

**Behavioral Sciences and Christian Mission:
Implications for cross-cultural ministry workers**

by

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*Opinions expressed in this thesis are not necessarily endorsed by South African
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DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

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To my beautiful host country – South Africa; and to our Father God for calling me to cross encounters for Christian witness in this most remarkable land.

Living in my host country of South Africa with its attractive ethnic groups of multi-cultural diversity, taught me more self-understanding than any formal learning.

As a result, my world view was delightfully broadened and expanded above and beyond my western culture and training.

N'kosi Sikelele Africa

SUMMARY

Relatively new to the study of missiology has been the recognition of the three behavioral sciences of: sociology, anthropology, and psychology and their potential for enhancing cross-cultural encounters. This study has demonstrated current ways in which the behavioral sciences are impacting missions' development and practice for effective witness.

Although the biblical sciences and history play a primary and essential role in communicating the gospel cross-culturally, this study has focused primarily on the behavioral sciences' role in communicating God's Word effectively. This study has affirmed that insights gained from biblical and historical studies add to the impact of insights gained from the social sciences in gaining a clearer understanding of the church's call to mission.

The social sciences must never take precedence over nor supplant theology. Rather, they must be viewed as an effective aid in communicating God's Truth, globally to all people everywhere. The task of mission is a team effort, led by the Spirit of God with the cooperation of theologians, behavioral scientists, mission professors and mission administrators in order to achieve the *missio Dei*.

The behavioral sciences working together with the biblical sciences (theology) can illicit a human response of harmony and unity. As a result, mission strategies will be strengthened and solidified through a deeper understanding of the various tenets and complexities of a cross-cultural witness.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Aim of the Thesis

This thesis will examine comprehensive ways in which insights gained from the behavioral sciences such as sociology, anthropology and psychology can be applied to mission strategies. This study will establish that the social sciences are useful tools for a better understanding of communicating God's Word through contemporary missionary action. Findings from this study will reveal ways in which the behavioral sciences are currently impacting missions' development and practice. Historical evidence will show that the behavioral sciences are scientifically-based disciplines that probe the various individual and corporate parameters of human behavior, thus enhancing and contributing to a paradigm of missions.

1. 1 Limitations of the Study

Although the biblical sciences and history play a primary and essential role in communicating the Gospel cross-culturally, the limitations of this study call for a focus on the behavioral sciences' role in communicating God's Word effectively. It is presupposed that the biblical sciences and history are foundational models to the discipline of missiology. Insights from biblical and historical studies as well as from the social sciences assist in gaining a clearer understanding of the church's missionary calling (Escobar 2003).

1.2 Objective of the Study

The three major objectives of this study are:

First, to show that multi-cultural mission training is not complete unless training comprises both theology and the behavioral sciences. Research indicates that cross-cultural workers who have been trained solely in the discipline of theology, without instruction in cultural anthropology, particularly, are those individuals who more often experience the greatest cultural adjustment to cross-cultural living (Heibert 2002).

The second objective of this study is to demonstrate that the behavioral sciences can be complimentary and supportive of theology, but must never compete with or supplant theology.

Finally, this study will practically demonstrate comprehensive ways in which the behavioral sciences can aid and cooperate in communicating the Truth (God's Truth) globally, to all men in the most productive and efficient manner as possible.

1.3 Foundational Points for Missiological Work

Escobar (2003) contends that missions is a team effort, led by the Spirit of God working with the cooperation of theologians, behavioral scientists, mission professors and administrators to accomplish the supreme mandate of Christ's Great Commission. The church has benefited greatly from the systematic and critical observation of mission facts from the perspective of the social sciences. For instance, valuable contributions have been made by missionary anthropologists, such as:

Eugene Nida, Jacob Loewen, Charles Taber, Paul Heibert and Miriam Adeney. These men have used their scholarly approach to evaluate missionary work and to suggest new methodological paradigms for effective cross-cultural communication of the Gospel (Escobar 2003:20).

At the heart of 'mission' is the drive to cross geographical, social, and cultural barriers in order to share the good news of the Gospel with all people. In order to accomplish the task of mission effectively, it is essential that this passion be met with adequate pre-mission education and intercultural training.

Preparation for cross-cultural service has traditionally included the study of the Bible, theology, history, and other religions. In the last twenty-five years, cultural anthropology has become important to the missiological enterprise. No one would be considered adequately trained for cross-cultural missions in the 21st century without some understanding of cultural anthropology (Heibert 2002:9).

Escobar (2003:21) defines 'missiology' as 'an interdisciplinary approach to understanding missionary action.' He further contends that missiology examines missionary facts from several perspectives: the biblical sciences, theology, history, and the social sciences. Missiology aims to be critical and systematic in order to give the observer a comprehensive frame of reference.

Van Rheenen (1996:137) contends that missiology comprises the three interdependent disciplines of theology, social sciences and strategy.

He also posits that the social sciences of anthropology, sociology and psychology are useful in informing mission workers of the cultural context in which they live as well as the nature of the human psyche.

Kritzinger and Saayman (1990) view missiology with a slight variation as expressed by German missiologist, Sundermeier's critique of Gustav Warneck's (the father of modern Protestant missiology 1834-1910) missiological design. Warneck's missiological paradigm includes the three tenets of: church history, scriptural foundations for mission, and practical missionary theology or praxis.

A more comprehensive and pellucid definition of 'missiology' is given by Luzbetak (2002:12) when he states that the word 'missiology' is derived from the Latin "mission" which connotes a sending forth with a special message or a special task to perform, and the Greek "logos" which infers a study, word or discourse.

Kraft (2002:15) further defines the role of missiology as follows:

The study of missions helps us not only to communicate the gospel more effectively to people around the world but also to understand ourselves, our contexts, and the gospel more fully.

One of the critical foundational points in studying missions is that it raises the level of awareness in understanding ourselves more fully and how that understanding impacts the presentation of the gospel cross-culturally.

We glean additional insights from these researchers in the area of biblical scholarship, theology, and cultural anthropology as critical foundational points of reference for missiological endeavors.

For example, from the perspective of the biblical sciences we learn that the Spirit-inspired mission acts of Jesus, Paul, and the apostles are authoritative in a way that no other post-apostolic missionary practice is authoritative.

