

January, February, March 2014

Horizons



Creatively

- **spreading the gospel**
- **increasing understanding** and
- **changing lives** worldwide!

beginning on page 6, read updates on
3 such mission endeavors working to
introduce people to Christ's saving power



**Reggie
Hundley**

**Editor,
HORIZONS
and**

**Executive
Director,
Mission
Services
Association**

We welcome your letters to the editor. Letters no longer than one typewritten page are more likely to be published. Include your name and address on all correspondence. Only signed letters can be printed. Letters may be edited for the sake of length and clarity.

An Explanation and . . . A Challenging Thought

“Well, it is about time!” I am sure that this will be the sentiment expressed quietly (or at least entertained privately) as this issue of *Horizons* arrives. Most have wondered where the January and February issues have been. Yes, we have received telephone calls wondering if subscriptions had expired or copies had been lost in the mail.

This issue is a bit later than normal due to the unfortunate aftermath of the burglary of our Mission Services office in mid December 2013. With the pressing demand of creating the newsletters and mailings needed by the missionaries and ministries we serve, it seemed best to plan for our first “quarterly” issue. As things have progressed, we are considering the option of *Horizons* becoming a regular quarterly magazine. This is not a settled issue, and we promise that there will be no less coverage of missions if the decision becomes permanent. We appreciate your patience as we catch up to the normal workflow after missing the better part of two months in the world of printing. *Horizons* continues to be an important part of the work of Mission Services, and it continues to be read by people around the world whether in print or on screen.

For the challenging thought, I will wade into the deep and treacherous waters of the world of politics...in a spiritual manner. Mixing politics and Christianity can be, and usually is, a very dangerous proposition. However, I feel as if I need to do so, because I think there is a dangerous and growing division among us as the body of Christ. There have always been political divides among believers, but the intensity of our disagreement is becoming perilous.

The problem today is not simply a difference of opinion, but believers are being drawn into the trap of questioning one another's faith based upon matters of opinion. Our good friend Bob Russell, retired Senior Minister of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, wrote in his blog about the

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harsh criticism he received based upon his choice for the Presidency of the United States in the 2012 election. I have never been afraid to voice my political opinion in private discussion, but of late I have been accused by some of having a faulty understanding of the love of Jesus because my opinions tend to lean to the conservative side of fiscal issues. Recently, two other friends made trustworthy public statements about political leaders in the USA needing to be people of high moral character. People responding immediately accused them of being insensitive, not caring for the poor, and worse.

As believers in Jesus, I hope we model Christian love as we disagree. We need not withdraw from political discourse to avoid potential areas of contention, but surely we can refuse the temptation to demonize those with which we disagree. We hear political leaders denigrating everyone with whom they do not agree, but we belong to Jesus! We should never compromise God's truth for the church or for society, but our emotions or the tone of our response can either be a source of healing or destruction. May our actions and discourse be seasoned with salt. May we be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Salvation does not depend upon party affiliation or opinions on fiscal policy. I can think of few places of greater darkness where God's light may shine brighter. You think about that!



HORIZONS is a mission-oriented magazine of the undenominational fellowship of the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Mission Services, as publisher of HORIZONS magazine, publishes articles written by field missionaries rather than staff writers. We believe this offers a clear image of the variety of opinions that exists between missionaries within the historical Restoration Movement.

Editor: Reggie Hundley
Editorial Assistant: Carol Hundley
Graphic Design: Cheryl Elliott
Pressman: Bill Topley
Bookkeeper/Treasurer: Georgia Sharpe

Publisher: Mission Services Association
Address: 2004 E. Magnolia Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37917

Phone: 1-800-655-8524
Outside USA: 865-525-7010
Fax: 865-525-7012

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July 8-11

North American Christian Convention

Indianapolis, Indiana

Theme: reMission

2014 President: Tim Harlow

Contact information: North American Christian Convention
513-772-9970 / www.gotonacc.org

July 20-26

Lake James School of Missions

Angola, Indiana

Contact information: Kent Shady, Program Chairman
260-824-2132 / kdshady@adamswells.com

September 19

Peace on Earth Ministries

Joplin, MO

Appreciation Banquet

Theme: 50 Years of Preaching

Contact information: Victor Knowles / victor@poeministries.org
417-627-0325 / www.poeministries.org

November 13-16

International Conference on Missions

Columbus, Ohio

Contact information: David Empson
317-539-4231 / david@theicom.org

November 14-16

Eastern Christian Conference

Hershey Convention Center, Hershey, Pennsylvania

Theme: Sent

2014 President: Don Hamilton

Contact information: Eastern Christian Conference
410-836-6102 / info@easterncc.com
www.easterncc.com

Sowing in Tears, Reaping with Joy

Italy For Christ -- The Overseas Ministry of
Jim & Caranita Wolsieffer and Gianni & Stephany Bruno

Psalm 126:5,6

**"Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.
He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."**

For the transgressions of many, *one man died.* It was August 29, 2013. A 38 year-old employee of the water company drowned in the middle of a main street close to our office. The man had just lowered himself in a narrow, unsecured ditch and a freak landslide buried him from the waist down. Neglecting more safety rules, the coworkers decided to use a backhoe to free him. They accidentally broke an unsecured waterline and a violent flash flood burst over the victim. Frantic screams alerted the firemen, just one block away. Coworkers and storeowners stood helplessly as inattentive water employees ignored repeated urgent phone calls to turn off the city's water supply. One fireman impulsively jumped into the hole to pull the man out by his arms, but was forced to leave his boots behind in the quicksand-like mud to save his own life. Many witnesses will never for-

get the plea for help in the victim's eyes as the mud buried him alive.

