

EDITORIAL

Ministering the Global Gospel in a Globalizing World

In his short book (135 pages) *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2009), Manfred Steger lucidly discusses the incredibly complex historical, economic, political, cultural, ecological and ideological dimensions of contemporary globalization. As Christians seeking to be faithful to God in our lives and witness, it feels, at times, like an overwhelming challenge merely to understand the vast complexity and interconnectedness of our globalized world, let alone, to know *how* to engage fruitfully in ministry in our various ministry contexts.

In the run up to the Lausanne Congress to be held in Cape Town in October, the Lausanne Movement have set up a series of 'Global Conversations' online (<http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/>) in which Christians from across the globe participate in blogged conversations in eight languages. Conversations are taking place under 21 different headings so far. Both the global scope of this conversation, and the way it is being carried out online, illustrate that even we Christians are globally interconnected in amazing new ways.

So how does our globalizing context influence the way in which we minister, and the content and shape of our ministry? Just one personal example illustrates our new reality as we move into the Pioneers milieu. Last month, I was privileged to fly to Malaysia, to be a part of a small gathering of on-the-ground church planters serving in diverse Muslim cities on four continents (!). Together we grappled with ways that God could use us to help launch movements of multiplying churches in Muslim contexts across the globe. We plan to stay in touch, and regional networks were set up that will keep in touch via secure email and Skype and periodic face-to-face meetings. Today, even when we work in a seemingly remote corner of the world, we no longer need to minister alone, thanks to globalization.

According to Os Guinness and David Wells, in their Lausanne post on globalization and mission (<http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/10566>), our threefold corporate task, faced with the complexity of our globalized contexts, is to (1) discern and understand our world, (2) assess appropriate ministry in our context, and finally (3) engage in service and ministry where God has called us. Even put in such a simple way, this task is impossible without the support of our communities and teams, and the leading and gifting of the Holy Spirit. But then again, we who are a part of Christ's church are called to the unthinkable high calling of demonstrating 'the manifold wisdom of God... to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places' (Eph. 3:10 – ESV).

It is my prayer that this SEEDBED will help give you increased understanding of our complex ministry contexts so that our ongoing engagement in our local ministry can continue fruitful through the Holy Spirit for the Father's glory.

Serving with you in our globalized world,

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hello Don,

I read with interest your article 'Ministering to Muslims in a Globalised World of Violence and Clashing Civilisations' in the latest Seedbed (Vol. 23, No 3, Dec 2009). In particular the section where you described your developing understanding of the missions task touched upon some things that I have been thinking through, one being openness and the other being socially engaged.

I recently read *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* by Chris Wright and he discussed how Jesus saw himself in the light of the Old Testament. In a sense Jesus came to do what Israel was supposed to have done, that is to bring mercy and justice to the nations (e.g. Is 42) and Jesus himself emphasises his social engagement when, in reply to their question whether he is the 'one', he tells John's disciples to report that 'The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.' (Mt. 11:4-5). In Jer 22:16, God describes King Josiah saying that 'he defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?' These issues are central to holistic mission.

On the subject of openness I sometimes wonder if we (or some of us) are unnecessarily clandestine, occupying roles that get us 'in' but perhaps give us an aura of lack of credibility and may even be strategically sub-optimal. This was something I struggled with as I directed GAP. We were fully supported and so did not live anything like a business director would and this did not sit right with those I met. I am not saying that it is necessarily wrong to do things this way, it might be the only way to run such a ministry but it bothered me.

I have just completed an MBA and am now waiting on the Lord to reveal his will for the next stage in our lives. Until this morning there was a great possibility in KSA but this has now closed. It would have allowed me to help with development within the society – being socially engaged in a small but significant way. For me, this engagement and openness would be refreshing and something I am a lot more comfortable with.

My vision is to work in a secular company occupying a credible role for a westerner allowing me to be clandestine about only those things that I really do need to keep quiet about (e.g. company membership) while being open about my role and my love for Jesus.

Just some thoughts.

PR

