



## LEADER'S GUIDE

# Ministering in the Global Church

*A fractured church with a crippled mission  
finds healing through brokenness.*

Most of us accustomed to a Western, or American, style of “doing church” have never seen the situations or met the people Christopher Heuertz describes firsthand. We have not lived in tent cities or shared meals composed almost entirely of refuse. We have not confronted the horror of merely surviving in the face of inhumane evil and violence.

Heuertz call us to become personally involved in the mission of God by entering into the world of the poor and broken. This is missions work as we typically understand it but usually delegated to “professional” missionaries. But Heuertz goes further. He encourages us to see the less fortunate, less educated and less privileged not as a mission field to merely convert and remake into our image. Rather, we should see the poor, the illiterate, and broken as healthy, necessary members of the body of Christ.

This study will examine some of the major themes from Christopher Heuertz's article and will discuss the biblical rationale for this startling point of view.

### Lesson #4

#### Scripture:

Matthew 4:23; 5:3–12; 9:35–38; 12:27–29; 19:23–25; 21:31–46; Mark 4:26–32; Luke 4:18–19, 43; John 3:5; 18:36; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 12:13–14,27; Ephesians 1:22–23; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:15–20,24



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**Based on:**  
"[A Community of the Broken](#)," by Christopher L. Heurtz, THE CHRISTIAN VISION PROJECT (February 12, 2007)



**PART 1**

**Identify the Current Issue**

*Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the article "A Community of the Broken" from THE CHRISTIAN VISION PROJECT, included at the end of this study.*

Christopher Heuertz identifies three major issues. First, the church as a whole cannot effectively fulfill its mission because of a crippling deformity: blindness. We cannot *see* the poor and broken as Christ does—instead, we view them as “other.” Seeing the poor and broken as a mission field for “professional” missionaries to target, the church has lost its hands and now cannot touch the lives of the broken. Failing to truly enter their fractured worlds, we cannot minister effectively. Blind, numb, and absent, we fail to express the kingdom of God missionally.



Second, Heuertz sees the church as being overly segregated. While women disciples outnumber the men worldwide, fewer women find leadership positions than men. And while the majority of the global church consists of non-white, non-American believers in the Global South, the Western church has yet to fully realize this, embrace it, or shift the center of perceived leadership.

Finally, Heuertz sees the church as crippled and fractured. While his ministry, Word Made Flesh (WMF), integrates representatives from the three major streams of Christianity (Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant), the Western church rejects ecumenical cooperation in order to protect doctrinal purity. Even within his own organization, doctrinal divides prevent shared ministry experiences, such as the sacrament of Communion. Yet Heuertz says that while distinctive doctrines may be preserved, the Western Church has lost its missional integrity. Our widespread failure to cooperate around the center of Christ and his mission leads to ministry failure and an amputated, crippled body of Christ.

**Discussion starters:**

- [Q] Do you agree or disagree with Heuertz’ assertion that the church is crippled? Why or why not?
- [Q] Describe some ministries where the church is not crippled as Heuertz describes. For example, can you recount ways the church has not viewed the poor as “other,” where the church has not been racially or economically segregated, or where believers from different faith streams have been able to effectively cooperate?
  - 1) If you cannot think of any examples, why? How does this confirm Heuertz’ premise, or does it?
  - 2) If you *can* think of examples, how does this refute Heuertz’ premise, or does it?
- [Q] Heuertz defines the church as: “the community that anticipates and seeks to express the kingdom of God.” What do you think of this definition?
  - 1) What biblical evidence do you find to support or refute this definition?



- 2) How does thinking of the church in this way differ from how you've normally thought about it?
- 3) Is this way of viewing the church more or less inclusive than other definitions you've heard? Is this definition broader or narrower than the definition of church you or others may hold?

**Leader's Note:** You may want to point your group's attention to some or all of the following passages for discussion: *Ephesians 1:22–23; 1 Corinthians 12:13–14, 27; and Colossians 1:15–20, 24.*

**[Q]** Heuertz describes some signs that “the kingdom has come in a small way” including seeing “former child soldiers teaching and embodying forgiveness.” How is this a sign that the kingdom of God has come?

- 1) What are some other signs of the arrival of the kingdom of God?
- 2) How do these signs intersect with the mission of the church?
- 3) What does the Bible have to say about the kingdom of God?

