



Foreword: *Providing the Resources to Move Forward*¹

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We live in a time of discovery and change. The recent graduation from the twentieth century has encouraged a look over our shoulder to see just how much has changed and how rapidly technological innovation is now controlling our lives. Many startling things are becoming commonplace. Remembering “how things were” is becoming more difficult.

The mission of the church of Jesus Christ calls for commitment, preparation, a broad support base, and a carefully considered call to ministry by the Holy Spirit. The pattern in scripture is clear: the work of missions is a collective task of the people of God. This was apparently God’s intent all along, but the pattern during the “modern missionary movement” (from 1800 to 2000) was more commonly a series of lonely pursuits. Today “solo performance” is going out of style. Even the big-name stars of evangelicalism now have *gray* hair, if any, and carry canes. Today’s norm is *teamwork*. This is why leadership is moving into the hands of the young.

The importance of teamwork is one of the many changes that have affected the way we understand Christian missions today. Similarly, the purposes of evangelism and missions are transformed to relate to a global society. Indeed, helping people develop a relationship with Jesus Christ stays high on the priority list, but the ways and means of fulfilling this mission are substantially different—more relational, less confrontational, more attentive to persons as individuals and families rather than to labeled masses; and through it all being transformed from self-centered and self-serving persons to Christ-centered and compassionate neighbors.

This shift in purpose, methods, and means of mission carries important implications for almost every aspect of missionary life and organization. Recruitment of people for missionary service is changing; wanderers and purposeless explorers are less acceptable. Training for missions is changing; varieties of competencies are needed but core knowledge of Christian foundations and principles are foremost.

The specialization of skills, knowledge, and preparatory training has substantially increased, even as the job-title *missionary* has become more diffused and indistinct. Parallel with the diversification of job descriptions in Christian education, a missionary may be a teacher of Bible classes, a teacher of English as a second language (TESOL), a teacher or school administrator for a missionary children’s facility, a camp director or counselor, a professor in a Bible college or seminary, a specialist in a denominational office, a field worker in a relief and development operation, an office staff person in a church, a pastor or evangelist for a group of churches, or any combination of job-descriptions, including travel agent and guest-house manager accommodating “short-term missionaries.”

Making comparisons and passing judgment about what sort of work really serves the missionary cause more effectively is a growing temptation. God uses all sorts of people to do all sorts of work; nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid playing the game, “Where’s the *Real* Missionary?”

Help From Social Science

In the cause of precise and effective planning and allocation of resources, the missionary enterprise has adopted standards and practices from science. In the early nineteenth century the frontier of social

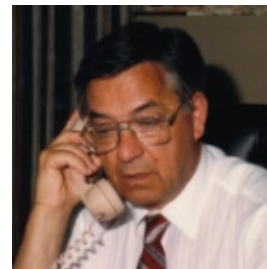
¹ Ted Ward. Foreword. In Leslie A. Andrews (ed). *The Family In Mission: Understanding And Caring For Those Who Serve*. (Palmer Lake, CO: Mission Training International, 2004), pp. xi-xv. Used with permission.

science was opened up by the assembly line and the cult of efficiency. Stopwatches and note pads became the new symbols of practical science. The assumption was that to do it faster is to do it better. To standardize and use interchangeable parts became industry's way to save money and time. The spotlight swung toward scientific studies of humanity.

Population statistics opened the door to human demography. The study of geography expanded to inquire into culture and social change. Examining the bumps and knobs on the cranium rapidly moved inside the skull to the study of behavior, emotions, and styles. Inquiry into the limitless variability of human similarity and dissimilarity became the focus of new sciences with their inevitable engineering products and theories of knowledge and mental capacities. The testing movement had arrived. The work of the church and, especially of missions, was thus impacted by this new emphasis on counting and comparing. What about matters of judgment? Is *bigger* always better? Is *more* inherently more godly?

