

Theological Education:
The Challenge of Folk Religions,
Tribal Peoples, and Their
Response to the Jesus Film

Church of the Nazarene – Jesus Film Partnership

- Presently being shown in 113 languages in 85 countries
- Tremendous response in many countries

What Are Realistic Expectations for the Next 7-10 Years

- 50 million viewers
- 5 million will indicate a positive response to accepting Jesus
- Potential 1,500,000 new Christians becoming church members in next 7-10 years
- Present membership 1.3 million members worldwide
- Membership of the Church of the Nazarene could double in next 10 years

Who Will the New Members Be?

- Most will come from Africa, India, Bangladesh, South and Central America
- The new Christians will have little or no Biblical knowledge
- Approx. 70% will be illiterate or semi-literate speaking over 100 different languages
- The new members will come mainly from a background of folk religions

This is the Challenge

- In the next ten years we could conceivably double the membership of the church
- Most of the new members will be functionally non-literate people
- These new Nazarenes will live in city slums or rural villages
- Most new Nazarenes will be extremely poor

How Many New Churches Will We Need?

- 1,500,000 members
- 50 members/church = 30,000 new churches in next ten years
- 100 members/church = 15,000 new churches in next 10 years

How Many New Pastors Will We Need?

- We will need 15,000 – 30,000 new pastors to lead the new churches that will result from the showing of the Jesus Film
- These pastors will have grown up mainly in folk religions with a background that was animistic, Hindu, or folk Catholicism.

Special Features of Folk Religions

- They are more concerned about life “here and now” than life “hereafter”
- They respond best to visual, dramatic, and narrative approaches
- They want to see spiritual power demonstrated in observable ways e.g. healing, dreams, visions, demons cast out, miracles of nature (e.g. Book of Acts)

Spirit World is Very Important

- These new Nazarenes grew up knowing that the spirit world is very real and has always had a big influence on their everyday lives
- They ask: How does Jesus relate to village gods and goddesses, ancestor spirits, witchcraft and sorcery?
- Nazarenes have a problem. Articles of Faith do not even mention the spirit world
- Nazarene Bible Colleges have largely ignored the spirit world and in so doing have given the impression that Jesus is unable to deal with the spirit world.

How Should We Do Follow-up?

- Narrative: story comes first. Theology is derived from the story.
- Visual: visual symbols cross language barriers and do not require literacy skills
- Re-teachable: We must multiply trainers who can teach others
- Low tech, Low cost: Most of these new Churches will have very little money and no electricity

How Can We Do it? -- Level One

- God Story Video
- Genesis - Revelation in 80 minutes. Simple visuals traces the story of salvation from Creation-fall -flood-Babel- Abraham Isaac-Moses- Passover - Christ life, death resurrection, ascension and second coming.
- 36 languages. Portable solar powered DVD player

Level Two: Illustrated Bible Lessons

- Have been widely used in PNG for 25 years
- They are re-teachable visual aids that assist an oral presentation
- They are extremely good for teaching narrative materials
- They have proven to be very effective in Sunday school, women's ministries, preaching services, camp meetings, baptismal and membership classes.

Develop a Series of 50 Lessons that Cover Genesis – Revelation

- Creation, Fall, Flood, Babel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph; - 10 lessons
- Moses, Passover, 10 Commandments, Golden Calf, Tabernacle, Joshua and Jericho: 8 lessons
- Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Exile: 7 lessons

50 Lessons Continued

- John the Baptist, Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus: 14 lessons
- Ascension, Pentecost, Growth of the Church, Second Coming: 11 lessons

Level Three: The Drama of Redemption

- College level text book: Narrative theology that goes from Genesis to Revelation.
- Looks at the Bible from the perspective of tribal people.
- Emphasizes the Drama of Redemption: Through the cross, Christ has triumphed over sin, death, and the devil.
- Christ is not only the Saviour from sin, but also heals, and delivers from evil spirits, witchcraft and sorcery.

Conclusion

- The Jesus Film is being mightily used by God to reach hundreds of thousands of people.
- In the next ten years 5 million people could respond positively to the Jesus Film
- We need the Holy Spirit's anointing and leadership as we respond urgently and creatively to disciple these new believers.