

Cross-Cultural Perspectives



Reaching and Teaching

As I recently joyfully sat through sessions of the Global Education Committee I was reminded of the need for training in our fields and for continuous improvement in our strategies. I have always been an avid supporter of the need for Bible schools in every country. Biblical education protects the future of the United Pentecostal Church International globally.

In this *Cross-cultural Perspectives* I look at some of the points raised by author M. David Sills in *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* addresses the need of always maintaining the correct balance between reaching and teaching.

Is it possible we have become the impatient Church? Are we captivated by the need for speed? Do we have a fast-track approach to world evangelism? Sills asks these tough questions, and more, while looking carefully at the concluding words of the Great Commission: “And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). He states, “That’s how disciples are formed. And disciples (not converts) are what He told us to make” (2010, Forward). He wisely argues that one of the key components of the missionary call, missionary enterprise, and the Great Commission is the theological training of believers. He claims that senior national leaders consistently note that their number one need is more trained pastors.

While not destroying or criticizing the need for aggressive evangelism strategies he calls for balance between reaching and teaching. The two are inseparable. The attention of some

missionary agencies to speedily reach the unreached often is accomplished with the neglect of theological education. They are reached and abandoned with hopes they will establish and carry on a training program. Sills uses the words of 2 Timothy 2:2 to argue his case for the extended need of a missionary presence in different nations. It is here that Paul wrote, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

Paul speaks of the teacher that passes on—or entrusts truth—to the next generation. Obedience and application of the 2 Timothy 2:2 mandate affects four generations. Truth is entrusted to: (a) Paul, (b) from Paul to Timothy, (c) Timothy to faithful men, and (d) from the faithful men and women to others. Every Christian is a link between two generations. Sills states, "The duty to teach and train those who come behind is inescapable; God's Word does not allow for any other path if the missionary wants to be faithful in discharging his duty" (77).

Sills precisely presents a biblical and historical case for teaching, training, and writing: "all of it happening in the New Testament church. And all of it equally necessary for the growth and health of the church. And all of it a vital part of the mission of the church" (Forward). To him, church growth is "growth in depth, not just in numbers" (Forward). He believes we have learned about addition-missions (evangelism and church planting) but have failed to learn the imperative lesson of multiplication-missions (training and leadership development) (70).

Sills believes writes that the "bare minimum that missionaries should teach must result in trained leadership in the national church that is able to interpret the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15); understand basic Christian doctrine (1 Timothy 4:6); and teach them to others (1 Timothy 3:2)" (64). He calls for the overhaul of theological education. We need to teach sufficiently so that "the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). "Only in this way will future generations have sound teachers, biblical doctrine, and the pure gospel as those before them received it. Those who have the truth must faithfully teach it to those who follow" (77).

I agree! I am so thankful for the Global Association of Theological Studies and all of our training efforts geared at grounding men and women in apostolic truth and equipping them to reach their people in this generation.