

Ministering to the Scattered Peoples

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Editor's Note: This Cape Town 2010 Advance Paper has been written by T.V. Thomas, Sadiri Joy Tira and Enoch Wan as an overview of the topic to be discussed at the Multiplex session on 'Ministering to Scattered Peoples.' Responses to this paper through the Lausanne Global Conversation will be fed back to the authors and others to help shape their final presentations at the Congress.

I. INTRODUCTION

People have been on the move from time immemorial. Very few people today live in the same geographical location where their ancestors originated. If we think long and hard we will realize that most of us come from somewhere else, even if it was centuries or decades ago.

The unprecedented movement of diaspora peoples on a large scale and at great frequency has set a global trend that has marked the 20th and 21st centuries. This phenomenon now touches most countries of the world. The latest research reveals that 'around the globe, 200 million people now live and work outside their homeland.' [1] In reality the numbers are higher when you include the second and third generations who are related to them. With socio-cultural factors such as globalization and urbanization, there are strong reasons that this global phenomenon will increase in scale and significance.

The factors causing these unprecedented movements of scattered peoples often include natural disasters like earthquakes, famines, tsunamis and floods; man-made disasters like chemical pollution and ecological crises; oppressive environments because of political or religious persecutions; economic and educational needs and opportunities.

With so many people from so many origins moving in so many directions and landing in so many destinations, planned or unplanned, it could be concluded that we are fast becoming a 'borderless world.' [2] Whether it is through regional treaty agreements between countries, clandestine illegal immigration, or forced cross-border influx of disaster-driven refugees, national boundaries are increasingly becoming porous. Ministering within the context of this global phenomenon requires new strategies to reach the massive Diasporas with the Gospel and through them to fulfill the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus.

The term 'diaspora' is originally a Greek word referring to the Jewish dispersion, i.e. to the scattering of Jews outside Palestine (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:64; Ezekiel 36:19) and also refers to the scattering of Christians of the early Church in the New Testament (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19). Over the centuries, the term 'diaspora' has been added to contemporary vocabulary in reference to the People on the Move who will cross national borders, i.e. the scattered peoples. Other terms such as 'migration,' 'emigration' and 'immigration' have been used in reference to People on the Move.

II. MOVING AHEAD WITH GOD - T.V. Thomas

God's Intentional Purpose for Diasporas

The God of the Bible is a Creator and is the author of mission. God Himself is on a mission (missio dei) in this world. It is God's love and compassion for His creation and humans that make Him seek, send and save. The mission of God is repeatedly echoed throughout Scripture. In His covenant with Abraham, God affirms that Abraham and his descendents will be the vehicle for blessing the nations (Genesis 12:1-3). God further specifies Israel's function as His servant nation by commissioning her

to be a "treasured possession" a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). Old Testament passages like 1 Chronicles 16:23-24 and Psalm 67 focus on God's mission.

Both the Great Commission mandate in Matthew 28:19-20 to "make disciples of all nations" and Christ's divine exhortation, "You are My witnesses" (Acts 1:8) demand that we evangelize the People on the Move. The reality that God is on a mission is highlighted by the apostle Paul in his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens where the significance of scattered peoples clearly surfaces in Acts 17:26-27: "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."

Verse 26 claims that it is God who sovereignly orchestrates places and times where and when people live. In verse 27 Paul zeros in on the reason why God moves people to different places. The reason is to fulfill His purposes "that they would seek God"? It is a universal fact that new environments make people more curious, make them question their long-held assumptions, challenge them to understand and compare their religious worldviews, and make them explore new alternatives and thus become highly receptive to the Gospel. We believe God is scattering the nations of the world to bring in a mega-harvest globally. Accordingly, the Church must embrace this new global reality and strategize to reach the various Diaspora people groups.