The difficulty of the rescue reveals the need: context and history

Symbolically, this tragedy reminds us of millions of Italians buried under centuries of dangerous cultural attitudes. Italian journalist Aldo Busi writes, "Italy manufactures self-absorbed cheaters. The only true, inimitable 'made in Italy' trademark is a burial chamber of deception, a mass grave of swindlers." The ancient Roman law that still influences the western legal system cannot keep the ground from crumbling in its own country. Italians pride themselves as being one of the most ungovernable nations in Europe while crying out for someone to magically solve the problems they themselves cause. Italy is unhappy in its own way.

Historically, political theorist Antonio Gramsci reminds us that the early Italian State was a fierce dictatorship that shot, dismembered or buried farmers alive in Southern Italy. Two forces actively opposed the State. On one side, paramilitary organizations like the Red Brigades overtly terrorized the nation while “men of honor” covertly fought the State through scams, extortion and loansharking. Through popular consensus that thrived on anti-government sentiment, these “men of honor” gradually made their way into key government roles. Before becoming a criminal organization, the Mafia in Italy started out as and remains a social structure that stands on an honor code of silence.

Socially, the use of intimidation on all levels of society along with the alarming enmeshment of Mafia and State contribute to cultural mistrust of authority. Submission evokes fear of being annihilated. The substantial problem, however, is not so much the resulting defiance toward authority, as much as the widespread expectations to go unpunished for any misbehavior. Italian Judge Felice Lima suggests, “There is a general attitude of impunity of all for all. This attitude allows Italians to feel honest while stealing, democratic while racists, catholic while pagan.”

Spiritually, de Sismondi described Italians as the most devout to Roman Catholicism among all Europeans but the least inclined to observe and follow Christian virtues and morals. He wrote: “Italians have mastered the art of silencing the conscience and of covering their lack of morality with a superficial compliance to rules....The great religious zeal of the Italians is not at all a pursuit of

holiness; on the contrary, it is wise not to trust especially the most devout.” Many Italians who leave the Catholic Church tend to gravitate toward religions or sects that are either very legalistic in nature or that pursue ecstatic subjective manifestations. These groups operate according to the same implicit rules of “Don’t trust, don’t talk, don’t feel.” These tacit assumptions inhibit the ability to discern what is authentic spirituality from counterfeit religion, allowing abusive leaders to shame and control others while living their own lives in immorality.

Experts in world evangelism maintain that Italy is one of the most difficult places to share the Gospel. Some have walked away from this difficulty. Others have jumped in only to sense the danger of spiritual quicksand. They pull out, feeling a personal loss for those they leave behind. Then there are those who ignore repeated urgent calls to get personally involved, preferring rapid results in more “fertile” fields. Jim and Caranita Wolsieffer, however, are American missionaries who in 1971 chose to run toward the spiritual adversities in Italy. What brought the then newlyweds to search for entrapped souls in organized anarchy?

As a young man, Jim himself had been rescued from a potential watery grave. A hasty last dive into a swimming pool fractured his neck. Doctors marveled at Jim’s miraculous survival after surgery, but warned him that he



Jim & Caranita Wolsieffer



*Gianni & Stephany Bruno
Anyssa & Raffaele*

would live with severe pain. “In order to live a significant life in the midst of such discomfort” the doctors added, “we recommend you choose a highly challenging occupation for which you feel it is worth living.” That accident prepared Jim and his wife to look for opportunities in the midst of nearly impossible situations. A quiet coexistence of tears and joy alternated between days that the pain confined Jim at home and days that he could preach and teach. Other serious health issues eventually forced him to pursue alternative means to share the Good News. Two of these ministries included 10 years of operating the first Christian Radio Station in Southern Italy and 16 years of managing a Professional Counseling/Spiritual Retreat Center in a rented farmhouse. In 2006, Jim and Caranita’s daughter and son-in-law, Stephany and Gianni Bruno, joined the Italy for Christ Mission. Stephany, with a Johnson University degree in Bible and Counseling, joined Caranita in the healing of damaged emotions. Gianni, a native Italian, with a Johnson University degree in Bible and Preaching, joined Jim in the preaching and training of spiritual leaders in the local church.

The need reveals the process and action plan: current opportunities

At the peak of its effectiveness, IFC suffered a loss due to typical Italian dishonesty and shrewdness. The government confiscated the property that IFC had rented for the Center because of the landlord’s tax evasion. Although many tears accompanied the forced move in 2012, the pruning produced new fruit. The Center relocated in the heart of the city, in front of its 12th century castle. In light of this new acquired visibility, IFC created parallel corporate boards in the States and in Italy, resulting in a new Italian name, a new logo, and new web sites (www.italyforchrist.org; www.recrea.it). On January 18, 2014, seven Christian professionals from different areas of Italy met with the IFC team to discuss the yearly budget and operational plan of Recrea. Based on their knowledge and experience, they believe that IFC is the only legally recognized non-profit organization in the Italian brotherhood that combines Professional Counseling and Spiritual Training to equip Christian Church Leaders, simultaneously offering its services to the population at large, without discrimination of creed or denomination. The mission statement and action plan account for this uniqueness.

Mission statement:

“IFC mission exists to identify the obstacles unique to the Italian culture that hinder mature Christian living and help Italians remove those obstacles.”

