

Cross-Cultural Perspectives from the Director



Riding a Horse Called ‘Trend’

Watch out. It is here to stay. There is no way to escape it. It is impossible to get around it. So, what do we do with this enemy (or is it a friend) called ‘change’? We just have to *deal with it* and to learn to see it coming.

Welcome to our newest undertaking for the next few months of *Cross-cultural Perspectives*: anticipating, identifying, discussing, responding to—and preparing for—changes in the global missions landscape. Our journey will require us to look at where we are, and where we are going, and the ‘trends’ that are taking us there.

We could ignore ‘trends’ by sticking our proverbial heads in the sand. Sunday Aigbe advised against that: “It is like suggesting that we wait for a heart attack to strike before we visit the doctor or cut down on our cholesterol.” No, it would be better to hit change head on, navigate the rough cultural terrain and go about our business of global evangelism in the twenty-first century.

A ‘trend’ is the general direction something is going; tends to move; general tendency; or inclination. In Spanish we say, *tendencia* or *orientación*.

‘Trends’ are like horses. They are easier to ride in the direction they are already going. However, I’m not suggesting you jump on any and every horse and gallop off into the Wild West. Not all change is positive change. (Speaking

of horses; did you realize that Mongolia is the only nation where the number of horses is higher than the number of people? Now you know!)

To deal with trends we need to first acknowledge they exist. God alone truly knows the future. But, He helps us to see the opportunities and obstacles. We need to be men that have “understanding of the times” to know what Foreign Missions “ought to do” (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Mongolia (located between the Soviet Union and China) was unified as a nation in 1203 and became the greatest land empire ever known. Kublia Khan invited one hundred Christian missionaries from the West to introduce their religion to his people. He promised that if these Christian teachers were able to persuade them concerning the Bible; he and those under his rule would become Christians. No missionaries were sent. (Well, a few did arrive ten years later—ten years late.) At the same time, an invitation was issued to Tibet. *They* responded and Mongolia became predominantly Buddhist. The opportunity to influence a continent for Jesus Christ was lost. (*Message Magazine Online*, Volume 50, No. 10, Summer 2002). What happened? Did they miss the trend? Did they fail to realize ‘opportunity’ was knocking? Will we make the same mistakes as God opens new doors in the 21st century?