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Reader Feedback

"Dear CSM—Recently I have been challenged to increase my faith and would be very interested in any resources that CSM offers on the topic. We would also like to know when Bro. Charles will be in our area. May God keep you in His amazing grace.

-Wilma, B., PA

(Editor's note: Please go to www.csmpublishing.org and click on "Ministry Store" for Charles' latest release, "Faith Works". You can also see his latest travel schedule by clicking on the "Charles Simpson" tab.)

"Dear CSM—We highly respect your ministry and thank God for your anointed teaching. We need people to be bold in Jesus in these days. God is so good.

-Dennis N., PA

We want to hear what is on your mind! We welcome your feedback, prayer requests, testimonies, and concerns. Please write to: **CSM Publishing**, P.O. Box 850067, Mobile, AL 36685-0067. Or, visit us online at **www.csmpublishing.org**. All emails and letters become the property of CSM Publishing and may be edited for content and published.

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Through the Storms

Trusting in the Lord and working together cause families to overcome trials

By Stephen Simpson

One rule for writers is. "Write what you know." I seem to be writing (and speaking) a lot about storms lately. Last year, as you are aware, our area was hit with four different tropical storms or hurricanes; one, Katrina, dealt the central Gulf Coast a devastating blow. Of course. storms come in all shapes and sizes; some are of the weather variety and others come in the form of sickness, financial difficulty, conflict, and other trials.

What we have learned in the face of storms, both natu-

ral and spiritual, is that not only is Jesus "in the boat" with us, but that He does care for us in the midst of it all. Furthermore, if we can be sensitive to hear His voice, we will learn how to stand with others and bring them peace and strength—even when the winds of turmoil are howling and the waters of fear are rising.

Since Hurricane Katrina struck in late August of 2005, you, our readers, have helped CSM to raise and distribute—directly and indirectly—nearly \$300,000 in practical aid and support to those most affected by the storm damage. On behalf of all of those reached, in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, we thank you and we offer praise to God. Even now, some support continues to come in and we are distributing it as the Lord leads. (Any funds designated for Katrina Relief go directly to assist storm victims-these funds are over and above our regular monthly financial needs, which definitely continue as we meet many opportunities worldwide.)

As the article by John Feaver on this page attests, the needs are still great. In fact, CSM is partnering with Covenant Church of Mobile and with Christian Outreach International to help meet some of the specific needs mentioned in John's article.

Standing together for a great cause is what family is all about, whether we are speaking of natural family or

spiritual family. Recently, my friend Bishop Levi Knox made a profound statement: "The Kingdom is extended through covenant relationships." I believe he is exactly right. As we stand together as the body of Christ, and focus outward on meeting practical needs, we will yet see a great harvest for the kingdom of God.

Storms will come. Scripture and experience tell us this is true. But we have a firm foundation in Christ and in our covenantal relationships together that will bring us through each and every trial. God bless you, and thanks again for standing with us.

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Hurricane Update: New Jersey Church Offers Katrina Relief

How members of Long Branch Covenant Church have made a difference along the Gulf Coast By John Feaver

SHEETS OF RAIN AND STREAKS OF LIGHTNING GREETED OUR TEAM FROM LONG BRANCH (NEW JERSEY) Covenant Church as we drove into Bayou la Batre, Alabama on a Sunday in late April. We found our way to the church building where the Christian Outreach International (COI) staff were waiting; Matt, Heidi, and Jeremiah from Canada and Ohio are twenty-somethings who have given up the comforts of family and friends for months on end in order to be in the Gulf Coast region, helping in whatever ways they can.

That evening, as the rain continued to come down in torrents, a call came in from a local homeowner: "Could you put a tarp on my roof? It's raining in my house!" "That's odd," said Matt, "we already put a tarp on her house." He quickly realized that it must have blown off, so on their one day off, he and Jeremiah drove over to replace the covering.

