

mission:world

NEWS

INDIGENOUS MISSIONS

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The fourth value of BMA Global Missions is that we practice indigenous missions principles. The word indigenous simply means that something belongs locally. The ministries that we initiate around the world must be sustainable and reproducible in each of those local contexts. Those ministries will not last, and certainly will not multiply, if they are dependent on outsiders to provide vision, finances, and leadership.

In missionary ministry, a certain tension has always existed in the instruction and application of biblical truth in local cultural contexts. This process is referred to as indigenization: the attempt to make the gospel belong in a local setting and not be viewed as a foreign idea or expression. Unfortunately, in many places of the world where Western missionaries have pioneered gospel ministry, that ministry has been presented with a significant Western cultural baggage.

Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, practiced indigenous missions principles during his own personal ministry. He did not walk into a historical/cultural vacuum; he walked into a very specific history and culture in Israel. In his efforts to convey his message and develop reproducing leaders, he worked in and with the cultural norms. He did not view all culture as antagonistic to his mission.

Jesus used four common metaphors to communicate and illustrate his message: farming, vines, sheep, and fishing. These, of course, are obviously taken directly from daily life in Israel. Jesus also utilized the synagogue system as long as they would allow him, and he employed the rabbinical structure of instruction where a rabbi would have a select group of students/followers. Jesus spoke in parables, which was a common teaching method of the local culture. There were many things that Jesus did not accept or utilize from the culture, especially the religious system of his day.

Indigenous missions principles are quite evident in the New Testament. Historically, men like Henry Venn and Roland Allen, who both lived and served as missionaries in the early twentieth century, articulated indigenous principles, and they continue to be a very good resource in the on-going discussion.

For many years, a guiding concept in the indigenization conversation has been the “Three-self” model for churches. In this idea, the goal is for a church that is self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating. This simply means that the church makes its own decisions, pays its own way, and is able to multiply . . . all without outside interference or help. This model has been scrutinized for various reasons. One criticism is that it overly emphasizes the “self” part and creates isolation. Another criticism offered that it was incomplete and two more “selves” were added: self-expressing and self-theologizing. These simply mean that the local church looks like a church in that culture in architecture, worship style, communication style, leadership selection, etc. Self-theologizing does not mean

it can create for itself some special system of theology, it means that they must build and apply biblical theology in local themes that we simply do not have very often in the West such as polygamy, animism etc.

BMA Global Missions attempts to carry out healthy indigenous principles. Noted missionary Hudson Taylor once said that “missionaries are the scaffolding, not the edifice.” Like Christ, our missionary methods must include local forms that will allow us to develop local leaders in local systems that will carry on after the scaffolding has been removed.

Two primary ways that BMA Global Missions attempts to accomplish this goal include our church planting grant program through ChangeMaker missionaries and our practice of the “principle of the thirds.” Both of these efforts have as their stated goal to partner without creating dependence. Prayerfully, this also does not take us to the extremes where we have no ongoing relationship and do not cultivate the “self” part in isolation but in association.

The grant program through ChangeMaker missionaries is carried out in the lives of non-American church planters who receive a church planting grant for a limited number of years. In essence the partnership is with both the project and the person, but it is not open-ended. It is intended to help the church plant go to the five-self stage and repeat the process as the church becomes part of our worldwide family.

The principle of the thirds is intended to support those churches in their advancement by not giving them gifts where they are not vetted in the process. If they want to make a major purchase or build a building etc., they are expected to fund the first third of the total cost, then we will try to help them with a third, and the last third can be an interest free loan from our international loan fund. In the end, we partner and facilitate; we do not enable and create dependence. Also, the local congregation will have paid two-thirds of the total cost when the project is complete.

Much like our own children, we look forward to the day when they are independent from us as parents in finances, decision making, and other areas of life. That does not end our relationship, it merely changes the dynamics. Overall, we as parents rejoice in seeing our children flourish on their own. BMA Global Missions is thankful that we have many family members in our association around the world that function on their own and yet they are a vital part of the ongoing ministry.

If the edifice is going to shine and the children are going to live in a healthy manner on their own . . . the scaffolding and the unhealthy systems of enablement and dependency must come down.

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OPEN HEARTS AND GOSPEL RESPONSES

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Editor's Note: For the past decade, Jeremiah has been serving in the district of Ahmednagar, located in the southern state of Maharashtra, which has a population of 4.5 million people, most of whom are Hindu. Ninety-four percent of the world's Hindus live in India, but there are substantial populations of Christians, Sikhs, and Buddhists. India's massive population includes not only the vast majority of the world's Hindus, but also the second-largest group of Muslims within a single country behind Indonesia. While there are legal protections for religious groups and minorities, Indians still experience "high" levels of government restrictions on religion.

