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Editorial: Tentmaking on the Frontiers

Although tentmaking is not a new concept, perhaps it is just now being realized as an important strategic development by which the unreached peoples of the world can be reached by the Word of God. The articles in this issue of the Journal cover the essence of tentmaking from the beginning when Paul earned his own support, through its historic development until today when businessmen and professionals are witnessing in the social and business worlds of the unreached peoples.

Controversies have come and gone over what a tentmaker is and whether or not the term is suitable for personnel who have the goal of sharing their faith in a different culture. The term tentmaker and its Biblical basis is discussed at length in this issue by tentmakers of the 20th century. Many of our forefathers, both clergy and lay have ventured into new areas of the world for the express purpose of spreading the Gospel. They normally took their own social mores with them and lived a different life style from the peoples of the indigenous society to whom they were called to witness. The question of what is a tentmaker and how do we distinguish them from any other type of missionary is fully addressed in the articles in this special issue on Tentmaking.

The full potential of tentmaking is just now being realized by the Christian community. Churches are beginning to support lay persons who are moving into the 10/40 Window to share their love for Christ and the message of the Gospel. Many of these lay persons are going with large families and the children also become effective agents for the Lord as they live their Christian witness in the ordinary scope of life. What greater testimony can there be? The importance of family and social relationships is discussed in this issue on the experiences of a tentmaking sending agency.

One of the most exciting areas is the

realization of how the business community can serve the Lord strategically. This is not something new, that has never occurred before—the Moravians practiced this principle years ago. However, it is only now that businesses are beginning to organize and assist one another in completion of the Great Commission.

The Business Mens Consultation at the recent GCOWE conference in Pretoria was truly a first in the growing movement of cooperation among businesses. A separate movement of partnerships are opening up new avenues for the Word to be shared as well. This movement along with the possible cooperation between Tentmakers International Exchange (TIE) and the Christian Business Mens Committee is converting the world marketplace as a beachhead into the unreached areas and peoples of the world. These marketplace opportunities are placing the Gospel in the markets and homes of the unreached in every corner of the globe. Here is the key, we believe, to effective communication of the Good News—reaching them where they live and work!

A new day in modern missions has dawned, a grass roots movement for reaching the unreached has been launched. The tentmaking movement needs to be seen for what it is—a mission development of the modern era, (the so called third era of missions focused on the unreached frontiers) that erases the unbiblical dichotomy between laity and clergy, between the religious and the secular, between ministry and business, and thus challenging every Christian to get involved in the task of highest priority. The tentmaking movement gives every believer the structure needed to use their skills and talents for the glory of God in reaching the nations of the earth. As never before Christians from all walks of life can get involved, using their skills as engineers, teachers, businessmen, becoming missionary tentmakers, sharing

the Gospel of salvation in Christ in their “natural” everyday lives with a waiting world that still has not heard. As never before, Christians from all walks of life can get involved in “making tents” on the Frontiers for the glory of the Lord, and for the planting of the Church of Jesus Christ in their midst.

In our generation, there is nothing more important than thousands upon thousands of Christians around the globe to 1) catch the vision of the ripe harvest fields of the unreached peoples of the world, and 2) giving their lives and using their skill to make Christ known to them, and 3) to plant His Church in every tribe, tongue and nation that still has not heard. Nothing is more important! This special edition on Tentmaking on the Frontiers, which explores for us the meaning, development, history, Biblical basis, strategy, training and the special role of mission agencies and churches regarding tentmaking points us in the right direction, giving us a vision for a lost world and providing us the needed structure to make it happen. It addresses the place of the local church, of the need for training for tentmakers, of the new role of mission agencies as related to tentmaking, and ends with a look at tentmaking developments in India.

Plans are in the making that in a future issue of the Journal, we will address the more practical dimensions of tentmaking, especially how Christian businessmen, teachers, engineers and entrepreneurs are and can be effective witnesses of the Gospel on the Frontiers.

*Hans M. Weerstra, IJFM editor,
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International Exchange.
October 1997
El Paso, Texas*

Tentmaking State of the Art

*What exactly is tentmaking?
To appreciate fully the panorama of Christian service and experience which is identified by the term, we need to consider the variables and diversity by which tentmaking in the U.S and in the Western world in general are distinguished.*

by Carol Clarke

In mission circles today people use the term “tentmaker” to mean different things, but most at least agree that it does not refer to the production or sale of camping equipment. The term has biblical origins in that it may be used to refer to a “secular” occupation of the apostle Paul or the source of livelihood for Aquila and Priscilla as recorded in Acts. Today tentmaking (in the context of the USA and other Western countries as well) is an umbrella term applied to a rather wide variety of Christian service opportunities, practiced primarily in an overseas, cross-cultural ministry environment.

Over the last twenty years, various organizations and individuals have attempted (with limited success) to define or prescribe what shape tentmaking should take. From the Lausanne Congress in Manila in 1989 emerged the seven statements of the Lausanne II Tentmaker Declarative Appeal:

The Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE, 1995) produced the Seoul Statement on Tentmaking which concludes with a seven-point challenge to the churches, educational institutions, and mission agencies worldwide.

The Tentmaker International Exchange, an international network focused solely on tentmaking, held its first international congress in 1994 and as a result, has published a simple, yet inclusive tentmaker definition:

“Tentmakers are Christian witnesses from any nation who because of their skills or experience gain access and maintain themselves in another culture with the primary intention of making disciples for Christ Jesus and, where possible, to establish and strengthen churches.”

While most organizational definitions of tentmaking sound relatively compatible at a surface-level, the nuances of tentmaker definitions become apparent when one analyzes the practice of those who may be identified as tentmakers around the world. Because of the diversity in views of what makes a tentmaker, tentmaking is better described than prescribed. What follows are some of the variables that make tentmaking difficult to define.

Financial Support

Some fully-supported career missionaries may be identified as tentmakers, strategy coordinators, or non-residential missionaries, particularly those who work in the “10/40 Window”, that portion of the world where the least evangelized peoples live. Other tentmakers, however, may be fully supported by marketplace employment; they require no donor support and take no mission agency funds.

In frontier mission areas, jobs which provide full support (at least by Western living standards) are often scarce. Tentmakers in such areas may have full-time employment, but because their salaries are low, they must supplement their incomes with donations.

Geographic Boundaries

Some agencies send tentmakers only to so-called creative access countries in the 10/40 Window; others would say that tentmaking is a viable Christian service option worldwide. Some promote tentmaking in an open country which allows missionary presence as an apprenticeship for tentmaking in more demanding frontier mission environments. A few programs promote tentmaking

as a means of providing bi-vocational pastors in unchurched or needy areas of the home country.

Training for Ministry

Those who choose to affiliate with agencies will find that tentmaker training requirements range from no training or little training to graduate seminary degrees. Some agencies recruit committed lay-persons who have completed a few seminary courses or other types of specialized training. Agencies which send teachers overseas often require a 4 to 6 week pre-service training session.

Sense of Calling

The sense of calling is often directly related to “intentionality” before going overseas. Some hold that tentmakers must be sent from a local home church. Those who have moved away from their home churches for seminary or ministry experience, however, may not have a single “home church” which functions as their sending base. For purposes of nurture and personal accountability, they often relate to churches and fellowship groups in-country more than to a local church back home. Some agencies seek applicants who have a definite sense of calling and long-term commitment to a particular target people group or country. Other tentmakers feel called to cross-cultural ministry wherever the opportunity arises, but not necessarily to a specific people group. Experienced field observers sometimes note, however, that in terms of ministry what one says before going overseas is not as indicative of calling as what one actually does while in-country.

Job-Related Ministry

For some, the job is just a way to get a visa for “creative access countries” which would deny visas to missionaries. For others, the job is real but it is merely a way to legitimize being in-country or to make the money needed to support “real ministry.” For others, the job or marketplace is the place of real ministry, and they see their work context and contacts as the primary platform for ministry.

Length of Time Spent Overseas

Some apply the term “tentmaker” to persons who live and work or study overseas, even for periods of less than a year, such as one academic year. Others assert that tentmakers must live and work overseas at least one year or more. Still others would identify as tentmakers only those who make a long-term commitment to living and working overseas.

Type of Employment

Some hold that any type of employment which is morally upright is worthy of a tentmaker. Others would exclude embassy staff, government workers and military personnel because these occupations require political allegiances which may be in conflict with ministry interests. Similarly, employment with a major multinational or host-country corporation is acceptable for some, but raises conflict of interest questions for others.

Entrepreneurs, both on their own and working through mission agencies, often assert that only entrepreneurs have control of their time and business lives while overseas. They, therefore, see entrepreneurship as the only effective (albeit expensive) tentmaker platform.

Although not even recognized by some as viable tentmaking platforms, the most common overseas employment opportunities are found in the fields of teaching and working for non-profit organizations in health care or relief and development. Teaching English as a

second or other language is a job skill widely-sought in the international arena.

Level of Disclosure

It is natural to assume that the political and religious climate in the country would govern the level of disclosure by tentmakers. While this is certainly a key factor, some tentmakers operate more openly than others, even when working in the same country. Some overtly identify themselves as Christian witnesses and disclose to anyone who asks their affiliation with a mission or non-profit cause. Others reveal their identity to only a few close friends in-country.

In some instances, tentmakers never disclose their calling and commitment to ministry to anyone outside their home country. The rationale for non-disclosure may be related to more than personal security. Concern for the safety of those whom they might disciple or concern for co-workers motivate some to keep their identity secret.

Diversity in Tentmaking

There is confusion about tentmaking even in regard to Biblical examples. The apostle Paul often comes to mind first when one thinks of tentmaking. Yet, leading tentmaking practitioners express differing opinions as to whether or not (and why) the apostle Paul stopped making tents at a certain point in his ministry. In fact, they do not even agree about why Paul started making tents in the first place.

Others disagree with using Paul as a tentmaker model at all, since he was an itinerant preacher. They hold the view that tentmaking is the province of laypersons, such as Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18) or other “lay” Biblical figures.

This litany could go on, but what, you may ask, is the impact of so much diversity in the field of tentmaking? There are at least three ways in which these differences impact those who

practice tentmaking, including those who want to learn more about tentmaking.

First of all, the differences have the potential to divide or tear down the Body of Christ, both in the West and in developing countries. In search of the ultimate definition of tentmaking, mission conferences and tentmaker meetings have at times degenerated into “blame and shame” sessions as differing views of tentmaking have come into conflict. Judgments about the effectiveness of one kind of tentmaking vs. another sometimes give rise to judgmental indictments of the work, life, and ministry of fellow servants of God.

There is wide diversity of opinion, for example, in regard to what constitutes integrity in the life of a tentmaker. Those who are open about their faith overseas, for example, sometimes look on “undercover tentmakers” as persons living a lie. Some are sympathetic to the pressures placed on a family which chooses not to disclose its tentmaking ministry. Others, however, see this as taking unnecessary risks and jeopardizing the psychological (and perhaps physical) well-being of not just the tentmaker but his or her family, too. Furthermore, they may assert that Westerners in frontier mission areas in particular are usually so visible that their identity is not as well hidden as they might think.

Lack of Cohesiveness

As a practical consequence of such diversity, the tentmaking movement has lacked the cohesiveness of other groups within the evangelical mission movement. In fact, some would counter that it has never developed into a movement at all. It takes great wisdom on the part of tentmaker groups to decide when to accommodate and when to isolate themselves from differing views of tentmaking. In seeking to scout out models of “real tentmakers,” they have, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not, excluded or denigrated the work of those who have differing views of the tentmaker’s task.

The most unfortunate implication of this lack of cohesiveness, however, may well be the diversion of focus away from the needs of a hurting, alienated world which needs the touch of God and the Gospel of Christ.

Secondly, the differences in views of what makes a tentmaker greatly complicate communication about tentmaking. Every author, speaker, or practicing tentmaker enters into dialogue with his or her own notions about tentmaking. These notions naturally infuse their opinions and views of what constitute the life and role of the tentmaker.

To understand fully what someone is trying to say about tentmaking, the reader or listener must process the underlying assumptions as well. When authors provide a definition or clear description of tentmaking as they see it, they provide a window through which the reader may understand the ministry option clearly as they see it. Some authors have sought to abandon the term "tentmaker" altogether in favor of more descriptive or distinctive terms, and coined terms such as "business" (combination of business and missionary) have also emerged.

Engaging in dialogue with authors or speakers is, of course, the single most effective way to find out the basis for their assertions. For readers who cannot engage in the give-and-take exchange of conversation, the task is more difficult, but certainly not impossible. Clues as to the writer's biases about suitable employment for tentmakers or Biblical models, for example, are often found in the text, especially if one is aware of the need to look for them. Due to the diversity of views expressed in tentmaking literature, (including the articles published in this journal), readers must be astute in reading between the lines with discernment.

Celebrating the Diversity

Finally, the differences in views of tentmaking may offer cause for cele-

bration. Rather than focus on the differences as divisive, tentmaking advocates can choose to celebrate the myriad ways in which God chooses to allow human involvement in the work of the Kingdom. Tentmaking clearly means different things to different people, but that also means more opportunities and options for those who are seeking to find God's place for them in overseas service.

God is blessing committed Christian professionals around the world, and they in turn are blessing the nations to which they are sent. God is certainly using Bible college and seminary graduates, but there are also opportunities for lay-persons, especially in highly marketable professions such as computer programmers, English teachers, engineers, athletes, health care workers, entrepreneurs, and scientists. In fact, there are tentmaking opportunities somewhere in the world in practically any profession one could name.

Creative ministry options often defy consistent definitions; that is also part of their appeal. Persons exploring tentmaking options must grasp how important it is to ask questions and clarify what others mean when they discuss tentmaking options. It is just as important to have an understanding of the terms of employment for work with a mission agency as with any marketplace employer.

Conclusion

Reputable sending agencies (and employers) do not mind questions—they welcome them. Obtaining information and asking questions, even hard questions, up front can save the prospective tentmaker time and prevent mismatches in finding the right option for future ministry. Those who feel compelled to a ministry option some would identify as tentmaking often must persevere in searching for like-minded servants of God. If one agency or mission group does not define tentmaking as they do or provide tentmaking

options with which they feel spiritually compatible, they should prayerfully keep looking until they find one that does. Even those who choose to go overseas on their own should pray and seek for like-minded believers with whom they can establish relationships for accountability and nurture purposes.

By praying and being open to new possibilities, potential tentmakers may discover that God's plan takes them into uncharted waters. Likewise, mission organizations and sending agencies should ever be alert to God's leading in new directions. Whatever our circumstances, we should all be open and alert to the work of the Holy Spirit within our hearts and in His work.

We can all rest on the fact that the Creator of the universe is at work within us creating a new vision for making known to the nations the sovereign majesty, power, and glory of God. In today's world, that vision might lead to an avenue of service which some of us would identify as tentmaking.

Carol Clarke is the director of Global Insights, an international training and organizational development consulting firm based in Richmond, Virginia. She currently serves on the steering committee of the Tentmaker International Exchange. Carol holds a Master's Degree in Linguistics and has pursued additional graduate study in international business.

Photo here
by Carol
Clarke

The Kumbaran of India

Making known the Gospel to an unreached people in India by means of a tentmaking strategy. The Potter's Wheel Project not only provides employment and training for the Kumbaran people but puts them in living "natural" contact with the messengers of the Gospel. Pray that this strategy may result in the conversion of the Kumbaran to Christ and the planting of His Church among them.

The Kumbaran of India are a sub-caste of the Chettiars, or the Adi-andhra caste, one of the secluded castes of India, which includes all who work with mud or clay (tile makers, brick makers, potters). The Kumbaran are located throughout all states in peninsular India. The number of Kumbaran is not known, but is estimated at over 20,000. Telugu is the common caste language among all potters in addition to the language of the state in which they reside.

Mission to Unreached Peoples missionaries are working with the Kumbaran and operate a pottery factory in true tentmaking fashion. Several container loads of pottery have been shipped to and marketed in the United States.

This project has recently moved its location to an area where there are 600 potter families, of which only 15% are employed. This is a tremendous opportunity to plant seeds for a future harvest while uplifting the Kumbaran socially and economically.

Religion

—Hinduism with some animistic undertones.

—Special rituals of worship include dancing before idols with pots full of flowers on their head.

—A few isolated instances of individual Kumbaran converting to Christianity, but not in any significant numbers. For any church planting to succeed it must be a community wide decision.

Work and Employment

—The Kumbaran use a traditional wheel

powered by hand, although some use a kick powered wheel.

—Men are the potter wheel workers, training their sons to follow in their footsteps.

—Women help prepare the clay and often do the marketing by the roadside and in the village markets.

—Pots are baked in brick and mud kilns which are heated with coconut husks, leaves, and wood.

Social Life

—Potters live in communities with other potters, sharing work, food, etc. —Marriages are usually arranged, often without the benefit of any type of ceremony.

—Alcoholism is a major problem. There are many instances of fathers deserting their families because of alcoholism.

Education

—Most of the Kumbaran are unschooled, although some are now sending their children to school to get at least a primary education.

Current Status

—Many Kumbaran have become "coolie" workers because of the loss of the traditional markets for their products due to the competition in plastic and aluminum goods. Coolie work is seasonal and very unreliable

—The so called "Potter's Wheel Project" provides employment and training, upgrading their products to meet export market standards.

Photo here of
the
front cover
photo
in
black and white.

Prayer Needs

—For workers to assist in the "Potter's Wheel" expanding project, managing the factory and training the Kumbaran to be able to handle the responsibility on their own.

—For the Kumbaran to be open to the Gospel as it is lived out by Mission to Unreached Peoples workers and helpers.

*For additional information and prayer needs on the Kumbaran contact:
Mission To Unreached Peoples
P.O. Box 45880
Seattle, WA 98145-0880*

The Tentmaker's Mandate

It will become clear from our study of the different aspects of the tentmaker's mandate that this ministry is not an inferior alternative to traditional missionary work, but a valid and biblically authenticated form of cross-cultural outreach urgently needed in our world today. It may well be the only way to reach the "hidden" groups of unreached people. It may be the only way to penetrate the "closed countries" with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

by David J. Price

The Lord calls us to be involved in His mission to "preach the Gospel to the world." How can we reach this changing world of numerous faiths and ideologies? The tentmaking strategy gives a new force to the missionary movement and allows Christians into the cross-cultural ministry around the world. The tentmaker's mandate is rooted in Scripture, starting in Genesis and going through the New Testament, ending with Paul's own experiences.