In particular, the IFC team proposes that Italy is a shame-based, fear-oriented culture that needs servant leaders who can influence this generation with a grace-filled, love motivated environment. Christian Counseling, Leadership Training, and culturally relevant teaching and evangelism represent the instruments of choice that IFC uses to free Italians from the shared attitudes of mistrust and dishonesty that keep them trapped under a mudslide of condemnation.

Action plan:

To move Italians from survival to stability, IFC offers Christian counseling. The ministry of presence allows the healing of damaged emotions and challenges the “don’t trust, don’t talk, don’t feel” rules that govern social interaction. By creating a safe environment, people can surrender the superficial image that separates their values from their beliefs and live with authenticity. This grace-filled ministry continues to permeate the culture as Caranita trains teachers and doctors in basic listening skills, specifically related to grief issues and Stephany conducts Dance Movement Therapy groups.

To move Italians from stability to thriving, IFC proposes *Aquila and Priscilla*, a two year leadership training program, designed to mentor emotionally stable couples that aspire to serve the church in a servant leadership role. This program allows IFC to challenge hierarchical structure contrary to Biblical leadership that stunts spiritual maturity in the homes and in churches.

To move Italians from thriving to significance, IFC proposes *Reforma*, a series of Bible college level courses for those who already teach or aspire to teach

in the church. Gianni meets with a group of men twice a month to empower them for Christian service. Several non-practicing Catholics have joined the group with a sincere desire to explore the Bible. As a direct result of *Reforma*, members from a local church asked Gianni to guide them through a spiritual gifts inventory and assessment in order to become more intentional in their church involvement.

Future dreams of reaping with joy

Out of a population of almost 61 million people living in 70% urban areas compared to the size of Arizona, Operation World estimates the Italian evangelical presence at 1.1%. While IFC recognizes the reality of resistance to the message of grace, it rejoices in knowing the resiliency of the faithful minority. Paul penned Romans 8:28 to Italians! It has been a privilege to love and serve with those who have overwhelmingly conquered by Christ’s love and grace. Surely, to network with more of these faithful few throughout Italy is a dream, perhaps not too far in the future. We have been asked to teach Biblical principles of marriage at a summer family camp near the Swiss border. Caranita attended the European



*Counseling and training center;
Smart car has new logo and name*



Gianni and Jeff Faull co-teaching the men's Bible study of Reforma



Jim working with Sandro on the Association's financial records



Stephany greeting people during the inauguration

Leadership Forum in Poland to gain information on the situation of Christian Counseling in Europe. Gianni and Stephany accompanied 25 members from two local churches to attend the national conference of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (GBU), with guest speaker John Lennox. The conference updated Gianni and Stephany on the needs and progress of leaders of the evangelical movement.

While networking with other Italian Christians, IFC also seeks to increase its sphere of influence through the addition of American team members. Gianni actively recruits perspective missionaries. Ross and Megan Najmon have passed the assessment and seek support. Micah and Rebecca Herrick came for a second scouting trip in the fall of 2013 and are waiting for their assessment interview. The Wolsieffers and the Brunos beckon others to join them as they move a generation of Italians from survival to stability and from stability to significance by turning off the pipelines of toxic shame and revealing the cultural values that keep them alienated from God.



The rescue is difficult. Yet adversity never stops a squad from attempting to save someone who faces death. If anything, the challenge highlights the need for the rescuers to discern the dangers hidden in the crisis and to intervene with the appropriate instruments in a timely fashion, lest the first responders aggravate the situation. Spreading the Gospel in Italy is not only difficult but can also become ineffectual if done without an understanding of the hid-

den inner workings of the culture. Like underground water pipelines, the unspoken rules, tacit assumptions and shared cultural values can work against any missionary rescue effort. IFC does not presume to have all the answers, but does not tire to keep asking questions until those questions find practical answers in God's Word and in His Spirit.



William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, received word that his converts were coming home. They said, "We've tried everything. We've tried preaching on street corners, beating drums, passing out tracts and nothing works." Booth sent them a telegram that simply said, "Try tears." The value of each Italian soul alienated from God moves us to sow in tears. Perhaps Jim's chronic pain has been our training ground to intertwine suffering and joy into wonderful opportunities to share God's grace, which is more than sufficient. An entire harvest of souls for the next generation awaits your prayers and involvement. Will you run away or go toward the plea for help in their eyes?



Gianni's prayer -- to be a leader of future leaders in the churches in Italy



Gianni with recruits: Rebecca & Micah Herrick, Gianni, Megan & Ross Najmon



Caranita speaking for the Inauguration

Overseas Outreach

The Overseas Ministry of Rick & Della Deighton



Overseas Outreach was born as a result of answered prayer and through the leading of Almighty God. Our primary target is the Russian-speaking world, especially Ukraine, but there are also open doors in Germany, and there is still much to do here in the U.S.A. The biographical summary printed on the back of my first book, “Ready to Give an Answer”, says Rick Deighton is a bi-vocational missionary, who works lighting business between mission trips to former Soviet Union nations. Rick’s wife, Della, is co-owner of their business and is the bookkeeper for both their business and their ministry. With Rick, she was also co-founder of Alpine Christian Mission and Overseas Outreach. Rick and Della are co-workers with Victor and Evelyn Knowles as Northwest representatives of Peace On Earth Ministries, and Rick is an associate evangelist with Reggie Thomas (White Fields Overseas Evangelism). Rick is a graduate of Boise Bible College and later did post-graduate study at Ozark Christian College in mission strategy, expository and evangelistic preaching, personal evangelism, philosophy, and writing techniques. Rick’s articles, tracts, books, and booklets have been published in English, German, Korean, Russian and Georgian. Rick and Della believe that education is important, but prayer is vital in being “*Ready to Give an Answer*.”