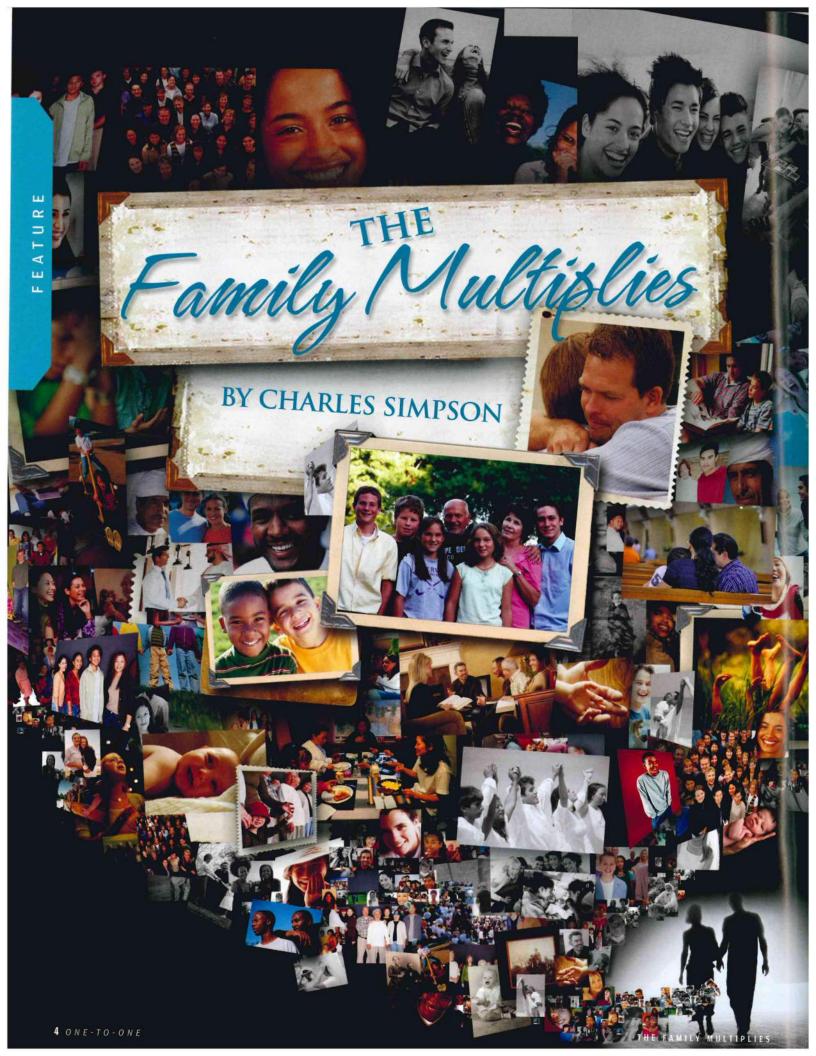


A woman removes ruined belongings from her Bayou la Batre home.

Picture courtesy FEMA,2006.

The next morning, Tony DiMauro and Ken Brynildsen started the project of removing that homeowner's leaking roof and installing a new metal roof. Charles Harris, a professional electrician, and Dianne Waters began electrical work on a house that has been loaned to COI. The COI staff hopes to stay there, as well as use it as a base for a children's ministry that Heidi is launching. While parents are often consumed with the challenges of recovering from losses of home, possessions, and even jobs, children need to be able to enjoy their childhood by having a place to play together.

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CHURCHES REJOICE IN ADDITIONS; GOD REJOICES IN MULTIPLICATION. WHILE CHURCHES SEEK

to add members, the non-Christian world—especially the Islamic world—is multiplying. How are they doing this? Families are having children—lots of children. The West meanwhile has de-emphasized family, having children, and is focused on population control.

Simultaneously, Western nations are importing workers and the children of other nations in order to sustain their economic growth and the retirement of an aging population. While some multiply, we only add.



The Church likewise adds or merely maintains, but has forsaken God's plan to multiply. We settle for mere additions. How has this happened? It happened because we shifted the personal responsibility to be fruitful from ourselves, individually, to the church institutionally.

