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Equipping Nationals to Train Church Planters in Their Culture

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Dynamic Church Planting International

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Mark Alan Williams

abstract

Training in a cross-cultural environment has its challenges, but these challenges can be overcome through cultural sensitivity and emphasizing biblical principles over North American bias. A key element of cross-cultural training is equipping nationals to multiply the training throughout their cultural setting. Nationals make the best trainers for one primary reason: they understand their people best.

This article provides practical methods for enhanced cross-cultural training effectiveness. Jesus' training process is outlined as a model for such training. Common mistakes are shared so they might be avoided in equipping nationals to train.

When we think of a "famine," we typically think of a lack of food. However, there are other kinds of famines, such as a lack of clean drinking water, a lack of shelter, or a lack of clothing.

In many places around the globe, there is a famine of training. This may be hard to imagine in first world countries where we are often over-stuffed with training.

I've had the privilege of training leaders around the world in about thirty countries from Nepal, to Italy, to Siberia, to Australia, to Ethiopia, to Colombia. Some had only the equivalent of a sixth grade education, and some even third grade. Giving three days of church planter training, I helped provide the most intensive Christian training they had ever received. Their "Certificate of Completion" for that training was like a college degree.

Some church planters are sent out with nothing more than a Bible, absolutely no instruction, and no funds. They were simply told to "Go and prove this book is true." They have suffered unnecessarily, simply due to ignorance of how to get the job done. It is not their fault. It is our fault when we do not share vital training and information with them.

So many new leaders in these countries have had the unfortunate task of planting churches with little or no instruction. This difficult, uneducated method is unnecessary. Jesus called us to be "Wise as serpents." [LM1] We are training around the world in places where there is a training and education famine of staggering proportions.

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have the right goal

Just training and handing out Bibles is not the answer. We must also train trainers in all cultures.

Years ago, our ministry, Dynamic Church Planting International (DCPI), started training in India. We had some wonderful experiences, but after flying halfway around the world, investing thousands in funds and hours, and coming home exhausted, we realized that we had not even touched the tip of the iceberg. The population of India is over one billion! If we were ever to begin to accomplish the task, we had to train trainers.

It has been said:

- If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day.
- If you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.

Yet an even more powerful concept is:

- If you train a man to train others to fish, you can transform a country.

Our DCPI vision is to ignite church planting movements around the world. We have realized that the best way to do this is to train trainers to not only train others, but to reproduce trainers and become fishers of men.

Currently our ministry trains about 8,000 leaders worldwide each year. In 2003 we only trained 801. That number has grown exponentially since then due to the

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fact that we learned to train trainers. Who does that training? Nationals train other nationals. It is 2 Timothy 2:2 in action: “And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The four “generations” in this verse (from Paul, to Timothy, to faithful men, to others also) depict the multiplication scenario needed in international training.

God wants us to be missions mobilizers!

money is not the answer

In *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours*, Roland Allen showed the importance of empowering nationals, not just sending money overseas. That book is a missions classic, yet somehow many have not gotten the message.

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Indeed, I did not understand this principle when in 2002, I spoke in a household church in Mysore, India. When the offering was taken, not having any rupees, I put in \$20.00. I certainly did not think this was a big deal. However, after the service as we rode on the train, the pastor explained that my offering had created a problem. It was the biggest offering they had ever received. Now the people would assume that he had rich benefactors in the USA and that they no longer needed to give. I was dumbfounded.

International leaders don't need our money. They might like it, but what they really need is training so they can fish and train others to be fishers of men.

what did jesus do?

We don't have to wonder what Jesus would do for people financially; we know. Matthew 8:20 (ASV) tells us, “And Jesus saith unto him, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” If anyone owned and could have handed out riches, it was Jesus. Nevertheless, that is not what He did. He didn't even heal every sick person He encountered. Instead, He gave something far more important: His teaching, His training, and His words of instruction.

What was the result? Jesus, in three years of ministry, started a world- and eternity- changing movement. How did He accomplish this? Of course, He was the Son of God, and that was incredibly special. Yet He promised that we would do even more. “I can guarantee this truth: Those who believe in Me will do the things that I am doing. They will do even greater things because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12 GW).

How can that happen—doing “even greater things” than Jesus? My opinion is that it happens as we follow in His footsteps and multiply leaders. The Multiplication Principle is when two multiply, they become four, which can become eight, which can become sixteen, and so on. Simply multiplying every year will result in one million disciples in twenty years and one billion in thirty years.¹ This is the way Christianity has spread in the past and the way it will spread in the future. Today there are over two billion who adhere to the Christian faith around the world. How many will there be in the future? The answer depends on the work of God and the multiplication of leaders.