**Leader's Note:** You may want to point your group's attention to some or all of the following passages for discussion: *Matthew 4:23; 12:27–29; 19:23–25; 21:31–46; Mark 4:26–32; Luke 4:43; John 3:5; 18:36; and Romans 14:17.*

## PART 2

### Discover the Eternal Principles

#### Teaching point one: The Western church is imprisoned in a lavish ghetto.

Heuertz says that the church in its current state is “fragmented, divided, and ineffective at even simple tasks.” One example is our view of mission:

“For many Christians today, mission can seem to be little more than sanctified tourism. Raised as opportunistic individuals, we bounce from one short-term experience to the next. We keep our options open and avoid committing to any one organization or set of relationships—so much so that many of us would rather work 20 hours a week pouring coffee than give our lives to helping secure safe drinking water for others.”

This is a special kind of bondage: we are bound not only to our limited view of mission, but we have become slaves to our culture. Western culture and Western-style church don't reflect the state of affairs almost everywhere else in the world.

As a result of living comfortably in our gated communities and comparatively lavish homes, “Western Christians are often isolated from people who are poor.” Rather than ministering *with friends*, we view the mission of God as ministering “*to the poor*.” Viewing the mission field as populated by the “other,” it's all-too easy to delegate the task of missions to professional missionaries while we remain comfortably at home.

True freedom however can be found in giving up the liberties of the developed world in order to “offer the freedom that comes with knowing Christ.”

**[Q]** Is Heuertz' criticism of the American church too harsh, or not harsh enough? Why?



- [Q]** Heuertz seems to focus primarily on the poor and indigent beyond American borders. How can believers rise to the challenge of missional living while planted within Western culture?
- 1) How can one live missionally while working “20 hours a week pouring coffee?”
  - 2) Is it realistic to expect that every Christian commit to a lifestyle of poverty in order to minister among and with the poor? If so, how can this be done? If not, how should the American church respond to Heuertz’ call to action?
- [Q]** Even as Heuertz is calling the Western church to a missionality, especially among the downtrodden, non-Western nations are sending missionaries to America. How do we explain this? How is it possible America is a mission-field even while we are attempting to fulfill our mission among non-Western people-groups?
- [Q]** Read the Beatitudes from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3–12). What implications does Jesus’ message have for the way we fulfill our mission?
- 1) Imagine two believers: one is a billionaire several times over, and another has a steady job but lives from paycheck to paycheck. Which of the two might find it easier to be “poor in spirit”? Why?
  - 2) How wealthy are you compared with the kinds of war-torn, persecuted, famished, and impoverished people Heuertz and his organization minister to?
  - 3) How does the typical American score on “meekness” when compared with residents of other countries?
    - How do national and cultural pride effect one’s spirituality and worldview?
  - 4) When Jesus says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” how would Americans read this verse differently than Grace’s mother would?

### **Teaching point two: The global church looks like the Day of Pentecost.**

In Acts chapter 2, after Christ ascended into heaven, the Spirit of God was poured out on the believers gathered in Jerusalem. Dozens of cultures and ethnicities witnessed the event: “Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism Cretans and Arabs).” When Peter stood up to preach in this “mosaic,” 3,000 people came to faith.

The very first evangelistic missionary event on the Day of Pentecost resulted in a far more variegated church than even the most ethnically diverse Sunday morning service in North America! In reality, the majority of believers alive in the world today are not white. Nor are they male. As Heuertz notes: “today’s ‘typical’ Christian is much more likely to be a young Nigerian or Brazilian woman than a Western white male.” Yet our churches do not reflect this mosaic.

When we finally gather around the throne in heaven to give worship and adoration to God, we may be surprised to see that the ultimate worship service won’t look anything like what we are used to. It will look a lot like that first day at Pentecost as “every nation, tribe, people, and language” gathered with one voice for the glory of God.



Just a few hundred years ago Western Europe stood at the “center” of Christendom, with religious and state leadership often vested in the same person. Within the last couple hundred years, the North American church inherited this “centrist” mindset. However, over the last several decades, the church in the Global South has exploded and now vastly outnumbers the Western church. Even within America, immigrant and non-white churches are among the fastest growing segments of evangelicalism. Yet few denominational organizations in America have non-white leadership at the top. And fewer still have top female leaders. As Heuertz asserts, when we don’t minister as though “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” (Galatians 3:28), the church is not fulfilling her mission.