THE ORIGINAL COMMAND

In the beginning God created male and female and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (see Genesis 1:22). There are two very significant points to note: God began with family and His intent was to fill the earth through multiplication. It did not take long. When one considers the duration of life back in those days and the number of children that families typically had, the result is obvious.

The Scriptures refer to the fact that the number of

people multiplied rapidly. The fact that they lapsed into sin does not obscure the reality that they were filling the earth.

BEGINNING AGAIN

When mankind fell into sin and wickedness, God started over, but again He started with a family. Noah's family built the Ark, was saved through the flood, and continued the mission to fill the earth through multiplication. For a second time the method worked. Ham, Shem, and Japheth became the patriarchs of nations.

When the time came to introduce the Holy Seed into the human situation, God again ordained a father and his family—Abraham and Sarah. The Lord supernaturally gave them a son and the guarantee that through their seed He would bless all nations. He

would, through a family, fill the whole earth.

It is vital that we take note that the promise to bless all nations was given to a family because family would be the means. The Lord never entrusted His plan to an institution or an organization,

"The new family is designed to bless all families. That is our mission."

but always He trusted a family. Long before Israel became a nation, it was and still is a family.

Throughout history, humanity has sought to ignore family tribe and race, but it continues to re-emerge. Does this mean that to recognize racial difference is

racism? No. While we are all equal before God and should be before one another, the recognition of family, tribe, and race is a natural thing and need not be a bad thing. However, there is a family that supersedes natural family, and it is the ultimate instrument of God's worldwide, external purpose.

THE NEW FAMILY

Jesus was born into a natural family and natural race, but He came to create a new family and new race. Hebrews 2:10 says that He came to bring many sons to glory. Included among those sons were people from every race and tribe.

Mark 3:31-35 records an occasion when Jesus' mother and brothers came to "rescue" Him from the overwhelming crowd that came to Him for ministry. When He was told that they were outside looking for Him, He said, "Who is my mother, brother and sister? He that does the will of my Father!" In that moment He translated natural family principles into spiritual family. Anyone could become part of His immediate family by relating to the Father and His will.

What is it that creates family? It is fatherhood (see Ephesians 3:14). Every time we say "Our Father, Thy will be done," and do so from the heart, we are acknowledging that we are one family through Jesus Christ. His Father is our Father; we are His brothers and sisters—His family. It was to His family that He entrusted His will and purpose.

His will covers how we relate to Him, to the Father, to the Holy Spirit, and to one another. It is not institutional membership: it is family relationship. His will also covers our relationship to His purpose in the earth. It remains, as in the beginning, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth." It will bless all people groups. The new family is designed to bless all families. That is our mission.

HINDRANCES

What prevents us from our mission to multiply? There are several issues that we must overcome: one is



our family divisions. The Scriptures are clear—division prevents blessings and the flow of blessings to others.

Our divisions are caused by sin, self-seeking, pride, unforgiveness, and viewing the Kingdom through sectarian senses. Seeing the Kingdom as a family rather than an organization will help us to have a different perspective. We do not need to attack organizations or try to destroy them; we simply must see each other as brothers and sisters.

Another hindrance is placing the

responsibility to bear fruit on "the group" rather than accepting it personally. "Let someone else have the children," is the attitude. Or, "let the Church bear fruit." But all of us as brothers and sisters are called individually to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (see John 15:16).

Division and deflecting the mission are two major hindrances to the purpose of God. Another issue is our blindness to the multiplication of the non-Christian world. Ignoring the Word of God and call of the Spirit has blinded us to reality. While we struggle to get a few "additions" in our churches, the secularists are making converts and the Muslims are multiplying. Christian Europe is drowning in Islamic immigrants who are multiplying. I am not attacking Muslims here; I am simply pointing out that they "get it" while most Western Christians do not.

As I write this, millions of Christian parents are sending their sons and daughters off to institutions dedicated to a secular if not atheistic world-view. And those unsuspecting students are being mentored by the millions. Meanwhile their parents fail to understand their own mission.

