

Catalyst

March 2009

Stimulating Action, Effecting Change

Like most university students, James Fraser was a young man looking forward with anticipation to all that his life ahead held in store. Gifted and accomplished, he was soon to graduate with an engineering degree which at that time afforded many potential opportunities worldwide.

He was also a great musician, some would say even a concert pianist, so at only 22 it seemed that his life held many possibilities for success, fame and recognition.

However, one day the dreams in this man's heart took an unexpected and radical change. Challenged by the words of Jesus to take the gospel to those who had never heard, Fraser decided that the investment of his life on earth would be in doing his part to fulfil the mandate to take the gospel into all the world.

Not everyone thought this turn of events was a good one. While back in England after some years in China, a relative expressed his opinion to Fraser that his life was being wasted in remote south western China, with a backward people full of superstition and tribal practices. Fraser, although taken aback by such a comment, stayed true to his convictions and spent the remaining years of his life reaching out to the Lisu people. It was certainly not an easy life that Fraser chose but it was a rewarding one. After years of seeing very little in the way of results and battling depression and many spiritual attacks, the breakthrough came and an indigenous church planting movement was ignited with thousands of Lisu receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ!

We are not all personally called to leave our countries and reach an unreached people with the gospel. However, each one of us has the personal responsibility to discover and obey our God-given life assignment which contributes to God's dream and commission being fulfilled.

The article in this issue highlights the two aspects of God's dream agenda. To give all people the opportunity of hearing the good news of Jesus Christ. And to see the nations disciplined and transformed in every area of society by a foretaste of God's will and kingdom on earth.

Fraser gave his life to reaching a people. He succeeded, and today the majority of Lisu are Christians. However, for many people who are reached with the gospel, the second key part of the Great Commission mandate is left undone—the need to disciple the people (nation) so that godly reform and transformation is brought to every area of its society.



Have you watched ***BREAKTHROUGH?***

It is exciting to hear reports about Breakthrough making an impact around the world. 10,000 copies were sold between September and December last year in some 40 countries. Opportunities are developing in various distribution channels including certain TV networks.

The Breakthrough DVD can be ordered online from www.jofraser.org
Film Discussion Questions can be downloaded from our new website!

A Mandate to DISCIPLE

the NATIONS

By Stuart Simpson

Most Christians will be familiar with the Great Commission scriptures to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Jesus, the apostle Paul and the New Testament church in Antioch provide a model for outworking such a global mandate and reaching all peoples from every tribe, tongue and nation. However, there is another vital aspect of Jesus' final command which is to "*disciple every nation*".

Let's consider the Great Commission passages as recorded in Matthew and Mark:

*"Go therefore and make **disciples of all the nations**, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20)*

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

Both passages highlight the exhortation to go but there is also a difference that relates to the breadth of God's dream. Mark says "preach" whereas Matthew uses a different verb, "disciple". It is relatively easy to define the task of preaching and proclaiming the gospel, although to disciple suggests a much longer process.

Individuals and Nations

In Mark the focus is on every single individual. Every person must have the opportunity to hear the gospel and no one is to be excluded. But Matthew's focus is not individual or personal but corporate. The object of the verb is not every individual, but every nation. Every people, all ethnic groups must have the opportunity to experience the shaping, transforming, discipling impact of the gospel. No nation, people, society or culture is to be excluded.

Mark 16 → Go → Preach → Individuals

Matt 28 → Go → Teach/Disciple → Nations

God's concern for both the individual and corporate expressions of humanity can be found throughout the Old Testament. We see God's care for individuals such as Abraham, David, Ruth, and Esther. God chose the nation of Israel in order to show Himself to all the other nations. Sometimes the prophets of old directed their words to individuals. At other times they spoke a message to cities or nations.

In the New Testament we see Jesus ministering to individuals but He also had a passion towards peoples and nations. Reaching out to one woman resulted in many Samaritans acknowledging him as the Saviour of the world. Prophetically seeing the destruction of Jerusalem caused him to weep for the nation of Israel. And as we've seen, He commanded all followers to disciple all nations. In fact, Jesus was the first person to ever connect the verb "to disciple" with the direct object "nations" in one sentence. So how is this discipling of nations to be carried out?

The 'How To' of Nation Discipling

Matthew records four key verbs but in the Greek only one is a commandment: 'disciple'. The other three verbs describe how the command is to be carried out, by "going...baptising ...and teaching."

GO! As disciples of Jesus we're to go to the nations like Jesus did, identifying with the people with servant hearts, whilst also bringing the truth of God's kingdom to bring godly transformation to all areas of society that have been marred by mankind's fall.

IMMERSE! We are also to 'baptise' the nations. How is this to be done? We normally think of water when we hear the word 'baptise'. However, out of the fifteen times the gospels record Jesus using the verb "to baptise", only three times relate to water baptism. Nine references are in relation to suffering and His sacrificial death, whilst the other two times are Holy Spirit baptism. Within the context of the Great Commission passage, one way is to see the reference to baptise in terms of individual public expression of repentance and faith through water baptism. Remembering that the root meaning of 'baptise' is to immerse, another possibility is that Jesus is telling us to immerse and saturate the nations in the name—in an understanding of the character and ways—of God.

TEACH! This naturally leads us onto the third 'how to', teaching them to obey everything Jesus com-

manded. We are told to permeate cultures with the teachings of the Kingdom of God until a society's worldview is transformed.

To disciple a nation will not necessarily mean that all or even the majority of the people will become Christians. But when Christians are like true salt and light, they will begin to influence and give direction to the values and focus of the people and culture. The gospel of the kingdom applied to all areas of life has the power to become the prevailing worldview of a people or nation.

