

Roles of “Alongsiders” in Insider Movements: Contemporary Examples and Biblical Reflections

by John and Anna Travis

Do insider movements¹ occur spontaneously as sovereign moves of the Spirit, or do they involve the activity of God’s people from outside the community as well?

History and Scripture suggest that all movements to Jesus involve human *and* divine action. In what would at first appear in Acts 2 to be a spontaneous movement—namely, the outpouring of the Spirit, followed by 3,000 decisions to follow Jesus—divine and human activity are both apparent.² In the insider movements with which we are familiar, both the hand of God and the labors of Jesus followers are clearly seen.

The present study focuses on ministry-related roles that certain Jesus followers (termed *alongsiders*) can play in advancing insider movements. We share examples from the lives of alongsiders we know, along with relevant passages from Scripture, to give input and encouragement to those called to alongsider ministry.³

Alongsider Defined and Described

The term *alongsider* refers to a follower of Jesus from another culture or area whom God has prepared to walk “alongside” insiders in their faith journey with Jesus. Alongsiders we know devote themselves to understanding the language, culture and hearts⁴ of the peoples God calls them to serve. They have learned to view the *other*—regardless of religion or culture—as a fellow creation of God equally in need of the salvation and transformation that following Jesus brings.

Regardless of age, gender or background, alongsiders have two traits in common. First, they have what we would term a *kingdom-centered*, rather than *religion-centered*, ministry focus. As they work with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and others, they are focused on seeing the Kingdom of God enter and transform these socio-religious groups from the inside out, rather than encouraging separation and change of religious identity.⁵ Secondly, alongsiders are willing to minister with little or no formal recognition. For security reasons, they generally cannot announce to the outside world what

John Jay and Anna Travis have spent most of their adult lives in Muslim communities, and have twice lived with Muslim families. He and Anna have authored numerous book and journal articles on the topics of cross-cultural ministry, insider movements, and healing prayer. John has also written on Bible translation. They have been involved in church-planting teams, community development projects, intercessory prayer (Anna) and two Bible translations (John). Anna has written training manuals on inner healing that have been translated into various languages. They spend much of each year coaching and training throughout the Muslim world.

John holds a PhD in Intercultural Studies and is part-time affiliate faculty at the Fuller School of Intercultural Studies. Anna holds an MA in Intercultural Studies from the Fuller School of Intercultural Studies.

God is doing in the movements they have seen. They realize that serving a movement is not about *them* or about building up *their* ministry or the ministry of their denomination or organization. Rather it is about seeing fellowships of Jesus-followers blossom in situations where often the alongsider's name and labors will be known only to God and to a handful of insiders.

Six Challenges of Alongsider Ministry

We have had the privilege of knowing a number of alongsiders and have witnessed firsthand how God has used them to advance insider movements. As we have listened to their stories, we have identified seven ministry roles they frequently assume.⁶ Most of these roles are similar to those exercised in the ministries of followers of Jesus in other types of movements as well. The main difference in alongsider ministry is how they face and overcome the following six challenges.

Challenge 1: Helping Without Directing

Alongsiders often come to the field with years of ministry experience, training and strong Bible study skills. The first challenge these alongsiders face is how to find and develop the first few believers (or people of peace⁷) without overwhelming them with all the alongsiders' knowledge and expertise, an action that could inadvertently undermine the confidence of emerging insider leaders. Alongsiders involved with the first few believers in a movement must introduce the good news in ways that empower, impart, encourage, facilitate, catalyze, and enable reproducible ways of engaging Scripture, all without controlling or directing the emerging movement.

Challenge 2: Sharing Truth without Undermining Insiders

The second (related) challenge is how to share biblical truth in ways that do not undermine insiders or separate

them from their own people, thereby inhibiting their ability to influence their families and communities. Christians have often tended to view other faiths or cultures primarily in terms of what is wrong or unbiblical in them. At times alongsiders do help insiders critically examine various beliefs and worldviews (see below), but the first step is always to affirm what is already biblically good and praiseworthy. Too often well-intentioned outsiders have spoken ill of the new believers' culture, causing insiders to reject their family and culture.

Challenge 3: Letting Scripture Be the Final Authority

How can alongsiders help new followers of Jesus think biblically and



critically about religion and culture, allowing the Word of God illumined by the Spirit of God to inform and transform local beliefs and practices? This is a dynamic process, one where the new followers of Jesus may over time arrive at interpretations of the Scriptures that do not necessarily match the interpretation of either the alongsider or of certain Christian traditions. In the movements with which we are familiar, we observe that as insiders look at their traditional practices and study Scripture, they choose to *retain* certain key aspects of their culture and religious community, *reinterpret* others, and *reappraise* or *reject* still others. Trusted alongsiders have often helped facilitate this sensitive, crucial process.