TRUE SONS

The apostle Paul refers to Timothy as his "true son." Then in 2 Timothy 2:2, he tells him to teach faithful men who will teach others also. True sons teach others to be true sons and daughters. True sons are not merely converts, they are faithful. Jesus and the apostles were true sons and they produced true sons. They set out to fill the earth (see Matthew 28:18-20).

I applaud those who plant churches with an outward focus. However, I urge that we go beyond planting churches, to planting sons and daughters. Replicating our structure is insufficient. We must replicate family—sons and daughters.

Passing on sound doctrine and historic creeds is important, but if we do not become fruitful, doctrine will become irrelevant

GRACE IS PERSONAL

We have received grace from God through Jesus Christ. We did not get that grace as a group; we received it personally. Grace is free, but it places a demand upon us personally. "Unto whom much is given, much is required" (see Luke 12:48). Each one of us will answer personally for the grace of God. We will not stand before Him as Catholics, Baptists, or some other group.

Grace contained is grace lost.
Grace is not a reservoir; it is a river.
"Praise God from who all blessings flow." Blessings must *flow*. We were not chosen to simply be blessed. We were blessed so that we can bless others. The future belongs to those who will bless others with the Good News of God's amazing grace.

PRIVILEGE

I have written about the responsibility to have children, but I want to focus on privilege. It is more than a duty; it is a great opportunity to see our life in another person. To see our children's children is the promise of God. To see them prosper and be fruitful and to be in good health is life's crowning joy.

Our family is blessed. Our children are serving the Lord and are in His family. So are our grandchildren. Five of our grandchildren were adopted into our family and have been received into God's family. Three of them are Latin and two others have a Jamaican background. We see no difference in any of them. The same grace flows through them all.

We may not all have natural children, but we can all have spiritual sons and daughters. Through them, we can be fruitful and multiply. Carolyn and I are so blessed to have spiritual sons and daughters in many nations who are also having sons and daughters. Whatever we may achieve personally pales in comparison to what these descendants will achieve.

I urge you to review the original purposes of God and His means to achieve it. Be part of a spiritual family and bring to our Lord by bringing God's grace to future generations.



Charles Simpson is Editor-In-Chief of One-to-One® Magazine. He ministers extensively throughout the United States and among the nations.

Charles Simpson

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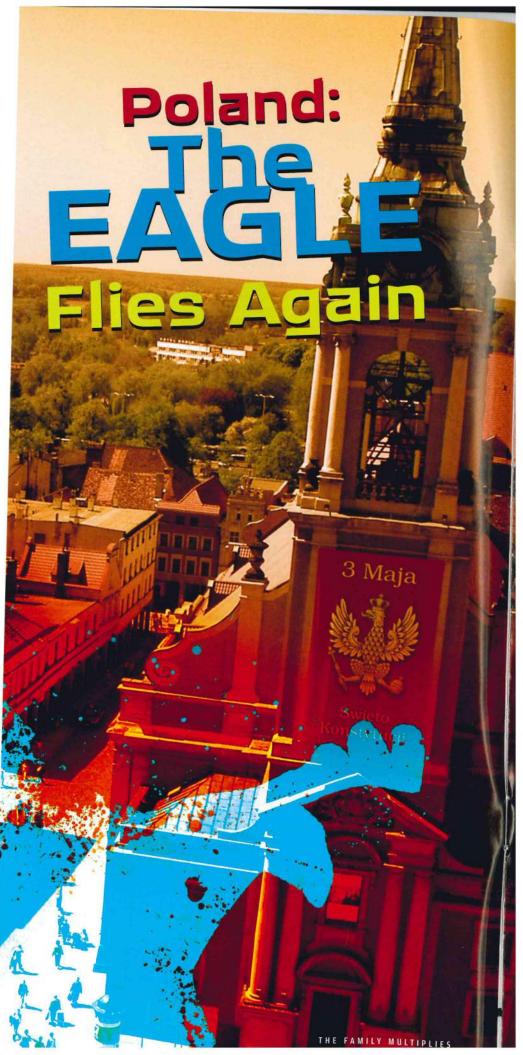
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A First-Hand Report at Economic Revival and Entrepreneurial Shepherds