- [Q] Discussing race and ethnicity in the church can be an emotional minefield. How do we address racial and ethnic inequities without giving offense? Or should it be discussed at all? How does the discussion deepen or help resolve the problem?
- [Q] Why should it matter whether the church in America reflects greater racial diversity? Many churches are physically located in communities that are not racially diverse. Why should this matter to them?
- [Q] Michael Emerson and Christian Smith have noted that “90 percent of American churches are 90 percent composed of people of the same race” (see: “[Behold, the Global Church](#)”). How can a local church address ethnic homogeneity? Is it simply a matter of doctrine and teaching, or hiring and training? Should churches try to recruit non-white ministers?
- [Q] Tim Stafford [noted](#): “[T]he most important development for the church in the 20th and 21st centuries has not been in the West at all, but in the astonishing shift of Christianity’s center of gravity from the Western industrialized nations to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In a short time, Christianity has been transformed from a European religion to a global one.” And Christopher Wright [has written](#) that in the early 20th century nine out of ten Christians were Western, but at the dawn of the 21st century “70 percent of the world’s Christians live in the non-Western world.”

- 1) Why do church historians and leaders find this shift so important?

**Leader’s Note:** *One idea to probe: According to Andrew Walls (in “[Historian Ahead of His Time](#)”), Christians in the Global South interpret the Bible more conservatively and literally than their Northern and Western counterparts. As the church in the South becomes more populous and influential, schisms are developing between the North and the South, as witnessed recently between the Episcopal Church in the US and the African Anglican church. Differences in biblical interpretation, theology, and application lead to further rifts and disunity. Unless the North American church builds bridges with the church leaders in the majority world, we may see devastating denominational splits.*

- 2) What false assumptions do we sometimes have about “real Christianity” that are rooted in a culturally-biased worldview?
- 3) Rather than worrying about so-called “geographical center,” what would a genuinely Christ-centered “Global Christianity” look like?
- 4) We tend to think of the Western church as the primary missions-sending “agency” for the world today, but half of all Protestant missionaries come from *non*-Western countries (see: “[An Upside-Down World](#)”). How does this challenge your view of mission? How do you think this is changing the way missions is being done globally?



### Teaching point three: A church with genuine mission has no comfort zone.

Jesus' mission was "to preach good news to the poor ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18–19). In order to accomplish this mission he assumed an uncomfortable mantle: Jesus "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:5–11). If we are to follow his example we, too, will need to empty ourselves of power, wealth, and prestige. We will need to assume the role of servants, ministering to the less privileged—not condescending *to* them, but entering into their world to be *with* them.

As Heuertz states, quoting David Chronic, "The poor do not need to be integrated into our community. God is calling us, rather, to identify with theirs."

- [Q] Why are so few called to missions work? If God has called many, rather than few, what is preventing us from answering the call?
- [Q] What are the hardest things for Western Christians to leave behind, to "empty" ourselves of, when considering a missional lifestyle?
- [Q] What can your church do to fuel the interest and passion of believers for living and working missionally? What can your church do to empower and commission missionaries?
- [Q] What can your church do *locally* to be more missional?
- [Q] What can parents do to help their children become mission minded and less bound to their Western-style comfort zones?
- [Q] Dallas Willard has defined spiritual disciplines as small actions that are within your power enabling you to do, over time, what you could not do now by force of will alone. If living missionally seems a daunting (or impossible) task, what spiritual disciplines would help believers move gradually in this direction?