Additionally, we learn that missiology examines missionary facts from history. A professional mission historian becomes necessary to evaluate successful or non-successful mission activity; compare sources of information and interpret them critically for missiological purposes (Escobar 2003).

Contemporary missiologists (Escobar 2003; Heibert 2002; Kraft 2003) agree that although valuable missiological insights have been gained from the social sciences toward understanding contemporary missionary action, and while mission requires *orthodoxy* (concern for the integrity of the gospel) it also requires *orthopraxis* (concern for the way missionary practice is carried on). Escobar asserts that before missiologists can search for methods and tools for communicating a verbal message, they must search for a new style of missionary presence. It is precisely at this intersection that cross-cultural training in the behavioral sciences can extrapolate missions.

The *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1992:2) recognizes the positive impact that the behavioral sciences may exert on missions:

The Christian movement can be advanced by employing the insights and research tools of the behavioral sciences, including the gathering and graphing of relevant statistical data for mission analysis, planning, control and critique.

More than thirty years ago missiologist, Peter Wagner (Wagner 1971:59) concurred:

Modern developments in the behavioral and social sciences may open up wide possibilities for missionary strategy on which few mission leaders have been able to keep informed. The valuable insights that technicians in these fields can provide missions should be used in a much greater measure than they have been to date.

Similarly, as far back as 1970, delegates to the 1970 El Burn Consultation on Latin American Church Growth, recommended consideration be given to recruitment of candidates trained in the social and behavioral sciences who would be qualified to act as consultants, giving direction to the most effective use of social and cultural dynamics for the growth of the church, missionary-national relationships, etc. (Wagner 1971: 59)

1.4 The Nature and Scope of Applied Missionary Anthropology

The word “*anthropology*” is derived from the Greek *anthropos*, “man” and “logos,” “word, discourse.” Thus we say that anthropology is a “man-study” or a “science of man.” Unlike psychology, however, anthropology is interested in man, not as an individual, but as a member of a group of individuals. Also, unlike psychology, anthropology does not focus on any particular point of man, but rather takes a holistic or total viewpoint of man from the perspective of the following: Each and every human characteristic is of concern to anthropology. Anthropology seeks to discover the interrelationships between various scientific models of the human being:

- Cultural Systems
- Psychological systems
- Biological systems
- Physical systems

- Social systems

When anthropology refers to the study of “man” it refers to the “study of races and peoples and mankind in general.” (Luzbetak 2002).

The study of anthropology has two distinct branches: physical anthropology and cultural anthropology. For the purpose of this study, cultural and missiological anthropology will be given consideration.

Cultural anthropology is concerned with analyzing and comparing the way of life and living. It interprets mans’ ways in historical perspective and establishes “laws” of human behavior. The fact that human beings do not act according to definite psychological, cultural, and social patterns, have allowed cultural anthropologists to discover many of these patterns or irregularities.

1.5 Missiological Anthropology

A specialized form of applied anthropology is known today as *missiological anthropology*. While its scope and purposes are missiological, the processes and analyses are anthropological. The specific object of missiological anthropology is the context in contextualisation. It investigates the context in which the Gospel must be understood (Luzbetak 2002:43).

Missiological anthropologists set out to determine the concrete priorities and the *how* of mission and help to identify the most effective means of expressing a society’s faith and obedience to God in terms of its ways and values (Luzbetak 2002:44).

The discipline of missionary anthropology for cross-cultural witness

stresses the importance of developing keen anthropological insights from a clearly Christian perspective.

These insights provide understanding in the following three areas:

- The people and their culture to whom we go
- Ourselves within our culture
- The biblical message within the biblical cultures (Kraft 2003).

Although Christian experience and theological input enable us to better understand the message God wants us to communicate, an anthropological perspective makes it possible for us to avoid being crippled by the enemy within us: our own ethnocentrism (Heibert 2003:xiv). Heibert further contends that early anthropological training helped him/her to gain understanding in three important areas: (1) of one's self and one's people as culturally formed and constrained
(2) the people of one's host culture and their cultural context (3) the Bible as a cross-cultural book.

1.6 Role of Cultural Anthropology in Missions

The early missionary, impelled by his/her calling, yet often lacking in adequate theological and missiological training, did not always understand what he/she observed; due to his/her ethnocentrism, sometimes he/she felt impelled to destroy what he/she saw; sometimes it frightened him/her; or disgusted him/her; or irritated him/her. At other times he was captivated by what he saw around him (Smalley 1974). These disturbing emotions and feelings often caused him/her to

question his/her call to mission. As a result, unfortunately, he or she left his/her calling deeply discouraged.

Former mission professor Kane (1973:78) concurs that one of the greatest mistakes of the nineteenth century was the average missionary's failure to appreciate and demonstrate respect for things foreign; whether customs, cultures, values, or virtues. Rather, they were seen as "strange" and therefore inferior. Anthropology more than any other discipline would have assisted in correcting the extreme ethnocentrism characteristic of Western mission corp workers deployed to various countries of the world.

As early as the year 1954, missiologist Eugene Nida asserted the need for anthropological insights in the task of mission. Nearly a decade later Luzbetak (1963) contended that cross-cultural workers be given a solid grounding in various concepts of cultural anthropology and their implications for cross-cultural ministry. These wise and godly men acknowledged the important role that cultural anthropological training could play in the lives of cross-cultural workers.

Over the years missiologists have identified two important tenets in applying cultural anthropology to the proclamation of the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ. First, cross cultural workers must remember that the gospel comes to modern people in the cultural context of the behavior and idea systems of the Jews of the Middle East (2000 BC to 100AD). Although its meaning is intended to be shared with ALL peoples of the world, each culture has its own ways of living and expressing idea systems in a myriad of varieties. The hearing of the Word of God is filtered through the lens of strong cultural mores.

Second, if the presentation of the gospel is not contextualized, several results surface: for some people, the message will not be heard because it cannot get through the lens by which they view their religious belief system; for others the message will be bad news because of the distortions and dislocations of the communication; distortion of the message by the cross-cultural worker causes distortion to the hearer of the message. Fortunately for others, there is a genuine understanding which leads to a new life in Christ. It is precisely at this interface of clear and effective communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ, across cultures, that the focus of applied missionary anthropology is most effective.