The command of the Master continues to challenge His people, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel." But what a world we live in today! It is a world of accelerated change gripped by needs, problems and dilemmas of a magnitude never experienced before. It is a world marked by overflowing populations suffering vast inequalities; of independent nations of every shape and size jealously guarding their rights and competing savagely for survival. It is an increasingly urbanized world, a very religious world where a proliferation of faiths and ideologies, old and new, battle for people's allegiance. It is a technological world of exploding knowledge which touches every aspect of life. Into this confusing, and often frightening milieu, the Lord calls us to involvement in His mission, and challenges us, as always, to total commitment.

But how can we reach such a world? The tentmaker strategy adds a whole new force to the missionary movement and has the potential to mobilize thousands of Christians into cross-cultural ministry around the world, putting them into effective contact with many of

the unreached people of the world.

Is tentmaking a totally new concept conjured up by the mind of man to meet the current situation? Is this kind of missionary activity biblically validated? What is the tentmaker's motivation? It is the purpose of this paper to answer these questions by showing how the tentmaker's mandate is securely rooted in Scripture. It starts with the foundation and basis for all missionary endeavor, which resides in the very nature of God Himself, and ends with a specific mission calling.

God's Nature and Kingdom

We begin with God Himself and His amazing love for His creation. He does not create and then withdraws, but reveals Himself ever reaching out to His creation. In the early chapters of Genesis we see how He related personally to the man and woman He had made. Even after the fall, He sought them out asking, "Where are you?" In spite of the grief and pain in His heart at their rebellion, He could not abandon the people He had created. He called Abraham through whom He purposed eventually to re-establish His rightful rule over all peoples. (Gen. 12:1-3) Paul sees this fulfilled in the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:8,9). Out of Abraham came Israel, chosen from among the nations in order to be a blessing for the nations (Ex. 9:13-16, Is. 49:5, 6).

Here is the fundamental nature of God seen both in Creation and Redemption. He is a missionary God. His purpose of love is to overthrow every

destructive thing that opposes His rule as King in every area of human life.

Because we follow a missionary God, we too should be missionaries with a responsibility and privilege to be involved in His purpose. It is impossible to love Him and serve Him and not look with love at His world. Tentmakers move out into the world because they share God's priority and submit to His Kingdom rule in their own lives including their vocation. Their intention is not to seek professional advancement or status. Although their profession does open doors for their going, they serve Christ through that vocation, not apart from it. Tentmakers do go to accumulate wealth or to fulfill a desire for travel or adventure, but their primary concern is for the extension of God's Kingdom people and communities. So we see that the tap root of the tentmaker's motivation lies in the loving heart of God Himself.

The Mandate of Human Need

A world in rebellion, cut off from the living God, doomed to destruction is lost in the most profound sense of the word. Paul spells out what this means in terms of man's real condition and need in Eph. 2:1-12

- While physically living he is spiritually dead (vs. 4, 5). His paramount need is to be made alive.

- He is part of a world manipulated by demonic forces that control cultures, and unjust structures that oppress and dehumanize people (vs. 2), so he needs freedom from the conditioning of culture and society.

- Because he lives in a world driven and terrorized by an all-pervasive selfishness, he needs power to overcome sinful desires (vs. 3).

- As this world is already under condemnation and faces the certainty of a final reckoning, man needs deliverance from God's wrath and judgment (vs. 3b).

- In a hopelessly divided world, man needs the reconciliation that God offers through the Cross. He needs to know God and become part of His family (vs. 11-13).

The tentmaker is convinced of the absolute reality of the biblical assessment of the human condition. He has personally experienced deliverance, reconciliation and new life in Christ through the Cross. He believes and knows the Gospel to be the power of God to change the lives of people and nations (Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 5:17). In joyful response to his own needs being met, and out of a deep concern for this lost world, he is willing to change location and take risks in order that others might also encounter their Saviour and King.

The Mandate to Unreached Peoples

The unreached peoples of our world cannot be reached without a definite missionary thrust. Paul's passion to preach the Gospel where Christ has not been named, burns on in the tentmaker's heart. (See Rom. 10:12-15 and 15:17-20.) When he sees specific groups of people who have no effective Christian witness and whole societies partly or fully closed to traditional missionary outreach, he seeks to respond creatively to the challenge.

The mandate of the tentmaker's role in the missionary thrust must be seen against the background of important realities about the unreached peoples of today.

- Their numbers are enormous—of the 5.1 billion people of the world, 26% are classified as unreached (Barrett). To reach them, cross-cultural witness is

necessary because these people do not have Christians as near neighbors nor do they have Bibles in their own language.

- Some of the unreached peoples comprise particular groups, e.g. businessmen, politicians, lawyers, educators, operating in the megalopolises of the world, not touched by usual missionary endeavour. A tentmaking approach makes it possible to reach these peoples in their own context.

- According to Dr. Yamamori, "Today, 65 % of the world's people live in countries that either partly or fully restrict traditional missionary approaches... and by the year 2000, these 74 to 84 countries are expected to contain...between 83 and 84% of all non-Christians." The tentmaker can still enter these countries, reaching these isolated "hidden" people groups incarnating and sharing the Gospel among them.

Christ's Lordship and our Priesthood

The call to enter the Kingdom of God means that every disciple lives under the Lordship of Christ in every dimension of human experience— family, finance, vocation, leisure and worship. There is no value distinction between sacred and secular, and the message, implications and benefits of the Gospel have to be demonstrated through a whole lifestyle. In fact this constitutes the great strength of the tentmaker's approach. He witnesses through all of life's experiences, so declaring God's praises, and lives such a good life among pagans that seeing it, they come to glorify God on the day He visits us. More than this, as Peter declares, all believers, not just a select formally-ordained few, are to be priests. (1 Peter 2:9-12) Accordingly, every believer, whatever his occupation, is equipped by the Spirit for ministry. No particular calling or vocation has any special claim to be better for witness, nor any special exemption from responsibility to wit-

ness. This understanding further undergirds the tentmaker approach and gives impetus and confidence to this kind of missionary work.

A Biblical Model

Although not invariably, Paul, the first great missionary to the Gentiles, consistently operated in the tentmaker mode throughout his missionary career (1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:9; Acts 20:34, 35). When seen together, the references to Paul working at his trade (which literally was making tents) point to an extensive involvement throughout his journeys, rather than to isolated incidents. For example, Luke refers to it in Corinth (Acts 18:3) and Ephesus (Acts 20:34). Paul himself speaks of it in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9) and as his general practice (1 Cor. 9:15-18). His reference to Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6) indicates tentmaking on his first missionary journey. Reference to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9) and Corinth (1 Cor. 4:12) apply to his second journey and mention of Ephesus (1 Cor. 4:11) and of the future at Corinth (2 Cor. 12:14) indicate his third journey. Finally, reference to Paul's activity in Rome (Acts 28:30) may well refer to his living off his own earnings, rather than paying for his own food and lodgings.

What is the explanation for this consistent tentmaking activity? Was it merely a case of a Rabbi practicing his trade to impart his teaching without charge? F. F. Bruce says that clearly this was an important element as Paul argues in 1 Cor. 9. Even though there was a biblical basis for his right to be supported, he did not exercise this right but made the Gospel free of charge in starting a new work. In doing this he set a model for Christian outreach into a new area emphasizing the greater blessing of giving than receiving.

There are two obvious reasons for taking this stance. By being self-supporting Paul was not a burden on the believers (although he did welcome needed support from established churches,

Phil. 4:16) and also avoided the danger of compromising the Gospel, God's free gift, by expecting financial assistance from new converts.

Some biblical scholars (e.g. Ronald Hock) would take the issue further. They see Paul's purpose in tentmaking as directly evangelistic, not simply as a necessary activity for financial support. "Workshops were conventional settings for discussion and intellectual activity which Paul deliberately utilized." In the summary of his missionary activity in Thessalonica (I Thess. 2:1-12) Paul links working and preaching together, the implication being, according to these commentators, that it was while working that he preached rather than his involvement in two separate activities.

From Paul's God-directed ministry it is clear that tentmaking is a biblical model, possibly even more "normal" than the traditional missionary model. It is seen as an important evangelistic spearhead and an effective means of reaching the unreached.

A Biblical View of Work

Different views of work pervade the community of mankind, even within the Christian Church.

- Work is something to be avoided at all costs.
- Work is a necessary evil, the result of the fall, which must be done to earn the money to do what you really want.
- Work is something you just go on doing—like a hen laying eggs.
- Work is the means by which you finance "real" ministry.
- Work, for some Christians, is seen as a useful opportunity and sphere for Christian witness.

While it is true that believers are to live and witness for Christ in every situation, it is a mistake to regard work and the workplace as having no significance of itself. It is more than a well stocked lake in which to fish or just the means to provide for the Lord's work.

A biblical view of work and vocation goes back to creation. God is revealed as a worker who enjoyed perfect job satisfaction— "He saw that it was good" (Gen. 1). Man, made in His image, was to be a worker too (Gen. 2:15), experiencing the same fulfillment and satisfaction. So work was well established before the fall, even though after the fall it had overtones of frustration, pain, boredom, and dissatisfaction when work became toil and productivity a struggle.

It is surely significant that when the Word became flesh, and Jesus Christ came proclaiming the Kingdom, he was found at a carpenter's bench. The biblical message of the Kingdom has implications for the workplace that embrace the areas of justice, loyalty, faithfulness and a commitment to the welfare of others. Paul, for example, wrote, "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col 4:1.)

The mandate for tentmaker witness arises out of our Christian understanding of work based on a theology of creation and the Kingdom, which includes three aspects.

1) *Work is for personal fulfillment.* The potential for creative work is an essential component of our god-likeness and is not something we do to live, but what we live to do. God's intended purpose in creation was that people should find fulfillment in work (Ecc. 2:24; 3:22).

2) *Work is for service to people and communities.* Adam worked the garden to feed his family. The Old Testament law emphasizes the communal aspect of work. We work, therefore, not just for ourselves but for the benefit of others, and by cooperating together in serving the needs of people, we help them realize God's purposes for them. Certainly this is more directly apparent in some kinds of work than in others. Tentmakers see their work as serving the

best interest of the national people, and of benefit to them in the overall Kingdom purposes of God, which include both the physical and spiritual dimensions of life.

Recently Chris Sugden criticized Dr. Yamamori's book *God's New Envoys* as expressing little "actual concern for national well being" or lacking any desire to become involved in the struggles of nation and community, particularly as they relate to the area of life in which the tentmaker is operating. It must be reiterated that tentmaking is not just a means of evangelism apart from any real emotional or active "oneness" with the host people that would be "interaction" rather than "involvement." This in fact would be a denial of the essential incarnation Jesus modelled for us in mission. Note what the Lord said to the exiles in Babylon: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:7). Here is the right perspective for the tentmaker who, in the nitty gritty of daily vocation, and in the labour of intercession, gives himself in all of life as a sacrificial offering for the welfare of a people. The Kingdom cannot be realized without the Cross—an ongoing process touching the life of the true servant of the Lord.

It is, of course, possible that some areas of work will not be suitable for tentmakers; e.g., the liquor industry, or that the policies or mode of operation of some companies might not permit the tentmaker to participate with integrity.

(c) *Work for the worship and glory of God.* Above and beyond personal fulfillment and service to others, our work is for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Through our work we participate in the purposes of God for humanity and we see past the immediate to the ultimate goal. "Whatever you do," wrote Paul, "work at it with all your heart, as working

for the Lord, not for men. since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Jesus Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23, 24). It is not without significance that these words are addressed to slaves!

The tentmaker deliberately engages in a work context because he views his work as an expenditure of energy (manual, mental or both) which is personally fulfilling, benefits the community, and honours God. The out-working of this biblical understanding of work is a vital aspect of the tentmaker's witness and disciplinmaking.

A Clear Call from God

Most of what we have considered applies generally to Christian disciples, all of whom are expected to witness in daily life and work and to be involved in God's mission to the nations of the world. But at this point, the tentmaker's mandate narrows down to the clear and specific call of God to the individual. The divine call is as crucial to the tentmaking ministry as to any other. While it is personal, it is not just individual, and has to be discerned and worked through within the fellowship and encouragement of the Body of Christ. This call will focus as three dimensions come together and are recognized and affirmed by the Body.

1) *The Tentmaker's Gift-Mix*

"They saw that I had been given the task of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles....For God was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles." (Gal. 2:7-9) The tentmaker will have been equipped by the Holy Spirit with the mix of gifts necessary to live and work in a cross-cultural context. All disciples are called to serve Christ in their own culture, but not all are fitted to serve cross-culturally.

2) *The Tentmaker's Goal*

Paul's ambition was to share the Gospel with unreached peoples and to strengthen young churches. This is

the particular goal of the modern tentmaker also, and it is no peripheral goal, but central to his vocational faithfulness. He not only witnesses to the Kingdom through his values and attitudes displayed at work and the love demonstrated through his service and relationships, but he is concerned to verbalize the good news in terms that are meaningful to the receptors. Like his biblical predecessor Paul (Rom. 15:17-20), the tentmaker is constantly looking for opportunities for spoken witness at every level of his involvement with another people. His purpose in living amongst them is to proclaim and persuade so that they might be brought into relationship with Jesus Christ as His disciples. Neither is this any shallow engagement. Like the Master, the tentmaker is concerned to make disciples by fellowship through initial contacts and investing quality time with individual people.

3) *The Tentmaker's Call*

As Paul and Barnabas were directed by the Holy Spirit to leave Antioch to go to the Gentiles, so every tentmaker is specifically called and directed. (Acts 13:1-4). The call comes personally but is also recognized by the congregation. Tentmaking is a Spirit-empowered vocation.

Conclusion

Down through the centuries God has been calling His servants out to do the unnatural thing: to leave country, culture, people and family in order to fulfill His saving purpose among the nations. The tentmaker is a missionary in terms of his calling and commitment. He is sent by the Lord at a specific time, to a specific place to bear witness to His Name, there to be a stranger and a pilgrim, closely following the Master who denied Himself, humbled Himself, and walked daily the way of the Cross. Through that obedience, the tentmaker earns the right to be there, the right to be heard, and the right to be invited back.

It is clear from our study of the different aspects of the Tentmaker's Mandate that this ministry is not an inferior alternative to traditional missionary work, but a valid and biblically authenticated form of cross-cultural outreach urgently needed in our world today. It may well be the only way to reach certain isolated groups of unreached people, and the only way to penetrate so called "closed countries" with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Editor's note: This article is taken from Dr. Price's book *Twentieth Century Tentmakers: Mission Mandate and Motivations*. Bible College of Victoria Centre for World Mission, Commodore Press Pty, 58 John St., Lilydale, Victoria 3140, Australia.]

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Photo here
of
Dr. David Price

The Tentmaking Movement in Historical Perspective

The main concern of this article is to examine the history of the tentmaker movement and how it is evolving as a significant mission strategy in today's world. A review of history over two thousand years does show that the growth of the church has largely depended on the faithful witness of ordinary men and women who were going about their daily business.

by John Cox

The past twenty years have witnessed an unprecedented growth in the number of distinctive church groups, of denominations and of parachurch organizations. Many have reflected the advance of the Christian faith into new cultures; many others showed dissatisfaction with traditional structures. And this development has come about when the Christian faith has been under attack from other religions, from occultism, from the New Age movement, and perhaps most significantly, from materialism and the God of economic prosperity. To some degree it could be argued that "God is dead", yet individual Christians and churches can be identified who had a deeper commitment than ever as they witnessed to the power of God who was very much alive.

In our modern-day history communication was opened up and the concept of the global village became a reality. The economic upsurge of the Pacific rim, struggles for recognition across Africa and the political change in emphasis from the nation state to ethnic identity all contributed to movement of individuals from one country to another, from one culture to another, as engineers, teachers, hospital workers, scientists, diplomats as well as aid workers.

Also during this period an awakening of political consciousness and economic awareness occurred that brought about the rapid collapse of the Soviet Empire. People power expressed itself in the heroic display of protest in Tiananmen Square. In the West, the political era of Thatcher and Reagan put great

emphasis upon the individual at the expense of community, but in the sphere of mission, it was increasingly evident that the individual could at times achieve great things for God that were denied the larger groupings.

In his book, *God's New Envoys* Ted Yamamori, the president of Food for the Hungry, showed that upwards of 80% of the world population lived in countries which did not permit the unrestricted entry of fully supported traditional missionaries. At about this same time small groups of dedicated Christians were meeting in many parts of the world—known as Tentmaker Task Forces—to explore alternative mission practices in preparation for a tentmaker track at the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Congress which took place in Manila, July 1989. The 80% is still probably a fair estimate for today's world despite the euphoria which accompanied the breakup of the Communist world. Penetration in restricted countries is hindered by the growth of more militant Islamic states; the hardening of attitudes in China, despite apparent liberalization of economic and political postures and resistance to anything that is perceived as Western and thereby undermining of ethnic identity.

Biblical Origins

We can learn from Scripture some indications of the early historical developments of tentmaking. In the early verses of Acts 18, we read that Paul arrived at the hustling and thriving port of Corinth, a great commercial center of the Mediterranean world where he visited Aquila and Priscilla. They were in

fact themselves political refugees for they had been ordered by governmental decree to leave their home in Rome, perhaps an early example of ethnic cleansing. The reason given for Paul seeking them out was not that they were Jews, nor that they were Christians, but that they shared the same trade. These tentmakers shared together what characterizes them: they shared the same faith and it was openly proclaimed in the synagogue; an evangelistic purpose as Paul sought to persuade both Greeks and Jews; a cross-cultural situation, in a Greek city but with primary associations with Rome and Israel. They worked, so that they were self-supporting and not dependent upon the largesse of any paymaster. Paul is seen throughout his ministry to be very, very dependent upon the encouragement of his sending church. To this day these are principles that can readily be translated into the context of our own ministry.

In the context of Scripture we can trace the historical origins of tentmaking back through the Old Testament; to Abraham as he left the security of home pastures and ventured into new unknown territory; to Joseph as he used his administrative wisdom in the service of the Pharaoh; to Daniel as he rose high in the diplomatic service of Nebuchadnezzar. In the New Testament, Jesus himself was best known for a number of years in his secular role as a carpenter before he devoted Himself to His ministry. It is clear that not all are called to be pastors in a professional sense. Jesus met with His disciples, telling them to "go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” with the promise that He “would be with them always, to the close of the age.” This was clearly a task that obviously could not be carried out by nor confined to those then present with Him. A review of history over two thousand years does show that the growth of the church has largely depended on the faithful witness of ordinary men and women great and insignificant alike, who were going about their daily business.