Strategic Locations

Now “Ready to Give an Answer” is also published in the Georgian language, and I have taught a concentrated modular one-week course in Christian Evidences and Creation Evangelism twice in the Republic of Georgia at the extension campus of Tavriski Christian Institute. While I was in the Republic of Georgia last April, Gogita, the director of Tavriski Christian Institute, asked to interview me about Creation Science for his on-line radio program, because he sees creation evangelism as a vital part of outreach in this former Soviet Union nation. The Director of TCI’s main campus in Ukraine, Valentin Siniy, told me when we first met and bonded in our vision, that the Republic of Georgia is a strategic location for outreach to the nations around it. Azerbaijan is on its eastern border, but Georgia is also a needy mission field itself. From Georgia Christian leaders and church planters can expand into the neighboring countries of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Armenia and Russia. Ukraine itself is a strategic bridge from the west to Eastern Europe and Central Asia. American missionaries are blocked from many or most of those nations, but Ukrainians can move freely back and forth because they were all formerly part of the Soviet Union.

Answered Prayer

I want to now refer back to my first sentence in this article to explain how Overseas Outreach was born out of prayer. In the summer of 1997, while we were living in Gresham, Oregon, and I was serving on the leadership team of Gresham Church of Christ (now named River Hills Church), both Della and I sensed that God was getting us ready for a change. We began asking specifically focused prayers, seeking to discern His will. In September we went to Joplin, Missouri, for the Convocation of One Body Ministries (now Peace on Earth Ministries). One morning we got personally acquainted with Reggie Thomas, founder of White Fields Overseas Evangelism, while enjoying breakfast together. After breakfast I casually mentioned to Reggie that we were praying for direction because we both sensed God was preparing us for a change. Reggie pointed directly at me and said, “We need a preacher for Estonia, and you may be the answer to our prayers!” I politely replied that I would pray about that – but inwardly I was thinking, “That doesn’t sound like any place I want to go.” After the concluding session of the convocation, I was walking towards the door when I heard Reggie call my name. When I turned, he pointed at me and said, “You will be hearing from me!” I mentioned it to Della, but even then I did not take it too seriously. However, a few days after our arrival back home, I had a letter in my hand from Reggie, inviting me to become an associate evangelist with White Fields Overseas Evangelism and to consider going to Estonia. After reading the letter out loud together, I told Della, “We have been asking for God’s leading, so we can’t just shrug this off. We’d better take it seriously!” So we knelt in prayer and asked the Almighty for His guidance. What is our

next step? It came to my mind suddenly and clearly that I should show the letter to the leadership team at church and tell them the background. Their response was, “Rick, this is from the Lord! We want to be your sponsoring church!” That is what launched us into the most exciting and productive ministry of our lives.

How God Opened the Door to the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine

Of course, there was a need for fund-raising and preparations, but in June 1998 I was teaching Christian Evidences courses for youth camps in Estonia. Following that, I teamed up with Victor Barviks, an acappella missionary in Latvia for outreach evangelism and church planting. I made two mission trips a year to Latvia in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

In the fall issue of “Creation Ex-Nihilo” magazine I saw an extensive article entitled, “The Creation Crusader of the Crimea,” concerning the ministry of Sergei Golovin, a converted evolutionist/scientist (geophysicist). As I studied the article, I thought, “This is great! I would like to meet him. I would like to work with him!” The article did not give me any contact information, but when I looked at his name more closely, I realized that I had already been distributing his videos on “Science and the Bible” in Russian to Russian-speaking immigrants in the Gresham/Portland area. The videos were produced by Good News Productions, International in Joplin, and I later learned that Sergei is the regional director for Good News Productions, International for the Russian-speaking world. G.N.P.I. supplied me with Sergei’s email address, and we connected in vision and purpose almost immediately.

Sergei invited me to become a presenter for the “Man and the Christian World-view” Symposium in May of 2001. Georges Carillet had started the symposiums a few years before as an outreach to an unreached people group – intellectuals in the Former Soviet Union nations. Georges is the director of Commonwealth International University and chairman of the board for Sergei’s ministry, Christian Center for Science and Apologetics. Both of them are key leaders in Simferopol Christian Church and partners in outreach to students and professors.



*Sergei & Olga
Golovin*

I became a regular participant in the spring symposiums and the fall conferences for nine years. (Georges had to discontinue them after the spring of 2010 because of shortfall in funds.) However, the idea caught on and sparked other such conferences, and I’ve been a presenter in some of them. Through the symposiums God brought me into touch with people who opened doors to other areas of Ukraine and Russia.

One of the special moments at the symposiums occurred after I presented my paper, “The Catastrophic Consequences of Darwinism”, which is now Chapter 3



*LaVerne & Georges
Carillet*

in my book, “Ready to Give an Answer”. Stephan Bruev, a retired medical doctor, stood up during the question time (cross examin-

ing session) and said approximately this: “I’ve been indoctrinated in Darwinism all my life, but after hearing this presentation, I don’t believe it anymore.” That was a “Wow” moment for me!

Does the presentation of Christian evidences and contrasting worldviews really make a difference in people’s lives? Definitely! Consider with me two more examples.

When Lena first came to Commonwealth International University (formerly Crimean American College), she was an atheist and a member of the Communist Youth. However, she got much more than language study – she got a course in apologetics from John Murphy and experienced the love of Christ from committed believers that led her to repentance and transformation. When I first met her in 2001, she was already using her musical talent by serving on the worship team at Simferopol Christian Church. Now she is married to a Christian leader who trains church planters.