By Jonathan Simpson

THE "WHITE EAGLE" IS Poland's oldest national symbol dating back over 1,000 years; it also graces the national coat of arms. Legend has it that Lech, an early founder and Slavic tribe leader chose the symbol after watching the majestic bird circle and nest in a large oak tree. He declared to his people that they too would make their "nest" in the same region and embrace the White Eagle as their symbol. And so it followed that the White Eagle was adopted by subsequent ruling Kings, forbidden later by the conquering Russians, Prussians, and Austrians and forced underground during WWII by Nazi and Russian occupants.



It wasn't until 1989 with the rise of the Solidarity Movement and the collapse of Communism that the proper White Eagle emblem was fully restored and now proudly displayed. The unifying symbol has long been a reminder of freedom, especially during times of oppression. To this day, the eagle has endured and, as the Polish National Anthem proclaims, "Poland has not yet perished!"

MOUNTING UP ON WINGS

"Life on Wings" is a historical sermon given by Ern Baxter. In it he said:

"Like the eagle, we are built to soar on the currents and know the secret of the wind."

"The eagle must go higher than any other bird. We are built for high places."

"An eagle doesn't flap up. An eagle is built for better things. 'You shall mount up with wings....' Not flap up, but mount up."

"There the eagle stands on a rock, batting his eyes, waiting. But as that eagle poises on the rock, he is waiting for something. He is waiting for the right breeze to come."

In this article, I want to share with you about Poland and our recent mission trip there. I believe there is a breeze coming in Poland and there are eagles ready to mount up.

POLE POSITION

Today, Poland stands in contrast to much of Western Europe. For starters, Poland has maintained a very limited immigration population. Ninety-five percent of those inside the country are Polish. Poland has not undergone the recent demographic shift brought on by immigration noted in certain western European nations, and has not had to bear the societal strains that can go along with it like, for instance, The Netherlands has.

Some of this has been due to the developed West's greater job opportunities and lax attitude toward immigration. While Poland has not had to worry so much about who is coming in across the border, there has been concern over the thirteen million Poles who have immigrated elsewhere, leaving the homeland often in search of work.

So what market advantage might Poland have? Consider the following excerpts taken from a Washington Post article entitled *Europe's Capitalism Curtain* by Steven Pearlstein:

"A curtain has descended across Europe. On one side are hope, optimism, freedom and prospects for a

better life. On the other side, fear, pessimism, suffocating government regulations, and a sense that the best times are in the past. This is not the same "iron curtain" famously described by Winston Churchill at the outset of the struggle against communism. But it is a psychological barrier demarking the part of Europe that is embracing global capitalism, and the one that wishes desperately that it would go away. This time, however, it is the East that is likely to prevail."

"The secret isn't just lower wages. It's also the attitude of workers who take pride and are willing to do what is necessary to succeed, even if it means outsourcing parts of production or working on weekends or altering vacation schedules—things that would almost certainly trigger months of acrimony and negotiation in western Europe."

"It's not the dream of riches that animates the people of Wroclaw so much as the determination to work hard, sacrifice what needs to be sacrificed, and change what needs to be changed in order to close the gap with the West. It is that pride and determination, says Wroclaw's mayor, Rafal Dutkiewicz, that explain why they are such a threat to the "leisure-time society" that exists in much of western Europe."

Recent investors in Poland such as Hitachi, Proctor and Gamble, Bridgestone, Accenture, and Microsoft must also agree. Had these depositors been considering a move toward western Europe instead, surely the recent labor protests in France and the western European demonstrations for "job security" would have made them think again.

Poland's last 15 years have seen a huge shift into market privatization, but closing the gap on the West will take awhile. Though it has become a European Union member, the World Bank estimates it may need 30 years to catch up with the other EU nations. Of course, that would depend on whether or not other EU nations will maintain certain growth levels. As of late, Poland has been turning in 4-6% growth rates, and real estate prices are on the rise; however, unemployment has been markedly high at 19%.