Throughout History

The history of the Christian church is well endowed with the achievements of great men and women of God and groups of people who have had a peculiar sense of purpose in serving the Lord.

It was an American Christian working in Central America as a business man to whom is attributed the comment, “In the first Reformation, the people of God were given the Word of God. Now we need a new reformation when the people of God are given the work of God.” Christy Wilson, often is looked upon today as “Mr. Tentmaker” has drawn attention to the words in Ephesians, chapter 4 verses 11 and 12, which affirms very clearly that some should be apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists and pastors. Why? To equip the saints for the work of ministry. In other words, the professionals are facilitators. It would seem therefore that there is much wisdom in the words of Ford Maddison. The Reformation brought new understanding and a renewed awareness of the priesthood of all believers in expounding the Word of God. It can, I believe, be claimed that today—at this most challenging time in history—there has emerged new understanding and a renewed awareness that all believers need to be involved in doing the work of God, a shared ministry in which divisions between clergy and laity need to be put aside in the common task using all our skills, talents, training to get along-

side those fellow workers in the office, in the factory, in the school for whom Christ died, as well as going to the ends of the earth to reach those who have never heard.

Our main concern in this article is to examine the history of the tentmaker movement and how it is evolving as a significant mission strategy in today’s world. We especially want to focus our thoughts on the achievements of some of the great servants of the Lord at various times in recent history.

As the whole principle of tentmaking is so firmly rooted in Scripture, so does the contemporary tentmaker movement have clear historical forebearers. Some twenty years ago J. Christy Wilson, whom we have already mentioned, wrote a book entitled *Today’s Tentmakers*² in which he touches on the tentmaking movements and individual tentmakers of past generations. Plans are in the making to enlarge on this theme in a revision shortly to be published. Wilson reveals so clearly how the Lord has used His people wherever they have been led to keep alive the good news of the Gospel of Christ.

This and other books are warmly recommended for they reveal how active the church was in the East, as was the persecuted church in Persia which spread to the Far East even before the birth of Islam. Perhaps these were the seeds of the church today in Korea? Normally we do not think of Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus as missionaries, yet the spread of the Gospel was a primary force in their motivation for exploration. We speak now of entrepreneurial tentmaking as though this were a new idea, but the marketplace has always been a focal point in the spread of Christianity. The Roman Catholic missions in the 17th and 18th centuries especially in Latin America engaged in agriculture primarily for their livelihood!

Christians within the East India Company were true to their faith. Also military personnel, as they served in the

armed forces of nations seeking global conquest and the growth of empires. We are inclined today to be very critical of the methods adopted for trade and colonization and rightly so, for there has been much to repent of. But nonetheless, individual traders, individual soldiers with a love for God in their hearts, made known the love of God because of their daily commitment to Him.

Christy Wilson sees the Moravian missionary movement as one of utmost importance. It was sparked off by a black slave telling Count Zinzendorf of the spiritual plight of the people in the Caribbean. Immediately two volunteers stepped forward—artisans with a missionary heart. The rest of the story makes exciting reading and is commended to you. Dr. William Danker said that “The most important contribution of the Moravians was their emphasis that every Christian is a missionary who should witness through his daily vocation.” It is this kind of conviction, in the hearts of present day Christians, that led to the establishment of the Tentmaker International Exchange (TIE).

William Carey

This same conviction was behind the words of William Carey who said “My business is to witness for Christ. I make shoes to pay my expenses.” His biography⁴ is “must reading” for anyone with a mission heart. Carey was conscious of his own privileged society in which there were many ministers of the Gospel, countless church buildings, and limitless opportunities for the expression of Christian fellowship. In a real sense we still enjoy the many blessings he enjoyed despite the awesome decay in the moral standards of our society and culture today. However, why should we enjoy hearing the good news of salvation through the atoning work of grace of our Lord Jesus time and again, when there are still millions in this world who have never had the opportunity of hearing of the love of God

even once? That was one of the questions that provoked and excited William Carey and compelled him to leave the shores of his home land, to take his last and set up as a shoemaker in India with the primary purpose of sharing his faith with the people of the sub-continent. To this day there is a church in Calcutta which in its very existence is a tribute to Carey's tenacity and commitment.

Carey was not a theologian, nor a priest, but a tradesman who loved his Lord. Today, tentmaking has grown in strength, purpose and numbers as more and more Christians express their blessings of good education and training. As Christians have the opportunity to share the benefits of such training and education in the developing world and elsewhere, so God has given the opportunity to share the greatest benefit of all—His love in Christ.

In recent times, one is mindful of two Americans who, nearly thirty years ago, and having a great love and concern for the people of Israel, arrived in that country with a bicycle and a sewing machine to see how their love and concern might be used to draw the people of that land to their Savior. Now they have a thriving business (after many harrowing experiences), which gives employment to hundreds of Israeli people who know of their Christian commitment. They are linked to a Christian church in Tiberias, and they know that they are just where the Lord wants them to be.

Christian history is full of the lives of dedicated individuals who have known what it is to be a true disciple of the Lord, who have known what it means to put God first, their neighbors second, and themselves last. Many of these have found traditional missionary organizations to be their means of serving the Lord, but many others have recognized that Christ is with them

in their workaday lives and have faithfully followed His leading.

Unknown to Christian leaders, unknown to the structured church, such people have gone out in faith to pitch their tents wherever God has lead them. In consequence, there are many unsung heroes of the Gospel whose reward will be in Heaven. Very few of their stories will be told. The most

The most significant characteristic of tentmaking is that it has merely been a natural expression of their walk with God who has been the totality of their walk through life.

significant characteristic of tentmaking is that, to many, it has merely been a natural expression of their walk with God who has been the totality of their walk through life.

Personal Commitment

Through the seventies and eighties there gradually emerged an awareness that world mission and evangelization found its greatest expression in many different ways in many different countries reflecting the essential culture of each country or people. Christianity was not a social order to be imposed upon foreigners as political structures and economic imperialism as was the norm in the nineteenth century. Christianity was the outward expression of the love of Christ in individuals, as ambassadors for Christ, who knew such joy that they wanted others to have it also.

Christy Wilson crystallized this in Afghanistan. He was conscious that God was drawing him to Afghanistan and this came home most forcibly to him as he watched the Afghan Olympic team at the London games in 1948. Later

he found himself in that country where the culture was alien, the political system was alien, the social and family structures were alien—but the people were, like him, made in the image of God. He worked as a teacher, he came to know the people better and they in turn recognized in him a love he had towards them. Without knowing it, they saw Christ in him, and found that they

were accessible by him and he was acceptable to them because they knew him as a person and not as a representative of an organization.

This was not the maverick activity of a loose cannon nor a lone ranger. He was a team member, enjoying cooperation and partnerships with amateurs and professionals alike. Among his team-mates was a minister of the Anglican church, a young diplomat at the British Embassy and the Director of

a mission agency whose field of activity was West Asia. Wilson's major contribution to the tentmaking movement was to awaken Christian colleagues back in the United States to the fact that the potential untapped missionary resources were vast. Seventy thousand American Christians alone went overseas each year in their work and the great majority did not link their professional work with opportunities for mission. The ideas was "There were missionaries for that."

"California Here We Come"

Ruth Siemens—a tentmaker herself in Central America—had a great vision. There were many needs for professionals from the West in the developing world. What wonderful opportunities to witness to the Christian faith if all these professions were Christian? There were many young Christians in the United States with a vast range of usable skills who would jump at the chance of working overseas. And the consequence was "Global Opportunities"—GO. A database was established in the

early eighties which sought to list every possible job opportunity overseas, especially in those countries where the Christian presence was marginal. Applications were received from Christians seeking overseas employment, their gifts and attributes were assessed and Global Opportunities sought to place them where their particular gifts could best be used to the glory of God.

Ruth Siemens was not alone, for California was the home of a number of Christians of vision at this time and a number of initiatives got under way. Don Hamilton established TMQ Research which explored in great depth what it was that characterized a successful tentmaker—his Christian commitment, his personal circumstances, and his motivation. Dr. Ralph Winter, from the US Center for World Mission, gave great encouragement and the concept of tentmaking gradually gained recognition for its legitimacy in mission circles. Soon the center of gravity moved to Seattle Washington, and Christian parachurch/church mission-orientated agencies developed such as Crista, Issachar and Tentmakers International. What was needed was a focus to draw together all the wealth of ideas that were exciting in themselves yet largely still uncoordinated.

Lausanne II, July 1989

The Lausanne II congress planned for Manila in July 1989 provided the catalyst. The Task Forces were formed for this purpose. Workshops for committed Christian leaders were held in every continent. Among the front runners in this were Ted Yamamori, President of "Food for the Hungry," Dick Staub, now a well-known chat show host on American radio; Ken Touryan whose business in Albuquerque New Mexico was a tentmaking ministry; Dr. Lynn Buzzard and Christy Wilson. It became apparent that throughout the world there were practitioners and enablers of tentmaking who felt the need

of a fellowship of like-minded people who wanted to share experiences and learn from others. The outcome was a track at the Manila gathering that would focus on tentmaking which would examine ways to forward the movement that would promote the spread of the Kingdom.

Many readers will be familiar with the Manila Manifesto which epitomized a new commitment to World Evangelization. What is less well known is the statement issued by the Tentmaker Track.⁵ It affirmed that tentmakers are Christians who, in response to God's call, proclaim Christ cross-culturally, witnessing with their whole lives. It affirmed also the vital central position of the established missions movement and drew attention to the need for structures of accountability by tentmaker practitioners to these agencies, as well as to local Christian fellowships and partnerships, and above all to the home churches. It recognized that the tentmaker, especially in his "secular role," was inevitably in the front-line of spiritual warfare.

Statement on Tentmaking

The Lausanne statement identified seven proposals for the church that the future history of tentmaking should prove to be effective for the Lord

- 1) To encourage Christian lay people to seize opportunities for cross-cultural positions to extend God's Kingdom.
- 2) To recognize the key position of church congregations in mobilizing and equipping the laity for world evangelization.
- 3) To identify and enlist people for cross-cultural witness among unreached people groups.
- 4) To produce training materials and programs for tentmakers in the Scriptures, inter-personal relationships and time management.
- 5) To involve home churches in assisting in placement and orientation

to face culture shock successfully.

6) To nurture tentmakers through faithful pastoral care to include prayer backing, good communications and visits.

7) To assist in re-entry culture shock, and to use tentmakers efficiently in challenging and recruiting others.

The Lausanne Movement committed itself to the expansion of networking between national and international church and mission bodies concerned with tentmaking. Out of this the Tentmaker International Exchange (TIE) was conceived, which stood in the same spirit and purpose as William Carey expressed in the words of Isaiah: "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; hold not back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations (people groups)."

Dormant Years

The focus of the tentmaker movement was still very much on the Western seaboard of the United States. The Seattle based Christian service organization, Issachar, was well represented at Manila and the assumption was that this group had the resources and the commitment to get the Tentmaker International Exchange off to a good start. However, there were significant delays in the political as well as the Christian history of the twentieth century.

The leaders at Issachar were very much aware of the vulnerability of the Christian church in Russia particularly, and they developed a project under the name of *Enosis* whereby churches in the West should be linked to independent churches in the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States to give them partnership, support in prayer, manpower and other resources.

The effect of this upon Tentmaker International Exchange was that it never really saw the light of day.

However, the vision of Manila 1989 was not dimmed in the hearts of those deeply committed to the centrality of tentmaking in current mission outreach. One such person was Danny Martin who first realized the vitality of tentmaking when working with relief agency called World Concern. His commitment to this brought about the establishment of a tentmaking mission agency which is known as "Mission to Unreached Peoples." This ministry today has well over 100 tentmakers serving across Eurasia from Cambodia to Poland. With Dick Staub, and Gary Taylor (formerly of Frontiers) Martin and a group of like minded people called a meeting in Seattle, Washington in January 1991 at which it was decided to activate the concept of TIE. In order that the international aspect of TIE would prevail, the author of this article, John Cox, from the Pickenham Ministries in England, was asked to undertake the role of International Coordinator.

Breakthrough at Glorieta

A small group met at Willowbank Church near Chicago and plans were made to hold a conference in January 1992 at the Baptist convention center in New Mexico. Right from the start it was felt that the core of TIE would be a network of national groups. These groups would recognize the needs of their own country who would network with other national groups in such a way that experiences would be shared and good practices disseminated. Groups could learn from each other and apply these practices to their own situation and culture.

It was concluded that the conference in Glorieta, New Mexico should be directed at the situation in the United States, that the discussions should pioneer

the way forward, that known tentmaker leaders and enablers throughout the world should be invited to attend as observers, and that the international possibilities of TIE be examined in more depth.

The goals of this meeting were achieved to a remarkable degree as

Tentmakers International Exchange (TIE) had something to offer the thousands of Christians throughout the world who sought to honor Christ in their worship, in their witness, and in their work wherever it took them... TIE is a servant body entrusted to support and encourage all committed to the Great Commission in all its aspects.

more than twenty nationalities weathered the wintry conditions of New Mexico. One brother from Indonesia could not be parted from his woolen scarf throughout the entire conference!

There were two main outcomes which saw TIE emerge from an idea to a reality. First there was formed the United States Association of Tentmakers (U.S.A.T.) which has more recently adopted the name INTENT. This in itself was an important step forward as the American scene had hitherto seen many eager initiatives by persons of vision and drive but little achievement in the matter of partnership and cooperation. The other outcome came from a meeting of the overseas visitors who were impressed by the content and commitment to tentmaking shown by their American hosts. They agreed that a fellowship

of like-minded Christians across the whole cultural spectrum could greatly contribute to the spread of the Kingdom of God into the estimated 12,000 remaining unreached people groups of the world. First links were established in Glorieta with the World Evangelical Fellowship and AD 2000, as well as a strengthening of the links with the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

Consolidation

Preliminary plans were drawn up which envisaged nine regional gatherings to spread the word along lines originally put forward at Lausanne II. However, no financial resources existed behind TIE. My task with my associate coordinator, Danny Martin, was primarily to keep the flag flying—of maintenance rather than doing much mission ministry. This was largely done by personal contact with known individuals, and correspondence with occasional

opportunities to meet and pray together. Quiet persistence in maintaining links and Danny's travels, particularly in the Far East, kept the fires burning. However, it became increasingly clear that a specifically international global gathering was essential.

Chiang Mai, March 1994

Thankfully, through the good agency of Mission to Unreached Peoples and Martin's gift in recruiting willing and very able volunteers to undertake full responsibility for staff work, this devotion led to the first global congress of TIE which was held in Thailand at Chiang Mai early in March 1994.

There was a very real sense of occasion at this time. Again some twenty countries were represented. It was especially encouraging to see widespread involvement by Asian tentmakers but

the lack of Africans and South Americans was lamented. TIE was experiencing one of the dilemmas of worldwide gatherings—the cost of getting there! The program had been skillfully compiled and the contributions from the platform were outstanding. The congress was graced by the presence of the two main speakers who set the tone for the conference and who brought a spirit of purposefulness to everyone.

Christy Wilson, the father of the modern-day tentmaking movement, drew attention to the pedigree of tentmaking as a prominent contributor to world mission. Jan Vencer, president of World Evangelical Fellowship, emphasized the centrality of partnership among all persons, missions and para-church-church agencies in winning the world for Christ. Contributions from other speakers revealed the great breadth of view regarding the possibilities for using one's secular skills in witnessing for the Lord. It seemed that no limits could be entertained in seeking the will of the Lord when Dr. Sun Ki Bang spoke of the ministry of E-land, a company which then employed more than 2000 workers and which operated strictly in accordance with perceived biblical principles. The congress marked another step forward with the drafting of a mission statement, and the appointment of an executive committee with members from North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Purpose More Defined

The Mission Statement together with a Vision Statement sought to clarify the position of TIE. Members of the congress affirmed that TIE had something to offer the thousands of Christians throughout the world who sought to honor Christ in their worship, in their witness, and in their work wherever it took them. The dominant conviction was that TIE should be a servant body entrusted to support and encourage all committed to the Great Commission in all its aspects and to tentmakers in par-

ticular prevailed.

Mission Statement: TIE exists to promote tentmaking world-wide and to provide a forum for networking.

Vision Statement: The vision is to promote the concept of tentmaking as mission to serve national tentmaker associations, denominational groups and vocational and professional associations around the world. TIE will help with formation of such groups by the exchange of ideas, information and opportunities, identifying needs and resources. TIE will serve as a clearinghouse for information on and sources for training and equipping tentmaker trainers to enable vocationally skilled Christians worldwide to minister cross-culturally.

TIE is a response to the need felt by tentmaker trainers and practitioners alike. We have long realized that within each country exists resources that are being duplicated elsewhere. If we can communicate our resources and needs to each other, the work of reaching the nations will be made much easier.

In March of 1994, an international group of tentmakers formed TIE to be the networking arm of the tentmaking movement. Our responsibilities are to network people, training organizations, missions and businesses interested in tentmaking. Occasional regional and worldwide conferences will be held because of the value of such gatherings.

An early outcome of this congress was the publication of a newsletter which was called "Opportunities," which has been issued two or three times each year from the office at Seattle and has sought to bring the fellowship of tentmakers closer together. It has also fostered the spirit of partnership which was the theme of Jan Vencer's address to the congress.

The "Yellow Pages" as a resource publication was also prepared. Both ventures continue albeit on a low key but they form the first expression

in seeking to realize the vision. The contents of these productions have revealed how the international aspect of TIE is now taking shape. The members of the congress departed full of hope and expectations for the future while the new committee met wondering how to follow the mind of the Lord and how to operate world-wide without any funding base. There remained the necessity to exercise a strong faith in contemplating how to fulfill the expectations that came out of the congress.

Faithfulness

There ensued numerous discussions by correspondence, occasional meetings and a continued awareness of a sense of belonging to a 'club' with a common purpose. "Intent" held a Pan-American gathering each year. The work of tentmaking ministries in India grew steadily but discreetly. Individuals worked zealously in South America and Africa. Enablers and practitioners met from time to time in Europe and the Middle East. National groups in Canada and Australia grew in purpose and strength.

The enthusiasm of Johnny Chun the founder of Mission International brought about a seminar in Seoul conducted by members of the TIE committee which led to the formation of the Korean Association of Tentmakers linking over twenty Korean mission agencies to encourage the recruitment of young Korean professionals for cross-cultural witness.