Challenge 4: Understanding the Need to Self-theologize

Related to the previous challenge is the question of how to help insiders develop a biblical worldview and *self-theologize*,⁸ expressing the message of Jesus in ways understandable and meaningful to their family and friends. While ideally this should happen whenever the gospel crosses any cultural or religious barrier, it is especially crucial in insider movements, where communities may already be predisposed against the gospel. Self-theologizing helps insiders incorporate the old (from the existing community), as long as it does not contradict the new (following Jesus and the Bible), finding vocabulary, thought forms, subject matter, and communication styles that are culturally appropriate. Failure to do so can result in a foreign-sounding gospel, as if it were a message for others but not for them.⁹ Self-theologizing helps a people see that Jesus is truly for them, the savior for all people.

Challenge 5: Encouraging Intentional Fellowship in the Absence of Familiar Models

This challenge concerns how to encourage Jesus-centered corporate life among insiders when the alongsider cannot directly model or participate in regular insider gatherings. Since insiders do not join local pre-existing traditional churches, where they might find certain elements typical of other Christ-centered communities (e.g., corporate prayer, worship, a designated meeting place, youth programs), they must create alternative ways to gather that are both biblical and viable. Small insider home groups, which often meet in ways similar to underground churches in certain closed countries, must rely heavily upon inductive group Bible study, the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the use of spiritual gifts (e.g., teaching, healing, discernment, helps, vis-à-vis Eph. 4:7-13, Rom. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:4-31).

Challenge 6: Ministering in Spite of the Lack of a Recognized Position

The sixth challenge involves the status and identity of the alongsiders. Alongsiders serve the insiders in a variety of roles, yet they are often in the awkward place of neither being insiders themselves, nor officially holding leadership positions in the movement. In addition, few mentors or role models exist for alongsiders, and home churches are just now beginning to understand this type of ministry. Like the insiders, most alongsiders are pioneers, learning as they go. Some alongsiders thrive in this environment more than others.

Having briefly considered these six challenges, we now turn to ministry roles exercised by alongsiders and relevant Scriptures related to each role.

Seven Roles for Alongsiders

The following seven roles are presented with two caveats. First, by combining various roles, or further delineating others, some may see either more or less roles than seven. Secondly, these seven roles are based on personal observations of alongsiders we have known as well as our own ministry experience,¹⁰ thus there may be roles we have missed due to our own limited exposure to other fields and ministries.

1. Intercessor

We place the role of intercessor first as prayer is central in any type of movement to Jesus.¹¹ Most alongsiders would say that breakthroughs took place *after* intercession and that insider movements are sustained *through* intercession. Intercession paves the way for a movement as intercessors ask God to cause signs and wonders to take place,¹² move on human hearts, hold back demonic strongholds, call workers, and bring about maturity in new believers.¹³ In addition, God speaks to intercessors and gives them love for those they are called to serve.¹⁴

T*his small movement continues to this day and has gradually spread to several neighboring towns and villages.*

Example: We know groups of alongsiders who set aside regular seasons of intercession and fasting for their adopted people. This may be several hours daily for extended periods of time, all night once a week, an entire month, or one full day every week over many years. We were part of one such four-year period of intercession. This time was preceded by utter desperation for God to move and, thankfully, was followed by the beginning of a Jesus movement within the religious community of our adopted people. This small movement continues to this day and has gradually spread to several neighboring towns and villages.

Biblical reflections: To understand intercessory prayer, we look first to the life of our Lord. At every key juncture in his life we find Jesus off alone, interceding before the Father. Prayer was central to his ministry.¹⁵ Before Jesus, men such as Moses, Daniel and Ezra demonstrated intercession as they repented for the sins of their forefathers.¹⁶ After the ascension of Jesus, we find that intercession was integral to the ministry of the apostles in the earliest Jesus movements.¹⁷ Today, intercessors continue this work, joining Jesus in his intercession at the right hand of God.¹⁸

2. Learner

Alongsiders are learners. While they do bring a vital message to be shared, they first seek to understand before insisting on being understood. For alongsiders, the pursuit of a deep understanding of the people often involves living with local families who do not yet follow Jesus, which helps facilitate a process that Tom and Betty Brewster have called *bonding*.¹⁹ In addition, most alongsiders try to gain insight into the religious heritage and worldview of those they

are called to reach by engaging, over an extended period of time, in some form of ethnographic interviewing. While cross-cultural field workers in other types of ministry often do the same, the knowledge gained through such research and participation in the community is particularly crucial for alongsiders as they need an in-depth understanding of how God is already at work in the religion and culture of those they serve. Without it, they may find it hard to see what is already biblical and praiseworthy—or truly wrong, even demonic—in the religion or culture in question. Those who intimately understand the hearts and minds of the people are better positioned to recognize these dynamics.