Look for Poland's unemployment to reduce as it positions itself as a "go to" country for service industry outsourcing and gains strength in exporting machinery and transportation equipment. Also look for more investment from the United States as goodwill toward Poland grows.

Furthering the point of the East/West European contrast, of Poland's 39 million residents, 95% claim Catholic allegiance; approximately 60-75% of these

attend mass regularly. Western Europe, on the other hand, is hard pressed to find a country with 10% regular church attendance. Perhaps with Protestant Germany to the West and Orthodox Russia to the East, Poland was more inclined toward Catholicism. Most certainly, the popularity of Pope John Paul II, who grew up just outside of Krakow, further bolstered the Catholic Church's position in Poland.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SHEPHERDS

Our friend Rev. Ron Gray, who has led previous trips to Poland and who frequently ministers abroad, headed up our eleven member team. Once on the ground, we divided into 3 smaller teams. Yes, this was a "mission" trip, but not in the "traditional" sense: two of our three teams were there to share on biblical business principles, while the third was focused on education. The churches where my team shared used the opportunity as an outreach in the community for those who were interested or in the process of starting their own business.

Because of Poland's recent Communist past, being a Christian and a business owner can seem like conflicting ideas. Our desire was to encourage them to step out, share some of our experiences, and try and answer questions they might have. After a few days there, I came to see those who were starting businesses as pioneers because they did not have the advantage of learning from someone who had "been there". I also realized that these pioneers would someday become mentors.

How I got to Poland is a story that goes back before my time. During the Cold War and the days of the Iron Curtain, our longtime friend Goos Vedder was traveling to communist controlled countries, ministering and delivering Bibles. Much fruit has come from those days. Today Goos is a father in the Lord to many in Eastern Europe and in particular to those pastors I met with in Poland. Let me introduce you to two of them.

Leshek lives in Strzelce Opolskie. For sixteen years, before the church began, one elderly man in the town



faithfully prayed that a church would come. Today, Leshek's small but enthusiastic church is the answer to that prayer.
Leshek has a true pastor's heart and particularly a burden for men. While staying there in Strzelce, besides speaking at his church, Leshek scheduled us to

visit two other churches in neighboring cities. One was in the large city of Wroclaw and the other was a church where Leshek knew the pastor, and the congregation needed encouragement. Late at night, when we would conclude our time together, he would go home to study. He was continuing his education. "I am always asking my congregation to stretch themselves and grow, I must do the same," he said. I enjoyed my time with Leshek so much that I have forgiven him for getting me to eat bull stomach soup!

After staying in Strzelce, we took a train to Torun and visited with Jacek's church.

I met Jacek two previous times, once in the home of Brother Goos where we celebrated American Thanksgiving over an Indian meal. We had already become fast friends. Torun is a beautiful city. It was preserved during the war and is now a college town. Jacek's church is young



and reaches out to many college students. Jacek has a powerful testimony of God touching and saving him. He is hungry for leadership training materials and has translated and distributed many CSM materials into Polish.

Besides pastoring, Jacek owns his own import/export and cosmetics businesses and employs a sales force complete with company vehicles. Jacek believes in making room for leadership in the church and is actively raising up leaders.

Both Leshek and Jacek are in their early-to-mid 30s. They, along with pastor Sygmunt in Sczezcin (the last city we visited on our trip, and pictured below with Ron Gray),

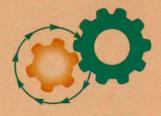


are close friends. I was impressed by their unity and the way they honored each other when they spoke of one another. They are the fruit of many years of sowing, and they are now bearing fruit themselves. These men are eagles. They understand the wind currents and are mounting

up. They are not scared to reach out in new in and different ways because they want to fly higher.

Please remember them in your prayers, and, as Brother Ern said, "Nest high!" (2)

Jonathan Simpson is the Director of Development for CSM.