Former missionary to China, Douglas Sargent, attests to the value of and need for more formal study of anthropology for cross-cultural workers:

...It is a thoroughly well justified demand that we weave our sociology, our theology and our medicine into a more satisfying whole. Our thinking is compartmentalized...only as we enter into their whole way of thinking shall we understand the Christian headmaster of a grammar school who consults a witch doctor when he is ill. It is no use demanding that such customs cease unless we are prepared to deal adequately with the whole complex of ideas from which they spring. Some formal study of anthropology will obviously be of real value here (Sargent 1960:96).

1.7 Aims of Applied Missionary Anthropology

There are several ways in which applied missionary anthropology training can assist cross-cultural workers: First, it can clarify more fully the meaning of mission theory or the 'how' of mission by assisting in identifying the proper emphases and the most effective manner of expressing a society's faith and obedience to God in terms of its ways, values, and soul (Luzbetak 2002:44).

The second way is by assisting the CC (cross-cultural) witness

to foresee and predict the results of missionary action. In this way, anthropological research is used for doing fieldwork whereby the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day activities of the community in order to suggest the most effective and efficient methodology for presenting the Gospel in the given cultural context.

Applied missionary anthropology also aims to include a knowledge of and a clear understanding of the cross-cultural worker's own way of life and of mankind in general. Knowledge must be tailored to the actual socio-cultural situation in which the CC witness will have to live and in which he will have to solve his problems.

It is essential to the success of his/her ministry that he/she have a thorough understanding of one's own socially acquired habits and how they may differ from his host culture. By understanding these differences he will be able to cogently demonstrate ways to communicate God's message.

Smalley (1974) attests that cultural anthropology makes it possible for a CC witness to see life through the eyes of those who participate in it; (an emic perspective) the proclamation must challenge men and women where they are. As such cultural anthropology becomes the convincing instrument by which men and women may be pressed (by the Spirit of God) to make radical decisions about life's fundamental issues.

1.8 Concept of Culture

One important and distinctive aim of anthropology has been to develop the concept of 'culture.' Kraft (2003:38) defines 'culture' as:

the total way of life of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group, a people's "design for living." From this perspective culture is viewed as a coping mechanism or strategy for survival.

Furthermore, missionary anthropology seeks to deal with culture change. As cross-cultural witnesses are always keen to see certain changes take place among the people of their host culture, it is essential that workers learn to discover change agents that are the least disruptive to the people. Thus, an equally important aim of missionary anthropology enables one to understand the processes of culture change in a constructive, rather than destructive way (Kraft 2003).

Just as missiological anthropology can make a positive contribution to missions, the behavioral science discipline of psychology can establish a foundation for understanding human relations and the dynamics of those complex relationships in a multi-cultural milieu. Therefore, the following discussion will center around the positive contributions of psychology to missions.

1.9 Historical Perspectives and Contributions of Psychology to Missions

Psychology has been defined as the *scientific study of behavior and mental processes* (Jordaan & Jordaan 2003). Dating back to the time of Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC), people have queried human behavior and mental processes. But not until the later 1800s did they begin to apply the scientific method to questions that had puzzled philosophers for centuries. Only then did psychology come into being as a formal, scientific discipline separate from philosophy.

In order for cross-cultural witnesses to most effectively communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ, they must have a thorough grasp of the man-to-self relationship and the man-to-man relationship. Dr. Marvin Mayers (1977) contends that theology entails the “what” to communicate (the truth of God in Jesus Christ) ;whereas the behavioral sciences entail the “how” to communicate that truth incarnationally. When Christ is incarnated into a lifeway of the people, the Gospel message is integrated with the rest of the culture. To communicate God's truth incarnationally is to take note of the following:

Jesus identified with His receptors. In His case, He was incarnated in the receiving society. We cannot become incarnate, but should do our best to enter sympathetically into our receptor's way of life with understanding and empathy even learning to participate with them to some extent and to share ourselves with them in person-to-person self-disclosure (Kraft 2003:443).

The success of missions depends largely upon the quality of the relationships between cross-cultural workers and the people to whom they serve, the biblical model of incarnation will be the tool to bridge the cultural gap. To bridge the cultural gap between heaven and earth, God became human and dwelt among us, eating our food, speaking our language, and suffering our sorrows – yet he did not give up His divine nature. Similarly, incarnation means *identification*, without denying who we are originally. In fact, it is a bicultural state. Just as God became one with us in order to save us; we must become one with the people to whom we go in order to bring them the message of salvation (Hiebert 2002: 158).

Theology rightfully assists in developing the man-to-God relationship; whereas the behavioral sciences assists in developing the man-to-self and man-to-man relationships. Mayers (1977) cogently asserts that preparation for multi-cultural mission is incomplete unless training entails both theology and the behavioral sciences of: psychology, sociology and anthropology.

Luzbetak (2002) attests that while anthropology is concerned with the norms of behavior for a society, psychology focuses its attention on individual behavior. Whereas psychology often employs laboratory experimentation, anthropology takes a cross-cultural approach. However, these differences can be mutually useful. Particularly in that psychology can provide important information for cross-cultural workers in the areas of: cognition, learning theory, factors involving culture change, and the relation between personality and culture (Luzbetak 2002: 43).

1.10 Psychology and Human Diversity

There may be few aspects of integration of greater practical value than that of psychology and missions. Most contemporary psychologists agree that a fuller understanding of human behavior will result from appreciating the rich diversity in behavior that exists across cultures. For cross-cultural workers, understanding the behavior of people from diverse backgrounds gives us the tools to reduce some of the interpersonal tensions. Knowing the scientific basis of human diversity will allow the cross-cultural worker to separate fact from fiction in his daily interactions with people.

Understanding HOW and WHY groups differ in their values, behaviors, approaches to the world, thought processes, and responses to situations, the mission worker can savor and comprehend that diversity.

Finally, the more one comprehends that human diversity, the more effective he/she will be in communicating Christ cross-culturally. Psychology can assist ministry workers to understand how culture contributes to human diversity and how race and ethnicity affect behavior.