Networking

Seoul was also the location of the GCOWE congress of 1995 and although there was no track specifically devoted to tentmaking, there were opportunities for informal gatherings. Interest in TIE was clear and the enthusiasm of individual members of the congress was great. A consequence of these meetings was the issue of a statement which largely re-affirmed the objectives of the Manila statement of 1989.

The work went on without setting anything aside. There remained a conviction that there should be another global gathering to examine critically the progress thus far and to work towards a more pro-active ministry. The committee was conscious that it had not been able to give the measure of support and encouragement that it would have liked and what many supporters had been looking for.

The opportunity to face this issue arose at the "Intent" conference in Chicago, in October 1995, when a small group of observers from overseas tentmaking groups met with the Director of TIE. Three members of the committee, John Cox, Danny Martin and Berit Kloster (from Norway) had been able to meet together at the GCOWE conference in Seoul earlier in the year and had there discussed possible venues. In Chicago it was possible to narrow the options down to New Zealand or Australia owing to the generous gesture of the TIE members there to host and organize a second global conference

Melbourne, February 1997

The hottest recorded heat wave for nearly eighty years welcomed some one hundred tentmakers to Melbourne. A most rewarding aspect of the conference was that every continent was represented—apart from Antarctica! There were many new faces representing their regions and countries. The format was familiar to all who attend such conferences, but this time there was a greater emphasis upon the practical issues and how experienced tentmakers had learned from these and were able to share with and challenge others. The most significant outcome was the sense of excitement about an enlarged and more strategic role for TIE to play in the years leading to the next millennium. During the congress the writer of this article passed his sixty-seventh birthday and felt the time to retire after involvement since 1989. Danny Martin

remained on the new committee to ensure continuity while Berit Kloster became the new Director. She brought with her committee experience since 1984, and practical experience as a tentmaker in South America. We now have a very experienced board of directors with a wide geographical spread and each committee member is to take individual responsibility—both for the promotion of tentmaking in each one's region and for a particular aspect of the ministry. Another congress is planned in 1999 in South Africa.

The Future

We have seen that tentmaking had its practitioners in the Old Testament, and it had its definitive operator with the apostle Paul in the New Testament. It has also had its faithful Christian witnesses as precursors of a more formal missionary structure in earlier centuries, and a renewed part to play in fulfilling the Great Commission in reaching the unreached peoples of the world. Our prayer is that more and more Christians will see their role in the marketplace primarily as opportunities to live the "whole" Christian life as ambassadors for their Lord. There remains a task to be performed. There are whole peoples to be reached. Only general mobilization of the whole People of God can achieve the goal and accomplish the task. It can therefore be asserted that Tentmaker International Exchange has a vital part to play and has—must have—a rewarding future as it reaches out to the remaining unreached of the world.

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Dr. John Cox was the International Coordinator of TIE since its inception in Manila in 1989. He graduated from Cambridge University, spending eight years in commerce and subsequently as a principal of a College of Further Education in the UK. He retired from this in 1983. He has been a short term worker with TEAR Fund in the Ethiopian famine in 1984 and thereafter has been on short term assignments with SIM. He has been a trustee of the Pickenham Trust since 1983. The Trust is a Christian educational and missions organization. He has pioneered Tentmaking initiatives in the UK since 1987.

Photo here
by
John Cox

The Tentmaker's Vision:

Through all of Church history we have suffered from using methods that functioned well in one era and in one culture but not in another. In adopting methods from another age and culture we show that we need to be more creative, that we lack God given imagination.

by Berit Helgoy Kloster

Looking towards the future, Christians tend to take the long view and see the great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne, and in front of the Lamb (Rev 7.9).

This was the vision given to God's people in one of history's toughest times of persecution. The light was too dim at that time to see a close up picture clearly, but every generation is obliged to analyze its own time and to evaluate how best to spread the Kingdom of God. The Great Commission demands this. How can we go to all the peoples of the world unless we study the road that will take us there?

Through all of Church history we have suffered from using methods that functioned well in one era and in one culture but not in another. In adopting methods from another age and culture we show that we have little imagination. The Roman Church adopted Caesar's political structure. The Western missionary strategy, as it was hammered out in the early 1800s, was in essence a copy of the British colonial structure. In hindsight we must ask if the mission strategists of the times thought about the effect the close connection with the colonial powers would have when the Gospel was communicated into new cultures.

Today we must admit that many mistakes were made, but that the Lord used the weak vessels in spite of our mistakes. Today with materialism running rampant, and efficiency values governing our lives, we are facing greater challenges than perhaps at any other

time in history. In political terms we have all the visa restrictions and all the ethnic hostilities. History has produced so many scars, that we from the West cannot build friendships with people from other parts of the world unless we first ask for their forgiveness.

Western Christians no longer have the patience required to do missionary work. If quick results cannot be produced, in terms of converted souls, then modern-day missionaries lose the support of their donors. This hurts pioneer work as well as mission training. In addition, the modern-day missionary requires an ever greater support apparatus at home. Today, the "older" missionary churches, must go to the "younger ones" and see how they solve the problems they face in carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth in a mechanical worldview.

As Christians we must throw out the simple conversion stories. Few if any experience a radical "one night" conversion. Even the apostle Paul had many years of intense study of the Old Testament behind him, and also the meeting with leading Christian personalities, such as Stephen, on his mind when he met the Lord on the Damascus road. Every person is himself or herself involved in the conversion process where God is the instigator. We have to rediscover the old truth that if we are Christians, then Christ lives in us (John 14:23). Yes, if he lives in us, then he does something to the person we invite in, then he speaks when we honestly admit our mistakes. He also speaks when we, in our work, show a high moral standard.

If we believe that Jesus lives in us, then Jesus is today probably on board every airplane, on every train, and in every major city. He is in the tourist crowd, and at the universities and schools. Do we permit him to be seen? An outstanding expert on Islam says that there are three methods for winning the Muslims: friendship, friendship and friendship. Friendship in the name of Jesus is paramount.

To be a tentmaker is to build friendships. The one you meet at the work place is the person you have something in common with. Yet, only the Holy Spirit can convert a working relationship into a constructive Christian teaching situation. Most of Jesus' teaching took place while he and the disciples walked around and met people in different situations. We are so set in our ways, we think Christian leadership training requires a quiet place, paper and pencil and a computer. I believe the Lord is inviting us to a course of study He personally has created.

The Bible talks about being a faithful servant who prepares the food at the right time (Matt. 24:45), but it is Jesus Christ and only Him who can provide nourishment. Here we have to pray for renewed vision and renewed boldness. It probably took three years from the time Nicodemus talked to Jesus during the night until he could be found by Jesus' cross.

We have to build alliances, and dare to ask where the most strategic meeting points are. Which peoples groups communicate best with each other? Who meets people in the various strata of society? Who can get into any coun-

try? Business people and aid personnel can get in almost anywhere. Let us pray specifically for those groups!

If the enlargement of the Kingdom of God is left to tentmaker strategy, some could conclude that it does not work, since tentmakers are exposed to political and economical ups and downs. But what did the Lord mean when he said that he was going to be with us till the end of the age? The tentmaker vision is to encourage every believer to show that Christ lives in him or her. The tentmaker vision is to carry those in prayer, who are at the front lines where Christians meet unevangelized cultures. It is to pray so that we may be able to see our every day lives with God's eyes.

The tentmaker vision in the name of Jesus, and with his love, is to encourage each other, so that we may "know the hope to which he has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Eph 1:18-20).

Dr. Berit Helgoy Kloster is the new International Director of Tentmakers International Exchange. She has been a lay preacher for the past 20 years, an active tentmaker, radio broadcaster, and writer. She has a Ph.D. in Christian Education, in addition to degrees in Spanish and Educational Psychology. She is married to Svein Erik Kloster, a urology surgeon. They have four children, twin boys ages 20, a boy 17, and a daughter 10. She comes from a family that are active in mission work, and has worked towards establishing tentmaking in Norway.

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The Vital Role of Tentmaking in Paul's Mission Strategy

Tentmaking has great potential for contemporary frontier missions that we need to carefully examine the apostle Paul's example and teaching, and note the role that his manual labor played in his ministry. He would not have dedicated so much time and energy to make tents had this not been a vital part of his mission strategy!

by Ruth E. Siemens

Why did Paul spend so much time doing manual labor when he did not have to do it? The question should concern us because at this turn of the century far more Paul-type tentmakers are needed than ever before in history. The thousands of international jobs my staff and I laboriously researched 20 years ago when we began to help tentmakers go abroad seem like a trickle compared with the ocean of constantly changing openings available today.

The collapse of the U.S.S.R. not only freed the Soviet satellite nations, and produced 15 new Soviet republics, but it turned almost all non-aligned governments to the West. Most of them struggle to implement free market economics, multi-party politics and improved human rights, in order to qualify for scarce international aid. All need tentmakers.

By far the largest demand today is for educators, as it was in the early 1950s when I began my teaching and administration in private, secular schools in Latin America. But in addition to education at all levels, professionals and certified technicians are needed especially in health care, engineering, science and technology, business and finance, agriculture and related fields, and computer science. Openings are fewer, but available, in the social sciences, fine arts, athletics, and in many industries, like construction, petroleum, publishing, food science, travel and tourism. Most positions require degrees and experience, or long experience in lieu of a

degree, because governments protect semi-skilled and unskilled openings for their own people, except in a few sparsely populated, mineral-rich lands. Salaries range from adequate to high, with travel and benefits--if you acquire the job while still in your homeland. Otherwise, you are considered a local hire and usually receive local pay.

Before we examine Paul's example and his teaching, consider briefly nine benefits of tentmaking in today's world.

- 1) It provides entry into hostile countries that forbid missionaries-- 80% of the world's people!
- 2) It provides natural, sustained contact with non-believers in restrictive and open countries (like Japan, less than 1% evangelical).
- 3) It conserves scarce mission funds for missionaries who must have support.
- 4) It multiplies our personnel, as we mobilize the laity for missions.
- 5) It supplements Christian radio and TV by incarnating the Gospel for millions who have never seen a Christian.
- 6) It can reduce the attrition rate of missionaries who do not finish their first term or return for a second one-- about 30%. Tentmakers who have learned the language and culture at their own expense are tried and proven candidates for mission agencies.
- 7) It legitimizes mission agencies before increasingly difficult govern-

ments.

8) It is ideal for new mission agencies in new sending countries which cannot follow our Western model of full donor support or cannot send money out of the country.

9) It makes good use of the vast global job market which God has designed to help us finish world evangelization. Dare we ignore hundreds of thousands of paid jobs all over the world while false religions and cults take advantage of them to spread their heresies?

I will use the term *tentmaker* to mean missions-committed Christians who support themselves abroad, and make Jesus Christ known on the job and in their free time. They are in full-time ministry even when they have full-time jobs, because they integrate work and witness. They follow Paul's model of tentmaking, for the same reasons he did it. How preposterous that any serious Christian should relegate spiritual ministry to free time in the evenings and on weekends!

Because we cannot finish evangelizing the world without a massive force of such tentmakers, I am amazed at the lack of attention that is given to Paul's model. The word *tentmaker* has been co-opted, but Paul's example and teachings on this unique approach are largely ignored.

A major reason is the common belief that Paul usually had church support, and only made tents during financial emergencies. I hope to show that

this is a myth based on proof-texts taken out of context. (We criticize cults for doing this.) To get the whole picture we must examine all the relevant passages and then correlate them, especially, Paul's letters with events in the book of Acts. These passages interpret and limit each other.

We must ask seven basic questions:

1. How much manual labor did Paul actually do? 2. How much did he receive from church or donor gifts? 3. Why did he work at all when he did not have to? 4. How were converts to evangelize? 5. What was Paul's strategy? 6. How effective was it? 7. What practical implications does Paul's tentmaking have for us as we enter a new millennium?

How Much Did Paul Work?

Did he work on his first journey?

In 1 Cor. 9:6 Paul asks, "Are Barnabas and I the only ones who cannot refrain from working for a living?" This suggests strongly that he worked on the first journey, the only time the two men traveled together. They must have supported themselves as they went through Cyprus and Galatia, and continued to do so after they formed separate teams.

On the second journey, he almost certainly did manual labor in Philippi. (2 Cor. 11:12 was written from Philippi.) Both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians say he worked "night and day," that is, early morning and late afternoon shifts, with the usual long Mediterranean siesta break during the midday heat. In Corinth we find Paul house hunting and job hunting, and he finds both with Priscilla and Aquila, who are recent Jewish refugees whom Claudius had expelled from Rome, and who shared Paul's trade, the making and repair of animal skin tents. (They were not weavers of tents. Acts 18:3-5). He almost certainly wins them to the Lord because if they were already Christians, Luke would have called them that instead of Jews.

On the third missionary journey, Paul spent almost three years in Ephesus. Acts 19 gives a poignant description of Paul teaching over the long noon hour in the school of a man named Tyrannus. F.F. Bruce in *Paul and His Converts* considered the Western Text accurate on this point. Paul is preaching in his work clothes. Probably his audience is similarly dressed. Listeners take away his apron and the sweat rag from his brow, in the hope of healing ailing friends.

Then on Paul's farewell meeting with his elders, he reminds them that he had earned his own support with his own hands and he expects them to continue his example. (Acts 20:33-35) Paul approved of pay for pastors only after the pioneer stage.

The first proof-text to give us trouble is Acts 18:5. It says that when Timothy and Silas arrived from Macedonia they found Paul totally involved in ministry. It is generally assumed that they brought money from Macedonia and so he quit his manual labor to give full time to preaching. (A couple of N.T. paraphrases actually say that.) The men probably did bring gifts. But whatever change Paul made (if any) had occurred before the men appeared. The words in Greek suggest that they were surprised that he was already so deeply into his ministry. The larger context also show convincingly that he did not quit his manual labor.

Paul spent most of his third journey in Ephesus, either the second or third largest city in the Roman empire. Near the end of that time, messengers from Corinth came to say that Judaizers had come with their legalistic teaching, and the congregations had split into factions. Worse, the visitors insist that Paul is no apostle. That is why he cannot get church support and has to do manual labor! In their minds, how could anyone with shabby clothes and blistered hands be important?

So Paul writes 1 Corinthians in Ephe-

sus and sends it with Timothy. We know the Judaizers' charges from Paul answers. They criticized his message and his oratorical style. Paul says he preaches Jesus Christ and him crucified, and that he does not follow the oratorical fads of the day. But the Judaizers' most serious charge by far was Paul's manual labor. They could never have made this charge if Paul had quit tentmaking when Silas and Timothy arrived! The charge would stick only if he did manual labor most of the time.

In Chapter 9 Paul makes his formal defense regarding the main charge. He begins by defending his apostleship. He speaks approvingly of Peter and James and others who did receive church support.

You will recall that Jesus himself had called Peter away from his two-family fishing business in order to give all his time to fishing for people. When Peter briefly returned to his business, Jesus asked him to promise three times that he will not go back to fishing for fish. (Lk. 5:1-11, John 20:21) Two decades later Peter and his wife still received support for their missionary travels.

But Paul says that he and Barnabas have just as much right to financial support. Then he gives a long list of arguments in favor of church or donor support. It is the strongest defense of supported ministry in the Bible. Paul is proving his own right to financial donor support. This list is another reason why it is assumed that Paul was mainly supported and made tents only when money was scarce. However, no one seems to notice what follows.

Paul says three times in the same chapter (1 Cor. 9) that he has never made use of his right to financial support. Never! That must include all three journeys, and probably the prior period as well. Then he gives his reasons for insisting on self-support when he could have lived on donor support. This passage occurs in the middle of the letter,

which in ancient writings usually contains the most important section for the main purpose of the writer. It also comes in the middle of a larger section about the need to give up all kinds of rights for the sake of the Gospel. But before we consider why Paul chose this course of action, we must look at another passage of Scripture that seems to contradict this conclusion.

Paul's Financial Support

How much support did Paul actually receive? Paul writes that he even "robbed churches" in order to serve the Corinthians. (2 Cor. 11:8, 9) He refers to money received from Macedonia—money that Silas and Timothy probably brought. But "robbed" is hyperbole—exaggeration for emphasis. In reality Paul is shaming the Corinthians.

But that passage is usually taken to mean that Paul was mainly on donor support. Phil. 4:15, 16 seems to indicate the opposite. Several years after the third journey Paul was in Rome in Nero's palace prison. The state did not provide the basics for prisoners, so friends had to bring in food and clothing, etc. The Philippians (Macedonians) graciously send Paul a gift. In thanking them, he reminds them that in the early days they were the only ones who had ever given money toward his ministry. How often had they given? A time or two. This passage would seem to preclude gifts from other sources.

But there is more. When we examine 2 Cor. 12:16-18 in its larger context it seems clear that the Judaizers also suggest that Paul's boast of self-support was not entirely true. Surely, he must be getting money secretly from some source. Paul replies that he receives no funds from any source, and he will not allow anyone to silence his claim to self-support. It would destroy the model he was so carefully providing for his converts, and which was so crucial to his whole strategy. He was not just pretending self-support. Several passages suggest that his team members also

worked, presumably when they were not traveling. Paul's team was self-supporting. They were all dependent on what they earned. Paul says that in the pioneer stage he does not even accept free hospitality. He paid for his food and lodging (1 Thess. 3:6-16). So Paul had three options:

- 1) To charge his listeners, as lecturers did all over the empire.
- 2) To receive money from churches or from wealthy patrons.
- 3) To earn his own living—the option he chose.

Paul's self-support had facilitated his pioneering work in Corinth. But now the crisis that the Judaizers caused proved difficult to resolve. Timothy takes Paul's letter to the Corinthians, but comes back to say that the congregation was not convinced by it, and they had lost confidence in his authority as an apostle. Since so much is at stake (in all the churches) Paul makes an emergency journey to Corinth. He is rebuffed. He refers to this as his "painful visit," Then he writes another letter, no longer extant—which he refers to as his "severe letter." He sends it with Titus, an experienced senior partner—and then wishes he could get it back. He fears it is too severe, maybe counterproductive.

Meanwhile, he planned to remain in Ephesus a few more weeks and then to await Titus in Troas. But Demetrius the silversmith incites a riot, and Paul barely escapes with his life. Hiding in Troas, he is so worried about the Corinthians, that he travels on to Philippi to intercept his co-worker there. Titus brings good news. Most of the Christians, but apparently not all, are repentant and have sided with Paul.

So from Philippi, Paul writes 2 Corinthians, ostensibly about the offering for Jerusalem (in the center of the letter). But most of the letter is related in one way or another to the tentmaking issue. He says he is at that time earning his support in Philippi and plans to continue this same policy on his forth-

coming third visit to Corinth. For Paul, his manual labor was not negotiable, even if it jeopardized his apostleship. Why did he continue to insist on his tentmaking when it had become so controversial and he could have had church support?