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Revolutionary 15 SION Reformation in MEMAN 15 SION 15

How to reach "the unreachable" by getting out of the box By Gary Henley

WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO LIVE IN THE MOST PROLIFIC HOUR OF THE "mission" of Jesus' followers in history. However, much of the amazing expansion of the Gospel witness is coming in revolutionary ways—ways that break through the barriers of cultures, yet often surprise Western evangelical believers. Today, more people are becoming followers of Christ every day than ever before; but the "means" of doing so are requiring God's people to let go of expectations and requirements which could lock others out of the blessings of God.

The call to take the blessings of God to all the world was

first given to Abram. God told Abram to trust Him, to leave his home, and to go to a new, strange place. In Genesis 12:1,2, He promised that Abraham's family would become a great nation and would eventually take the blessings of God to all nations. The family of Abram did become a great nation, but for centuries they failed to take the benefits of God's promise to other nations. This was because they wanted to own God and his blessings as their possession, and because they became so religiously rigid they

loaded the blessings of God with "baggage"—extra-scriptural elements of their culture which made it difficult for people of other cultures to embrace the blessings.

Today, much of the Church, and even much of the modern "missions" movement, struggles with these same issues. However, when and where we "get back to basics," millions of people around the globe are finding the blessings of God through Jesus within their own culture.

For example, Jesus told his disciples to make disciples of people of every ethnicity and culture. Today, there are thousands of Muslims who are becoming followers of **Isa al Masih** (Arabic for Jesus Messiah.) Yet, these disciples remain in their culture with little, if any, resemblance to Western Christians. Many of them continue to meet in mosques on

Fridays, just as some first-century converts from Judaism met in Synagogues on Saturday. Similar observations could be made of thousands of other ethnic groups—they gather and worship Jesus in forms almost entirely unrecognizable to traditional Christendom. This is called contextualization of the message, applying it within the context of a culture.

In mission, real contextualization points us toward the mission models of the apostolic church. Paul said, "To the Jews, I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.... I have become all things to all men so that by all means I might

win some. (1 Corinthians 9:20-23).

Ours is not the first generation to be forced to think in new ways. In the early 1800's, some missionaries began to see that the aim of mission was to start churches that would start churches that would start churches that would start churches that were self-sufficient, and totally indigenous in appearance and activity. "Missions" which adapted to these principles gave birth to the "people movements" described above, movements which are now reaching Chinese, Hindus, and Muslims in record numbers.



This is a brand new Internet Cafe being finished in a small Arab town in an anonymous country. This is typical of the explosion of the Internet among Arabs today. Picture courtesy Gary Henley

Obviously, this kind of mission requires a new kind of missionary. We need to think "out of the box." Charles Simpson has compared the Western model of "the church in the box" to what he calls "the church of the vine"—the organic, family-model church knit together by relationships. These are the kinds of churches that can flourish in the tougher places today. Here are just a few of the new types of missionaries needed today:

VINE GROWERS are missionaries who have experienced this kind of relational church life, and who can model and teach that concept in other cultures. Extended circles of relationship are the normal pattern of life in many cultures, and these readily become the environment for discipling new believers who, in turn, can become leaders of their own relational circles.

With expertise who can develop businesses which are more than just a "cover" for missionaries to obtain a visa. A "Kingdom Business" is defined as one that equally produces converts and profits—profits that can change local economies. A Kingdom Business can benefit local believers, and also secure the favor of governments who might otherwise resist mission efforts. For example, IOM workers, whose business is building homes in one nation, are also reaching leaders in that culture.

MON-RESIDENTIAL MISSIONARIES live outside of the country or culture they are reaching, but augment the efforts of indigenous believers through strategy, counsel, or technology. An example would be Matt Brennan, who leads IOM's "eBridge," our Arabic language Internet outreach. Matt provides the technology to support the efforts of Arab Muslim-background believers. They have a unique ability to tell the Gospel to their own people. As cultures discover the Internet, electronic media may be to the mission reformation today what the printing press was to the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

INNOVATIVE INSIDERS are indigenous believers who find ways to proclaim Christ to their resistant cultures. One such man was a Syrian soldier who met Christ while fighting against Israel. Today, as an Arab follower of Isa al Masih, he has written and published popular novels for the Arab world. This placed him in a position to publish the Gospels in Arabic with notes answering the questions Muslims ask when reading those books. These are sold with his novels throughout the Arab world. He has also gathered the network of Arab believers who are providing the evangelistic content for eBridge.