1.11 Psychosocial Adjustments of Cross-Cultural Ministry Workers

More difficult than the physical acclimatisation that has to be made to living in a host country, is the psychological adjustment due to cultural and environmental factors. Often cross-cultural workers face unique challenges due to the nature of their location and lifestyle. Adjustment issues for various members of the family induce multiple psychological stressors. As a result, one word is often written across the lives of mission workers: *frustration*. Bishop Stephen Neill attributes these stress factors to inadequate pre-deployment training:

The main problem of the new missionary is likely to be Frustration. This may be the result of faulty teaching (Sargent 1960:126).

Sargent, more than forty years ago, sought to discover if psychology could shed any light on some of the adjustment challenges that cross-cultural workers faced during that era. To develop his study, he categorized mission workers into four prototypes: The first type is the young recruit who has higher theological training than his/her indigenous colleagues.

He/she has had previous cross-cultural training and arrives on the field believing he/she is adequately prepared. But...reality tells him/her that he/she is not as

prepared as he or she was led to believe; he or she lacks an open mind.

Frustration mounts when the cross-cultural worker must work and respect older indigenous colleagues with less experience and credentials. At this point, most of his/her frustrations are due to external circumstances. However, these are complicated by his or her inner presuppositions of cross-cultural living. Results: extreme and escalating frustration and tension.

The next mission recruit has misconceptions of what he or she will find on the field along with an idealized image of what he or she should be as a cross-cultural witness. Adding to his/her stress is the erroneous belief that he or she must display that image to his or her spouse (who has the same image). This transpires because he/she internalizes the strong belief that it would be inappropriate to display that misconception in the larger world outside his or her home. Results: escalating frustration, tension, and disillusionment.

The next recruit finds the strains of his/her host culture intolerable because he or she is the over-conscientious type; the over-serious individual who is time and task oriented rather than relational in his or her ministry efforts. Recognising the potential hazard to effective mission work, one mission agency sent an urgent request for new workers, but prefaced the request as follows:

But whatever you do, don't let the society send a really conscientious type to this sort of work, or he will crack up long before retiring age.

Cross-cultural workers who live with a picture of themselves that is far removed from reality will experience extreme tension, frustration, and disillusionment. A

renewing of this thinking is mandatory if he is to experience what Christ can make him to be.

The transformation in his thinking will make the difference between the strain of anxiety and the strain of adventure. Sargent (1960:129) has most aptly recommends:

It must be a part of major mission training to help men and women to see themselves as they really are and to develop a willingness to face facts, both with regard to themselves and the world in which they live.

Added to the cultural and environmental stresses which are experienced in a host culture, are emotional problems which stem from past childhood frustrations, marital conflict and emotionally disturbed children. Combine these with living and working closely with colleagues of different backgrounds and personalities and the results are psychological overload (O'Donnell and O'Donnell 1988). Culture stress remains a significant problem among mission workers. Research psychologists attest that when stress overloads the individual's psychological defense system, he can go into a state of emotional shock or even emotional breakdown.

1.12 Overcoming Culture Stress

Christian Psychologists O'Donnell and O'Donnell (1988) suggest ways in which Christian counselors can assist mission workers in overcoming culture stress:

First, the Christian counselor/psychologist is trained to recognize culture stress and can suggest ways to resolve the stress factor, decrease frustration, develop ways to build acceptance of the host culture.

In addition, improved communication skills can be developed and utilized. Suggestions and resources for developing emotional security can be offered. For mission workers, understanding the behavior of people from diverse backgrounds provides the tools to reduce some of the interpersonal tensions. Simply knowing the scientific basis of human diversity will allow the cross-cultural worker to separate fact from fiction in his daily interactions with people. Understanding WHY and HOW groups differ in their values, behaviors, approaches to the world, thought processes, and responses to situations, the mission worker can savor and comprehend that diversity.

Just as anthropology and psychology can make positive contributions to missions by assisting ministry workers to understand how culture contributes to human diversity and how race and ethnicity affect behavior, the behavioral science discipline of sociology can equally contribute to serve missions well.

1.13 Historical Perspectives and Contributions of Sociology

Sociology came into being in the late 1700s as an attempt to understand the far reaching changes that have occurred in human societies over the past two to three centuries. It comprises the study of human social life, groups and societies (Giddens 2001:2). Its comprehensive subject matter is our own human behavior as social beings ranging from global social processes.

Sociology demonstrates the need to take a much broader view of why we are as we are, and why we act as we do. The concept of social structure is important in sociology and in this respect can serve missions well.

Sociology has many practical implications for our lives. First, sociology allows ministry workers to see the social world from other viewpoints than their own. Often, when we seek to discover how others live, we also acquire a better understanding of what their problems are by increasing our social sensitivities. . From sociology, mission workers can learn the concept of culture, values and norms of a society; cultural diversity and the dangers of ethnocentrism.

Robert Montgomery (1999) posits that sociology can be as useful to missiologists as anthropology. He argues that it can profitably supplement and sometimes correct the contributions of anthropology by going beyond mere description to theorizing. He proposes constructing middle-range theories, designed to explain phenomena in accordance with the canons of sociology, using the concepts of dependent and independent variables to sort out social factors that contribute causally to specific phenomena in missions.

His sociology of mission studies include topics such as: *Why do some people respond positively and others negatively to the Gospel?* He explains ways in which sociology helps him do theology. He is insistent that theology, being inclusive, must incorporate empirical social reality, helpfully mediated by sociology, but cautions that sociology, being limited, must not lapse into theology. (IBMR 2001:186).

Luzbetak (2002:42) describes sociology as the “sister discipline of anthropology.” He asserts a caveat, however: although there is overlapping and convergence in methodologies and theoretical approaches of the two disciplines, there are noted differences: whereas sociology focuses on the study of human interrelatedness, anthropology includes all shared patterns of human behavior, ie, artifacts, symbols, etc.

1.14 Characteristics of the Behavioral Sciences: Strengths and Limitations

Former missionary, author, and professor in linguistics and anthropology, Marvin K. Mayers contends:

My preparation for multicultural mission was not complete until I was trained in both theology and behavioral sciences (Frizen & Coggins 1977: 133).