Why Did Paul do Manual Labor?

Credibility. Paul says twice that he works in order to put no "obstacle" in the way of the Gospel, so that his message and motivation will not become suspect (1 Cor. 9:12, 2 Cor. 6:3ff). It appears that donor support was not a problem for Jewish people, but it raised suspicions among the Gentiles. It is important that Paul should get no pay for his preaching, although it cost him dearly in weary labor and in frequent risk of his life. It proved he was not a "peddler of God's Word" nor a "people-pleaser," preaching what the audiences wanted to hear so they would give fatter contributions. He did not want to be identified with the unscrupulous orators who roamed the empire sponging off of their listeners. He wanted to be free of obligations to donors, not beholden to anyone—no mysterious church, no wealthy patron, no social clique. Paul says "Owe no one anything." If he had taken money from the Corinthians, who would have paid? Probably the wealthy members. Everyone else in this quarrelsome church would have believed that he had to do what the wealthy demanded.

Even today in most countries people think that religious workers have to say religious things because that is what they are paid to do. But they are more open to listen to peers. Non-believers sometimes suspect religious workers of being spies because there is a mystery about receiving support from a variety of donors and a few distant churches. In the pioneer stage of missions Paul wanted nothing to diminish the credibility of his message or his motivation or to interfere with his adapting to the people he wanted to reach.

Identification. Paul not only adapted to the general culture of each host city, but specifically on the people he hoped to win—the laboring classes. In 1 Cor. 9:18 ff he says he approaches Jews as a Jew, since he is one. He approaches Greeks (educated Gentiles) as the highly educated, trilingual, tri-cultural, upper class Roman citizen that he is. He does not have much problem relating to these two groups, even in his shabby clothes. In Athens the philosophers drag him to the Areopagus to lecture; in Corinth he wins upper-class converts; and in Ephesus the Asiarchs become his friends.

But Paul had more trouble identifying with “the weak” and the poor, the slaves, the day laborers. They were his main target for several reasons. To win the empire he had to focus on them because most of its residents were at the social and economic bottom. Seventy percent of the population in the provinces were slaves, and 90% in Rome and Italy.

So Paul worked as an artisan, using his trade. Every Jewish theologian had to learn one. The making and repair of tents was still a respectable level, not quite at the bottom. With this trade Paul genuinely earned his living—he did not pretend to do so while receiving paychecks from Antioch. (We do not know what work his team members did.) Earning their living required many hours of weary manual labor. Paul wrote from Ephesus, “To this present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our hands.” (1 Cor. 4:11, 12)

But Paul had another reason for emphasizing the lower classes. Most were barbarians. They were not savages but foreign born slaves, and people from the tribes and villages whose first language was not Greek. These bilingual and bicultural people were Paul's channel to the hinterlands, as we will see in the next section.

Modeling. Paul writes, “With toil and labor (weariness), we worked night and day that we might not burden any of you, and to give you an example to follow” (1 Thess. 3:8). It is extremely important to note what Paul modeled.

1) Christian living. None of the pagans Paul worked with had ever seen a Christian before. It would do little good to tell them how to live a holy life. They needed a demonstration, and Paul personally gave it. Without it they would have said, “But Paul, you are demonstrating a holy life in church. But try doing it in the cesspool environment of my job!” So Paul showed them how to live a holy Christian life in a wicked, immoral, idolatrous society. It made his counseling and teaching credible. (1 Thess. 4:1ff)

2) A biblical work ethic. Did you ever notice how much Paul says in his short letters about work? (2 Thess. 3:6-15) Converts were to earn their living quietly. If they did not work, they should not eat. Without a strong biblical work ethic there could not be strong Christians. Paul reminds the Corinthians that a good many of them had been bums—thieves and pilferers, idlers, and worse (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Paul probably found some of them in the gutters, and maybe some had tried to rip him off. In his letters to the churches Paul tells the *Christians* to stop stealing (Eph. 4:28, 1 Tim. 5:8). Bad habits die hard. And a good job helped. If they thought they could sit around all day and get paid for a few hours of preaching (missionary work is sometimes thought to be that), many Corinthians would have sought pastorates, and sought them for the wrong reasons!

Without a strong work ethic there could not be godly families. Thieves, pilferers, idlers and drunks now had to become good providers for their families (or they were worse than infidels). And they were to be generous givers to the needy. These problems are just as true today as in Paul's day. Mr. Zai-

chenko, a top Russian economist who found Jesus Christ a few years ago says no amount of money or technical help will do much good in his country without the recovery of a strong Judeo-Christian work ethic, which was destroyed during 70 years of Communism. The lack of an adequate work ethic has kept many Two-Thirds World countries poor and has kept many mission churches dependent on foreign subsidies. We must share our material resources generously, but wisely, with younger churches in poor countries. But to support their workers has to be harmful! Paul would not have allowed it. If an Indian or African missionary in his own country can live on only \$50 a month, that means their local churches are probably able to provide it. A new kind of Western paternalism will be as damaging as the old varieties. Several missions in India refuse foreign funds.

3) Unpaid lay evangelism. Paul wanted to make sure all his converts would immediately become unpaid evangelists—witnesses to their families, to colleagues at work, to friends in their neighborhood. Every new convert was a new beachhead into enemy territory. He even says they should not quickly move out of their social circles, and risk short-circuiting what God was trying to do there. (1 Cor. 7:17-24). I recall a young Jewish convert in Spain, who was told to quit his sinful job and recreation (advertising and skiing), and then found he could not win his friends because he was cut off from them.

Furthermore, all of Paul's converts were to become full-time evangelists, even though they had full-time jobs. How? By integrating work and witness. That is the genius of tentmaking! It is not regular missionary work under the guise of a secular job. It is a unique approach to ministry. Paul gives them instructions on how to evangelize on the job. This point is so important

to Paul's mission strategy that I will devote the next section to it

How did Converts Evangelize?

In Col. 4:5, 6 Paul says, "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time (*kairos*—each opportunity). Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt (interesting, thought-provoking, thirst-inducing), so that you may know how you ought to answer every one." Their conduct and their words should get people around them to ask questions about the Lord. Then the Christians were to be ready to answer those questions.

Paul's instructions are especially for evangelizing in the workplace (or campus or neighborhood), wherever one has sustained contact with the same non-believers. Note that the Christians were not to evangelize indiscriminately. They were to patiently *fish out seekers*, and focus only on them. At work, Christians are under constant scrutiny, whether they are aware of it or not. Their attractive, non-judgmental godliness will be noted, and so will their failures, so frequent apologies are in order, which further enhance their testimony. Whenever there is a good opening they must speak for Jesus Christ, but without becoming preachy. Their conduct and speech are bait, and is usually tiny. Brief comments, not sermons, not homilies, are needed.

Four points were essential about their lifestyle. They were to concentrate on *personal integrity*—how they related to the opposite sex, their honesty, and their truthfulness, etc. Much of Paul's ethical teaching is especially for the workplace. No situation justifies lies, half truths, or evasion of the truth. Tentmakers must be transparent. They must be who they say they are. A biology professor must be exactly that, not a missionary in the guise of a biology professor. He must have nothing to hide.

Paul tells his converts to focus on

quality work. In Col. 3:22-24 he says they are to serve their masters (including harsh slave masters) as though they were Jesus Christ himself, and with the same honesty and enthusiasm. Eph. 6:5-9 is even stronger, and includes paid employees. Because in serving the employer they are indeed serving Jesus Christ. Imagine how a wealthy householder would respond when some of his untrustworthy, pilfering, quarreling, lazy slaves became responsible, honest and hardworking. How would he respond when he discovered the transformation was due to the power of the Gospel?

Paul is aiming at the wealthy householders through their slaves. The household was a dominant social unit in the Roman empire. The householder owned land and a villa, occupied by his nuclear family, his extended family, house servants, farm laborers, artisans and managers to run the family businesses, and maybe even a tutor, a physician and a lawyer.

The best way to convert people was to aim at the householder, because individuals often had little liberty to make their own decisions. That is why the N.T. speaks of the conversion of the Philippian jailor "and his household." Many converted householders are mentioned among Paul's converts, and usually they hosted a church. Often the converted householder was the ideal natural leader of a new house-church and he had an ample home for meetings. This is the situation in many non-Christian countries today, where we must focus on the family head if we wish to plant growing indigenous churches.

Therefore, according to Paul, if one has a contract with a human employer one has a contract with Jesus Christ. It is wrong for any tentmaker to take employment just to get an entry visa unless he intends to do quality work for his employer. Mission leaders must refrain from telling tentmakers to

spend less time on their employment "because that is not what you are here for." The job is the absolutely essential context for the evangelism.

Converts were to develop *caring relationships*. To be friendly to everyone, but to watch for people who needed help. Paul says he and his team did not only give the Gospel, but first they gave themselves in sacrificial ways. Loving people, seeking their highest good, had to be a novelty in the Roman empire.

The fourth point is *verbal witness*, because living out the Gospel cannot bring anyone to the Lord unless we speak. We must insert casual and fitting comments about God into ordinary conversations.

Paul said they should use their lifestyle and their occasional words about God as bait, to fish out the seekers, and then be ready to answer their questions (Col. 4:5, 6). This is the best way to evangelize in the workplace (or on the campus or in the neighborhood), wherever we see the same people repeatedly. It is usually not good to say so much at first that further conversation about God becomes difficult.

Peter recommends the same fishing approach because it is ideal in an environment of spiritual hostility and persecution. He says Christians should not fear the persecutors, but be aware of the presence of Jesus Christ within them, and be ready to answer the questions, making sure their conduct was without reproach (1 Pet. 3:14-17).

Can you see why this is ideal tentmaker evangelism? We miss so much by taking Paul's tentmaking concept and ignoring his instructions! Most Christians do not evangelize at all, including the majority of missionaries. (They do other church ministries.) Most people who evangelize, hunt instead of fish. The question is not whether hunters can win some converts or not, but what happens to the vast number of victims

that are turned off to the Gospel? Also, a decision is not a conversion, although sometimes the two may coincide.

I am convinced that most Christians do not often evangelize because we do not feel comfortable invading the privacy of another person and imposing a religious conversation on someone who does not want to hear it. Are we never supposed to do that? In a hostile country it can be disastrous. It is better to fish out the seekers and answer their questions.

What are some advantages of fishing evangelism? For one thing, it is enjoyable to explain the Gospel to people who want to know God. You allow them to pace the conversations as they are ready. The Holy Spirit is patient with them and we must not run ahead of him. Their questions let you know when to speak and what to say. Their questions let you know what truths they already understand, where they are confused, as well as their hang ups and their felt needs. They show you how to pray for them. Their questions lead naturally into an evangelistic Bible study. I have seen more people find the Lord through evangelistic Bible studies than any other way. But these studies are very different from the kind most Christians do. By then you have developed a friendship with the seeker and you have more liberty to ask your own questions. I wish I had space to give you examples from my own experience. (See my papers, "Workplace Evangelism: Fishing out Seekers," 29 pp, and "Tentmaking and Investigative Bible Studies," 16 pp, both from Global Opportunities.) If we want the benefits of Paul's strategy, we must pay attention to its details.

Paul's Church Planting Strategy

Paul designed a strategy intended to produce a world-wide missionary lay movement—the quickest way to win the world. Paul needed thousands of missionaries to win the Roman empire and money for their support. Instead, he

produced them as he went along, by reproducing himself in his converts. Since all must be self-supporting, he needed foreign funds.

Today, fishing conversations turn into evangelistic Bible studies, which turn into discipleship Bible studies, which turn into small house-churches. This is the basic ministry of tentmakers, and they can do it better than anyone else because of their extensive, natural contact with outsiders. But in their free time they have many other ministries. God gave me an exciting ministry in my secular school employment, and in my free time led me to begin IVCF-IFES university student movements in Peru, Brazil, Portugal and Spain. But he led linguistics professor, Dan, to do a translation of the New Testament into the language of 5 million Muslims who had never had it before, while he and his wife supported themselves. Tentmaking is ideal of church planting.

1) *Paul's churches were self-reproducing.* Everyone evangelized. Paul aimed for exponential growth. Note two clear examples. Paul may have been in Thessalonica only a few weeks or months, but in his first letter he says that the Gospel had already sounded out from them over the whole region. Maybe it spread quickly because of the persecution. Paul was in Ephesus three years. But Luke says that in the two years that Paul taught in the hall of Tyrannus "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." That area covers the Roman province of Asia (See Acts 19:10).

But the *whole* province? Even the hinterlands? I wondered if Luke was exaggerating a little, and then noticed corroborating testimony from a very unlikely source. In verses 26 and 27, Demetrius the silversmith, whose riot nearly cost Paul his life, shouts to his fellow artisans, "Men... you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable

company of people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may count for nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship." Remember the great bonfire of magical books and fetishes in Ephesus. What success Paul had!

2) *Paul's churches were self-governing.* He brought in no foreign pastors, but appointed and coached local house church leaders, and taught them "the whole counsel of God" so they could mobilize their laity—not get them into a myriad of church committees, but to "equip" them for effective witness in their world.

3) *Paul's churches were self-supporting.* Never dependent on any foreign funds. Everyone worked during the pioneer stage, including the house church pastors. New converts learned to give—but to the poor, not to clergy.

Paul's house church leaders kept their jobs (Acts 20:33-35). By the time growing congregations required more full-time leadership, it was clear which house church leaders had the respect and confidence of the community's Christians, as well as of its non-Christians (1Tim. 3:7). They knew who was effective at evangelism in the workplace in a hostile society. If a pastor had no personal experience in the marketplace, how could he train his church members to be effective there?

By the time full-time leadership was needed there were local funds for salaries. Paul tells his older churches to provide well for their pastors—for example in Galatia, and eventually, Ephesus (Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17, 18). The pastors were local, not foreign imports.

By then the basic pattern of unpaid evangelism was well established, so that paid ministry was viewed as an exception to the rule. But Paul did not allow his churches at any stage to become

dependent on foreign leadership or outside funds.

Paul says he did not work haphazardly, but he had planned his strategy “like a skilled master builder.” (1 Cor. 3:12ff) His foundation was theological as well as methodological. He warns all others to heed the precedents he had so carefully established. But could his plan have succeeded if he had not supported himself? Clearly, he did not think so. It would seem that Paul’s long hours in the workshop would have greatly slowed down his ministry. Instead, it was greatly speeded up.

How did he get the thousands of missionaries he needed? He multiplied himself many times over in his converts. How did he get the necessary funds for so great an undertaking? All his converts and missionaries were self supporting.

How Effective was Paul?

In ten years (the three journeys took a decade), Paul and his friends, with no financial support, evangelized six whole provinces. Notice what Paul says after just about 20 years of ministry. He writes to the Romans “From Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum (modern Albania) I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. I no longer have room for work in these regions!” (Rom. 15:19-24) He had evangelized the Greek-speaking half of the Mediterranean, and now turned to the Latin half of the Empire, including Spain. He proceeds with the same strategy—inviting the Roman believers to help him win their province (all Italy?), and then help him win unreached Spain. To have skipped over them and sent in new foreign workers would have been damaging to them. He will help them fulfill their responsibility before God.

Paul does not mean that everyone in the eastern Mediterranean was evangelized, but enough people had found God so that the churches could continue to evangelize the rest. The pioneering

was over. But what about the rural areas? Paul said he was debtor to the barbarians as well as to the Greeks. But we are not told that Paul traveled to the villages. Paul reached the tribes and villages by reproducing himself in many converts from rural villages and tribes. They had no anthropological nor missiological training, and many came from unsavory backgrounds, but they were effective. Michael Green in his *Evangelism and the Early Church* describes how many did not even have Christian doctrine straight, but they had Jesus Christ inside, and they ran to their tribes and villages with the good news. They took the Gospel clothed in the language and culture of their people, not as a foreign import.

Most of the working people were from rural tribes and villages. The Roman Empire was never more than a chain of military outposts and city colonies along the Roman roads. Each had its own language and customs, its laws and deities, which were usually respected by the Roman authorities, who were concerned with federal matters and national security. Neither the Greek nor Roman emperors ever tried to integrate or educate the tribal peoples. Many languages were spoken, even in the cities. Remember what trouble the Lycaonians had caused Paul and Barnabas in Lystra? (Acts 14) But by turning his multilingual, lower class converts into unpaid evangelists, Paul guaranteed the evangelization of the hinterlands. Paul lived in the cities and let his converts evangelize the country side. It was indigenous, exponential growth. Speed matters when pioneering in antagonistic cultures. Paul’s converts took the Gospel so quickly that it was too late for the opposition to gear up to stop it. In contrast today we give non-Christian religions decades to build and reinforce their defenses.

Dr. Donald McGavran said that church growth requires a large force of unpaid evangelists, but how are they

produced if the only models we provide are generously supported leaders? If by contrast they seem wealthy, local converts with meager wages will rarely serve without remuneration. On the other hand, it is not a problem if a tentmaker earns well, since it is not pay for religious services. He gives that without pay.

Implications for Today

We must not slavishly imitate Paul. But certainly it is folly to proceed without careful consideration of what he did and why. No tentmaker or missionary in our era has begun to reproduce what Paul did in so short a time with so limited resources. What does a study of Paul provide for us today, and how may we adapt it to the challenges of our 21st century world?

1) *Paul’s strategy gives definition.* Almost everything that is said today about tentmaking can be immediately contradicted because everyone uses a different definition—one of 20 that are floating around. If every Christian, or every working Christian, or even every Christian expatriate, is a tentmaker, then the word is as devalued as the currency in inflation-ridden countries. It is useless! Of all the Christians who have found employment overseas, probably not one percent are tentmakers. Most are expatriates who had little or no ministry at home, and crossing an ocean did not change that. But some can be mobilized and trained.

Yet almost every missionary article assumes these expatriates are tentmakers, and therefore concludes that tentmakers have little motivation, little cultural, language or ministry preparation. This is grossly unfair to all the genuine tentmakers, many of whom have better training in every way than their regular missionary counterparts. Many of our applicants have had full theological and missiological training.

I suggest that for the sake of communication, we take our definition of

tentmaking from the example and teaching of Paul.

"Tentmakers are mission-committed people who support themselves, and integrate work and witness, doing cross-cultural evangelism on the job and other ministries in their free time."

If the definition omits the financial aspect—self-support, or the on-the-job evangelism, or the cross-cultural nature of that ministry, then it is not Pauline tentmaking!