Examples: Many alongsiders have lived with Muslim families for several months, and in some cases, years. We know one team of alongsiders who were not able to live in the homes of local families, so they rented attached rooms close to them in the very center of Muslim neighborhoods. We lived with two different families—first for one month in a village setting followed by two months with a family in a large urban area. All our ministry coworkers, both expatriates and nationals, live with local non-Christian families for at least one month. Living with a family not only creates bonds of friendship, it also opens an entire web of extended family relationships that allow participation in weddings, holidays, funerals, and other key life-cycle events. Several alongsiders who eventually saw Jesus movements take place within the religious community around them, first studied with their local friends the holy book(s) viewed as authoritative in that context (e.g., the Qur'an with Muslims), before going on to study the Bible with them.

Biblical reflections: Scripture abounds with examples of people powerfully used by God who, through life’s circumstances, learned the language and culture of others. Daniel learned the language, sciences, culture, and religion of the Babylonians, eventually becoming a change agent for God’s purposes in that polytheistic culture.²⁰ Moses knew firsthand the ways and language of the Egyptians. Joseph lived in Potiphar’s household,²¹ a situation God used to prepare him for a work far beyond what he could have ever imagined.

Jesus sent out the seventy two-by-two to the villages where he would later go. He had them stay with local families, eating and drinking what was offered them. He told them not to travel from house to house so they could discover who those people of “peace” were who would receive the message of the kingdom.²² Upon their return from the field, we find them “debriefing” with Jesus, the one who had sent them out to learn and grow spiritually, staying with families other than their own.²³

3. Friend

We use the word *friend* here in two ways. First, alongsiders become friends with those who do not yet follow Jesus. As these cross-cultural relationships form, the subtle “us” versus “them” mentality begins to disappear. Our Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist neighbors become dear friends, and sometimes our children’s adopted uncles and aunties. From this level of intimacy, heart-to-heart discussions can happen, making it more natural to speak of Jesus and how someone can know him.

Examples: Alan (not his real name) is an alongsider whose closest friend, next to his own family members, is the leader of a mosque near his home. Alan began his relationship with this man by volunteering to teach English to children in the mosque. What amazed us about Alan is that he spends much of his free time at his friend’s house watching TV or drinking coffee. To Alan this is not a ministry strategy; he

simply does this because he loves to share life with this mosque leader.

A second type of friend is one who has deep, long-term relationships with key leaders of insider movements; these friendships often span decades. Many insider leaders find great strength in having such a friend, someone from outside their group who can be a confidant and counselor, especially in shame-based cultures where gossip is rampant. These insider leaders are pioneers who face dilemmas of many kinds, particularly in cultures where leaders are expected to play a large role in the lives of the people in their groups.

Examples: We think here of two long-term alongsider friends we know who



have stood by their insider friends through thick and thin—seeing children get married, grandchildren born, and many new people put their faith in Jesus, as well as illnesses, imprisonments, torture, depression, slander, and marriage difficulties. These friends, who often live in other countries much of the year, keep in touch regularly as best they can in light of security concerns. They meet face-to-face whenever possible. Both insider and alongsider sense that God has put them together and equally benefit from this unique cross-cultural friendship.

Biblical reflections: In Scripture we discover that Paul not only counted on the friendship of his co-workers,²⁴ his

work was marked by friendship with those he served.²⁵ Jesus, too, longed for the friendship of his disciples, especially in the hour of his greatest need.²⁶

4. “Worker of Miracles”

We use the term *workers of miracles* for alongsiders whom God has gifted and uses regularly in physical healing, inner healing, deliverance from the demonic, the interpretation of dreams, prophecy, and so on. Their ministry benefits those who follow Jesus and those who do not follow him yet. An alongsider can assume the role of a worker of miracles without becoming a leader in the movement. Miracle workers can serve at strategic moments when deep-seated spiritual problems arise. While all believers may pray for miracles, these alongsider workers of miracles are recognized by trusted insiders as being especially gifted and experienced, likely having what the Bible refers to as gifts²⁷ of healing,²⁸ discernment of spirits,²⁹ prophecy,³⁰ and/or other gifts.

Examples: We know alongsiders gifted in inner healing and deliverance who have been great resources to insider movements. Especially in places where folk practices are common, those who come to faith often need freedom from demonic strongholds. This usually involves renouncing magical practices, getting rid of charms and amulets, and breaking ties with shamans and power practitioners. Another aspect of this type of prayer is the healing of past traumas and emotional wounds, a ministry that greatly assists in spiritual transformation. This healing of heart wounds also helps new followers of Jesus learn to forgive others, a vital part of forming Jesus-centered communities of faith.

One alongsider we know prayed for Muslim women in her neighborhood concerning a variety of physical, emotional and spiritual problems. She then invited them to her home where they talked about health, stress and the healing Jesus brings. With the alongsider’s

help, this group eventually embraced Jesus and became a “covenant community” where together they studied the Bible, shared their lives, and prayed for each other and their neighborhood. They also became familiar with healing prayer and how to stand against evil powers. Within a number of years, this original group experienced growth and multiplication, meeting in several homes and branching out to a neighboring town. This movement now involves entire families and brings the blessings of the kingdom of God through Jesus to their neighborhoods. God powerfully used the alongsider and her prayers to see this small insider movement begin.