Jesus modeled the Multiplication Principle when He mentored the twelve and the seventy-two. Luke 10:1–2 says, “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field’” (NIV).

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God wants us to mentor others as Jesus did. Second Timothy 2:2 gives this direction: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (NIV). Indeed, we can have a powerful impact as we multiply trainers who can do a much better job training in their culture than we can.

How can they do a better job? They know some things we may never know as well:

1. Their language—we might eventually learn it after months and years of study, but we will likely always speak with our American accent.
2. Their culture—a principle of anthropological study is that when you think you understand a culture, be careful . . . you don't.

Some other factors also cause nationals to be better trainers:

The understanding that,

1. “If my own countryman can do it, I can do it.” Instead of thinking, “This is American; it will not work here,” hearing their own fellow countrymen teaching and giving examples of their ministry makes it realistic and believable.
2. Using nationals removes ulterior motives. When an American comes, many internationals see walking dollar signs! The reality is that our country's wealth and past experience tells nationals that there can be a financial windfall if they can convince Americans to support them. This is a

¹ <http://answers.libertybaptistchurch.org.au/answers/57.pdf>

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distraction in training. Indeed, sometimes it is right to give money, but it can be a major distraction.

3. An equivalent educational level is important. In developing nations, many church leaders have a third to sixth grade education. We can sometimes unintentionally easily speak over their heads. Add the distraction of translation, and you have a formula for great confusion.
4. Nationals can blend in and be secret agents for outreach in their own countries. An American foreigner can stick out like a sore thumb.
5. Americans often cannot stay in a foreign country due to visa limitations, obligations at home, or the need to go home and raise funds. Also, they often cannot tolerate other cultural conditions.

The best trainers are indeed nationals.

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jesus' process of training

Jesus showed us how to train leaders through His example. Here is a summary of His process:

- Stage One, **MODELING**: The teacher does training to model it. In John 13:15 Jesus said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (NIV).
- Stage Two, **MENTORING**: The teacher does it as the disciple observes. The teacher offers instruction and feedback. Mark 3:14 says, “He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach” (NIV).
- Stage Three, **MONITORING**: The disciple does it, and the teacher observes. The teacher offers instruction and feedback. Luke 10:1, 17, “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go. The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name’” (NIV).
- Stage Four, **MULTIPLYING**: The disciple does it and reports to the teacher. The teacher provides ongoing instruction and encouragement. Matt 28:19–20 says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (NIV).

At DCPI, we have taken steps to follow this process Jesus showed us. Our policy is

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never to provide our training internationally without training trainers and sending them to minister as Jesus did.

Our church planter training is generally three full days. The potential trainers are pre-selected by the coordinator on location. We give an additional day for training those becoming Certified Trainers on how to teach our materials. Then ideally we have them immediately hold a training event where the trainees train, and we observe and give feedback.

how to's

Now let's look at some how to's for cross-cultural training.

1. Go to the people.

A traditional Bible school might be in a city where rural leaders come, or it may even be in the USA. The problem is that often after tasting city life or the first world, they want to stay. Thus, poor, isolated groups can be neglected. The best strategy is to go to the people, meet and train them in their home environment, and send them to reach their neighbors.

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2. Make training inexpensive but not free.

It is best if trainees contribute to the expenses of the training. In doing so, they value more what is provided and have a sense of participation, as opposed to simply receiving a handout. Typically this contribution is equal to the cost of reproducing the student outlines they receive and use for taking notes. Sometimes it also includes the cost of refreshments and lunches. Other expenses are often borne by a hosting church or association of churches.

3. Make training simple but profound.

Rick Warren has explained the difference between simplistic and simple:

- Simplistic = "Have a nice day!"
- Simple but profound = "This is the day that the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it."

Pride may cause us to want to impress with our concepts, theories, and vocabularies. If people have a third or sixth grade education, though, simplicity is vital. In many cultures, planning the future is uncommon. (Even many American church planters are not very good at planning.) Basic principles of planning and training can be revolutionary.

4. Trainers are Volunteers.

At DCPI, Certified Trainers are not paid to train. Sometimes they may receive an honorarium, but that is not the norm.

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Why then do they train for church planting? They do so because of a passion for the Lord Jesus and the Great Commission. It is a gift to the Lord and their countrymen. It would not be wrong for them to be paid. However, beside the fact that our ministry does not have funds to pay them, it would violate the principle discussed above about funds coming from the USA. Virtually all of our volunteer trainers are employees of their own church, association, or mission. Their passion to give of themselves has caused the multiplication of our impact.

5. Avoid areas of theological controversy.

Because we are training for practical ministry, we ask our trainers to avoid addressing non-essential and debated theological issues such as Calvinist and Armenian convictions. We want to stay focused on training to fulfill the Great Commission. Theological convictions are important—that is why we require that our leaders sign to indicate agreement with our doctrinal statement (similar to that of Campus Crusade for Christ). It covers the fundamentals of the faith and avoids minor issues.