We also should use Peter for our model of regular missionaries because Jesus so clearly called him to leave his business and to trust God's people for support.

Then we need to recognize that any combination of these two quite different approaches to cross-cultural ministry is valid, as long as it is honest. In these hybrid options we must be sure there is no pretense before outsiders, Christians of the host country, nor donors in the home country. Where there is pretense, there is usually a clandestine mentality that leads to suspicious actions and loss of credibility.

2) *Paul's example gives a biblical basis.* This is desperately needed! The mission community is not even sure whether to accept tentmakers as valid workers. Almost all the magazine articles and book chapters on tentmaking in my considerable collection have one common characteristic. They give a few advantages of tentmaking and end up with a long list of disadvantages. Always the same ones, most of which are not defects of lay ministry, but are based on an inadequate definition, and the restrictions of a hostile society. Regular missionaries cannot do a better job in those countries since they cannot enter at all.

A whole book has been written about tentmaking with the bottom line that the ones with evangelism and Bible study skills did better than the rest. In my opinion, any person who does not have evangelism and Bible study skills is

not a tentmaker. The book is not really about tentmakers, but about Christian expatriates in general.

Even though most true tentmakers serve in risky and hostile countries, they are constantly lumped together with uncommitted expatriates, and disparaged along with them. Our definition will help us to distinguish clearly between the two groups.

Tentmakers are often made out to be second class. They receive little help or encouragement from their churches or the mission community because these do not understand the tentmaker approach to which the tentmakers are called by the Lord.

No wonder so relatively few young people are going as tentmakers and many of those overseas do not renew their contracts. I believe the whole church needs the biblical basis which Paul gives us, and tentmakers need to keep it before them as an encouragement. Roland Allen said that if we are convinced that tentmaking is biblical, we will not find fault with it, but will seek ways to make it more effective.

3) *Paul gives a description and model of this unique ministry approach.* Tentmaking is not supposed to be regular missionary work under the guise of a job. Paul goes into detail on the Christian's conduct and speech on the job, and how to do selective evangelism, fishing out the seekers and conversing with them where adversaries cannot dissuade them or harm the tentmakers. We refer many tentmakers to mission agencies, but I always find it discouraging that in no time at all the tentmaker has been pressed into the mold of a regular missionary and most of the benefits of tentmaking are lost.

Paul also says much about tentmaker ethics. His instructions can protect us from serious derailments, like the current attempt of some leaders to decide when it is permissible to lie in tight situations. Never! There is no loophole in Scripture. No one can ever arrest you

unless God permits it, and if he does, then do not short-circuit His plans. If the early Christians had lied when Saul of Tarsus arrested them, then "the chief persecutor of the church" might never have become "our beloved brother Paul." We must heed Paul (and Jesus) on this question.

4) *Paul shows us what should be included in tentmaker training.* There is a good deal of overlap with what every Christian and every missionary should learn. But most of the training should be based on the unique character of tentmaking. In a war, not all the foot soldiers need officer training. But in the Lord's army all of us had better know how to do spiritual warfare, how to wield the sword of the Spirit in good evangelism and Bible study. It is shameful how poor most Christians are at these basic skills, even after years in Sunday school and church. Preparing young people for future ministry should provide strong motivation for Sunday school teachers and youth workers.

But the tentmaker in today's world also needs good academic preparation and experience witnessing in the workplace. If Paul came to China today, he probably would go as a university professor, since most people in China are interested in education. He might go to India as a businessman.

The person who goes to a Christian high school, a Christian college and then seminary is poorly prepared for tentmaking. Probably, the best training place is in a Christian fellowship on a secular university campus. A university is a microcosm of a multicultural, spiritually hostile world. It is a mission field ideal for in-service training for more distant hostile countries. Ideally, the candidate should gain the benefits of both secular and Christian institutions. The tentmaker will make language and cultural preparation. (See GO Paper, "The Tentmaker's Academic, Cultural and Spiritual Preparation," 20 pp.)

5) *Paul gives us a complete pioneering strategy for hostile environments.*

How his strategy should be implemented in varied modern contexts needs careful study. But surely it is folly to ignore what he said and did since no one has yet equaled his achievement, to evangelize such a large region, so thoroughly and quickly, with such a small team and virtually no money.

Tentmaking in itself cannot assure the success of missionary efforts. That would be asking more than it can provide. Many other factors contributed to Paul's success, like his holy life, thorough teaching, Holy Spirit's power, willingness to suffer risk, his prayer life, etc. But clearly, Paul's manual labor as a tentmaker made a great contribution to his overall strategy. He would not have dedicated the better part of many days making tents had it not been a vital part of his mission strategy.

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Photo here
of
Ruth Siemens

The Place of the Local Church in Tentmaking

Many Christians and churches are fully aware that traditional missionaries will never be able to complete the Great Commission by themselves. They now realize that if the world is ever to be evangelized, it will have to be accomplished by tentmaking type missionaries who use their vocations as entry platforms among unreached peoples.

by Danny D. Martin

Most mission-minded churches are now aware of tentmaking.

Twenty years ago almost none were. When a businessman from the local congregation was transferred overseas, he was viewed as leaving the church. There may have been a farewell party, but there certainly was no thought that this businessman would in any way be accountable to the Lord or his church for the ministry he might develop overseas.

But the times are changing. Due in large part to the educational efforts of Dr. Ralph Winter of the US Center for World Mission, many congregations are now aware that traditional missionaries will never be able to complete the Great Commission by themselves. They cannot get visas into many of the countries that contain the world's unreached peoples. So if the world is ever to be evangelized, it will have to be accomplished by lay people who use their vocations as entry platforms among unreached peoples.

For missions committees who are used to dealing only with traditional full-time workers, this has created a crisis. How do they handle all these lay people who want to get involved in missions? In some cases, local churches have had to develop new sets of policies for tentmakers. But most missions committees still need help to determine their role in sending tentmaking missionaries. Fortunately, our mission handbook (the Bible) has adequate instructions for the local church seeking to know its role in this vital area of ministry.

Equipping

"...pastors and teachers to pre-

pare God's people for works of service...." (Eph.4:11,12)

The role of church leadership is thus to equip people for ministry. Everyone. Does your church take this seriously? Every Bible school has a curriculum designed to produce uniform knowledge in its students before they are allowed to graduate. Every church should have the same program and objective.

Instead of offering a smorgasbord of entries in Sunday School and small group meetings, there should be a basic curriculum which every new believer is required to complete before assuming leadership within the body. For many within the church, this will entail a program of mentoring rather than attending classes and taking exams. The focus should be on correct living rather than theoretical theology. Has the local church equipped each believer to be salt and light within their community? Yes, theology is important, especially biblical theology, but the test of true theology is in the way it is lived out in our lives for a hurting world.

Screening

"Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom." (Acts 6:3)

No one knows a believer better than his local church. They are the ones who have watched his spiritual growth and the development of his leadership potential. It is true that the senior pastor may not know all the inside information about every member. But he should certainly know someone in the body who does. Perhaps it is a cell group leader. Perhaps a good friend or

mentor or Sunday School teacher.

I suggest that each applicant for tentmaking submit his decision to the elders or missions committee before accepting a position in another country. It is critical to have the blessing of the local church before embarking upon a ministry overseas. Only members who have proven themselves to be full of the Spirit and wisdom should be approved for ministry.

One church in Singapore actually went to a young couple they believed would make good missionaries, and asked them to consider going after completing their training. We need proactive churches!

Sending

"So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:3)

Every tentmaker should have a commissioning service before leaving for the field—just like any and all missionaries. In a commissioning service, the congregation commits themselves to pray for their new workers. The tentmakers go under the authority of the local church who has approved them for ministry.

This is not to be taken lightly just as ordination is not taken lightly. There is a direct line of accountability from the tentmaker to the sending church, even when they work with and through a mission agency. The leaders of the church retain spiritual authority over those they have commissioned and sent.

Supporting

"And because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked

with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue.... When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching...." (Acts 18:3-5)

Many churches mistakenly assume that tentmakers do not need financial support. After all, they are "self-supporting workers." Paul was self-supporting at Corinth, at least for a while. He was only available on the Sabbath to minister in the synagogue. But after Silas and Timothy arrived, things changed drastically. Paul was now available to preach full-time. What happened? It appears that Silas and Timothy brought financial support from the churches of Macedonia, thus making Paul's continued employment unnecessary.

Most jobs overseas do not pay well. Therefore, most tentmakers must raise at least partial support in order to survive. I have discovered that tentmakers receiving support from local churches also get more prayer support from those churches. Tentmaking missionaries also feel a greater degree of accountability to them. Partial support also allows the tentmaker to have more control over his time, and thus his ministry. Many tentmakers who work 50 to 60 hours per week to keep their bosses happy in their target country have little time left for ministry.

Encouraging

"The men were sent off and went down to Antioch where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message." (Acts 15:30-31)

Tentmakers are very often located in countries where there are very few support systems. They do not have access to Christian bookstores with their volumes of books and tapes. Mail and e-mail systems may be unreliable. Satan uses

these difficulties to discourage tentmakers as he has done with regular missionaries in the past. Tentmakers can soon feel forgotten and abandoned by their friends.

They face the additional difficulty of security. Neither they nor their friends are able to write clearly about their ministry situation and their prayer requests. People back home might begin to wonder whether they are really doing anything useful for the Lord and the advance of His Kingdom. Sometimes tentmakers are not sure themselves!

Local churches can do much to encourage tentmaker missionaries. They can send letters and tapes and e-mail messages. Sometimes they can visit their tentmaking missionary. One friend from my home church sends us the local sports page and a tape of our church's service each week. He is our lifeline to our church family back home.

Reporting

"On arriving there (Antioch), they (Paul and Barnabas) gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them..." (Acts 14:27)

This was the nature of Paul and Barnabas's ultimate accountability. They told their sending church all that had happened on their missionary journeys. In the same way tentmakers need to report to their local church leaders and congregation what God has done through them. Usually security is not as much an issue and they are able to speak freely about their ministry back home. Members of the church are able to ask questions and perhaps be challenged themselves to consider missionary service to the unreached of the world.

There is little doubt that local churches are a key ingredient to the success for the tentmaking movement, but there is a price to pay. God readily

blesse churches who are willing to prepare and send some of their best leaders to the unreached of the world. Churches can now develop strategic partnerships with tentmaking missions to pro-actively take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. May it happen! Maranatha!

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Photo here
by
Danny Martin

word on training. We seem to be short on serious and systematic attempts to equip this marvelous marketplace workforce. If these words cause a flood of protests from groups doing proper training, then praise the Lord, because you have been very hard to find!

Allow me to lay a foundation for thinking about training by discussing the training attitude, current training developments, the climate of training and training as it relates to the local church.

The Training Attitude

Training is an attitude of mind before it is a programme. We either believe deeply that training is worthwhile or else we waste people's time. Here are five statements that expand on this matter.

Don't bother to train anyone today unless it is for the mission field.

The principal of the seminary where I teach tells us not to bother teaching any subject unless we can teach with a mission heart and a mission focus. That is not easy with something like Church History or Theology but it can be done. Training is not the boring stuff we get out of the way before we start the real thing. Training is what prepares the heart attitude. Mission is what training is all about, whether it be mission to Western culture or across cultures to the Two Thirds World.

Have too many Western training institutions got into a rut, pigeon-holed the component subjects and developed watertight delivery and assessment methods, without a mission intent to bind them together? There was a powerful statement last year from Jim Reapsome about mission and the local church that could just as well apply to training: "When people walk into a church ...they must smell world-wide outreach for Jesus Christ as if incense were burning. The smoke of missionary passion must permeate the whole place beginning with worship, pastoral prayer and down through all the edu-

cational programs and various ages and social groups. Everyone must boldly declare, Our Church exists for missions to the ends of the earth."⁵

That was about churches. It has to be true also about training institutions and programs. Training is an attitude and that attitude is mission.

Hands on, brains off won't last the distance.

Let me explain this odd phrase. Many people want training to leave the ivory tower of academic study and teach/learn instead by doing—apprenticeship models, practical, down to earth stuff. "Get people on the job alongside experienced people and it will all come out all right."

I have no problems with practical training—none at all. But training also equips people to think and understand and grow in their knowledge and insight. To have a future, tentmaking needs people who can think deeply about what they do and that is built in by the right sort of training.

The tentmaking movement is light on theologians and missiologists. There is considerable debate about the delivery systems of modern ministry training.⁶ Many models are being offered⁷ but none call for the complete absence of an underlying theology or sound biblical understanding.⁸

Training aims to produce the reflective Christian, not the reflective materialist.

That also is an odd phrase as well! Training is about producing an entire lifestyle. It has to start and finish with the worldview and value system of Jesus Christ, not with the latest management technique or conflict resolution course or self actualization technique. It is NOT about "I'm OK, you're OK." It is about Jesus Christ as Lord and my willingness to serve Him all my life in everything I do and say!

Hence, training aims to produce people who can relate the worldview of

Christ and the Bible to the setting round about them and make the right connections. Tentmakers are not spiritual technicians fitting together the latest fads; nor are they cross cultural tycoons who start the day with a prayer meeting and then suck the local market dry. Rather, they are Christians in heart, body, mind and soul—Christians who know how to think through Christian principles in a practical way. However, that does not happen overnight. It takes the right sort of training to build those gifts and attitudes into people. Even Jesus took three years to train His disciples.

Training today is about formation, information and application.

The training process is an integrated and integrative one. It is about the person, their skill and knowledge level and their performance capabilities. However, they develop these aspects not in isolation but interwoven as a total process and integrated whole. For this reason, there is no single trainer or training body. Later we shall see how many cooperate to form the person. The point is that the formal training process is related to other processes, not something we do when we "send people away to do a course." The "course" they do must be in harmony with the formative and practical aspects of the training. These things have all been said before in relation to ministerial and career mission training. However, the inertia factor in many of these training processes has been difficult to overcome. While training for tentmaking is still being formulated, it is easier to get it right. It is encouraging to note in a number of examples of training programs emerging from the non-Western sector that this integration is woven in from the start.⁹

Training for a significant career in tentmaking needs to start as early as possible.

Training is a long term process. Too often we feel the need is there, the job is there so as teachers we throw in a

residential training programs.

Concerning adult learning methods, we need to reflect on the following statement:

- 50 and over learn by reading the manual.
- 35 and under learn by trying the controls.
- The rest are just confused.

Here is just one example of the changes. People as old as I ask our children to fix the computer or programme the video. We are scared to hit the keys in case we get it wrong. We struggle with the music and dress, the language and food fads of various sub-cultures. When I am told today I have a learning curve ahead of me, I usually find myself looking straight up! Because the generations are so different, so are the ways we train them. Tentmaker training will have people of all generations, many professional backgrounds,

diverse ethnic origins and various sub-cultures all thrown together. We need to design our training to reflect that because in a field setting these are the people who will be there together.

If you can't measure it, many people today don't want it.

Younger generations want learning that results in outcomes. Most tentmaker programs in the past have aimed simply at orientation, a smattering of skills and principles sufficient to ensure survival. Now people want to have proof they have done the learning, a measurable outcome, not for the certificate on the wall but for their resumé, their future employer or for their own motivation. Many missions and governments reject the person who says, "I have lots of experience but never bothered to get any credit." When we design our training, we need to consider a format that can be measured. It is amazing what such a requirement does to the qual-

ity of the course as well!

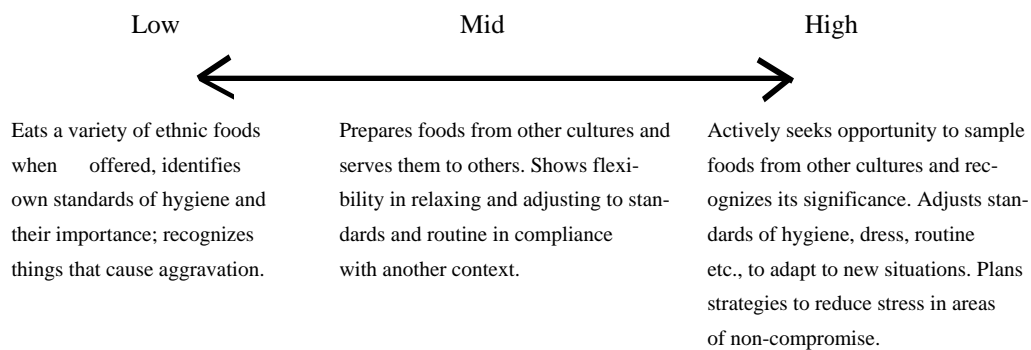
The means of measuring have changed too. Training aims now at competence, not competition. Traditional Western training methods grade people according to the results they obtain in tests and exams. They often joke that a lecturer needs a two storied house so they can put the exam papers on the stairs in order of merit. Today we understand more clearly the component skills of mission and have designed programs to move people along a competency continuum. A competency approach has a major effect on student attitudes and also on course design. Students who have not studied formally for some years are far more relaxed in this sort of environment. And a competency approach also allows training that builds practical and theoretical skills into an integrated

them, we need to communicate in a format they understand.

Related to this is the fact that "receiving churches" are asking for more than merely academic biblical and theological skills. Extensive surveys have uncovered a deep longing for missionaries (and tentmakers) whose spiritual formation, team skills and proven ministry skills are all well developed. Relational gifts outweigh academic achievements. Personality and family must be stable and adaptable. All of this comes with a listening ear and a servant heart. This means a whole team of people contribute to the training programme. The heart of it all is this: if we are going to train tentmakers, we must form the whole person, not simply communicate a bundle of biblical facts or technical skills.

Sample of Competency Continuum Based on the Competency Cluster, "Cross Cultural Skills"¹³

Competencies summary statement, demonstrating adaptability by eating ethnic foods, wearing appropriate clothing and adjusting to routines and possessions in a relaxed manner. Recognizes personal symptoms of stress and acts to alleviate it.



whole and lets people on the receiving end know exactly what the tentmaker can and cannot be expected to do.

Here is a brief example of a competency continuum:

The point of all this discussion is simple. The majority of prospective tentmakers are well trained professionals, students, business people or skilled trades people. They have learned their skills in a contemporary environment using current educational methods. In our enthusiasm to design training for

The Training Climate

Training involves community but not always an institution.