Astronomers, chemists, physicists, and biologists had made peace with each other through their mutual respect for mathematics. The social scientists struggled for respectability through their own use of mathematics—in the form of probability statistics; although the nature of their measurement tasks were much more difficult to harness. Two new sources of questionable truth emerged: inferences based on measurement of irrelevant variables, and statistical over-manipulation of imprecise quantification. These labels may sound more complicated than necessary. In ordinary language the first is a result of measuring the wrong things—quite like what happens when you count a dog's fleas among its offspring. The second is what happens when you ask the Ministers of Education in the nations of the world to send UNESCO the annual data on their countries' literacy rates. In both these examples, the data will be useless.

Nevertheless, social science is coming into its own. Carefully used by competent scientists, and rigorously delimited to matters that are properly addressed by its procedures, social science provides valuable understandings. Many of the newer fields of inquiry are able today to deliver important understandings from the social and human ecological domains, especially in matters of communication, teaching and learning, and management. Human personality variables, such as motivation, decision-making, and leadership, are becoming clearer.



Objectivity and the Quest for Truth

All of this comes at a price. Not only is research demanding and time-consuming, it requires precision and integrity. The closer we look the more aware we are that there is much more to learn. Increasingly we realize that we don't know all we need to know. This is perhaps the major outcome of the CART/CORE research.²

Thanks to habits of exaggeration and biased information, people have learned to distrust what they hear. Objectivity, that happy habit of describing reality thoroughly and honestly, has been all but lost. It is so common today to hear information in extremes. You can hardly gain a hearing for things that are *important* and *valuable*. Not unless we hear that it is *really* important or *extremely* valuable, does it rise above the threshold.

This tendency to exaggerate appears almost everywhere. It creates in us the habit of false emphasis. As a result, we lose perspective. Thus truth itself is obscured and objectivity suffers. In this condition, opinion goes unchecked and verification is rarely sought. Although our truthfulness should be a hallmark of Christian virtue, it becomes shadowed by personal opinion, bias, and ungrounded argumentation.

² Consultation and Research Team/Committee on Research and Endowment

This shadow falls across responsible evidence, whether the topic is cause and effect in teaching and learning, physical and emotional risks in family welfare, or quality attributes of family relationships. Everyone in the mission of the church must guard against unsubstantiated opinions; open-minded questing is the mother of virtue.

Understanding Those Who Serve

The changes in mission management since World War II are largely a result of the discovery that good intentions and righteous hopes are an inadequate basis for wise decision-making. Immediately after the war, the surge of new missionaries and re-opened fields resulted from a persisting assumption that God could use anyone regardless of qualifications or competencies. Indeed, many great accomplishments for the Kingdom of God resulted from sincere and faithful people's efforts, but before long it became clear that effective preparation and careful selection made a big difference.

This awareness was vague and largely unguided at first, but leaders in the field of missionary recruitment and development began to discover the variables that were most important. Under the wise guidance of the mid-century pioneers—people and ministries—readiness for ministry was enhanced and selection of missionaries became a matter of more careful choice.

Many of the chapters in this book reveal the footprints of these pioneering efforts; these writings are historically valuable as evidences of the growing awareness of selection, placement, nurture, and in-service care as major factors in mission effectiveness and competence on the field. What is to be learned from the research? . . . *missionary kids from strong, healthy families do a lot better (whatever the issue) than kids from stressed, unbalanced, or dysfunctional families. It is relatively unimportant what kind of school setting the kids are in, the age of going to boarding school, the age of repatriation, the length of time overseas, etc. Maybe we needed research to tell us to "go back to basics"—such things as the importance of fathers spending time with their kids. That is certainly not unique to missionaries.*

The special needs of those engaged in the Christian ministries—whether at home or abroad—have received more attention as the understanding of the serving community has increased. For too long it was assumed that being a soldier in the army of the Lord brings special immunity to the emotional stresses of life, and that the degree of "living above it all" is a measure of spirituality. By now, we know better. But mission organizations often fail to put their understanding into practical forms that can effectively support and assist the families under pressure and stress.

Caring for Those Who Serve

The latest big question in the field of Christian mission is whether or not "foreign missions" is an effective way to approach the matter of world evangelization. Surely it is becoming more costly and demands a larger investment of time and resources. For every missionary there are several dependents. For each of the dependents (and for the missionaries themselves), there are social, emotional, and physical needs that require special help—and increasingly demand the establishment and maintenance of institutions.