When another atheist young lady from Muslim background came to Crimean American College, Lena was by then teaching at CAC, and her contagious faith influenced this young woman to give her life to Jesus. Both of them have served as my interpreters and co-workers with World English Institute.

My planning strategy remains very simple and direct: “Lord, what would you have me to do?” I try to be very conscientious about walking through the doors He opens!

Basically, I consider our Overseas Outreach mission a support ministry for outstanding ministries already functioning in Ukraine, mostly on shoestring budgets. The three ministries we have worked with the most closely through the past 13 years are CCSA (Sergei and Olga Golovin and team),

CIU (Georges & LaVerne Carillet and team) and Christian Life Church in Kharkov, with Zhenya & Natasha Molodchy. (Zhenya is minister of missions there. He is one of the preachers for the congregation, plus he reaches out in new church



Zhenya & Natasha Molodchy

planting, seminars for police officers and prison inmates, teaching and preaching to those recovering from addictions, etc. Both Zhenya and Natasha have a passion for souls and are effective personal evangelists. God has given Natasha a gift of friendship, so that strangers are simply friends she hasn't met yet.

Besides these, we also work with several ministries to orphans, namely the Schalbyetski family, The Love Cradle, Mulberry International, and Youth Reach International.

God has opened doors for me to teach worldview classes contrasting creationism with evolutionism in the English classes in universities, colleges, high schools and even some elementary schools. I have more freedom to teach the Word of God in public schools in Ukraine than in the U.S.A!



Rick with the Schalbyetski Family

Book Offer

The books "Ready to Give an Answer" and "Is the Bible Without Any Errors?" are an outgrowth of my participation in the "Man and the Christian Worldview" Symposiums.

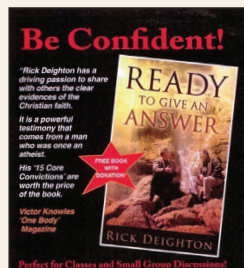
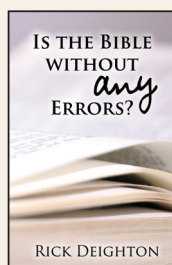
"Ready to Give an Answer" is now by textbook for the week long modular course in Christian Evidences and Creation Evangelism.

Would you like to become a participant in helping change lives through presenting truth in love by being a prayer partner or contributor – or both? Contributions to Overseas Outreach can be sent to P. O. Box 1224, Nampa, ID 83653-1224.

If you decide to contribute to Overseas Outreach, you can designate which ministry you want us to channel it to – and you may have a free book for an offering of any amount. Please tell us which title – or both if you wish.

My next book, "More Than Conquerors in Cultural Clashes" is now at the publishers, Search for the Truth Ministries. This

book is to encourage and challenge disheartened believers to accept, believe, and act like who we are in Christ – More Than Conquerors! God does not hint that we might be – or should be conquerors. He tells us we are MORE Than Conquerors!!! Brothers! Sisters! Let's be who we are!



From Teaching to Understanding to Lifestyle Change

Al Corson -- Insight Recourses International

It has been about 2 years since we last shared about our work in Africa and around the world. In our last article, our name was Safari Insight Mission, but now we are Insight Recourses International. This change is a result of God opening doors far beyond our initial vision. The goal of IRI is little different than any other missionary organization; that is, to spread the gospel. Our emphasis, however, is focusing on helping the recipients of the gospel *understand* the things they learn. This makes IRI able to partner with most all mission works that are out there and help existing missions or missionaries with their mission goals.

Many missionaries, mission organizations, Christian Collages, and other ministry organizations are frustrated with a seeming lack of transformation in many mission fields, despite years of focused evangelism and ministry effort. These organizations have become increasingly concerned with several chronic difficulties missionaries experience when sharing the gospel. In Africa, for example, many Christians still practice various forms of their traditional religions alongside Christian worship. In

Western churches, many Christians are “Sunday Christians” who go to Church service, but don’t evidence the transformation of the Holy Spirit that Scripture talks about. Other cultures we have interacted with have similar issues—in most cases, the most frustrating issues revolve around a lack of lifestyle change that the Bible says goes along with a new life in Christ. IRI has put 8 years of research into why, despite increasing efforts to preach the gospel in ways various cultural groups can more easily understand, we are still seeing this kind of syncretism appearing in Christian communities. This despite planting thousands of churches a year, building Christian colleges by the hundreds around the world, developing programs for church growth, personal growth, youth growth, and baptizing in accordance with the examples laid out in Scripture. Why are we getting syncretism when our hearts are so clearly focused on God’s kingdom? We know the scriptures; we have studied the people groups we are ministering to. What are we missing? Let us share what we have encountered in our ministry—

perhaps it can help others with the spiritual and cultural conflicts they are facing.

What We Learned:

Human beings are creatures of habit. Often, our habits are good, allowing us to perform certain routine activities without having to think about them. Just imagine how difficult life would be if we had to remind ourselves how to eat, walk, or drive a car every day – we would hardly get anything meaningful done! Our habits let us “ignore” activities we perform regularly so that we can focus on the more complex details of life. Unfortunately, we can also have “bad habits”—actions we perform without thinking that are, sadly, detrimental to us in some way. We are all familiar with good and bad habits, but we often don’t realize that it isn’t just our physical actions that can become habitual; any act we perform regularly can be habit-forming—including how we think, how we learn, and how we teach.