The faith of Christ is infinitely translatable; it creates a place to be "at home" in any culture. The challenge of twenty-first century mission is for each church to embody that truth within each unique cultural context. Achieving that will require new thinking at every level, a revolutionary reformation of mission as we have known it.



Gary Henley. the Director of International Outreach Ministries, is available to speak in your church about mission to Islam and to all the world. Contact Gary at: 251.626.9992.

Hurricane Update-continued from page 3

Before leaving NJ, a number of intercessors from the church had expressed an urgency about praying for the team during the week. Even as the name of Christ is being lifted up in the region due to the many Christians pouring time and money into the relief work, there is evidence of spiritual opposition.

For example, the ignition on Jeremiah's truck came apart in his hands on their first morning. He called Mike, an experienced mechanic, who outlined the repair process. Charles chimed in: "Let's just pray!" which the team promptly did. Just two minutes later, the ignition was working....and it continued to work the rest of the week!

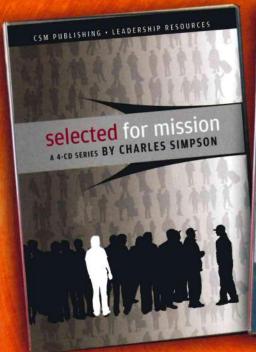
On another day, Andrew was pulling a rafter off a house, and it fell onto his face. Although the board had many nails, none touched him. He shrugged it off and kept working, not mentioning it to anyone else. Minutes later, I received a call from his wife Gail, who was holding the fort back in NJ. She mentioned several people had told her they were praying for the team. I relayed this to Andrew and the others, and Andrew realized he had just experienced protection as a direct answer to those prayers.

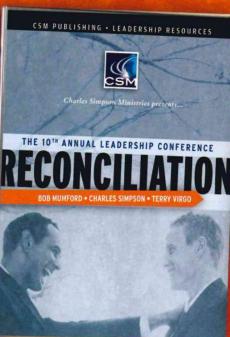
A few of the team members had come down with another team in December, 2005, when they did a "mud-out" of another Bayou la Batre house (literally digging out mud and hauling water-soaked possessions to the curb for disposal), installed subflooring, and removed ceiling tiles in Robin's house, and distributed food and clothing in nearby Biloxi, Mississippi. Encountering the extent of the physical and emotional damage caused by the hurricane was deeply moving. The team was impressed by the gratitude of the people for being alive, and for whatever possessions they still had. Over and over, they were thanked for coming down to make a difference in the lives of others.

The team all came home in December with a desire to return. Some of them were able to come again this time; others are planning to go down to New Orleans in July with the youth group from the Shrewsbury Assembly of God church.

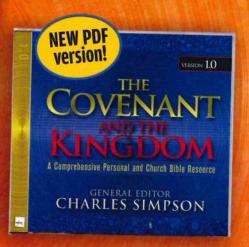
As we looked around, we saw many signs of hope. Bayou la Batre itself, which was virtually a ghost town in December, had many more businesses open, and lots of traffic on the roads. The December "mud-out" house had lights on one evening as we drove by. Biloxi has managed to remove most of the piles of debris, although many lots are still empty except for the ubiquitous trailers.

One thing is clear: for the churches of America, the opportunity to serve the people of the Gulf Coast is far from over. Willing volunteers are needed with a wide range of skills. Money is needed to pay for building materials to enable homeowners to return and try to regain their lives. We cannot just assume that local, state or even federal government will be adequate to address the overwhelming scope of the devastation. God has opened the door for us to show the world that our faith is accompanied by works of love and compassion.





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