Mayers’ pre-mission days included education in college as an historian and in seminary as a theologian. Following his training and preparation, he was deployed to mission service in Central America. During his first term of mission work, Mayers encountered problems and frustrations for which he had no solutions; nor adequate preparation to discover solutions. At the end of his mission term, he was sent back to the USA on home assignment. It was during that time that he enrolled in anthropology classes and behavioral sciences.

It was precisely then that he began to discover ways to cope with issues he had faced on his first term of mission service. Upon return to the mission field, Mayers found that what he had to communicate (the gospel of Jesus Christ) was more sound and deeply meaningful than ever; his methodology for communicating biblical truth was also far more effective than previously.

Coggins and Frizen (1977) cite a caveat by Mayers when he cautions that

although it is important when utilizing insights from the behavioral sciences to know what they *CAN* do....training programmes must also emphasise the limitations of what the behavioral sciences *CANNOT* do.

1.15 Positive Aspects of the Behavioral Sciences

The behavioral sciences of psychology, anthropology and sociology are on par with the humanities and physical sciences. Research techniques are useful to study human behavior wherever it is found. Research methodologies may be carefully designed NOT to supplant God's truth, but rather to enhance it in the lives of men and women.

Secondly, the behavioral sciences additionally provide a fresh and vital way of looking at the Bible through role theory, stratification and space relationships within the contexts of biblical culture. For example, an understanding of role theory can help us to see why the king in Old Testament times would go into the city dressed in sackcloth and ashes to confess sin.

Next, it provides a fresh and vital way of looking at life. Behavioral science concepts such as identity, self acceptance, and adapting to culture, all provide a better understanding of why mission workers should permit freedom within the context of cultures. However, just as the behavioral sciences can make positive contributions to missions, there are limitations to its usefulness with particular regards to a thoroughly Christian approach to cross-cultural needs.

1.16 Behavioral Sciences: Limitations.

It is important for Christians, when using insights from the behavioral sciences, to determine their precise limitations. The following pre-suppositions

must be taken into consideration: First, the behavioral sciences are not a new teaching. They do not seek to change truth. While they provide a differing MINDSET they do not provide a different FAITH. They are a variation of culture – an educational subculture.

The behavioral sciences must NOT be viewed as being in competition with theology. Rather, they aid in the communication of sound theology and doctrine and are not for the exclusive domain of scholars. Rather, they are being used increasingly by Christian organizations for counseling, small group guidance, training and preparation of missionary personnel and required course work in Christian colleges and seminaries.

They are NOT behaviorism of Skinner and Watson whose teachings derive from determinism and the physical sciences. On the contrary, the behavioral sciences are within the realm of the social sciences and deal with social control which is fully compatible with the biblical doctrine of free will.

Next, the behavioral sciences deal with the cultural systems given to men and women by God to provide law and order in the day by day experiences of life. Importantly, the behavioral sciences serve as vehicles for knowing God and man/woman more fully and deeply (Frizen & Coggins 1977).

Luzbetak (2002:49) posits the following view with regards to the social sciences and the church working together.

Mission anthropology does not suggest that social scientists at the service of the Church should take the law into their own hands; rather they should respectfully challenge the law and the lawgiver and together work toward the desired change as loyal members of one and the same team.

1.17 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter dealt with the historical background of the three behavioral sciences of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Their contributions to missions have been generally noted. This chapter has evidenced that the behavioral sciences are not in competition with theology; rather they can assist workers in communicating sound biblical theology and doctrine. Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that the behavioral sciences can serve as effective vehicles for knowing God and understanding man more fully and deeply as well as formulating an understanding of the mission worker himself/herself.

The next chapter will present comprehensive ways in which the behavioral sciences can positively impact mission endeavors in multi-dimensional ways.

Chapter 2

Contributions of the Behavioral Sciences to Christian Missions

One of the principal encouragements of the behavioral sciences to mission is that they give the Christian who lives a biblical and Christ-centered life, a renewed sense of living a very fulfilled life – with self and others. By gaining a deep understanding of our fellow man in the context of a global dimension, Christian workers gain a sense of harmony and unity within their host culture; this in turn produces a deep sense of individual fulfillment that parallels the peace of God in one's heart which assists in eradicating ethnocentrism.

The study of anthropology helps to free the missionary from ethnocentric biases by giving them a thorough understanding of the four universal human needs: biological, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual. From this, multi-cultural workers learn two important missiological concepts: First, that every culture provides for these needs in ways that may differ from other societies. And secondly, although each of these needs must be provided for, they are done in culturally structured ways (Kraft 2003:118). It is the mission worker who must be familiar with these four cultural needs and learn how they are structured within their host culture before effective methods of witness can be utilised.

2.1 All Truth is God's Truth

Critics of the behavioral sciences assert that caution must be exercised that the truth (God's truth) is not supplanted by deterministic methodologies.

Scriptural support for the philosophical question: "What is truth?" lies within the words of Jesus to His heavenly Father when He stated, "Thy Word is Truth."

The lens through which all truth must be evaluated, is the lens of sacred Scripture. It is essential that mission workers adhere to this premise.

Mayers (1977) equally concurs that the behavioral sciences as applied in mission, serve not to supplant the truth, but rather to enhance it.

The behavioral sciences are not to become competitive with theology and sound doctrine, but rather aid and cooperate in communicating truth to all men. Equally true is that the behavioral sciences are not designed to displace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, but rather, to allow each person in their own cultural setting to know fully and completely this One who loved and gave Himself for all of mankind (Frizen & Coggins 1977:142).

2.2 Aim of the Study

The central aim of this study is to identify ways in which the behavioral sciences can serve missions well. There are distinctive and essential ways in which the well-trained Christian behavioral scientist can positively impact world mission endeavors.

This chapter will identify the following seven comprehensive roles in which cross-cultural workers can most efficiently serve missions: the role and impact of the behavioral scientist as Christian counselor, consultant, trainer/mentor, communicator, educator, translator and researcher will be presented.

2.3 Christian Counselor in Mission

More seminaries today are recognizing the need for trained biblical counselors. As a result, curriculum at major theological seminaries now include BA, MA and doctoral degrees in Christian/Biblical Counseling.