**Leader's Note:** *Probably any spiritual discipline can help in this area, however, some key disciplines and character traits to discuss would be generosity, hospitality, stewardship, frugality, humility, compassion, love, and mercy. Explore how these are critical to missional living out of one's "comfort zone."*

#### **Optional Activity:**

*Love is the primary driving force for missionaries serving and sacrificing on the mission field. Without love, a missional lifestyle or a missionary endeavor is simply another occupational exercise. However, if the love of God compels us, we are able to give and sacrifice and surrender ourselves to the task with joy. Then, as Heuertz notes, "the embrace of a child who has grown up on the streets frees ... hearts from a bondage they didn't know they had."*

*Since you cannot love those whom you have not known, it pays to get personal.*

- *If your church is near a college or university, contact one of the student ministry groups there and ask if there are any students studying from abroad who would be interested in coming to speak to your small group. If you can find one or more willing participants, ask them to simply come and share their testimony with your*



*group. Invite them to bring family photos, a recent newspaper, or anything relevant to their cultural background. Make it low key and non-threatening. You just want them to share of themselves, their culture, and the need for the gospel in their hometown.*

- *Check with your church leadership to see if there are any retired missionaries attending your church, or if any active missionaries are scheduled to visit in the near future. Missionaries will enjoy talking about their beloved mission field and will be more than happy to come talk to your group about the people they ministered with. Feel free to collaborate with your missionary for ways to make the talk and meeting relevant and personal. The goal is to personalize and “put a face on” the unknown.*

### PART 3

## Apply Your Findings

The Western church may truly be crippled as Heuertz describes. But, then, it may not be as feeble as he makes it sound. After all, while half of all Protestant missionaries come from non-Western countries, the good news is that we're still sending one of every two missionaries—even though non-Western believers outnumber us seven to one.

When the Jerusalem church was scattered upon the destruction of Jerusalem, the “center” of Christianity moved to Rome. When Rome was ransacked, the center moved to Western Europe, then England. As the Reformation leaped the ocean, the new beachhead became North America. Now the wave seems to be moving South and East—to Brazil, Africa, India, and Asia. In some ways, the gospel tsunami has come “full circle,” and in doing so seems to be maturing into a truly global Christianity.

In every era, questions regarding how to do the mission of the church are challenged when the gospel advances into new cultures and frontiers. How a believer from Bangladesh will “live missionally” might well differ from how believers from Nepal, Venezuela, or Cape Town will do it. We all share the same Bible, so there will be commonalities, to be sure. But the differences in the way we are called to do the mission of the church are not necessarily crippling distinctions.

We each have a mission field: the barista pouring coffee is called to live missionally in his community just as the Fortune 500 executive is called to live missionally in her community. For some, living missionally according to the call God has placed on their lives means uprooting their home and living in a *barrio*. For another it might mean raising support funds and traveling to a monsoon-soaked village in India. And for yet another it really might mean thriving where they are planted.

The key to living missionally may well have less to do with the mechanics and geography of your place of residence and more to do with how effectively you have been emptied of yourself (see Philippians 2) and how full you are with the Spirit and the mission of God: to preach the good news to the poor, to loose captives and release the oppressed, to make the blind see and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18–19).

**[Q]** What does it really mean to live missionally? Is it about geography, lifestyle, service, sacrifice, passions? What are the true earmarks of someone whose life is truly centered on the mission of God?





- [Q] Who do you know who is living a missional lifestyle? If you don't know anybody personally, can you think of someone in history who lived missionally? What about biblical characters? Who can you point to who lived missionally? What about their life was missional?
- [Q] Heuertz defines the church as "the community that anticipates and seeks to express the kingdom of God." How well does that describe you and your family? How are you anticipating the kingdom of God? How are you seeking to express it?
- [Q] How have you entered into someone's life and ministered to them lately?
- How has someone entered into your life to minister to you?
  - How was this liberating for you?

**Action point:**

To live missionally is to live with the mission of God in this world beating in your heart. And God's mission is to draw all men, women, and children to him in love, worship, and obedience. Read Matthew 9:35–38.

There are three prayers implied here. The first prayer is the one Jesus did not need to pray: we must have the heartbeat of God beating within our breast so that when we see the lost, we respond with divine, heart-broken compassion.

The second prayer is like it: we must pray that God will somehow meet the need.




The third prayer is that God prepare and use *us* to meet that need.

This week, add that first prayer to your daily agenda. Pray the Lord of the Harvest give you a heart of compassion for the lost. Pray that your heart learns to break for those whom you've never met. When that happens, when the Holy Spirit pours his love into your heart, the other two prayers will flow naturally from that. In fact, you won't be able to not give those prayers.















Living missionally means loving without boundaries.

—Study prepared by Rich Tatum, [blogger](#), freelancer,  
and former online media managing editor for CTI.