6. Make training easily reproducible.

Our DCPI training is easily reproducible—everything that they need to train others is given with clear instruction. They just have to go out, find the people to train, and do it!

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levels of leadership

In order to transfer leadership to nationals, we have found it helpful to establish levels of leadership:

1. Dynamic Associates

These are leaders who set up training events. Like the Billy Graham Crusades, we never go anywhere unless we are invited. The ones who invite us are Dynamic Associates (DA's). A DA is simply one who organizes a training event.

How do we meet them? We have had many Partnership Trips in order to meet potential Dynamic Associates. Also helpful have been referrals, international missions conferences, Call2All gatherings, etc. The Billy Graham-sponsored Amsterdam 2000 gathering introduced us to over 1,000 leaders who requested our training.

2. Certified Trainers (CT's)

These are the ones to whom we have entrusted to train our materials. In addition to receiving the three days of training, they have an additional

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day of training in which we show them how to be trainers. Many times
people ask how we know who to make CT's. They are prequalified by the
DA's who arrange the training event, and typically they are very good
trainers.

Since most are already gifted at preaching and teaching, we mostly have to
train in specifics of how to train using our materials. Specifically, this
means a few things that are difficult for Americans, and even more difficult
for many other cultures:

- a. Having a Program Director who is responsible to keep the training
coordinated and on time.
 - b. Staying on time. We teach them to time sessions carefully and hold up
time cards indicating the number of minutes left in a training session.
 - c. Not lecturing during a discussion time.
3. Master Trainers
- These leaders are able to train and appoint Certified Trainers.

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expectations of certified trainers

Our expectations are simple. Because the vision is to impact the planting of five
million churches, we want to place minimal restrictions on reproduction.

Therefore, we have basically only two expectations:

1. Do not change or modify the training materials. This maintains the
integrity of the materials. Trainers are, however, while following the
teaching outline, encouraged to substitute their own illustrations and
church planting stories.
2. Report back to headquarters their training accomplishments. This is the
way we track our progress toward the five million church vision, and
inform our supporters and team about the progress toward the five million
church vision.

mistakes to avoid

- American Slang

American culture and slang is ingrained in our thinking and lifestyle. We
have no idea how much until we begin to experience other cultures.

Without realizing it, we may say in training incomprehensible things like,
“Knock yourself out,” or “I really blew it,” or “Fat chance.” While some
internationals might be able to figure out these phrases, chances are good

Williams: Equipping Nationals to Train Church Planters in Their Culture that phrases like these and many others will be completely confusing or misunderstood by listeners. Work hard to eliminate these unintelligible American colloquialisms.

- American Humor

I have been privileged to visit forty-six countries and train or speak in most of them. One difficult lesson I have had to learn is that what is funny to Americans is often not what makes people laugh in other cultures. Reverse, what they may think is funny is not very funny to me. I love making people laugh, but I have learned to be very careful trying to be funny in other cultures.

- Giving “Handouts”

If you train in developing countries, you can expect to be asked for funding. It may even be presented as an expectation. As mentioned above, outside money can spoil God’s work. The simple response, “We provide training but cannot provide financial assistance” should be adequate. Of course, if there is a dire need, it might be appropriate to consider. Be careful of the dependence factor, though.

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results:

What is happening as a result of these training efforts?

One church planter, Simon Kisimpol, is a Masai tribe church planter in Kenya. God gave him a vision to reach one people group—the Masai—for Christ and the church. His Bible is bloody because he used it to protect his head when his own people attacked him because of his testimony. One of his friends and one of our Master Trainers, Solomon, helped Simon receive DCPI training, and now Simon has planted many churches and has become a Certified Trainer himself.

We did a Research Project in Kenya to determine the effectiveness of our DCPI training in reproducing churches. We began training in Kenya in 2004 and continued training there year after year. Four and a half years later, the “Research Project” took place. This is what we discovered: in less than five years, Bishop Kamau had more than one hundred Master Trainers, Certified Trainers, and Dynamic Associates working with him in Kenya alone. This team of nationals equipped 1,800 church planters who planted more than 3,700 churches in Kenya. During those four and one-half years, these Kenyan trainers had gone to ten other countries to equip church planters and trainers.

That is the story of a church planting movement that continues to move

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beyond the borders of Kenya. Why is this happening? Because we are multiplying
trainers cross-culturally to reach the world for Christ.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

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He is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute (1976), Biola College (BA 1978), Talbot Seminary (M.Div. 1981), and Fuller Seminary (D.Min. 1990).