Biblical reflections: Scripture is filled with accounts of anointed workers of miracles³¹ whom God used in early Jesus movements, powerful evidence of the initial fulfillment of Jesus’ words to his followers, “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”³² We are inspired to read how the Lord worked miracles through the disciples,³³ Peter³⁴ and John,³⁵ Stephen,³⁶ Phillip,³⁷ Ananias,³⁸ Paul,³⁹ Barnabas,⁴⁰ Paul’s friends,⁴¹ Agabus,⁴² and the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews.⁴³ Paul shared how much patience was required in his ministry of miracles.⁴⁴ James urged that elders should pray with people, and that believers should confess sins and pray with each other, and God would make them workers of miracles.⁴⁵ As miracle workers take risks to see God work, they may need patience like Paul, remembering that even Jesus met with resistance to miracles at times.⁴⁶ Many miracles may be required before the fruit of allegiance to Jesus results, as we see when the ten lepers were healed by Jesus, and only one came back to pledge his allegiance to the Master.⁴⁷

5. Proclaimer

The gospel does not come out of thin air; whenever the good news is proclaimed in a new area, it is because

Equipping generally calls for a high level of language skill, cultural understanding, and relational wisdom.

someone or some form of media from the outside has crossed a religious and social barrier. In every insider movement we have seen, the growth of the movement can be traced back to one or two insiders who first received the gospel and then persuaded their family and friends to embrace it as well. Although some of these movements began with a dream or vision, the Lord often directed the first insiders to an alongsider who could proclaim to them the full message of the gospel.

What makes alongsider proclaimers unique is that they do not link following Jesus with the concept of “changing religions.” In addition, they are constantly looking for potential “people of peace”⁴⁸ whom God will use to help lead groups of their fellow Muslims, Hindus, Jews, etc., in following Jesus.

Examples: While all Jesus followers are called to share the good news, proclaimers seem to have what Scripture calls the gift of evangelism.⁴⁹ One alongsider proclaimer we know illustrates this well. He loves to go to the mosque and wisely yet boldly share with the imam how Isa the Messiah in his great love came for all people and how he, the imam, could come to know Isa as a Muslim. God has used this particular proclaimer to help lead some of the first Muslims to Jesus in what later became an insider movement across a number of villages. For years he mentored five men who were the leaders of this still growing movement. Because so many millions have yet to hear the good news, alongsider proclaimers will always be needed both to catalyze new works and to work alongside leaders in insider movements.

Biblical reflections: Scripture records the creative work of proclaimers in diverse religious contexts. We see Jesus with Jews,⁵⁰ the disciples with Jews,⁵¹

Peter and John with Jews,⁵² Ananias with Saul the Pharisee,⁵³ Paul and Silas with Jews,⁵⁴ Jesus with a Samaritan woman,⁵⁵ Phillip with a Samaritan sorcerer,⁵⁶ Peter and John in Samaritan towns,⁵⁷ the healed and delivered man with Gentiles,⁵⁸ Peter with a Roman God-fearer,⁵⁹ people of Cyprus and Cyrene with Hellenists,⁶⁰ Paul with philosophers,⁶¹ and many more.

6. Equipper

Whereas proclaimers are often the first to bring the good news to a particular group of people, equippers are alongsiders whom God uses to help mature or assist certain key insider leaders in later stages of the movement.⁶² These equippers can suggest specific activities that could help advance a movement without undermining its indigenous leadership.

Equippers may provide spiritual mentoring, marriage counseling, training in inductive Bible study methods, tools for Bible translation, help in creating films and other materials, or technical assistance in various health and community development projects. They may help insiders wrestle with the transformation of certain traditions that could be contrary to Scripture.⁶³ At times they may wisely connect insider leaders with others from outside the community who have specific needed expertise. Equipping generally calls for a high level of language skill, cultural understanding, and relational wisdom.

Examples: One equipper worked with a seasoned leader of an insider movement for many months to create a two-year leadership development curriculum for newer movement leaders, based on Luke and Acts. While this seminary-trained equipper could have attempted to develop the curriculum on his own, the result would have been a less indigenous training experience and,

more importantly, it would have short-circuited something that God wanted to do in a key leader he had raised up for this movement. Instead, the pair worked through Luke-Acts carefully and inductively, and together they discovered key principles under the guidance of the Spirit. Insider leaders then introduced the Luke-Acts curriculum to eight fellow insider leaders. In less than ten years, scores of home group leaders in the movement were engaged in this two-year leadership training.