## Additional Resources

-  [\*Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!\*](#) John Stott (InterVarsity Press, 1976; ISBN 978-0877844853)
-  [\*Whatever It Takes: The Amazing Adventures of God's Work Around the World\*](#), Dub Jackson (B & H Publishing Group, 2003; ISBN 978-0805426885)
-  [\*Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West\*](#), Lamin Sanneh (Eerdmans, 2003; ISBN 978-0802821645)



-  [\*It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives\*](#), Tod E. Bolsinger (Brazos Press, 2004; ISBN 978-1587430893)
-  [\*Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry, and Mission in Practice\*](#), Jonathan Wilson (Baker, 2006; ISBN 978-1587430374)
-  [\*The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World\*](#), Alan Roxburgh (Jossey-Bass, 2006; ISBN 978-0787983253)
-  [\*The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South\*](#), Philip Jenkins (Oxford University Press, 2006; ISBN 978-0195300659)
-  [\*The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative\*](#), Christopher J.H. Wright (InterVarsity Press, 2006; ISBN 978-0830825714)
-  [\*Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture\*](#), Michael Frost (Hendrickson, 2006; ISBN 978-1565636705)
-  [\*Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism\*](#), Mark Mittleberg and Bill Hybels (Zondervan, 2002; ISBN 978-0310250005)
-  [\*United by Faith: the Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race\*](#), Curtiss Paul DeYoung (Oxford University Press, 2004; ISBN 978-0195177527)
-  ["What is a Church? Biblical Basics for Christian Community,"](#) Mark D. Roberts, Ph.D. ([markdroberts.com](http://markdroberts.com), October 2, 2006 [Accessed: August 1, 2007])
-  ["What's Next: Local Church,"](#) Tim Stafford (*Christianity Today*, October 2, 2006 [Accessed: August 2, 2007])
-  ["Historian Ahead of His Time,"](#) Tim Stafford, (*Christianity Today*, February 8, 2007 [Accessed: July 26, 2007])
-  ["It's a Small Church After All,"](#) Mark Hutchinson (*Christianity Today*, November 6, 1998 [Accessed: August 1, 2007])
-  ["An Upside-Down World,"](#) Christopher J. H. Wright (*Christianity Today*, January 18, 2007 [Accessed July 27, 2007])
-  ["Behold, the Global Church,"](#) Brenda Salter McNeil (*Christianity Today*, November 17, 2006 [Accessed: August 3, 2007])



# THE CHRISTIAN VISION PROJECT

ARTICLE

## **A Community of the Broken**

*A young organization models what it might mean to be the church in a suffering world.*

By Christopher L. Heuertz, for the study, “Ministering in the Global Church”

Several years ago, I made my first trip to Freetown, Sierra Leone, just as that country's civil war was winding down. One of my first stops was a camp for the war wounded.

During the war, nearly 250,000 people had their arms or legs amputated by rebels, militia groups, or government soldiers. The mutilations killed the great majority of victims. But a few survived: Those who had the presence of mind to run to safety with their bleeding stumps lifted above their heads to avoid fatal blood loss.



Late in the day, I found myself on the front step of a young woman's slum-like camp home. She looked able-bodied and healthy. Yet her story was as terrible as each of the others'—her village had been attacked, her home burned to the ground, and her husband killed before her eyes. Finally, she had been brutally raped.

As she was speaking, I looked over my shoulder to see her 3-year-old daughter, Grace, picking up a handful of peanuts with one hand. As a 2-month-old baby, Grace had lost her left arm just above the elbow to the same men who had already taken everything from her young mother.

Grace was biting on the shell of a peanut, pressing it against what was left of her arm, to no avail. As a full-grown man with all my limbs, I still have trouble opening a peanut. Grace was trying to do the same without an arm.

Though my travels have taken me to many unforgettable places, that moment with Grace and her mother is seared into my memory—not just for what it taught me about human suffering and perseverance, but also for what it taught me about the plight of the church.

### **Our Broken Body**

An essential Christian conviction is that the church is the community that anticipates and seeks to express the kingdom of God. To explain the healthy



functioning of the church, the apostle Paul twice turned to the metaphor of a human body, equipped with many different parts, that working together could live out the life of its risen Lord, the head of the body, in a broken world.