Many educators are familiar with the idea that the way a person is taught becomes the way they teach others; we do as we have done to us. This becomes important when we consider that much of our modern education teaches *facts* (or data: who, what, when, and where), but is often less focused on reasoning through *concepts* (why and how things go together). In our culture, we often learn *how* to think from our families, and *what* to think from our teachers. Unfortunately, this means that when we attempt to teach others, we teach as our teachers taught us—that is, we teach what to think (just the facts, sir or ma’am). The facts of what to think, however, are only half

the equation—in order to affect a full transformation in Christ, a person needs to learn *how* to think as a new creation. They need a new perspective, a new understanding...a new world-view. In short, we need to communicate how to think as much or more than simply what to think.

Jesus explained through his parables how to go about evangelizing. He used a results-oriented conceptual approach, forcing his disciples to *think* about what he was saying, not just blindly memorize his teachings. The parable of the sower in Matthew 13: 10-23 is a keystone passage for IRI. In Mark 4:13, Christ says this about the parable of the sower, ***“If you do not understand (comprehend) this parable how can you understand any parable?”*** (NIV) The parable of the sower is about understanding the hearts of the listeners (the soil) when seeding it with the word of God—and in Greek, *heart* and *mind* are deeply interconnected concepts.

We have found that there are people groups who have endured suppression to the extent that their reasoning skills have been compromised. We say “skills” and not “capacity”—all people have the capacity to reason well, but in some cases their culture and language have been stressed or suppressed to the point that they are in a perpetual “survival mode.” When people are put in situations of perpetual stress or constantly suppressed, we tend to react, rather than carefully reason through our situation. If this persists, our reasoning skills, like any skill, become rusty. In some cultures, such reasoning skills have been not been consciously developed for generations. On top of this, IRI has discovered, through

observations and research, suppressed cultures are often afflicted with a kind of generational PTSD. This compounds the results of cultural suppression. IRI has found that this is the case in Mozambique, some American tribal communities, the Philippines, and Myanmar. These factors (suppression and PTSD) have generated many cognitive “disconnects” within the thinking patterns of those affected.

One of the most prevalent disconnects impacts the understanding of personal identity. Under prolonged emotional stress, people can detach themselves from their situation as a coping mechanism to survive the trauma. In most cases, they limit their actions to what they are told to do. Their thinking reduces to the point of simple reaction to instructions, with little reason to request or seek an explanation for personal action. (In many cases, any attempt to determine a real explanation for their instructions are met with violence and additional suppression.)

This way of thinking results in an indirect self identity. They see themselves as part of a system, and their identity comes largely or purely from being a part of that system. Over time, under certain suppressive situations, certain abstract dimensions found in an affected people’s language can be lost, along with the reasoning skills that are tied to these linguistic elements. Cultures affected by this linguistic loss find it more difficult to discern differences between key concepts. This phenomenon bears a striking similarity to the darkening of the understanding mentioned in Ephesians 4:17-19. It accounts for the unintentional development of syncretism within the

churches and Christians. The terrible truth is that their mindset is, in a real way, darkened and therefore unable to see the light of the gospel.

In cases like these, believing in Christ is not the problem. Anyone can believe, based on what they see and their relational ties to Christians. James recognizes this truth, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:19 – NIV) The problem is one of discipleship – helping people understand what they believe so that they can further grow in Christ. This is why James focuses on works—not because works save, but because a transformed mind results in changed actions (James 2:18 ***“I will show you my faith by my works.”*** – NIV). In our work in Mozambique, IRI has identified over 300 conceptual terms that have to do with comprehending the gospel that are known by definition, but not understood *conceptually*. That is, the Mozambicans know what to think—that Jesus is the Son of God, but don’t know how to fit that idea into their lives. The reason for the lack of conceptual understanding is tied to the suppression Mozambicans faced for many years under colonial rule. This suppression stifled conceptual thinking in the culture, resulting in the loss of conceptualization discussed above. This can be undone, but cannot be addressed wholly through traditional education, which relies too much on memorization of facts, not conceptualization. Therefore, instead of focusing on teaching more facts (that are not being integrated into the lives of believers), we have focused on the development of reasoning styles aimed at integrating biblical concepts with the

national culture and language.

This work takes the great foundation that many missionaries have dedicated their lives to laying, and tries to take the nationals to the next step in spiritual development. What is the next step? In short, it is a holistic application of the Gospel. Now that Mozambicans believe in Christ, IRI works with them to help them develop abstract thinking tools, with the goal of promoting the transformation of the mind described in Romans 12:2.

The results of this empowerment in Christ have been encouraging, to say the least. Over the last three years, the Mozambicans we have been working with have started:

- Taking lead roles in church planting.
- Reorganizing existing churches that have become syncretistic so the body of the church can discern why they should follow Christ not their traditional religions.
- Starting new businesses. Like,
 - Welding shops.
 - Markets.
 - Sewing.
 - Rental properties.
 - Sleep-overs, i.e. motels.
 - Farms.
 - Tutoring.
 - Charcoal making.
- Using new businesses to help support the body of Christ by building a financial infrastructure in communities.
- Breaking dependence on Western charity.
- Putting orphans in homes in their community to keep their cultural identity.

- Meeting poverty and fear head on through understanding and discernment.
- Developing a mindset that enables a powerful personal walk with Christ.

From everything we have seen, this is just the beginning for the Mozambicans.