III. MOVING TO REACH PEOPLE ON THE MOVE " Enoch Wan

Opportunities and Challenges When Working with Diasporas

Due to the demographic changes on a global scale, contemporary Christians are to realize that there are opportunities and challenges when working among diaspora groups in the context of the 21st Century. In the Multiplex Session, we will explore new approaches as summarized in Figure 1 below:

See Attached: Figure 1 - Working with diaspora: opportunity and challenge

"Diaspora missions" is the practice including ministering to (in evangelism and service), ministering through (motivate and mobilize) the diasporic groups and ministering beyond them (to other groups in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

How the Holy Spirit is Working Among the People on the Move

Case Study 1 " Church Planting (House churches in CAN = Creative Access Nations)

Details will be provided during the Multiplex Session.

Case Study 2 " International Churches (The Lighthouse in Kuwait)

The National Evangelical Church of Kuwait (NECK) is a unique entity in the country of Kuwait where 25,000 worshipers are gathered. They are extremely diverse denominationally, doctrinally, culturally and even linguistically. Come and learn of the details at the Multiplex Session.

Case Study 3 " Diaspora people group meeting in "Bus-Churches"

Many churches in the West have "Church buses," but diaspora people have "Bus-Churches." Photos and description will be presented at the Multiplex Session.

Amazing Windows of Opportunity

Example 1 " Karen of Burma (Myanmar) in Thailand now in USA

Karen refugees numbering 150,000 had been living in refugee camps along the Thai-Burmese

border for up to 20 years. In recent years, up to 20,000 Burmese refugees per year from Thai refugee camps can be reached in US major cities. Detailed description will be presented at the Multiplex Session.

Example 2 ? Africa?s Unreached Peoples in Europe and Americas

According to Lausanne World Pulse, there are now golden opportunities regarding the Unreached People Groups (UPGs) of Africa now reachable in Europe and the Americas. Detailed explanation will be provided at the Multiplex Session.

Example 3 ? Reaching Koreans, Chinese and Brazilians in Japan

Japan is known to be ?the graveyard of missionaries? yet many nationalities within Japan are receptive to the gospel. Come to the Multiplex Session and you will be surprised to learn that Koreans, Chinese and Brazilians in Japan can be reached with the gospel.

What Can the Church Do?

1. Motivate and mobilize local churches and believers

Motivate and mobilize local churches and believers to seize the opportunities to reach diasporas in their neighborhood by practicing ?missions at our doorstep.? If this is a new idea to you, come to the Multiplex Session to learn of the details.

2. Integrate ?relational paradigm? and ?diaspora missions?

Missionary efforts and ministerial approach in the West have the tendency to be managerial and entrepreneurial (i.e. outcome based with focus on measurable goals and numerical growth), programmatic and paternalistic (i.e. lack of relational touch and partnership practice). Therefore, new approaches are proposed below.

See Attached: Figure 2 ? Integrating ?relational paradigm? with ?diaspora missions?

Relational approach in ministry (diaspora missions included) differs from that of ?programmatic approach? for it is costly, time-consuming, effort-draining, messy and risky; yet it is close to the heart of God. The heart of the matter in ministry is ?the matter of the heart.? Relational ministry must come from the ?heart,? leading to the transformation of the ?mind? then translated to what we do with our ?hand? in service. The pattern of relational ministry is: heart à ahead à hand. Come to the Multiplex Session and you will learn about these facts.

3. Practice strategic stewardship and relational accountability

In light of the global demographic trend as described by Philip Jenkins[3], the Christian Church is to practice strategic stewardship, which is to be defined as ?the wise use of God-endowed resources and God-given opportunities to His glory and for Kingdom extension strategically.? There is a relational accountability vertically to God for good stewardship, and to share the Gospel horizontally. If this is a new idea to you, come to the Multiplex Session to learn of the details.

4. Engage in strategic partnership for networking and synergy

Strategic partnership is desperately needed in the context of the 21st Century when the center of Christianity is shifting to the Southern Hemisphere to replace Western paternalism and Euro-centric missions.

IV. MOVING THROUGH PEOPLE ON THE MOVE ? Sadiri Joy Tira

The Church is on the Move

God in His sovereignty is moving people so that they may seek Him and know Him. This mass movement of people has presented both challenges and opportunities to reach the People on the Move. The encouraging news is that the Church of Jesus Christ is also on the move! Historically, global missions were the prerogative of those who were called and trained for cross-cultural ministry. In recent years, mission forces (personnel) have been bolstered by the diaspora Christians or Christians on the move. There is a dramatic paradigm shift in missions. Now, it is not just the traditional "career missionaries" or specially commissioned "tentmakers" who are spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but also seemingly ordinary people on the move carrying the extraordinary Good News to the furthest corners of the globe.