But the body of Christ, far from being a healthy, functioning body with the capacity to respond to the needs of the world, is more like a child who is missing a limb. We are fragmented, divided, and ineffective at even simple tasks. Yet, like Grace, some of us are young, foolish, or brave enough to try to overcome these limitations.

That has been the goal of Word Made Flesh (WMF). Our community can be found in the sewers of Eastern Europe meeting with children living on the streets, with former child soldiers in the refugee camps of West Africa, among victims of sex trafficking and children with aids throughout Asia, and in the shanty-towns and *favelas* of South America.

It's often observed that there is among my generation a crisis in the theology and practice of mission. For many Christians today, mission can seem to be little more than sanctified tourism. Raised as opportunistic individuals, we bounce from one short-term experience to the next. We keep our options open and avoid committing to any one organization or set of relationships—so much so that many of us would rather work 20 hours a week pouring coffee than give our lives to helping secure safe drinking water for others.

The challenge for WMF is working with those who are intelligent yet doctrinally confused, lonely yet community-resistant, cause-driven yet commitment-averse, idealistic yet cynical, magnanimous yet suspicious, and, not least, over-educated yet deep in debt—and challenging them to establish community with and among the oppressed of the world.

## **The Voices of Friends**

Western Christians are often isolated from people who are poor. This is all the more troubling given the centrality of the poor in the Bible. God seeks provision for the poor (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 15:4, 7-11; Ps. 41:1; Prov. 28:27), identifies with the poor (Ps. 68:5-6; Prov. 14:31; 17:5; 19:17; Isa. 3:14-15; 1 Cor. 1:27-29; 2 Cor. 8:9; James 2:5), validates the authenticity of our Christian life through our relationships with the poor (Prov. 21:13; 22:9; 28:5; 29:7; Isa. 58:6-11; 1 John 3:16-18), and uses the poor as the standard for judgment of individuals and nations (Ps. 109:6-16; 140:12; Jer. 22:16; Amos 5:11-12; Matt. 25:31-46).

As our Africa-Europe regional coordinator David Chronic wrote several years ago, "The poor do not need to be integrated into our community. God is calling us, rather, to identify with theirs." At WMF, ministry is not so much to "the poor" as "with friends." It is a simple verbal change that attempts to honor and humanize those we minister to.



In the same way, in the ministry's quarterly journal, *The Cry*, you are likely to find a story by a child who works as a prostitute next to an article by a prominent theologian; a prophetic piece submitted by a child who grew up on the streets in Lima next to a reflection from one of our full-time staff.

Many in WMF have found that giving up the freedom that comes with the developed world in order to offer the freedom that comes with knowing Christ is hardly a sacrifice.

Many say that the embrace of a child who has grown up on the streets frees their hearts from a bondage they didn't know they had. They see those who prostitute themselves discovering in the pages of Scripture surprising restoration. They see former child soldiers teaching and embodying forgiveness, a sign that the kingdom has come in a small way.

WMF has highly educated and well-qualified women and men on its boards of directors and leading its communities around the world—still, one of its international boards is chaired by a refugee with a fourth-grade education.

## **A Global Mosaic**

Much of my early exposure to mission came in compounds spread across Asia and Africa. These missional communities lived together, often in a walled campus, creating a transplanted microcosm of their culture and society. Rarely in these communal compounds would I see an African or Asian coworker who wasn't a gardener or a cook. Although these communities were full of dedicated men and women, I began to fear that this model of mission was a kind of apartheid that hindered the message of the church and undermined genuine community.

This is especially a challenge for a ministry like WMF that draws its members largely from college and university campuses. As Michael Emerson and Christian Smith observe in *Divided by Faith*, the highly educated are less likely to express overt racism or prejudice—yet in North America, it is the university educated who live in the most segregated neighborhoods and whose churches seem least likely to have culturally diverse memberships.

Word Made Flesh strives to cultivate a mosaic of diverse Christian community. The staff at its Omaha office includes middle-class alumni of Christian colleges but also immigrants from Mexico and Vietnam. Nearly all staffers raise "missionary support," but some multinational and multicultural staff come from communities that offer support of other kinds rather than finances. Finding a way to sustain a truly multiethnic U.S. office is an ongoing challenge.

