see it as an investment for the future of the ministry. The idea is that once these children grow up, they can start contributing to the ministry's work, allowing the church to reap what has been sown over the years. They perceive the return on investment as low because it requires waiting several years before seeing any tangible results. This mindset needs to be corrected. Again, I would like to reiterate that children represent not only the future but also the present of church ministry.

WHAT THEN SHOULD CHURCHES DO TO UTILIZE THE CHILDREN FOR MINISTRY?

EMBRACE

Churches should embrace the truth that children are not only the future but also the present. Given the Biblical references mentioned above in the introduction, church leaders need to embrace the whole counsel of the Word of God. Church leaders should also learn from and be inspired by those churches that utilize their young talents as a workforce for the Kingdom.

In my nearly 20 years of full-time ministry, I have seen enough to confidently say that young children can indeed be an integral part of church ministry. Churches that embrace this truth have greatly benefited from it. For instance, my goddaughter, (we call her 'Baby Sai') a member of the praise and worship team at her local church, exemplifies this. At the tender age of five, she skillfully plays the drums, not only on special occasions but also during regular Sunday services. While many churches struggle with a shortage of committed workers, that small church in Santiago, Isabela, Philippines has cleverly utilized this young, talented girl, allowing her to use her gift for the kingdom.

Even our own children, John David and Philip Josh, aged 13 and 11 respectively, take part in church work. While they may not be as musically inclined as Baby Sai, they still participate and contribute to the ministry. They are responsible for preparing the sanctuary, sweeping the floor, and arranging chairs. Although many may see this as an insignificant contribution, we view it as an important role in the Kingdom.

As I am invited to speak at church anniversaries, workers' retreats, and leadership conferences, I am continually amazed and increasingly convinced by what I see: young children can indeed play a significant role in church ministry. Church leaders must embrace that truth.

EDUCATE

Young Children must learn the fundamental doctrines of Biblical Christianity that will serve as the foundation for their service. Children's Ministry should extend beyond mere storytelling, memorization of verses, coloring, and other typical Sunday School activities. The truth is that children can already grasp fundamental Christian doctrines if teachers are creative in offering avenues for learning these truths in an exciting and engaging manner.

This idea and practice align with the objectives of the 4/14 Movement, which seeks to nurture a child's awareness of God within the developmental window between the ages of 4 and 14, extending up to 18 years. The Movement believes that this period is critical for spiritual development and aims to awaken a generation to a life with Jesus, with the idea that a child's relationship with God can transform their lives, communities, and the wider world.[3]

Apart from teaching children fundamental doctrines, they also need to be taught about the principles and practices of ministry. Because we aspire to involve children in the ministry, they also need to be oriented about ministry principles and practices, just as we do with adults.

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT THE MINISTRY?

Children need to develop proper ministry worldviews and perspectives. To lay a solid foundation for their Christian work, it's crucial to teach them about the principle of stewardship. This includes understanding that everything they have – their time, treasures, talents, and even their bodies, the temples of the Holy Spirit and are gifts from God, meant to be used exclusively for His glory.

Additionally, the principle of accountability is vital. They should learn that God will hold them accountable for all He has given them, and in time, they will give an account to Him. It's important for children to learn this from a very young age to develop a sense of responsibility.

Another key principle is that of interdependence. As Christians, they should neither be wholly dependent on others nor entirely independent. Instead, they should learn to be interdependent, understanding mutual dependence within the Christian community.

The principle of excellence is also crucial, as they are serving the Almighty God. They should strive to give their best for the glory of the King they serve, aiming to be the best version of themselves every day, without comparing themselves to others.

Furthermore, young children should understand that church leadership is synonymous with servanthood. Higher positions in the church should be viewed not as greater rights but as greater responsibilities. They should also recognize that ministry is a privilege granted to a select few. Once they perceive ministry as a privilege, they will value it more and not take it for granted.

These are just some of the lessons we need to impart to our children regarding the principles and practices

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3. Ibid.

of ministry. There's much more to discuss, but the point is the necessity of teaching young children these concepts. Churches should be more intentional in conveying these truths to children, not just to adults.

I believe we should start integrating these ministry lessons into children's camps, which will serve as an act of commissioning them for church ministries.

ENGAGE

While it is essential to educate children about fundamental doctrines and ministry principles and practices, failing to engage them in actual work can lead to stagnation and significant frustration on their part. Therefore, churches need to engage the children in age-appropriate works in the church.

As I have observed, many Christian leaders believe they must wait until children reach their teenage years before involving them in ministry work. However, the truth is that children can participate in age-appropriate ministry activities as soon as they learn to speak and follow instructions. They can be involved in welcoming or ushering, distributing Gospel tracts, serving communion elements, serving as Scripture readers, and even in music-related tasks as early as 5 to 7 years old, provided they are capable.

It will be beneficial to provide children with a clear ministry description when engaging them in age-appropriate works or ministries, just as we do with adults. Even if they are still exploring which ministry to engage in, understanding their responsibilities is crucial. Defining the scope and tenure of these responsibilities can be very helpful. For instance, they could be assigned to a task for the next one to three months, giving them a sense of vision, direction, and motivation.

Additionally, as we engage them, providing feedback and evaluation is important. With a clear understanding of what is expected, we should periodically offer feedback on their performance. This role, ideally performed by older mentors, is not only for correction but also for motivation. We need to be more intentional in offering praise and appreciation for their efforts. By doing this deliberately, we encourage them to feel more integrated into the work of the Lord.

Letting them know that they are making a significant contribution to the ministry, no matter how small it may seem, is essential. It will inspire and motivate them to do more for the Lord.

EMPOWER

Another area of ministry work that many churches often overlook for children is the task of witnessing for Christ and making disciples. Again, I must emphasize that the Great Commission is not exclusively given to adults. I firmly believe that the Lord Jesus Christ intended this mission for children as well. Church leaders need to empower children to witness for Christ and to make disciples of all nations.

When I was pastoring a church in Butuan City in Mindanao, we conducted a training session on evangelism. To my surprise, an 11-year-old boy, named Matrick, attended. We had announced the event during a Sunday service, and Matrick, having told his father he wanted to attend, did just that. Honestly, I didn't expect much from him at first, thinking he was just a kid. However, I was pleasantly proven wrong. The following Sunday, Matrick excitedly reported that he had shared his testimony with many of his classmates, eventually leading them in a prayer of acceptance. When I asked the group who else had applied what they learned from the training, Matrick was the only one who raised his hand. This experience was my first encounter that convinced me of the potential young children have to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission.

CONCLUSION

As Christian leaders, it is our responsibility to assess the level of engagement of young children in ministry. We must enable them to participate in this glorious work in the Kingdom. Since they are still young and unable to do it on their own, they need our assistance. Thus, our responsibility is significant. May we all, from this day forward, view children not only as the future but also as an integral part of the present church ministry.

Isn't it wonderful to envision a time when we all see God face to face, and the most anticipated words from the Lord Jesus Christ, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'[4] are spoken not only to adults but to young children as well? I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ would love to speak those words equally to both adults and children.

The Lord Jesus Christ, said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."[5] So, let's welcome the children into this journey.

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4. Matt 25:21 (NIV)
5. Matthew 19:14 (NIV)

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