Ministry Approaches and Models through Diaspora Christians

Approach 1: Reaching countrymen in their respective homelands
Illustration 1 ? Iranians in North America are mobilizing other Iranians in North America. Americans are doing short-term "missions" in their homeland. Illustration 2 ? Punjabi Christians in the UK are visiting families, relatives, and friends in their native village with the purpose of sharing the faith in Jesus Christ that they found in the UK. Illustration 3 ? Indonesians who were converted to Christianity while they were employed as contractual workers in Hong Kong, are returning to Indonesia equipped to share their faith to their family and community.

Approach 2: Reaching local and regional people
Illustration 1 ? Korean workers in Central Asia are reaching out to their hosts ? Uzbeks, Kazaks, and Kyrgyz. Illustration 2 ? Brazilian Christians living in Japan are reaching out to Japanese people in Japan. Illustration 3 ? Mainland Chinese Christian contract workers are witnessing to Arabic-speaking Muslims in the Gulf.

Approach 3: Reaching Transients
Illustration 1 ? Filipino seafarers are reaching multinational crew members and travelers on ships. Illustration 2 ? Australian Christian host families are reaching out to International Students from countries like China. Illustration 3 ? Malaysian Christians are reaching out to Nepali contract workers in Malaysia. Illustration 4 ? Zambian Christians are reaching out to Malawi Muslim diplomats stationed in Zambia.

Approach 4: Compassionate ministries
Illustration 1 ? Sri Lankan Christians from Germany are reaching out to refugees in Europe. Illustration 2 ? Christian agencies in the USA are helping asylum seekers in American cities. Illustration 3 ? Diasporic congregations in Toronto are responding to the Haitian earthquake victims.

The reality of diasporas and the potential of diaspora missiology to motivate and mobilize Christians to reach to and through People on the Move should not be underestimated. Never before have there been so many opportunities to reach people with the message of Jesus Christ. This is why congregations must be motivated and mobilized to participate in this new missions strategy.

Furthermore, a concerted effort should be made to teach diaspora missiology both at the formal and non-formal level, training future pastors, international workers (missionaries), and lay leaders. Intentional diaspora training would prepare workers for ministry in the borderless world. Theological institutions are gradually installing a diaspora focus in their curriculums. It must be noted that Ambrose University College and Seminary in Calgary, Canada is working towards this via their Jaffray Centre for Global Initiatives. In February 2010, Ambrose offered a college/seminary crossover course ? Diaspora Missiology in Canadian Context: A Third Millennium Trends and Issues in Mission. Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, USA also offered a variation of this course in April 2010 through the Institute for Diaspora Studies to Doctor of Missiology students. While there have been a few pioneering initiatives in diaspora missiology, there is currently no concerted effort in the evangelical academic community to train Kingdom Workers for diaspora missions. If diaspora is a major issue in the 21st Century, then would it not be essential to include diaspora missiology and diaspora missions in the curricula of our evangelical academic institutions? In light of the data

presented in this Multiplex Session, is this not an opportune time for the Church to mobilize Christians to practice and partnering together in diaspora missions?

Let us pray to the Lord of harvest to raise up worldwide intercession for an unprecedented move of the Holy Spirit so that the Whole Church takes the Whole Gospel to the Whole World.

[1] Duncan Mavin, "One Big ATM?", The Financial Post Magazine, October 07, 2008. Don Mills, Canada: National Post

[2] The term "borderless world" is to be attributed to economist Kenichi Ohmae who wrote The Borderless World (McKinsey & Company, Inc., 1991)

[3] Philip Jenkins, in The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity. Oxford Press, 2001

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Downloadable Attachments:

Diaspora-Figure1.pdf

<http://conversation.lausanne.org/uploads/resources/files//Diaspora-Figure1.pdf>

Diaspora-Figure2.pdf

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