Internationally, WMF tries to foster multiethnic partnerships. The Bolivian staff serving in India and the Romanian staff serving in Peru have made some of the deepest connections among the poor. To be sure, a church like Nepal's has its own



urgent needs that can make it hard for a Nepali to serve in a place like Brazil, but the more such exchanges happen, the more we believe we anticipate the time when the Lamb will be praised by people of "every nation, tribe, people, and language."

## **Women and Men as Partners**

Not long ago, I was at a large gathering of young evangelical leaders. The conference boasted delegates from more than 100 nations in an effort to represent the global body of Christ. Just under a quarter of the participants were women.

In one sense, this represented great progress—at similar gatherings 30 years ago, women would have been far less well represented. Yet in another sense, the gathering was far from an accurate picture of who is providing leadership to the global church.

As Philip Jenkins points out, today's "typical" Christian is much more likely to be a young Nigerian or Brazilian woman than a Western white male. Women are the numerical majority of Christians around the world. And it is only when women and men work together that we demonstrate the wholeness of Christ's body, where "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Mother Teresa, perhaps the most influential woman of the 20th century, ignited the imagination of the world and encouraged the church to see Christ even in his most "distressing disguise." Along with lesser-known WMF saints such as Jyothi Bhattarai, Daphne Eck, Phileena Heuertz, and Elizabeth de Sirpa, she was raised up by God as a leader for both men and women to follow into service of Christ among the poor. Needless to say, this is an important value at WMF.

## **Missing our Brothers and Sisters**

For many North American evangelicals, ecumenism has come to imply compromise. But in Word Made Flesh, ecumenical partnership is seen not as moving away from truth for the sake of unity, but as moving toward the center: Christ himself. When Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians come together in the name of Jesus, the body of Christ regains some of its fullness and integrity.

The Orthodox women and men in the community have brought tremendous gifts in the arts, teaching us how to create authentic and tangible expressions of love for God. Catholic community members have an instinct for communal identity that deepens collective accountability. And the Protestants are naturally able to find simple, culturally accessible forms of song and prayer. WMF has found that each of these three great traditions brings a crucial and gracious correction to the limitations of the others.



But when we come together for the meal that is at the center of the church's life, we encounter the persistent brokenness of Christ's body. Two Catholic priests serve on the U.S. board and have made crucial contributions to our predominantly Protestant organization. But at the Communion table, they are unable to serve the elements or partake of them.

Those experiences compel us to pray for the restoration of the unity of the church, and to love and serve one another until that restoration takes place.

At times like these, I feel especially like Grace, intensely aware of the brokenness of our body and the ways we are handicapped in our witness in the world. Calling the poor our friends, making partners of those from very different cultural backgrounds, advancing the calling of women as well as men—all of these are demanding and humbling commitments that more often reveal our disabilities than our abilities.

So Grace has become, for me, a symbol of hope. After all, she and her mother survived. Paradoxically yet wonderfully, even with their broken hearts and a missing limb, they had something to offer me.

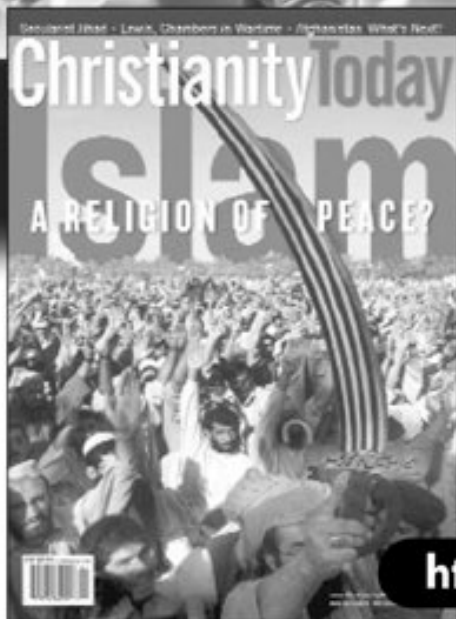
Community with those like Grace is a community of the broken and incomplete—but I believe it is also the beginning of the kingdom arriving in all its wholeness, for Grace and for us.

—*Christopher L. Heuertz*

["A Community of the Broken,"](#) by Christopher L. Heuertz, The Christian Vision Project (February 12, 2007)



# UNDERSTAND THE WORLD



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