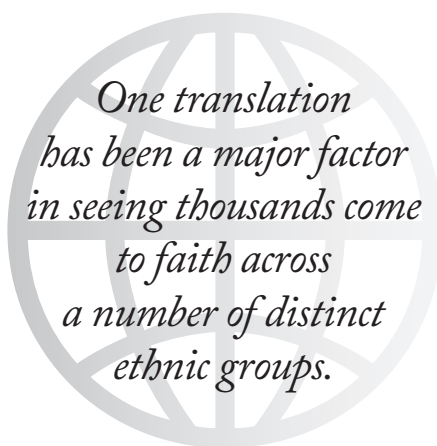
In another country, a working group of alongsiders was formed to serve developing insider movements across several different language groups. The pressing need was for culturally and linguistically relevant Bible translations. The alongsiders assisted the insiders in training translators, checking translations, field testing key terms, and using tools to check the meaning of Greek or Hebrew words. One such translation in a widely spoken language has been a major factor in seeing thousands come to faith across a number of distinct ethnic groups through inductive Bible study.

Biblical reflections: In the earliest Jesus movements, we see God preparing certain men and women to equip others, who in turn empower yet others.⁶⁴ Peter and John assisted Philip the Evangelist in his ministry among the Samaritans, and were used by God to pray for the believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter and John may have been positively impacted by their experience with Philip regarding ministry in non-Jewish religious communities, because before returning to Jerusalem, they entered several other Samaritan towns to bring the good news.⁶⁵

An important aspect of equipping is to make the right connections at the right time. Note Paul's explanation of his interactions with the leaders of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem, especially regarding the timing involved. After his miraculous encounter with the Lord (and his call to the Gentiles

three days later), he did not immediately connect with the leaders already in place. Did this give time for God's radical call on Paul's life to be developed, away from the strict, long-standing religious boundaries observed by godly leaders like James?⁶⁶ Yet the time did come for those connections to be made.

God used Ananias,⁶⁷ Barnabas,⁶⁸ Peter⁶⁹ and James⁷⁰ in the life of Paul. Ananias gave Saul his earliest spiritual input in the way of Jesus. He obeyed the Lord's voice (though it went against everything he knew and had heard), found Saul, prayed for his healing, and spoke prophetically to him concerning his calling. Barnabas saw Saul with eyes of faith, believing God was



calling him, though he was certainly a diamond in the rough when Barnabas first started encouraging him. Peter assisted Saul (by this point called Paul) when Jewish followers of Jesus heard that Gentile followers of Jesus were remaining uncircumcised. He verified the legitimacy of Paul's calling with the testimony of his own experience with Cornelius. James listened well when Paul shared with the Jerusalem leaders how the good news was breaking out of the known Jewish religious structures. James gave his spiritual input, backed by Scripture, and kept the door open for Paul's radical ministry among Gentiles. Years later, Paul sought out those leaders in response to a revelation from God, and even dared to take

an uncircumcised Gentile follower of Jesus (Titus) with him. He was greatly relieved when the Jewish leaders did not pressure Titus to change religious identity (to be circumcised).⁷¹ James welcomed Paul, giving him wise counsel, though the contrast between the callings on each of their lives had only increased. While these relationships were not without some conflict,⁷² Paul greatly benefited by input from those God sent to equip him.

Paul then poured into many other lives, like Priscilla and Aquila,⁷³ Timothy,⁷⁴ and Onesimus.⁷⁵ Priscilla and Aquila helped equip Apollos,⁷⁶ who was a blessing to many. Timothy equipped many believers in the Gentile movements, and Onesimus was of great value in the work as well. In the later years of ministry, Paul could say that nearly all those he equipped were non-Jewish⁷⁷ leaders in the Gentile Jesus movements.

Another aspect of equipping is depicted clearly in the New Testament. Paul and others helped support growing Jesus movements through the writing of letters to individuals, groups and networks.⁷⁸

7. Interfacers

God used Paul, Barnabas and Peter to explain Gentile ministry to their fellow Jewish believers, advocating for the right of Gentiles to follow Jesus without being circumcised and taking on a Jewish religious identity.⁷⁹ In a similar way the Lord will also call some who have seen insider movements firsthand to explain to fellow Christians what God is doing behind the scenes inside other socio-religious communities. We call this alongsider role that of an *interfacers*.

Examples: In recent years, some carefully planned meetings have taken place involving a few English-speaking leaders of insider movements, alongsiders who serve as interfacers, national pastors, and some foreign Christian leaders. During these face-to-face

meetings (which take place over several days), it becomes apparent that while the participants are different from each other in many ways, all present are true followers of Jesus.

In one such meeting, several national pastors (who might typically be suspicious of insider movements) saw the grace of God in the lives of the insiders and spontaneously decided to wash their feet; everyone was moved to tears. A year later, at a gathering in another location, the insider leaders washed the feet of the Christians, saying, "Please forgive us. When you sent people to bring the gospel to our people years ago, our people killed many of them." Again, many were in tears. This kind of strategic interface—where one group does not dominate the other, and where each comes to learn—can be a beautiful example of the body of Christ in action.⁸⁰ Another positive outcome of this type of meeting, and the work that interfacers can do, is that it helps insiders see how they can relate to the wider body of Christ.