Seven Spheres of Society

In 1975, Loren Cunningham and Bill Bright, founders of Youth With A Mission and Campus Crusade for Christ respectively, both received independently from the Lord the same list of influential areas of society that Christians should target. The Christian writer and philosopher, Dr Francis Schaeffer, had also received the same message. The seven areas of society in which the nations should be discipled can be listed as follows:

- Family
- Religion (church and mission)
- Education
- Celebration (arts, entertainment, sports)
- Public communication (media)
- Economy (including business, science, and technology)
- Government

What is interesting is that different men and women of God had been targeting these same areas of society for hundreds of years.

Nations Builders

For example, many Christians are familiar with the 'father of modern missions', *William Carey*. Carey was not only a 'Christian missionary', but he was an industrialist, an economist, a medical humanitarian, a media pioneer, an educator, a moral reformer, and a botanist. It has been said that Carey did more for the transformation of the Indian sub-continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than any other individual before or since.¹

Another nation builder who had a tremendous impact on the nations was *John Wesley*. Wesley's effect on Great Britain went far beyond evangelism. His legacy includes contributing to the liberation of women, and the beginnings of workers' rights and

safety in the workplace. He attacked slavery before Wilberforce was born, fought for civil and religious freedom, brought awareness to the evils of exploiting the poor, opened a medical dispensary, a bookstore, a free school, and a shelter for widows. He also set up spinning and knitting shops and studied medicine in order to help the destitute. In addition, some historians believe that the renewal movement led by the Wesley brothers prevented something similar to the French Revolution taking place in England.

Other nation builders that could be mentioned would include John Calvin, Martin Luther, and Abraham Kuyper. But what about nation building today?

What about *You and I*?

The important thing is not to be concerned about the size of our impact but whether we are doing what we can to bring a transforming influence into those spheres of society where we have a voice. Here in Asia, I seek to empower future leaders to discover and fulfil their God-given calling and bring positive transformation in whatever spheres of society their calling gives them an influence. This maybe in their family, in education, in the business or entertainment world, or in one of the other seven areas. One way I am seeking to empower them is through a leadership and character development programme. This aims to impart biblical values and principles, along with the essential requirement for good character, in order that they truly live successfully and make a positive difference in their families, communities and nation.

God's perspective is much greater than just seeing people 'saved'. As wonderful as that is, this is only the beginning. God's heart has always been for nations and to see them discipled and experience godly transformation. This task is not just for 'missionaries' but for *every* disciple of Jesus Christ. We all have our own unique circles of influence where we can bring God's kingdom. Let's rise up and be the nation builders and reformers in the spheres of society God has called us to!

Interested to know more? Check out this new resource by YWAM Publishing: ***His Kingdom Come—An Integrated Approach to Discipling the Nations/ Fulfilling the Great Commission.***

¹ *The Legacy of William Carey*, by Vishal & Ruth Mangalwadi, 1993, 1999



Sarah's Story— Precious Stones making a Difference!

Many children who have suffered rejection from their families early on in life struggle with issues of trust. Six-year old Sarah* joined our animal-assisted therapy program at the beginning of this year with the goal of helping with her emotional development. On visits I made with our dog Jasper to Sarah's home, Sarah really wanted to be involved with Jasper, but could not believe that he would not bite her. Gradually, however, she began to be able to touch him, and has even been able to brush him as high as his neck!

From this...

On her first visit to Precious Stones, Sarah was scared of the baby rabbits, an animal almost irresistible to most children. She hid behind her adoptive mum, saying how scared she was, and climbed onto a chair for safety when the rabbit was loose. It seemed like she feared being bitten by this animal too.



On her second visit to Precious Stones, Sarah watched the rabbits in their cage for a while, taking an interest and asking questions, but she would not touch one. As we were talking however, I noticed her unconsciously reach out and touch the baby rabbit being held by her brother. She did not think about what she was doing. I praised her and asked her to show me where she had touched it. She tentatively pointed to the rabbit's back. Later, I wanted to take a photo of the children, and



suggested taking one with the rabbits, hoping I might be able to encourage Sarah to touch the rabbit again. To my delight, she made the suggestion herself, telling me clearly that she would not hold one, but that she would touch one. I grabbed my camera and hoped she would not lose her courage. To my surprise, she sat down next to the rabbit and reached out her hand to touch it. The smile on her face showed her joy! We scored a victory that day! However small that victory may seem to some of us, for Sarah it was a major one, and it is small steps like this that add up to building new **trust**, **confidence** and **self-esteem** that can help change a child's life, and the lives of their children, breaking generational cycles of rejection and disadvantage.

To this...in just two visits!

Animals really can help uncover the Precious Stone within a child.

(For further information on the ministry of Precious Stones, please contact Michelle).

** (her real name has been changed)*



Catalyst e-zine Feedback!

Michelle's article on God's goodness has blessed people and been a helpful aid for small group Bible studies.

"I found your article on Giving in to Goodness very powerful indeed. I feel you got hold of something so fundamental for the Evangelical sector of the church. Although we preach Grace and the goodness of God, it seems to me that we hang on to judgment and to law and consistently rob people of the joy of salvation... a huge thank you for the wonderful picture of God's Goodness that you revealed in that article. It is one of the best I have ever read." *(Eric Delve, Christian leader & Founder of Detling Summer Conference, UK)*

Catalyst Ministries

Stimulating Action and Effecting Change

NEW WEBSITE!

Our completely-new-look website has been updated and re-launched with many new features, including videos and blog. Check it out at

www.catalystmin.org

Navigation

The Forgotten Mandate of Preaching

A gospel that does not deal with the issues of the day is not the gospel at all. - Martin Luther