Many of these needs were assumed to be reduced by the "new face of missions"—rapid long-distance travel, shorter mission assignments, and international schools. But no, all of this simply increased the ease of bringing the pre-existing difficulties of families into the remote and demanding realm of overseas service. Little by little, these circumstances are better understood. It seems harsh and even not appropriate for Christians to be so lacking in faith as to question the call of God on such practical matters. But when a family offers to undertake a huge financial or life-at-risk chance by taking overseas a child who has been diagnosed with a long-term heart problem or some other ailment that could involve vast amounts of medical expense, somewhere in the support system there should be warning bells ringing.

One of the editors of this manuscript made the following observation: One of the messages of any book on “caring for those who serve” is that those who serve need a lot of care at a lot of points—more than most mission agencies can possibly give, and maybe more than they should try to give, in the context of limited resources.

Caring for those who serve is built on a foundation of faith undergirded by the Word of God. On this foundation a series of practical steps are appropriate, beginning with a secure system for underwriting traumatic expenses. (James 2:17 offers an appropriate warning about lonely faith.) The issue is not simply cost, but preparation and, especially wisdom—godly wisdom informing faith.

Preparing Those Who Serve

All those who serve God in the outreach ministry of evangelism need and deserve appropriate preparation. Service is based on decisions and actions of voluntary commitment of oneself to the tasks of ministry. But somewhere along the line there are some standards and qualifications to be considered. It is not enough to be willing. It is not enough to *want* to serve. Every servant of God is equipped with the gifts of God’s Holy Spirit, appropriate and adequate for the work of ministry. This is a matter of faith in God’s purposes and of his faithfulness to those whom he calls. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the foundational; by availing oneself of the opportunities for learning—through reading, by study, and through experience—these gifts are enhanced, expanded, and fitted for applications in ministry. Guiding these processes and bringing them to effective fulfillment is the task of those who undertake to prepare those who serve.

Providing the Resources

No matter how fervent, how creative, or how carefully dedicated to the cause of Christ, the way will often seem blocked as common facts of life emerge. Ordinary principles from management science, such as the following, often arise to startle mission planners:

1. Everything costs money.
2. Even things that prove to be useless cost money.

These first two principles can be too easily overlooked. The first is obvious and obviously is important. Misplaced faith in one’s own mystical powers of persuasion cannot replace a sound business plan. Yes, God will provide. But keep in mind that God makes the judgment calls!

The second principle requires a humble self-assessment. Just because an idea sounds persuasive and exciting to you, remember that most ideas sound persuasive and exciting until they are put to the test in the real situations. And when the idea goes nowhere its collapse is made more tragic by the waste of resources represented.

A third and fourth principle can be added in order to keep your sense of balance and perspective:

3. Every time you add something to the closet, something else must go.
4. There is always enough time or money; the difficult task is *budgeting*—to assign priorities effectively.

These principles, like the first two, work together to encourage planners to take the task more seriously. The third principle is built upon the maxim of an uncluttered closet. The issue is not getting all the good stuff into it, but being systematic about getting the extraneous stuff out in a timely manner.

The fourth principle is built upon the third by reminding that a sound budget is not a matter of making an adequate list, but rather of making sure that the priorities are well assigned and treated in a responsible manner.

Moving Forward

The CART/CORE research opened up the topics in a systematic and comprehensive way. The variety of research procedures provided a useful introduction to the methodologies of inquiry. Perhaps these insights will prove more valuable than any of the specific conclusions that can be drawn from this research as a whole.

The chapters in this book are like individual gems set in a ring. Each represents a particular event, task, or topic in the recent history of *Families in Mission*. Each is concerned with one or another of the efforts to move understanding forward. The methods and responsibilities undertaken by the various authors are widely different. We can hope that these differences enrich each reader's understanding of these important gems. If so, the beauty and complexity of this ring of inquiry will be made accessible in a way that reveals its significance.