Biblical reflections: Looking only at the outward forms used in certain Jesus movements within Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist or Hindu communities, the outside Christian world might assume that these believers are not being true to God, or are not even part of his kingdom. A similar situation existed in Joshua's day. When the tribes who had settled to the west of the Jordan observed from afar a large altar built by the two and a half tribes who had settled to the east, they jumped to the conclusion that their brothers to the east had fallen into idolatry, treachery and rebellion. Fearing God's judgment (not only upon their brothers, but themselves as well), the western tribes prepared to make war. Thankfully, the leaders from both sides met first. When confronted with accusations of idolatry, the eastern leaders were shocked. They explained that their altar was not built for idolatrous sacrifice, as was assumed, but as an

When confronted with the accusation of idolatry, the eastern leaders were shocked.

eternal witness to coming generations. They wanted everyone to know that even though their tribes had settled on the east side of the Jordan, they were fully part of God's people and one with the western tribes. Their God was the same God, the one true God. This satisfied the western leaders; they brought the good news back to their tribes and never again talked of making war on their eastern brothers.⁸¹

Jesus had to rebuke his own disciples for incorrectly judging and wanting to stop the deliverance ministry of someone "who did not follow them." (This incident took place not long after the disciples had tried—and failed—to cast a demon out of a mute boy.) Jesus told them: "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us."⁸² Thus Jesus affirmed this ministry being done in his name. Yet in a different situation described in Acts, the seven sons of Sceva tried to bring deliverance in Jesus' name and ran into severe difficulties. Apparently they didn't know the Lord Jesus and thus did not have authority in his name.⁸³

In Acts 15, certain Jewish followers of Jesus reacted negatively to the news that Gentiles had become part of the people of God through Jesus without being circumcised. Those insisting on circumcision claimed that those without it were not yet saved. After hearing case studies from the field, going through long deliberations and taking a deeper look at Scripture, it was decided that these Gentile followers of Jesus, although uncircumcised, were indeed saved and part of the people of God.⁸⁴

In each of these events as recorded in Scripture, God used interfacers to explain, testify and interpret to his

people what was actually happening in other groups. The leaders of the eastern tribes explained to their western counterparts the intent behind their altar. Jesus explained to his disciples that the person doing deliverance in his name was actually on their side. Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James spoke to the other leaders in Jerusalem on behalf of the Gentile Jesus followers, advocating their legitimate place within the people of God as equals to the Jewish followers of Jesus.

Conclusion

Alongsiders are part of a process that frequently begins with intercession for a particular people group. Many then live among the people for whom they have prayed, often with local families. In time, deep friendships are forged. When alongside serve as proclaimers, their experience as learners and friends helps them know how to share the good news in ways that make sense. Some alongside serve as workers of miracles, or as equippers as movements begin and develop. And some alongside attempt to explain what they have seen and experienced to those eager to know what God is doing inside other religious communities, thus interfacing between insider believers and Christians outside the situation.

Not all insider movements have alongside. When they do, alongside may only be involved in a few of the roles mentioned in this article. While most of the roles described here are most needed in the early stages of a movement, some are needed at later stages. May God, as the one who longs to draw all people to himself, continue to sovereignly connect alongside and insiders so that the full harvest will be realized. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ The term "insider movement" refers to groups and networks of non-Christian peoples who follow Jesus as Lord and Savior and the Bible as the word of God, but remain a part of the socio-religious community of their birth. A synonymous term used for insider movements is "Jesus movements within" with mention of the particular socio-religious community/communities being described, such as "Jesus movements within Muslim communities" or "a Jesus movement within the Hindu community." (See John J. Travis and J. Dudley Woodberry, "When God's Kingdom Grows Like Yeast: Frequently Asked Questions about Jesus Movements within Muslim Communities," *Mission Frontiers* July-August 2010 24-30).

² This movement, recorded in Acts 2, was preceded by the translation of the Old Testament into Greek (before 200 BC); the ministry of John the Baptist calling the people to repentance; the miraculous birth of Jesus; the training of the twelve, the seventy-two, and the women who accompanied them; the miracles and preaching of Jesus and his band; Jesus' death, resurrection, appearances for forty days, and ascension; and the 120 obediently praying and waiting, as described in Acts 1.

³ Most of these alongsider roles are not unique to insider ministry and are similarly applicable in other ministry contexts.

⁴ Many passages illustrate that Jesus is more concerned with the inside (heart) than with the outward appearance. He sees through the life circumstances of those he encounters, and he understands and speaks to the heart. Examples include Zacchaeus, the woman at the well, the Pharisees, and, in a parable recorded in Luke 18:9-14, the man who came to pray at the temple.

⁵ Some insiders may in time wish to change religions, something they have every right to do. The point is that the decision was not encouraged or forced upon them by alongsiders or other outside Christians; it must be a choice the insiders have prayerfully and carefully made on their own.