Our work is growing, and most of our churches are also growing after the lockdown period. God is tremendously blessing our efforts in one mission area in the district of Ahmednagar where we have baptized more than thirty people in the last six months. I am working with a young church planter named Bro. Jayesh in three church plants in this district, and Bro. Jayesh and his wife were some of the first people that I baptized eight years ago.

God is opening people's hearts, and the people are responding to the gospel. I want to tell you about two stories, each story about new believers and how they came to know Christ:

First, a lady named Savita visited our prayer meeting at one of the church plants with one of our members three months ago. She had a very rough life and found herself deep in sin after suffering abuse and experiencing drug addiction. Savita lived with multiple partners in the last six years but never married any of them. That day when she visited our prayer meeting, God opened her heart and she was filled with guilt. She cried in front of the whole group and accepted that she was a sinner, repented of her sins, and accepted Christ. She was baptized just three weeks ago. We are gracious to God for opening people's hearts to receive his word, changing their lives forever.

The second story is about a man named Shiva. His wife came to our church regularly, but Shiva never came; he was a very staunch Hindu and an alcoholic. A few months ago, their daughter had pneumonia, so we went to their home to pray for her, and by God's grace he was home at the time. He did not speak a word and almost seemed angry as we prayed for the little girl. After praying, we spoke to him and told him about Jesus, but he just sat there, listening to what we had to say, never speaking a word. A couple of weeks later he visited our Thursday prayer meeting and listened

to the message being preached from the third chapter of John, the story of Nicodemus. The Holy Spirit opened his heart, he was filled with guilt, and that day he accepted Jesus and insisted on getting baptized immediately.

God is great and faithful. He is bringing a revival in this church plant. We praise and thank God for what he is doing in Ahmednagar.



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NEWS

ENABLING BELIEVERS TO REACH THEIR OWN PEOPLE

BY: Jeremy Hambrice

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Seven years ago we began to build our jungle houses in the mountains among the Wantakia people of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Before we ever learned their language, created an alphabet for it, or translated any scripture in it, we asked God to show us men and women who were faithful, available, and teachable (F.A.T.). We knew that many years down the road we would be doing ministry with them and eventually handing God's Word over to them so they could continue teaching it long after we were gone.

As we started learning the Wantakia language, we began to see men and women display those F.A.T. qualities, and as we spent time with them, we could see God revealing both men and women who were faithful, available, and teachable! Pasei was not one of those people.

When we first moved out to the village of Pinji to live with the Wantakia, Pasei was not there. We had no idea that all three of us missionary families had built our houses on his property. His older brother had given the okay, but when Pasei heard the news, his first thought was that he had struck it rich, and he would come and demand from us missionaries that we build him a tin roof house too.

When Pasei first arrived, he didn't make any demands, but we could sense that he was a very arrogant person, always telling people his way was right and theirs was wrong. Pasei had been married to his wife Wumlin for about five years at this point. They were childless, and he would beat her and tell her how easily replaceable she was. They tried eating magic fertility leaves from the bush doctor, but that didn't help her conceive. Pasei was convinced Wumlin's brothers used sorcery to make her barren.

After three years we finally learned Pasei's language, created an alphabet for it, began to translate the scriptures into it, and developed a literacy program so people could read it. How surprised we were when Pasei, the man who knew everything, came to us with his three dollar school fee and faithfully attended our literacy program for three months. On the heels of that first literacy class, we taught the people of Pinji village God's Word for the first time.

We prepared around seventy Bible lessons that would take the Wantakia from the beginning of God's Word all the way to the end with the hope

that many would repent before God and trust in Jesus as their Savior.

It took us a little over two months to teach the entire story of God, and Pasei and Wumlin faithfully came every day. As they sat on a log under our teaching tarp, hearing God's Word in their own language, looking at pictures of the stories and watching many of these scenes acted out by us missionaries, Pasei and Wumlin heard for the first time how they were sinners who had come from Adam and were born in Satan's clan.

They heard their only hope was the promised Savior Jesus who came and did all the work necessary for them to leave Satan's clan and live in God's. After hearing that message very clearly, they both, along with many other Wantakia people of Pinji village, believed in Jesus and went from "darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26).