Mission today needs people able to cope with community that has been tested in relationship. Traditionally this has been a residential task. However living in harmony is not an automatic product of living together. I recall the residential college that built six apartments for married students and provided only five clotheslines. So how is community to be achieved apart from

champions as much as it needs strong practitioners. Fortunately, while there are as yet few books on tentmaking as such, there is a flood of fine material on Christians in the marketplace. When the people in the pews each Sunday know what to do for the Kingdom on Monday, then mission will be in good hands both at home and across cultures. As a start, how about looking at the *Word and Life Study Bible*, the fruit of many years work by Pete Hammond of *Marketplace*, designed to explore the ways in which ordinary people live effectively from Monday to Friday.

Too many pastors think the people in the pews exist to keep the Church going, but in Scripture the pastor exists to keep the people going; for in the end it is the whole people of God who do the whole mission of God.

It was only towards the end of 28 years as a pastor did I realize how little difference I made on Mondays. I taught and exhorted and visited and loved and counseled and married and buried and all the other things a pastor does. But I had no specific plan to make a difference on Monday. Then I tried visiting some people at their workplace in their lunch hour, found out about the job scene of the people, used workplace illustrations and prayers in services, held workplace services in which people came in their work clothes, talked about career choices and workplace ethic—but I needed to do more. Churches can gobble up all available time and all available people. We need to realize the Sunday service is just a railway station where the troops stop briefly on the way to the battle front to get refreshments and supplies and we need to design it to get people ready for life at the front, not life at the station.

My favorite statement about all of this can be summed up as follows:

If you want to set the church on fire, you will find more fuel in the pews than the pulpit.

Tentmakers and career missionaries

are different in many ways. Neither is “superior” to the other, neither is “needed more” in today’s world. God needs both approaches and perhaps many more besides. However, when we do send tentmakers into the battle zones, let’s send them trained, ready, and equipped. They do not deserve second best in either equipment or training. They hurt just as easily as career missionaries, need spiritual resources just as much, have just as valuable a message to communicate. Also it is just as distressing when they come back home beaten and depressed. May we provide today’s missionary tentmakers the best and most appropriate training available!

End Notes

1. Christy Wilson is a senior statesman of the modern tentmaking movement. He wrote a foundational text on tentmaking and has also encouraged and mentored many tentmakers over the past quarter century. His book is Wilson, J. Christy Jr 1979 *Today’s Tentmakers*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House

3. Report on *Consultation on Missionary Attrition* convened by World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission, London, 1995

4. e.g. Taylor, William D. ed. 1991 *Internationalizing Missionary Training*. Grand Rapids: Baker

5. Reapsome, Jim. *World Pulse*. April 21, 1995

6. e.g. Anderson, Ray S. 1993 *Ministry on the Fireline*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press. pp197ff

7. e.g. Dearborn, T. “Preparing New Leaders for the Church of the Future,” *Transformation*. December and Elliston, E. “Church Based Training” *Strategies for Today’s Leader*. Vol 32 No 1 1995. pp8-10

8. e.g. Wells, D. 1993 *No Place for Truth*. Grand Rapids: Wm Eerdmans.

9. Taylor, William D. ed. 1991 *Internationalising Missionary Training*. Grand Rapids Baker Book House. pp 43-189

10. *Strategic Careers Project*, 1624 21st Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904 USA.

11. Chandran B. and D., Thomson R.

and Rajkumar S. 1995 *Breaking New Ground*. New Delhi: The Tentmaker Centre.

12. For information on this group, contact Tentmakers International Exchange, P.O. Box 45880-0880, Seattle, WA 98145, USA.

13. Massey, Brian. *Training* (Published by Missions Commission of WEF), September 1994. p 6

14. Ferris, R ed. 1995 *Establishing Ministry Training*. Pasadena: William Carey Library. See especially appendices B, C and D

15. A group with extensive experience in this area is *Mission Training International*. See Lewis, J. ed. 1993 *Working Your Way to the Nations*. Pasadena: Wm Carey Library. Ch 4

16. *ibid*.

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Photo here
by
Derek
Christensen

Successful Tentmaking Depends on Mission Agencies

Along with effective prayer support, tentmakers need association with structures of accountability provided by churches. . . , mission agencies, missionary teams and local fellowships in their country of work.

by J. Christy Wilson Jr.

In the history of missions, successful tentmaking has depended on a close association with mission agencies. For example, Protestant missions in Korea started with a tentmaker or self-supporting witness by the name of Dr. Horace Allen who was a Presbyterian physician with the American Embassy there in 1884. When an assassination attempt was made on the life of one of the princes, the royal family requested that Dr. Allen help save his life. After he did, he was asked what gift could be given to him to show adequate appreciation. He replied that he would like permission to start a hospital where he could assist other Koreans the way he had the prince. Permission was granted by the government and Protestant missionaries were allowed to come and work in that nation.

Thus, the successful tentmaking of Dr. Allen brought Protestant missions to Korea. The first missionaries to follow him there in 1885 were the Rev. Horace Underwood sent out by the Presbyterian Board, and then the Rev. H. D. Appenzeller sponsored by the Methodists. This cooperation between a tentmaker and mission agencies was the key to God's great blessing on Christian work in that nation. Later on, Dr. Allen became the American Ambassador to Korea.

The Seoul Statement on Tentmaking Includes Mission Involvement

At the Global Consultation on World Evangelization held in Seoul, Korea May 17-26, 1995, a significant statement on tentmaking or self-supporting Christian witness was issued. This docu-

ment which was produced by around 50 participants summarizes the concept of tentmaking as it applies to missions today. It also clearly brings out the importance of association with mission agencies. Quotations in italics from parts of this document demonstrate the need for the cooperation of mission agencies with tentmakers if their ministry is to be successful. These statements are as follows:

"We rejoice in what God has done and is doing through Christians with fully supported missionary status. While in no way detracting from established missions, tentmaking is integral to reaching the world...Tentmakers must be sent out by and have a close relationship with a local church in their home country. Where possible, they should seek association with a mission team in the field. They must also have a close link with congregations in their adopted nations. Along with effective prayer support, tentmakers need association with structures of accountability provided by churches (Acts 13:1-3), mission agencies, missionary teams and local fellowships in their country of work.

"Approximately 80% of the world's 2,500 least evangelized people groups live in countries which do not grant missionary visas. Thus many thousands of tentmakers must be recruited, trained, nurtured and placed in order to provide a gateway into these areas...

"The AD 2000 and Beyond Tentmaker Strategy Group urges all churches, educational institutions and mission agencies to adopt the following goals:

- 1). To encourage Christian lay men and women to seize opportunities to take up residence and work where Christ is not named in order to extend God's Kingdom...
2. To embrace the crucial role that tentmaking affords, and the key position congregations and mission agen-

cies play in mobilizing and equipping laity for world evangelization.

3. To identify and enlist professionally trained tentmakers for cross-cultural cooperative witness among the unreached people groups and cities.

4. To make available workshops and materials for training tentmakers in the Bible, missions, biographies, linguistics, anthropology, non-Christian religions, inter-personal relations, area studies, church planting and other training as needed...

5. To secure greater cooperation by congregations, missions and coordinating agencies in assisting tentmakers in their preparation, placement, language learning and adaptation to alien cultures. Prospective tentmakers should also seek and welcome such involvement...

6. To nurture tentmakers abroad through faithful pastoral care. This includes prayer backing, accountability structures, careful communications and personal visits to the field. There are millions of Christians already working abroad who need to realize their potential and to be equipped to be effective witnesses.

7. To assist tentmakers with reentry shock into their own culture, to debrief them and to facilitate their challenging and recruiting of others into tentmaking work.

"We in the AD 2000 & Beyond Movement commit ourselves to the expansion of strategic partnering between various national, international, church and mission agencies concerned with tentmaking. In the words of William Carey, who was both "the father of the modern missionary movement" and a "tentmaker" himself, let us "expect great things from God, and attempt great things from God."

Tentmakers in Afghanistan and Their Partnering Mission Agency.

When we wanted to go Afghanistan in 1951, missionaries were not

allowed. But the government wanted teachers for their educational system. My wife and I, therefore, went to Washington, DC, and I signed a contract with the Ambassador at the Afghan Embassy to teach English in that country. They paid my way and gave me a small salary.

After we arrived in Afghanistan, while reading my Bible I saw that this was similar to what the apostle Paul did. He was a self-supporting missionary as a tentmaker. I was a self-supporting missionary as a teacher. In a few years, we had over 70 Christian tentmakers in Afghanistan. After we had been there for 15 years, the government allowed medical doctors, nurses and teachers of the blind to enter the country as regular missionaries with the skills needed to help their people. Today the International Assistance Mission has over 100 workers from 28 different agencies and 13 countries in that nation. [or Afghanistan] Here we see the fruit of cooperation between tentmakers and mission agencies.

World Evangelization Requires Both Missionaries and Tentmakers.

Dr. Tetsunao Yamamori in his book *God's New Envoys* points out that by the year 2,000, 83% of the world's non-Christians will be in areas of the world which do not allow traditional missionaries. Thus, if they are to be evangelized according to the command of Christ, these restricted places will need to be reached by tentmakers.

Once when I was going down a main street in Kabul, Afghanistan, I saw a young man who was completely out of context. At first I thought he might be a Rabbi because he was wearing a big black hat and a black suit. He also had a large red beard. He was so much out of context there that I stopped and asked him if he spoke English. "Yes I do," he said. "May I help you, since I know the local language?" I asked. He responded, "I am looking for someone by

the name of Christy Wilson." I wondered why he was looking for me, since I couldn't figure out what kind of a person he might be. I found out that his name was James Lowery, and it turned out that he was a Mennonite from Ohio, dressed in Amish like garb. I noticed then he didn't have any buttons on his black suit, just hooks and eyes.

I asked him what he was doing in Afghanistan. "My wife and I are working in Swat," he answered. Swat was a Muslim state in northern Pakistan that was then completely closed to missionaries. I asked him what he was doing there. "I'm teaching English in a government secondary school," he said. "And my wife and I are having the time of our lives. We entertain the students in our home, and we're teaching English by using the New Testament as a textbook. The students have never seen the Bible before." Later I met his wife and she was wearing a white Mennonite prayer veil on her head.

Since I knew that no missionaries were allowed in Swat, I asked, "How did you and your wife ever get into Swat?" "I had never heard of the place," he replied. "I applied through the State Department under a Fulbright Fellowship to teach English in Germany, and they sent me to Swat instead."

The Holy Spirit has scattered Christian professionals like this couple all over the world as witnesses for Christ. He and his wife were today's "tentmakers," or self-supporting witnesses teaching English in a closed Muslim area of the world. They were also connected with a Mennonite mission board.

Many Mission Agencies Today Have Tentmaking Branches.

God has blessed fully-supported missionaries in a wonderful way. But with an estimated 80% of unreached people groups in areas that do not allow regular missionaries, tentmakers who can get into creative access areas will also be

needed in order to complete the evangelization of the world according to Christ's commission.

Another type of tentmaker is a non-residential missionary; or one who lives in a place where fully supported missionaries are allowed, and then makes frequent trips as a tourist in and out of a closed area to reach an unreached people group there. In this way, even though they are funded by churches, they can operate in creative access areas as tentmakers.

More and more mission agencies are becoming involved in tentmaking. At the latest count, 74 boards in North America have tentmaking branches. These are very important since they can help tentmakers with proper training and orientation, with prayer backing, with language learning, with counsel regarding work on the field, with assistance for culture shock, with church planting, with conservation of the converts, with reentry shock when they return and with help to get them another position. Mission agencies can also use those who have been tentmakers to help recruit others.

Churches Adopting People Groups Through Mission Agencies.

When churches try to adopt people groups and send tentmakers to them without the assistance of mission agencies, it can lead to fruitless effort and great disappointment. For example, one congregation tried to adopt an unreached people group only to find that they did not exist. It turned out to be the name of a language which was spoken by people who had already been reached. Such needless efforts can be avoided by working through mission agencies whose leaders would know the areas and the peoples living there who need to be reached.

The Adopt-A-People Campaign, which is headed up by the Rev. Jerome Hannaman, updates a list of mission agencies every month that have the means

to assist churches and individuals in selecting a group to adopt.

Recently, I attended a conference in Korea where Youth With a Mission was seeking to send business men and women to unreached people groups all around the world. They were to be business tentmakers who would try to plant churches where as yet there were none, but would also be associated with their YWAM Board.

If tentmakers are to be successful, and not be like “loose canons” around the world, it is necessary for them to work in close association with mission agencies.

Dr. J. Christy Wilson Jr. served as a missionary for 23 years in Afghanistan and Iran. He is Emeritus Professor of World Evangelization at Gordon-Conwell. The Wilson's have three children who were born in Afghanistan: Nancy Newbrander, Christy III and Martin, all of whom are married to fine Christian spouses. They have eleven grandchildren. Their home is now located. at Westminster Gardens, 1420 Santo Domingo Ave., Duarte, California.

Mission Perspective of a Tentmaking Agency

This article takes key thoughts and phrases of the mission statement of Mission to Unreached Peoples agency and details the vision in words and examples of tentmaking missionaries.

by David M. Hupp and Danny D. Martin

Mission to Unreached Peoples is one of several newly formed mission agencies who, in one form or another, serve as a missionary sending agency for tentmakers. Our “tentmaker” missionaries come in many varieties. we do not differentiate between vocational personnel, support personnel, and more “traditional” missionary personnel. All are considered part of the same team.

What makes a tentmaker-sending agency different from traditional sending agencies? By and large it consists in the need to seek creative ideas and ministry platforms and a willingness to be flexible, creatively customizing support and care packages as needed.

To portray the operation of a tentmaking agency this article takes you through some key phrases and thoughts gleaned from the mission statement of Mission to Unreached Peoples.

Investing our Lives...

God has given us many things. He has given us control over those things and then asks us, “What do you want to do with what I’ve given you?” Are we willing to invest these things in Kingdom work? We talk about investing our lives because that is all encompassing, and so that is the first thing we invest. But what about *our gifts*, our practical gifts. Giftedness includes accounting, nursing, management, computer sciences and much more. We use the gifts that God has given us, and with them we give Him glory.

We also invest our *resources*. This may imply giving up the right to receive something we think we deserve, including a good salary. High paying

jobs for tentmakers overseas do not exist. Sometimes you get enough to get by, maybe enough to live on. We do not always know what God is going and what He requires of us—our home equity, our cars, our right to life insurance and retirement benefits, etc. However, we are saying as a people, and as an agency, that we put our resources on the altar.

We also *identify our vocational skills*—skills that are needed in developing countries where most of the unreached peoples are located. We look for people who have vocational skills because that is one of our best strategies to gain access to unreached peoples around the world.

We send doctors who give up six figure incomes to live and work in Nepal, ministering under cooperative agencies such as United Mission to Nepal and International Nepal Fellowship in hospitals and clinics. CPA’s walk away from secure careers and join hands with Mission to Unreached Peoples teammates and travel by bus the mountains of Asia to make a difference in the practical operation of missionary hospitals, other mission operations as well as developing churches. Architects are penetrating “closed” countries as business consultants. Engineers are working in community and industrial development projects. They have chosen to invest their lives in God’s work to reach those who have not heard.

Modeling Christ...

We not only preach Christ, we not only talk about the change that He has made in our lives, but we put flesh and bones on what it means to be a fol-

lower of Jesus Christ.

Mike and Mary and their three boys live on the frontiers in Nepal where they manage a TB Leprosy clinic and hospital, caring for the health needs of rural Nepali families. Before going to Nepal both obtained their Master’s Degrees as Family Nurse Practitioners and served for several years in a rural health clinic. This was excellent training, as in Nepal they live, worship, and weep with the people. In Mike’s words, “We have grown close to our church body here. Their burdens are great. They are the poorest of the poor. It is a privilege to encourage them.”

God’s Grace in our Midst...

God’s grace is the leveling process throughout Mission to Unreached Peoples. We do not have great missionary statesmen. We have lots of missionaries, but we do not view some as “great” or “greater” than others. All those doing what God called them to do are filling a role in the Body of Christ. A secretary in Seattle in Missions to the Unreached Peoples is as much a part of God’s work serving by typing eight hours a day and going home and taking care of her children and husband, as a missionary who is bringing one hundred people a week to the Lord on the mission field. We do not differentiate. All of us are what we are by God’s grace, Also we are absolutely awed at the power of God that He chooses to work through us to touch the world for Him.

We serve shoulder to shoulder with co-workers of different educational levels, different skin, color, and different countries. The seminary graduate and the high-school graduate can and

do work together, respecting each other's gifts and callings. One of our teams includes a psychologist (Ph.D.), several university level teachers, English teachers, as well as a computer engineer, computer consultant, elementary and middle school and high school teachers, a high school chaplain, and church pastors. At least three nationalities are represented.

The Potential of Lay People...

This is one of the best parts of the vision that Mission to Unreached Peoples has to offer. No longer is it only the seminary graduates and the Bible college graduates who have the right to serve overseas and proclaim the Good News. Also the carpenters, plumbers, and accountants go. Lay Christians are saying, "Suddenly, it's our turn!" We believe this is a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2, "*I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind, both men and women.*" Our organizational calling is to mobilize Christians and churches for missions.

"Do you mean I can use my experience as an engineer in the utility and degree in Electrical Engineering as a tentmaker missionary in Mongolia?" Steve worked as an engineer, for four years after college and was delighted to learn that a position in the utility industry in Mongolia would provide a platform for his missionary service there. As with many others, he was able to put his vocational skills and gifts together using them for a missionary call and vision.

After serving with a sending church for two years to gain ministry and outreach experience, Steve is on the way to Mongolia to work with youth and with the church.

Rick and Lisa both graduated with degrees in computer science and spent several years working in industry in various roles in computer and information systems. They were challenged to establish a business platform to help

Christians in their target country in three ways: (1) to demonstrate Biblical business principles, (2) to provide employment for Christians, and (3) to raise funds, for ministry outreach. Within the first year of arrival on the field they started one business of importing in bulk and packaging popcorn for the people in their country. This is now operated and owned entirely by believers. A second business venture began when they saw a lack of board games in their country so they began designing and marketing their own. This has grown into a business selling approximately 100,000 games a year in local market that is both profitable and is meeting the original goals of their vision.

At the same time Rick and Lisa are able to have a tremendous impact on the local church in several towns in the region where they live. Through their English teaching, summer camps and youth ministry, numerous youths have become Christians and are being disciplined. Their pioneer and entrepreneur spirit has opened the door for other tentmakers to follow them, and as they continue to establish themselves, additional doors of ministry are opening. Rick and Lisa are lay people making a difference in obedience to the Great Commission.

Recruit, Train, and Care...