As our Mozambican brethren start taking over our ministry in their country, we are being called to work with new partners around the world. In the U.S., the Philippines, Myanmar, Hong Kong, and other places, we are being asked to come alongside missions organizations (and even non-Christian organizations who see a practical value to transformed lives in the “secular” arena) to help them find new ways to develop the people they are working with. Much has changed for IRI over the last few years, and God is not finished changing us yet. We are thrilled, however, to be given this wonderful opportunity and blessing. We would like to conclude this article with some letters we have received from people we have worked with in Mozambique and around the world. These letters are a precious encouragement to us—we hope they will be the same for you. Please keep in mind that some of these writers have English as a second, third, or fourth language, and some of these letters are translations.

From Mozambique:

Name: Angelo Luis Mossiricane

Country: Mozambique

Job: Farmer

The IRI organization (ABC thinking) teaching resulted in me accepting new ideas.

The difference between donor Missionaries and organization IRI is that donor Missionaries teach only to pray and ask God to do miracles or wonders in man but IRI organization says that God has given us the power to do any kind of job that exist and when I heard these words I became very happy and my life has changed because of the ABC thinking.

If I was in America I would have funded and empowered the Mozambican people in ABC thinking, pastors, widows, orphans, vulnerable, elderly and God's work.

Dear brother AL,

I hope you are doing okay up there in States. We are all ok.

Sorry for taking long without writing to you since you left Mozambique. I was busy helping the Churches we had two of them with roof problems as know that here now is rainy season. We manage to buy grass and water proof for thatching them and we did they are [out] of danger now. This as you that is my effort, now is being much strong because we have a vision of trying to use the things around us. Thanks for this Knowledge. I am writing this email just to say thank you on ABC thinking you dropped in me and my family. All of us now we are doing very well because before doing anything we need to have some internal questions like how? why? when? etc. that help us in good progression in our plans.

We came to discover that before we were doing thing for emotion and less thinking was there applied. But now the thinking is the key of the success of our plans. As you know my plans that I am

on the side of developing the Churches in ABC thinking. Most our local Churches are doing things wrongly because there is a lack of good thinking among them. With ABC thinking in my point of view will make people in this country grow stronger in everything they do on themselves.

My family now is the key of admiration in our village this is seen by the work done here by them.

We are looking forward to see you again with new Ideas in this knowledge.

Mozambique needs much of you help so that can grow strongly and be able to use their opportunities correctly.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus be with you, Best regards, George.

Name: Taona Saize Chibare

Country: Mozambique

I work as a pastor, merchant and peasant.

The IRI organization teaches on ABC thinking; controlling our environment, preserving and taking responsibility for what God has given us and how to think about the concept of time, tell the truth, also respect our friends and accept what others do, everything in its proper time .

I am writing this letter because IRI teaching has affected me more positively than other organizations and missionaries. Other organizations and missionaries only teach about spiritual beliefs and donors donate money only but the IRI organization (ABC thinking) teaches; how to think -develop ideas and know-how, individualism, learning to do things by yourself and think by yourself. One should not feel ashamed of doing menial jobs since one needs the income for survival.

If I was in America I would fund and empower the following groups.

- 1. Christian people in learning ABC.*
 - 2. Ministers who work for Lord and have no support, orphans, widows and the elderly.*
-

Name: Maria Taona Saize

Country: Mozambique

Work: Student, 9th Grade, 21 years

The IRI organization (ABC thinking) led me to reflect new impasse as new ideas. The differences between other missionaries, donors and organizations are, they donate and devise solutions but ABC thinking taught me a lot and I am thankful.

The ABC teaching affected my life because it brought a difference as far as thinking is concerned, new ideas and rationalization.

If I were in America I could fund and empower the people of Mozambique, ABC pastors, elders, widows and fund the work of God and Pastors who work for God.

Other Locations:

My name is Linah Mutimbairi. I come from Zimbabwe. Mr. AL Corson from United State of America is working here in Mozambique. His purpose in Mozambique is human resource development. He always motivates everyone to take control of his own environment.

The IRI teachings is affecting my life in a positive way why, I am learning a lot of things, they teach me ABC thinking, to tell people the truth and they don't tell people what to think they tell how to think. I started to work at IRI in 4 February 2013 but up to now I am always happy in my life and I am feeling like I'm living in a small

paradise because of their teachings. They are improving my life a lot.

Some churches they don't tell people to work why, because they deal with faith or miracles. They tell us to stay at home and then our faith can call a work for us, in which way, for example from nowhere somebody calling on your telephone asking you if you want to work? That's the way your faith can work. But IRI always tell people to work they don't only depend with miracles. It is not possible to stay inside about one week without food waiting for a miracle you are going to die with hunger go and find something to do that you can eat what you want and you can put what you want.

Dear Al,

Through the seminar and coaching programs and world view workshops, and the principles and theories of ABC thinking are helpful and useful to me. One thing I want to share is dealing with ABC thinking. In our country, most of the people are living without thinking something how to do the best. Some are thinking but the principles and theories are wrong like BCA, CBA, BAC, and CAB. Everyone in the world worships something or one thing. But their purpose or focus in worship is wrong. Let me experience, when I have shared about the attributes of God the creator, one of strong Buddhist man replied, "You call God, we call Buddha as god, so we are the same because of the name of God." This is wrong thinking. So, we have responsibility to correct their wrong thinking into right.