When that happened we began to see such a transformation in the lives of Pasei and Wumlin. Pasei changed from being the most arrogant man in the village to the humblest! He went to apologize to Wumlin and her

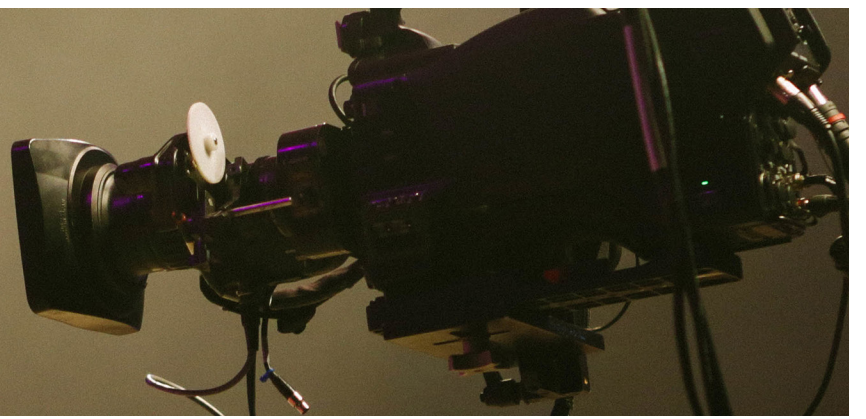
family for how he had acted and told them that he now believes that God is the author of life and could give them a child if he desires. After praying for over a year, God provided a child!

Not long after Pasei believed, we began to train Wantakia literacy teachers to take our place. That is the way of indigenous missions—"we do things with people and not for people, enabling them to reach their own people." Because Pasei, through the power of the Spirit, was beginning to show some of those F.A.T. qualities, we began to train him to become a teacher as well. In the meantime, we kept teaching the new believers through the book

of Acts. They all heard that one of the church's main responsibilities is to share the gospel, and they wanted to do just that.

As a result, there was great interest in hearing the entire story of God just like we had taught it the first time. This time, though, we missionaries didn't want to teach it by ourselves. We wanted to involve the new believers, teach with them, and enable them to reach their own people. To do that, we began to train Pasei and others to be Bible teachers. This time they stood up with us and faithfully proclaimed the good news. The result was that we saw many more believe in Christ and join the church! Because we have done this with them and they are being equipped to reach their own people, the church desires to take the gospel to Wumlin's home village of Asi.





COMPLETING THE TASK

BY: Holly Meriweather

Lifeword

lifeword.org

Lifeword exists to help make disciples through the creative proclamation, production and promotion of biblically sound media that communicates in the heart language of every tongue, tribe and nation.

Lifeword fully understands that the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations was given to the local church, the only authorized body to fulfill this great task. These are her marching orders as given by Jesus, so Lifeword, rather than doing the work for the local church or doing things for the local indigenous peoples, has come alongside with media tools, training, and various forms of support.

The men and women who create gospel media content for lifeword.org serve their own communities, their own cultures, and their own languages and dialects. There are currently more than 160 community radio stations and seven online radio stations run by local churches in their communities and for their communities.

The evangelistic gospel presentations they create are broadcast in 140 languages and led by local indigenous believers in our churches. Hundreds of these programs are 100% produced by churches for ministry to their own communities. Meant to be extensions of church outreach, these videos are produced for the various cultural niches in their own context.

In each of the four regions, Lifeword global partners work to create these relevant videos. In Africa, the BMA Ghana, BMA Liberia, and BMA Nigeria associations are reaching their own communities using tools Lifeword has provided. Nigerian Joseph Eniowo's use of smartphones distributed in three mission points to help evangelize children and families then begin discipleship.

In the Americas (Central and South), the Gaitans (Nicaragua) produce marriage and family videos

in a culture where infidelity and bigamy are acceptable lifestyles. Valmori Zelaya ministers in an area of El Salvador that is hungry for the gospel, so he produces 60-90 second evangelistic videos and is seeing positive results. Peruvian Paul Tinoco installs powerful transmitters as close as he can to people groups in Peru's remote jungles when he hears of those without access to evangelical radio stations.

In Asia, Filipino Pastor Pete Etabag is helping BMA churches there to reach communities from the cities to the jungles. Most of his trainees only have cell phones, so he teaches them how to produce gospel content with them. In Lebanon, Joe Costa records programming for several niche cultures in Arabic including Muslims, women, Armenian diaspora, and agnostics.

In the European region, Lifeword has come alongside Brother Bogdan Bilav with media tools that share the gospel. Using gypsy-language Bible recordings and translations of the four Gospels, he targets this marginalized people group. Also, Ukrainian Pastor Pasha Onatsko continues ministering to refugees and produces videos explaining why the war with Russia is happening instead of what is happening. His content is for people who need hope and an understanding that God is in control.

Lifeword Director of Operations Luis Ortega says, "It is an honor for Lifeword to be invited by the local church to help fulfill the great task

given to her by her leader, Jesus. Making disciples of Jesus in the heart language of every tongue, tribe and nation requires believers in each of those areas to do their part, and who better than local indigenous believers who are passionate about the task and familiar with their own context, traditions, beliefs, and needs, serving their own immediate neighbors."