The counselor in Christian mission is more than a psychologist. Rather he/she is a skilled and capable biblical counselor who, through his/her theologically sound training, possesses keen insights into integrating Scripture with his/her knowledge of human behavior in order to deal with problems often unique to multi-cultural workers. One recognises that mission workers too, have personal conflict that calls for professional assistance. For example, a mission worker who finds himself/herself struggling with unresolved issues from his or her past can be led to resolve those conflicting issues by seeking the support of a Christian counselor who will guide them into a thorough study of Colossians chapter three which emphasizes “putting off” old behaviors and “putting on” new behaviors because the new self can be renewed in the image of Christ.

Colossians 3:13-16 should be the desire of his heart:

Bear with each other and forgive...(v13)
Put on love....(v14)
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts (v15)
And be thankful (v15)
Let the Word of Christ dwell in you (v16) (NIV).

More denominations today posit that the primary problem on mission fields is interpersonal conflict among missionaries (Nazarene World Mission International and Christian and Missionary Alliance). This conflict has been attributed to two issues: One, multi-cultural workers who live in mission compounds and have

very little day-to-day contact with indigenous staff. Two, those ministry workers who develop initial culture shock and withdraw from fellow workers, thus creating tension in relationships.

The Christian counselor is well equipped to assuage the conflictual relationship issues which confront multi-cultural workers living in their host country. An experienced Christian counselor can lead a group forum on the biblical ways to resolve conflict from Colossians 3:1-2 which states: "Set your minds on things above and not on earthly things."

Peskett & Ramachandra (2003:206-207) emphasise the critical importance of the unity of cross-cultural workers:

The visible love of disciples for one another is what convinces a skeptical world that the Father has sent the Son into the world to bring about a new creation.

Conflict resolution can be taught using additional biblical mandates which emphasise forgiveness and reconciliation. Mission boards faced with these types of problems would be wise to make use of a Christian counselor before the problems escalate into resentment, tension, and poor Christian witness.

2.3.1 Major Counseling Issues

Additionally, Christian counselors could serve in a vital ministry to people who need one or two brief visits with a counselor when they have faced the loss of a loved one, issues of deep and lingering guilt, the trauma of culture shock, or health and safety issues that incur insecurity from living in high violent crime areas.

The wise counselor could make available to the mission region, useful readings, meaningful studies, and spiritual growth materials for personal and spiritual enrichment of missionary families.

The mission-counselor could facilitate small group sharing to generate open discussion about feelings of anxiety, anger, or distress. Additionally, counselors could assist mission administrators in training to become more aware of the emotional needs of cross-cultural workers with whom they work and live on a day to day basis; this would result in better relationships among mission administrators and mission workers.

2.3.1.1 Marriage and Family Counseling

Cross-cultural living can induce multiple family stressors. Finding ways to resolve these stressors is imperative for effective ministry and emotional well being. A marriage and family counselor could be used greatly to assist husbands and wives in reducing interpersonal conflict. Missionary marriages have to survive two major stress areas: One is the stress common to all marriages in the present social climate. The other one is in the area of the Christian concept of marriage. Many missionaries believe (rightfully) that of the utmost importance is to *show* those around them what God has been saying in the Scripture (O'Donnell and O'Donnell 1988). However, this modeled "goldfish bowl" experience can place tremendous stress on Christian marriages. This stress-induced experience can result in escalated marital conflict. Due to the nature of cross-cultural living, often there is a lack of emotional support for these

troubled marriage partners. Many cross-cultural workers have not established close friendships whereby they can receive support during these stressful times.

Similarly, adolescents who resist change and transition could be helped by a sensitive and caring counselor who takes the time to listen to their deep frustrations of cross-cultural living conditions. Loss of identity issues and belonging issues are all common but painful experiences for the third culture kid. They need assurance that they are normal people with the usual struggles and pleasures of life. But because they grow up with different experiences from those who have lived in one culture, they may sometimes feel (and may be treated) as slightly “strange” by the people around them (Pollock & Van Reken 2001: xxi). As a result, they experience plummeting self-esteem issues which only serve to compound their problems.

The position of a mission-counselor can help in other beneficial ways: to resolve group conflict, to train in human relations, in developing interpersonal communication training, and in providing social psychology insights.

Resolving group conflict will produce mission workers who will exemplify Christlikeness to the people in their host culture. Living an exemplary life before indigenous workers, is imperative to any mission endeavor. Equally important is to train ministry workers in good human relation skills. To be able to understand the personal dynamics unique to a particular culture will do much to promote the mission enterprise.

Another beneficial role of the mission counselor would be to assist in effective communication training. If the meaning of the message is lost due to poor delivery of that message, then effective communication will be hindered. Finally, skills in social psychology are essential in becoming an incarnational missionary. Peskett & Ramachandra (2003:202) compellingly concur:

The church that is called to heal the social life of the nations must manifest godly social life to the world.

These varied and essential skills of Christian counselors can assist cross-cultural workers in finding other people more enriching and thereby enabling them to make positive use of the scriptural command to 'love one another' in Christian unity.

2.3.1.2 Post-Traumatic Stress of Cross-Cultural Workers

Post-traumatic stress disorders are common among multi-cultural workers. Often they are faced with natural disasters such as a devastating earthquake or famine and drought. The counselor, serving as a social worker, serves two important purposes: First, to assist in ways to alleviate the stress-induced trauma of the ministry worker. Secondly, to reach into their homes and tragically disrupted lives to prepare such displaced and alienated people for the proclamation of the Gospel and the ministry of the church (Mayers 1977).

2.4 The Role of Christian Consultant in Mission

The experienced missionary-anthropology consultant can serve missions in several capacities: he or she can assist the new missionary in getting to know the culture of the people; how the people speak and how they live, interact and react. This primary information can be very valuable to the new Christian worker

in helping to make a smooth transition from his or her home culture to his or her new host culture.

A Christian consultant further makes the long-term missionary aware of new and fresh insights that can be brought to bear in mission: “Others do it this way and it works.” It can be very rewarding to pass on such important insights to find the discouraged, almost-defeated cross-cultural worker rejuvenated with fresh hope.