⁶ We are privileged to have personally served in each of these roles at one time or another over the last 25 years.

⁷ The term "person of peace" refers to those individuals who first welcome the good news of the kingdom and open the door for others to also hear and believe (e.g., the village ministry of the seventy in Luke 10:5-9, and Cornelius and his *oikos* in Acts 10:24).

⁸ Most churches and denominations over the centuries have relied upon catechism classes or rites of initiation (e.g.,

RCIA among Catholics) to instruct new believers in basic tenets of Christianity and the theological distinctions of their particular group. The insiders, on the other hand, have more of a self-discovery approach, where they read the Scriptures together, ask the Holy Spirit to lead them, interact with other groups of insiders with whom they have contact, and when helpful, interact with trusted alongsiders who may bring perspectives from other Christ-following communities worldwide, either past or present.

⁹ See "Is There More Than One Way to Do Theology?" by Charles Taber (*Gospel in Context*, Jan 1, 1978, Volume 1:01, pp. 4-18; 22-40). Here Taber asks: "What is to prevent Africans, Asians, and others from using their culturally conditioned methodologies in the interpretation of the biblical texts, just as we do? If we want to insist that our approach is universal, we must justify the claim: what is it that might give our particular style transcultural validity? Why should we be in a privileged position? ...What is needed now is for Africans and Asians to start afresh, beginning with the direct interaction of their cultures with the Scriptures rather than tagging along at the tail end of the long history of Western embroidery."

¹⁰ The movement in which we were involved as alongsiders is described on pages 240-242 of *Toward Respectful Understanding and Witness Among Muslims*, ed. Evelyn Reisacher (2012 William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA).

¹¹ The late church historian, Dr. Edwin Orr, spent a lifetime studying what factors led to the world's great revivals. He concluded that the only trait he saw in common in all the different revivals was that intentional, corporate, intercessory prayer preceded all of these movements. Orr, J. Edwin, *The Role of Prayer in Spiritual Awakening*, Oct. 1976, accessed on 6 June 2013 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix0QgVbVlNc>>.

¹² Acts 4:19

¹³ Epaphras' work as an intercessor is mentioned in Col. 4:12.

¹⁴ 2 Cor. 2:4, 12:15, Phil. 4:1, 2 Tim. 1:3.

¹⁵ The New Testament records Jesus praying at his baptism (Luke 3:21), early in the morning (Mark 1:35), in the wilderness (Luke 5:16), all night before a big decision (Luke 6:12), with thankfulness (Matt. 11:25, Luke 10:12), when facing bad news (Matt. 14:13), before saying or doing anything (John 5:19, 12:49, 14:10), before raising the dead (John 11:41), after exhausting ministry (Matt. 14:22, Mark 6:47, John 6:15), before

challenging his followers (Luke 9:18), at his transfiguration (Matt. 17:8, Mark 9:8, Luke 9:28), when teaching his followers how to pray (Matt. 6:9, Luke 11:1), for children (Matt. 19:3), for his follower facing temptation (Luke 22:32), for his followers to be indwelt by the Spirit (John 14:16-17), for all his future followers (John 17), before facing the cross (Matt. 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 12), for God to forgive his enemies (Luke 23:34), in his pain (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34), with tears (Heb. 5:7), and as he died (Luke 23:46).

¹⁶ See the prayers of Moses (Ex. 32, 34), Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29), Jeremiah (Jer. 14, 31), Daniel (Dan. 9), Nehemiah (Neh. 1), Ezra (Ezra 9, 10) and Solomon (1 Kings 8).

¹⁷ Acts 6:4

¹⁸ Heb. 7:25

¹⁹ Thomas and Betty Brewster, in their seminal book *Bonding and the Missionary Task* (Dallas: Lingua House, 1982), advocate living with local families when first arriving on the field as a way for cross-cultural workers to acquire language and culture and understand the hearts and lives of the people they will serve. They refer to this process as bonding, likening it to the *bonding* that occurs between a mother and child as the newborn first enters the world.

²⁰ We see in Dan. 1:4,17; 4:8 that Daniel studied the Chaldeans' literature, wisdom and language, and was even named after one of their gods.

²¹ Gen. 39:2

²² Luke 10:1-9

²³ Luke 10:17-20

²⁴ Paul's friends treated him with kindness and cared for him (Acts 27:3). Philemon was both a co-worker and friend for Paul (Philemon 1:1).

²⁵ Paul and his co-workers shared their very selves as well as the good news (1 Thes. 2:8). Paul took risks by opening his heart and expressing deep affection for those he served (2 Cor. 6:11-13).

²⁶ Jesus asked for friendship and prayer support when facing his darkest hour (Matt. 26:37, 38).

²⁷ Many who were taught that such gifts ceased after the New Testament era have modified their views after witnessing the Spirit work through some of God's servants in these miraculous ways.