For the people God leads into a tentmaking mission we serve to recruit, train, place, facilitate, and care for them. This includes providing pastors and counselors and handling financial, logistical, prayer letters, and other administrative needs. We do this in cooperation with the local church, so our role is to be a communications link back and forth between the church and the tentmaker, keeping track of the funds, promoting prayer, and understanding what is going on.

The core of our ministry as a tentmaking sending agency is to identify potential tentmakers who are willing to step forward in response to a mission

"call." Our *recruiting* department not only advertises opportunities for ministry, but also fills a role of screening for those with both the vocational and spiritual skills to be a successful tentmaker missionary. *Training* is an important part of the process, and includes our own cross-cultural orientation plus customized training as needed in either the home church or specialized missionary training courses.

The *placing* of missionary candidates in overseas tentmaking positions means we need to keep current as much as possible on overseas jobs and placement opportunities. Our first choice is to place new candidates in the vicinity of current teams and field leadership. Field leadership often plays a significant role in finding placement opportunities. We network with a significant number of other ministries to identify placement opportunities, and we research and identify placement opportunities to match specific candidates as needed.

But getting candidates overseas in a tentmaker position is just the start of the process. As a mission we maintain a continuing relationship with the tentmakers, processing newsletters, handling financial contributions and financial transactions, and a host of other logistical matters. Another vital part of the relationship is the provision of pastoral care with both field-based and itinerant pastors to minister to the tentmaker missionaries.

The joy is to see men and women from a diversified background, age, and giftings catch the vision of personal involvement in reaching the unreached of the world, and then carry it through by means of training, support raising, job placement, and transition to the front lines.

David and Diane were well settled into their church in the Midwest. David taught in High School, and they had just begun their family of two children. Missions was not in their

thoughts, but God moved sovereignly in their lives and they found themselves headed for the mission field to teach in a missionary school. Our role, in addition to helping them locate and secure the position, was to be there beside them to help with the logistics before departure and after arrival on the field, as well as providing a support team and pastoral care for them on the field. They served a fruitful five years that dramatically changed their lives and worldview.

Another young couple, Dan and Sherri, in missions. Dan has a High School education and his wife is a Bible College graduate. The Lord challenged them for missions and directed them to Mission to Unreached Peoples. Through their application process and orientation training, their eyes were opened to a completely new world and an excitement that the Lord could use them also. We worked with them through the support raising process, found jobs and housing for them in their country, and as it were held their hands through the process. It continues as we process their finances and newsletters monthly, and as both field leadership and our member care (pastoral staff) mentor them in a growing mission vision and responsibility. They are working with a local church specializing in youth ministry while both teach English as tentmakers.

Through the years we have worked with many singles and families with placement as TESOL teachers in China and other closed countries. Our role is to secure a teaching position, connect them with a supportive team, and to work with them through training, TESOL course certification, and continuing "member care."

We are working to internationalize Mission to Unreached Peoples so that we model Christ by modeling that Americans and Filipinos and Koreans can work together harmoniously on the same team with Jesus Christ as Lord. This

in and by itself says a lot more to people than just a North American team telling them about God and the Gospel. It really does make a difference.

If by God's grace, we are able to establish or plant Christ's Church, or gathering of believers in the country where we work, we do not want them to become a Mission to Unreached Peoples' church. Although we do want to establish churches, we do want them to be connected to other Christians. We take them, introduce them, make sure they know about each other and let them decide if they want to go down a traditional road and belong to a given denomination or be an independent church. We just want them to grow as an indigenous contextualized church in their country and culture.

How are these principles and visions implemented on the field? In Cambodia Chon has been instrumental in bringing Western and national church leaders together in cooperative fellowship and ministry, which has led to the development of the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia. He went into a situation four years ago of mistrust and lack of cooperation and has been used to bring much change and to foster cooperation.

Two medical professionals in Russia are working with and, in fact, are seconded to a local church planting ministry there. They are working in and with Russian health facilities, doing home care visits as part of the church's outreach, and simply serving to meet needs in the community in the Lord's name.

Our largest team is in Taiwan, located in two different cities. Outreach ministries include almost every team member connected to a different national church, teaching outreach English classes, connecting with home groups, or ministering in whatever manner they can. And in using their vocational gifts, several serve the missionary community as MK teachers, others provide computer consulting services, and

others are closely involved in the functions of the Taiwan Missionary Fellowship.

The organization reflects much international and cultural diversity. The different nations represented in the mission personnel include Canada, Taiwan, the US, the Netherlands, Denmark, Brazil, Cambodia, India, the Philippines, Singapore, and others. We are broadly interdenominational encompassing believers across the broad evangelical and charismatic spectrum.

Making Disciples Among Unreached Peoples...

Our focus is on the Great Commission, with the target being Primarily on reaching unreached peoples. But, why not "exclusively" focus on the unreached peoples of the world as our name might suggest? Reason is that the task of the Body of Christ in missions is bigger than unreached peoples. as such we have tentmakers serving God by teaching missionary kids. They are part of the Body of Christ, doing the part God has given them in working to finish the Great Commission to disciple the nations.

At the same time as an organization we focus our efforts on the unreached peoples and nations of the earth. We involve ourselves in the research of where the unreached peoples are, and we work to be strategic in taking the Gospel to unreached peoples and to develop creative access strategies.

While this is an area that we cannot publicize or provide details about because most of the work is in closed restricted access countries, current initiatives include the development of a China team and focus in the middle of at least six unreached peoples. Another initiative is an outreach and targeting of a large Muslim people group. This includes both on site personnel and North American based advocates (i.e., non-residential missionaries). Throughout Asia and a large part of the 10/40

Window, we have targeted specific unreached people groups and are working both with current missionaries in the field and potential workers and supporting and adopting churches and agencies to reach out to those who have never heard the Gospel. Many are in countries and provinces completely closed to traditional missionary outreach.

Physical and Spiritual Needs...

We strive to be creative in gaining access. In order to do that we find out what their needs are, and then try to meet those needs in the name of Christ. We do not believe God works in pre-packaged ways. We strive to find out the local needs and the physical needs, from which God opens up doors and ideas for ministry addressing the spiritual needs. We have realized that we have to meet people at their point of need. That is what community development forces us to do. We have to listen to their hurting hearts and lives.

One unreached people group that we can identify are the Kumbaran of India, a sub-caste of the Chettiars, or Adi-andhra caste, one of the secluded castes of India, which includes all who work with mud or clay (tilemakers, brick makers, and potters). Mission to Unreached Peoples missionaries are working with the Kumbaran people and operate a pottery factory in true tent-making fashion. Several container loads of pottery have been shipped to and marketed in the United States. This project has recently moved its location to an area where there are 600 potter families of which only 15% are employed. This project provides employment and training, upgrading their products to meet export market standards. Individuals have accepted Christ and we are praying and working for an indigenous church planting movement to develop from this ministry.

Mission to Unreached Peoples is one of the organizations working at doing tentmaking well, and we want to do it better. Serving tentmakers, who tradition-

ally have been an independent group, is not without challenges. But we are seeing the fruit of working and serving the Lord together in the fields which are His.

David Hupp is the US Director of Mission To Unreached Peoples. He has extensive experience in environmental, construction and development businesses. He is a CPA and has MBA from the University of Massachusetts. In 1980 David started a financial and computer ministry to provide audits, accounting and computer consulting to mission agencies. This business has grown and continues to operate in Taiwan.

Photo here
of
David Hupp

Danny Martin is the International Director of Mission To Unreached Peoples and the Associate Director of Tentmakers International Exchange (TIE). He is the Managing Director of Careers by Design which deals with Human Resource Consulting centered in Penang, Malaysia, where Danny and his family reside.

Photo here
of
Danny Martin

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Tentmaking in India

In India the term tentmaking is not commonly used and is generally misunderstood, yet a growing number of churches are reaching out to the unreached peoples through Christian professionals in mission ministry. These professionals are the laity of the church. In India, many churches have been established through their efforts.

by E. David Chaldran

Theological institutions teach about tentmaking as a “Pauline mission.” In India it has not been a common topic in any study or discussion among Christian professionals or in churches. Many understand “tent” making as putting up temporary shelters for functions and business establishments; these are known as “tent houses.”

Three years ago in a Mission Conference, we had put up a display stall with information about tentmaking and about the situation and prayer concerns in North India. No one visited this stall until we had time to introduce this as a new ministry. Then many visited us and we found that they initially understood us to be a group who put up tents (temporary shelters) for new churches. Now many of them are our prayer partners.

Unreached Peoples

Though tentmaking in India is not well known, a growing number of churches are reaching out to the unreached peoples through Christian professionals in cross-cultural ministry. India has 4,635 people groups, and it is common to have many different people groups within a small geographical area sharing a common language. These professionals are the lay leaders and the laity of the church. In India, many churches have been established through their efforts. Western missionaries, started schools, colleges, and hospitals, as part of their strategy in reaching out to the local people. Many of them could be called tentmakers but for the fact that they were dependent on their sending churches for their financial support. William Carey and his friends

Joshua Marshman and William Ward did a tremendous amount of work around Calcutta and in West Bengal. They started the Serampore College. Dr. Ida Scudder started the Christian Medical College at Vellore, Tamilnadu. Miss Christina Rainy brought a woman doctor with her and started the present Christina Rainy Hospital at Madras, Tamilnadu. CMS Missionaries started a college in Kottayam, Kerala. The examples are numerous, and frequently the only reward is that many Indians have appreciated the sacrifice and contribution of the Christians to the society.

Since 1960 mission agencies in India started targeting the responsive people groups among the tribal peoples, and in the last decade some of them have moved their focus to the urban people groups. In the states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, we have seen many pioneering Indian evangelists, who felt God’s leading to a particular area. To reach the local people some have used the strategy of starting schools. It has given them an identity among the people and they have been accepted as part of the local society.

Those who started such schools have diversified into other programmes like adult literacy, and community development, while their church planting activities are also continuing to grow. They have tentmakers (teachers committed for missions) working for them in these programmes and are looking for more potential tentmakers to fill other posts. Josephs in Alwar, Rajasthan, M.A. Thomas in Kota, Rajasthan, Shourie and his wife Rebecca in Nagod, Madhya Pradesh and others have

schools of their own. Immanuel Ministries have many schools and other social development programmes, including adult literacy programmes in many parts of Rajasthan.

Ministries, adopting this kind of strategy, can also be found in other parts of India. Dr. R. A. C. Paul went to a tribe in Orissa, which lived high in the mountains, to preach and provide medical care to the people. After ministering for a few years, he passed away from an illness he contracted there. His ministry was continued by his wife, Iris, who was also a doctor. Now she has a team with her involved in medical development and literacy programmes based in Malkangiri, Orissa. Today there is a church in that place run by the Indian Missionary Society.

A Western Religion

Christianity in India is considered a Western religion, and people are opposed to its propagation. Though there is ‘freedom of religion’ in the country, conversions to Christianity are still opposed. In some places where Christian work has started, Hindu fanatics have opposed them by threatening them, burning down churches and disrupting their activities. Converts have faced many problems from their society and many have been excommunicated from their own homes and society.

In the state of Orissa, 27 churches were burned down in the recent past, and cement is being reused for construction of Christian churches. In Rajasthan, a mission agency had started medical work and in about a year the opposition began to threaten their lives. Soon after that, they had to close

down their medical work and moved out of that location. All of these oppositions have been there because of the fear of conversions.

Tentmaking is definitely a positive mission strategy for India. One of the important aspects for a tentmaker to be effective in India is to be accepted by the people where he lives. This is of great importance in the Hinduistic environment. Due to the caste system in India, people have the nature of accepting others as “our people” or keeping them out as “outsiders.” Christianity has been considered a foreigner’s religion. Hindus consider all foreigners with Christian passports as “Christians.” They do not know how to differentiate between “nominal Christians” and “committed Christians.” So far they have seen and understood Christianity only by the witness and life of nominal Christians, (much like the ugly American), since the presence of truly committed Christians is very negligible.

Nominal vs. Real Christianity

The total Christian presence in India is only 2.3% of the total population, which includes all kinds of Christians including Catholics. Unfortunately, the majority of Indians have only been associated with nominal Christians and have formed a very negative image of Christian faith and life. So the average Indian does not respect the Christian religion and considers all Christians as outsiders.

The only way around this obstacle is by showing through our lives that we are different from the general image that they have formed about Christians. We need to be open to them, respect them and their culture, and show through our lives in our families and profession that we are different. The life-style we live, (standard of living), should be closer to their lifestyle or else they will never identify with us. Showing people our true love and concern, motivated by the love of Christ,

has no substitution in India. During the last two decades, two programmes relating to tentmaking were started. Rev. Ken Gnanakken introduced a vocational training programme together with theological training in the ACTS Institute. Professor Vijayam, conducted a training programme in his institution TENT to equip Christian workers and evangelists with simple basic skills. Both of these programmes were aimed at helping Christian workers and pastors to earn some money by means of using a skill. Both of these programmes have continued to fulfill their goals all through these years. A development agency called Farms India, provides training in agricultural training like cattle, poultry and goat rearing, picklemaking, etc. They also provide small start-up loans to help the students get started. This programme is aimed for the benefit of the converts.

Tentmakers Centre

In 1992, Tentmaker Centre had its beginning with the purpose of assisting Indian Christian professionals to move into areas of North India where there was no Christian witness. Our role is to motivate and mobilize Christian professionals, identify job openings, guide them, and put them in touch with some local Christian friends or a church in that area if one exists.

In addition, we guide and train such potential tentmakers, as well as working tentmakers, in various practical aspects of cross-cultural living. This is done through weekend seminars and workshops. Tentmaker Centre has published a handbook for tentmakers entitled “Breaking New Ground.” We publish a quarterly newsletter *Tentlink*, which carries news about various Christian ministries among some of the North Indian states. We list job openings and suitable training programmes for tentmakers, and publish articles on tentmaking, etc. *Tentlink* provides potential tentmakers with information on

job openings and others use it as a prayer bulletin about ministries in North India. We also sponsor sessions and programmes conducted by mission organisations and churches.

Today, we have tentmakers working as teachers, social workers, administrators of programmes, engineers, doctors, bank officers, in government offices, as well as in Christian institutions. There is little or no limitation where tentmakers can apply their trades and skills. In banking institutions and government establishments people are transferable to any part of the country. We have seen examples of tentmakers in many professions involved with student ministries, leading Bible study groups, helping in church activities, and being a support to the existing church in those areas.

Tentmaking Progress in India

In what follows we have highlighted some key aspects of tentmaking in India as seen from their life. All of them have a salaried job and are involved in ministry in their free time. They are not financially supported by any church or group. Neither have they been considered by any church as their tentmaking missionaries.

God's calling is important. Mr. KJ, was posted in one of the very remote areas of Rajasthan, a state in North West India. He had decided to move to North India and was looking for opportunities there. He had to wait for a long time. Meanwhile, he made a trip to North India, with a few friends, (organised by UESI), and the Lord confirmed His calling while on this trip. When he went to the place of the job site, he was shocked to see the environment where he was to live and work.

The place was a desert, very thinly populated, and yet his work was to be among the people. He had to travel about 40 kilometers to contact 2 villages. In (South India, this is very unusual.) The temperature goes up to 50 degrees

Celsius in the Summer and near freezing in the Winter. He said that if it had not been for the clarity of God's will in his life he would have left the place immediately.

However, now he has a regular Bible study going on with many non-Christians attending. He is learning the language and he is able to communicate with the people. He feels that he needs to be more thorough with the language, so that he can understand the problems of the people better and also not miss any opportunities to share about Christ with the local people.

Language is important. Mr. VR was from a Hindu background but had come to know the Lord and had committed himself for missions during his student days. He tried constantly to get a job in North India, but could not get one because he did not know Hindi. Without giving up hope, he kept on attempting to find employment. Finally, one company called him for an interview. They brought up the problem of learning the local language, but he assured them that within three months he would learn the language. They were convinced and gave him the job. True to his word, he was able to speak Hindi within a short time and became involved in Christian ministry with a local church among the Hindi speaking people.

Facilitating Tentmakers. Mr. SV, an engineer by profession, belongs to a state in South India. He was working with one of the leading companies in India. He was very involved in ministry, primarily to young people. He was very gifted and formed a music team and used it as a tool in evangelism. He drew a decent salary, and had good friends and family near him. Then he received the call to go to North India as a tentmaker.

He started applying to some companies but did not succeed in getting a job for a long time. After nearly a year

and a half, he came to know of an opening in a Christian Technical Institute in North India. He applied for the post of principal. The salary scale was very low even after the institute increased it for his sake. But what they had offered was just a little over half of what he was getting in his previous position in South India. With his second daughter only two months old, moving to a place that was nearly 3,000 kilometers away, was a major decision. But the Lord confirmed His will, and he was led to take up this new position.

After only two years in his new job, his contribution to the ministry in that region has been profound. He helps in leading Bible study groups and helps other ministries throughout the state. His witness in the institution is very good. The institute has grown during these years. He was instrumental in bringing another tentmaker to a sister institution, a school in the same area. He is encouraging more tentmakers to go to North India. God has blessed his commitment and has used him in the advance of His Kingdom in North India.

Accept God's plan. Mr. PC is from a Catholic background, and came to know Christ during his school days. He had also been helping in Bible study groups while in college. He got a job in New Delhi, with a reputable company. He feels that he did not have a specific calling to go to North India, but fully believes in God's plan and will in his life. He is now sure that it is God's will for him to be in North India. He gives his spare time for ministry among students and has also been helping Tentmaker Centre. His struggles include being lonely since he had experienced good Christian fellowship back home in South India. He also senses pressure due to the predominant secular values and materialistic people's attitudes. He also struggles with the change of food and high cost of living.

Conclusion

Tentmaking in India is just beginning to blossom. Churches have not yet received the vision of what tentmakers can do. Christian professional organizations also need to take the initiative in this area. Suitable training programmes have to be developed. The vision of Tentmaker Centre is that potential tentmakers from areas concentrated with Christians would flood into areas with little or no Christian witnesses and thus show through their lives and work the claims and love of Jesus Christ and so disciple the unreached peoples of North India.

E. David Chandran is one of the founding members of Tentmaker Centre and is now its coordinator. An engineer by profession, while in South India he felt the Lord's call to be a tentmaker and moved to North India in 1990. He is ably supported by his wife Beulah, who is presently the OnTrack Coordinator with Interserve. She has coordinated the Tentmaker Centre activities for over 2 years. Both of them have been associated closely with UESI (IFES affiliate in India), ministering to university students. They are both Interserve Partners based in New Delhi.

Photo here
by
David Chaldran