Another capacity in which a consultant can serve is that of a constructive “critic” who is trained to ‘speak the truth in love.’ For example, upon careful observation of a potentially dangerous outcome, the mission consultant may sense the need to say:

This is what you are doing, are you aware of its adverse side effects and negative implications for cross-cultural communication? Is this what you intend to do?

Because of his wise and calculated observation, potentially conflicting circumstances can be alleviated without dishonoring our Lord Jesus Christ.

2.5 The Role of a Christian Trainer/Mentor in Missions

The Apostle Paul of the first century wrote these oft-quoted words:

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (II Tim. 2:2 NASB).

Paul was saying that he received his wisdom by revelation directly from the Lord; in turn he passed it on to Timothy, who in turn was to select and train faithful men who would communicate it to others.

Similarly, this biblical obligation must be carried out today in like manner. The message of divine revelation must be passed on from person to person, from the people of one culture to the people of another culture; from generation to generation until the return of Jesus Christ.

(Hesselgrave 1991: 43).

Although the trainer/mentor is one kind of educator, his function is not within the characteristic educational challenge of the college classroom; rather the training takes place where the skill is most needed. For instance, his role is to master a skill and then pass it on to the next person who is then trained effectively in the skill – he then turns around and trains the next. An example is the EACH ONE TRAIN ONE book that was published several years ago.

The trainer/mentor can also be used to prepare workers for long-term cross-cultural living and re-orient them upon return to their home country and culture. By experientially sharing with pre-deployment cross-cultural workers, his role as mentor becomes foundational to the new worker. His ability to assist returning veteran ministry workers in facing re-entry shock is an equally essential function.

2.6 The Role of an Effective Communicator In Missions

The word *communication* comes from the Latin word *communis* (common). This infers that we must establish a “commonness” with someone to have effective communication (Hesselgrave 1991). The mission task is fundamentally one of communication.

Some theorists insist that in the most ideal relationship between the speaker and the receiver of the same culture, communication is only about eighty percent effective.

Hesselgrave (1991) asserts that if cross-cultural workers desire to succinctly summarise the mission task, one of the best words available is the word “communication”. To communicate Christ across cultural barriers to various peoples of the world, we must assume a commitment to Christ and the Holy Scriptures.

In as much as some cross-cultural workers are natural communicators who possess an innate ability to discern their communicative responses with skill and effectiveness, never-the-less, those innate gifts must not be a substitute for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who illuminates our thoughts for an effective delivery of the Message.

Former Professor Kraemer (1956:66) attests to this truth when he wrote:

The Bible is the record of the acts of God’s revelation toward the re-creation, the re-storement of man in his normal existence; In Acts chapter two, the condition of language in human life appears to be of paramount significance, because when the full power of the Holy Spirit reigns – when the divine human-dialogue is restored, the confusions of languages disappear and there is full communication again. Fall and redemption, Babel and Pentecost are the hidden factors behind language and communication.

For many others, however, a lack of communicative abilities has hindered the delivery of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Early mission workers clearly understood that their commission to make disciples of all nations involved the ultimate in communication- not only reinforcing the

Christian message behaviorally, but also persuading men and women to be converted to the teachings of Jesus Christ through the wooing of the Holy Spirit. One of the most revealing passages in the New Testament relating to the cross-cultural worker's responsibility to effectively communicate the Gospel is found in II Corinthians 5:

What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And He has given us the work of sharing His message about peace. We were sent to speak for Christ and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. (II Cor 5:19-20 CEV).

The cross-cultural ministry worker has been given this message of reconciliation. He/she becomes God's appointed representative to deliver this message. But he/she must know how to reveal both the truth of God and the heart of God; persuading, entreating and compelling all people to be reconciled to God (v. 20).

J.I. Packer with reference to missionaries communicating effectively, aptly sums it up with one word: TEACH:

It is by teaching that the gospel preacher fulfills his ministry. To teach the gospel is his first responsibility: to reduce it to its simplest essentials: to analyze it point by point, to fix its meaning by positive and negative definition...and to go on explaining it until he is quite sure his listeners have grasped it (Hesselgrave 1991: 84).

The effective communicator must be trained in effective ways to engage attention, capture interest, set out facts, answer objections, and relate how the gospel message bears on life issues. The cross-cultural worker may be trained in the soundest theology and doctrine, but if he is unable to communicate God's truth effectively, he will become as a "sounding brass."

The mission worker as communicator becomes aware that there is more than one part of a message being communicated. All messages carry at least the verbal/vocal as well as the non-verbal meanings associated with gestures, facial expressions, distance, and physical posture.

Thus, we learn that cross-cultural communication is simple and yet it is complex. One can engage in it without studying it. But to study it and analyze it is to greatly increase one's potential to most effectively communicate Christ cross-culturally. In as much as intercultural communication is as complex as the sum total of human differences, still the mission worker who is equipped in effective communication skills is one who will reach his highest potential for Christ and the world.

If the communication of the Christian message is to be culturally meaningful however, in terms of the total lives of the people, two features are essential: (1) It must use meaningful indigenous symbols wherever any concepts are crucial and (2) the implications of the message must be explained in concrete terms which are culturally applicable within that given society (Smalley 1974).

Charles Kraft (Peters 1989:192) equally proposes that Christian communication should be receptor-oriented because the participants are processing the message in accordance with their needs, interests, and values. Therefore, cross-cultural communicators should become aware of the interpretation of their message. Communication based on a perceptive understanding of a culture can stimulate some members of the culture to make vital decisions for Christ in a responsible way.

Mission workers with training in the behavioral science of psychology will grasp a better understanding of the four key elements of the communication model of persuasion: the source, the message, the medium of communication, and characteristics of the listeners. The effectiveness of a gospel message first depends on the Holy Spirit-inspired communicator of that message and the way he presents it.

Hesselgrave (1991) effectively summarises the importance of mission workers being trained in effective communication skills when he wrote:

Christ came to make possible the understanding and oneness of which philosophers of language, scientists of communication, and ordinary people alternately dream and despair. But Christians ought not to be smug nor complacent in their knowledge of Christ, for He has given them a commission to disciple the nations. Therefore they must still learn if they are to teach, if they are to communicate Christ cross-culturally.