²⁸ 1 Cor. 12, 28,30

²⁹ 1 Cor. 12:10

³⁰ Rom. 12:6

³¹ 1 Cor. 12:10: where working of miracles is a spiritual gift

³² John 14:12: greater works

³³ Mark 16:20, Acts 2:43, 5:12

³⁴ Acts 5:15
³⁵ Acts 3:1-16: Peter and John on the temple steps
³⁶ Acts 6:8: Stephen
³⁷ Acts 8:6, 13, 14: Phillip
³⁸ Acts 9:10-18: Ananias with Saul
³⁹ Acts 19:11, Rom 15:19: Paul
⁴⁰ Acts 14:3, 15:12: Paul and Barnabas
⁴¹ Acts 14:20: Paul's friends may have raised Paul from the dead
⁴² Acts 11:27-30: Agabus
⁴³ Heb. 2:3-4: miracles among the Hebrews
⁴⁴ 2 Cor. 12:12: Paul with utmost patience
⁴⁵ James 5:13-16: prayer of faith
⁴⁶ Mark 6:1-6: Jesus sees doubt in Nazareth
⁴⁷ Luke 17:12-19: ten lepers healed
⁴⁸ Luke 10:6-7; Mt 10:11-14
⁴⁹ Eph. 4:11
⁵⁰ Matt. 4:23-24
⁵¹ Matt. 10:5-8: disciples sent to lost sheep of Israel
⁵² Acts 4:1-2: Peter and John at the temple
⁵³ Acts 9:10-20, 22:12-16: Ananias with Saul
⁵⁴ Acts 17:1-3: the Jews in the synagogue

⁵⁵ John 4:7-41: the woman at the well
⁵⁶ Acts 8:5-24: Phillip with the sorcerer
⁵⁷ Acts 8:25: Peter and John in Samaritan villages
⁵⁸ Mark 5:18-20: the Gentile demoniac
⁵⁹ Acts 10:1-48: Cornelius
⁶⁰ Acts 11:20: the people of Cyprus and Cyrene with Hellenists
⁶¹ Acts 17:18-34: the philosophers
⁶² Some alongsider equippers may be active in the lives of potential leaders before movements begin, trusting that their service will equip future leaders and movements.
⁶³ Which can be retained? Which need to be confronted by the gospel? Or rejected, reinterpreted, or reassessed?
⁶⁴ 2 Tim. 2:2
⁶⁵ Acts 8:14-17, 25: Peter and John in Samaria
⁶⁶ Gal. 1:18-24: Saul's early development away from existing leaders
⁶⁷ Acts 9:10-20: Ananias for Saul
⁶⁸ Acts 4:36-37, 9:26, 27, 11:21-26: Barnabas for Saul
⁶⁹ Acts 15:7-11: Peter for Paul
⁷⁰ Acts 15:13-21, 21:17-26, Gal. 2:9: James for Paul
⁷¹ Gal. 2:1-10: Paul's later connections with leaders of the Jewish Jesus movement

⁷² Paul had conflict with Peter (Gal. 2:11), friends of James (Gal. 2:12) and Barnabas (Acts 15:39).
⁷³ Acts 18:2-3, 18: Paul for Priscilla & Aquila
⁷⁴ Acts 16:3, 1 Tim. 1:18, 2 Tim. 3:10: Paul for Timothy
⁷⁵ Col. 4:9, Philemon 1:10: Paul for Onesimus
⁷⁶ Acts 18:24-26: Priscilla & Aquila for Apollos
⁷⁷ Col. 4:11: Paul mostly equipped non-Jews in the later years
⁷⁸ Paul (Col. 4:16), Peter (1 Pet. 5:12) and others were inspired by the Spirit and went to great effort to write letters.
⁷⁹ Acts 15: Jerusalem leadership gathering where the question was addressed: Can uncircumcised non-Jews be fully recognized as the people of God through Jesus?
⁸⁰ The insiders we know personally all see themselves as a part of the Body of Christ.
⁸¹ Josh. 22:10-34: the altar of the two and a half tribes to the east of the Jordan
⁸² Mark 9:38-41: another person's deliverance ministry
⁸³ Acts 19:11-20: sons of Sceva
⁸⁴ Acts 15:1-35: Here leaders deliberate as to whether uncircumcised non-Jewish Gentile followers of Jesus are actually saved.

Int'l Society for Frontier Missiology

2014

September 23-25, 2014
 Atlanta, Georgia

RECASTING EVANGELIZATION

The Significance of Lausanne '74 for Today and Beyond

Registration: \$60 (\$50 before September 1 • Missionary: \$40 • Student: \$25)

For more information on ISFM 2014 and to register and secure accommodations: www.ijfm.org/isfm/annual.htm

Speakers include: Miriam Adeney • Doug Birdsall • Steve Hawthorne • Todd Johnson • Greg Parsons • Jeff Walker