--Thomas [from Myanmar]

I attended the IRI seminar in the Philippines in March 2013 with follow-up coaching in Hong Kong during the two months following. The extreme differences in thinking styles between cultures was fascinating, especially in its application to Christian missions and evangelism. The idea that miscommunication of the Christian message has been widespread and chronically unnoticed (with tragic consequences) is of terrific importance. Laying a better foundation so that actual communication can take place between speakers and listeners will affect my future participation and support of missions and evangelism. Within my own church setting, I am slower to assume that the ideas expressed (especially by the preacher and Sunday school teachers) are the ideas received by the listeners. I try to use more ways to confirm an accurate reception of any message. (For example, asking a listener to express the idea in question in his or her own words.) On a personal level, the IRI seminar challenged me to be more accepting and tolerant of other's views. Now I am deliberate in trying not to reject another's 'crazy' idea out of hand, but rather, make a serious

attempt to figure out where that person is coming from. What an improvement in relationships this makes. This is another key concept that I was reminded of and very deeply impressed with the importance of: relationships between people. I believe that taking part in the IRI seminar has improved the relationship I have with my wife, my children, brothers and sisters in the church and even complete strangers. I appreciate the wisdom and effort of the IRI team members. I fully support their work and hope that you will give them the time to share their valuable ideas with you.

--Scott Smyth, Hong Kong

In Conclusion

These are a sampling of the letters we have received from people we have worked with in our ministry. We are thrilled to see people changing their lives for Christ, and grateful to God for the opportunity to serve him in His incredible ministry. We also want to thank our supporters and partners for all their help in this wonderful work. God bless all His ministries and ministers.

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Thank You!

MSA greatly appreciates the following individuals and churches who responded to our most recent appeal. Your gifts are allowing us to continue serving missionaries and ministries worldwide. As of March 4th, gifts have totaled \$12,250.40. Thank you for your generosity!

Adkisson, Jane D.
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Wiemeyer, Stanley & Lois
Wiley, Colleen
Wilson, M/M Larry G.
Wise, M/M Jim
Yost, M/M Jerry

Prayer Needs & Praises

India

- Bnasan (Bana) & Marguerite Uriah give praise for over 40 years serving in Northeast India with Jaintia India Mission.
- Pray for the entire Uriah family for continued good health, safety, and physical stamina as they travel among the churches.

Jordan

- Harvey & Nancy Bacus request prayer as BOOKS & MORE will host its 2nd grand opening on May 24th showcasing their expansion from the original opening 4 years ago.

China / Egypt

- Please pray for Truman & Nancy Whitaker as they travel to China for 6 weeks to teach English.
- Truman & Nancy will also be making a trip to Egypt in March. Pray for them as they help Christian families reestablish business as ministry.

U.S. Retired

- Please pray for Tom Fife as he recovers from a recent heart catheterization.

Thailand

- C.W. Callaway requests prayer for the recording of the Mien Bible in Maechan. The equipment being used has not been working properly and efforts online and by phone with technicians have not yet been able to get the problem solved. Please pray that this obstacle may be overcome and that the Bible recording may proceed and not be delayed any longer.

Mozambique

- Don & Aleta Hulsey give praise that Maputo Biblical & Theological Seminary concluded its 4th year with a 1st graduation class of 18 students.
- Pray for the 11 men and 7 women graduates; the oldest was 67 and the youngest, 24. These students represent 13 different churches and all are already involved in ministry.

Mexico

- Pray for Martha Elba Hayes who suffered complications from a recent gall bladder surgery. Before being released from the hospital she was diagnosed with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease).

Christian Aviation & Radio Mission (CARM)

- Stan Smelser reports that the New Tribes helicopter continues to fly in support of New Tribes missionaries and CARM evangelists.
- The conference center and newly installed computer station was used to assist in Bible translation via Skype.
- The studio continued recording 6 programs each week in 4 languages.
- The New Tribes helicopter spent several weeks in the Central Philippines delivering relief supplies and the gospel to victims of Typhoon Haiyan.
- In Haiti, CARM is looking to open doors for building a radio station.

CRAM Worldwide

- C.Y. & Patricia Kim give praise for a wonderful celebration of ministry held at Mt. Pleasant Christian Church, Greenwood, IN with over 200 in attendance.
- Praise that Bibles were recently distributed in Russia.
- Praise for a new orphan named William at the Ole Folks / Orphanage Home.
- Pray for Jim & Andra Howe, project managers for Ole Folks / Orphanage new work.
- Pray for open doors in Russia as CRAM Worldwide furthers their footprint.

Arizona Reservation Ministries

- Dale & Diana Lawrence request prayer for the homeless and those with no heat on the reservation this winter.
- Pray for safety for the children of the San Carlos Apache Nation.
- Pray for the completion of a new hospital in San Carlos and for those who will serve there.

Team Expansion

- Join C & A in praying for those reading the Good News in Eastern Europe.
- Pray for the annual visa renewal process for J & J so that they may continue serving in Eastern Europe.
- Join J & S in praying for the kids coming to the kids programs in Eastern Europe.
- Join Brian & Heidi Rotert in praying that the many seeds planted in Ancona, Italy will grow into fruit.
- Join J & R in praying for their team in the school term during the winter months in Eastern Europe.
- Pray for SS now that her teammates have left. She is in charge of the English course and is the only American in this Eastern European town.
- Pray that God would provide opportunities for Kyle Koval (Italy) to plant seeds of the Gospel in Andrea's life.



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543 number of videos downloaded from **the missions network** during February 2014

170 nations in which people live that have visited **the missions network** to learn about God's Kingdom

20 the percentage of people spending an hour or more learning about missions each time they visit **the missions network**

5 the minimum number of days in a week when new information or news is added to **the missions network**

4 the average number of times each month that each person visits **the missions network**



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