2.7 The Role of Educator in Mission

The behavioral scientist can serve missions well in the area of theological educator. The mission educator has a broader task than the trainer/mentor, and a more specific task than the communicator. Whereas the trainer concentrates on the training in a skill and teaching of that skill to another, the educator has broader interests and seeks to educate larger numbers of students.

One of the most controversial issues in mission education today is whether the theological educational needs of students should be met through residential,

extension centres, or distance learning delivery systems. One example of this dilemma is with the International Church of the Nazarene (USA-based headquarters). The educational coordinator for the African Region (Dr. K. Walker) has been in conferences to ascertain whether the numerous residential theological colleges throughout Africa are financially viable to continue to deliver quality, yet affordable higher education. This dilemma holds a challenge for today's behavioral scientist-educator in evaluating the viability of traditional education versus non-traditional delivery of theological education.

Major mission organizations today are seeing the importance of distance learning for expedient delivery of theological education (Fuller School of World Mission; Trinity Evangelical Divinity; Trinity Theological Seminary, USA).

More residency theological seminaries are electing to close their campus programmes in order to reach a larger populous of students through distance learning (Nazareno Seminario in Guatemala, Central America and Puerto Rico).

A world-class example of state-of-the-art distance theological education is South African Theological Seminary in Johannesburg, South Africa. SATS began in 1999 and presently has an enrollment of more than 2,000 students from several countries. Professional educators at SATS devised innovative, cutting edge, quality, undergraduate and post-graduate theological education offered through a non-residency programme. SATS was the first private theological institution in South Africa to receive full government accreditation. At the Global Theology Conference in Thailand in 2006, SATS was acclaimed for being one of the top fifteen distance education providers in the world.

TEE (Theological Education by Extension) programmes are being used in many underdeveloped countries today (World Vision in Cambodia; Church of the Nazarene in Kenya, Guatemala, South Africa, Ivory Coast, and others; Assemblies of God and Christian and Missionary Alliance in Cambodia). TEE is offered and taught by mission workers at strategic learning centres such as churches, schools or community halls.

Educators trained in behavioral sciences must grasp a thorough understanding of the sociological structures with which they will be working; as Mayers (1977:139) cogently points out:

Much theology that is taught in Bible schools and seminaries overseas is Western-based theology. In my opinion, no theological issue should be resolved until sound conservative, fundamental and evangelical theologians from no less than two distinct cultures have struggled with it. I suggest that all theologies should be written jointly to guard against a one culture point of view.

Perhaps more than any other area of cross-cultural work today, mission educators must be trained in innovative, non-traditional strategies to train a larger populous of students to be sent forth for evangelistic purposes – as expeditiously as possible.

2.8 Role of Linguistic Translator in Cross Cultural Ministry

Linguistics (Latin *lingua*, “*tongue, speech, language*”) refers to the study of language across space and time. Luzbetak (2002:30) posits that the study of language as an anthropological subfield is well justified. Linguistics seeks to describe the fundamental constituents of languages and the rules by which languages are constructed into actual speech.

Luzbetak concludes that communication is the most basic human tool at the disposal of the Church in carrying out its role in the world.

When translating the Word of God into another language, caution must be exercised to know that culture fully; particularly nuances of words. An English word may take on a totally different connotation when used in another language. This could change the meaning totally and lose the effect of presenting the gospel.. An example of this is from the Indian tribe, the Pocomchi in Central America. If you are speaking about one being a sly “fox” from the scriptures, the Pocomchi will not grasp the true meaning; because the fox to them is not seen as sly and crafty- that is what the wildcat is. One must clarify the point using the word “wildcat’ instead; otherwise they will not grasp the intended meaning (Coggins & Frizen 1977).

Mayers (1977) concludes that translation is the most complex and demanding of all the challenges to the missionary. It involves a comprehensive understanding of the biblical cultures, one’s own culture, and the host culture who is to receive the translation. There must be functional equivalency and the translator must have sound doctrine and teaching in order to present the message in terms that are meaningful and appealing to the host culture.

2.9 The Role of Researcher in the task of Mission

Research is the foundations upon which the behavioral sciences are built. There is a valid place in missions for objective research. Objective research is needed primarily in two areas: First, to study all factors and participants involved

in complex interaction between two or more cultures in contact in mission.

Second, to study and evaluate the effectiveness of mission in its varying endeavors.

Ethnology, as a descriptive study of a particular living culture, continues to be an important concern to researchers studying living cultures. Such descriptive studies are sometimes referred to as *ethnography* (Gr. *Ethnos*, “nation, people” + *graphein* “to write, describe.”) (Luzbetak 2002: 31).

Ethnographic researchers endeavor to conduct in-depth studies of an intact cultural group in a natural setting. They focus on naturally occurring processes or change.

They become participant observers in social settings to provide valuable information on cultural patterns in human behavior, describing the perspective of members of the culture. Additionally, they study the natural settings in which culture is manifested. The training to be a behavioral researcher needs to be offered where populations are available to be researched. Courses in seminary must be designed to prepare research-oriented cross-cultural workers to use it as an effective tool to establish a solid foundation for their mission efforts.

2.10 A Caveat

While the contributions of the behavioral sciences are positive, varied, and comprehensive, they do not present the cross-cultural worker a panacea.

Rather, the blessings are often mixed and the use of the various disciplines call for godly discernment. Every thought, every action, every relationship must be

literally bathed in prayer. Decisions made must be formulated under the direct influence and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Most importantly, all behavioral sciences insights must be evaluated through the lens of Scripture and disregarded if found in direct conflict with the Word of God. For example, humanistic ideas which espouse that man controls his own destiny would be in violation of the scriptural premise that man must always be in subjection to the triune Godhead.

Cross-cultural witnesses, through the study of anthropology, can learn to protect the people of other societies from CC witnesses' own inclinations to make others like themselves and learn to adapt ourselves and our presentation of God's message to the host culture (Kraft 2003).

Importantly, the behavioral sciences in mission are not to supplant the truth, rather enhance it; are not to become competitive with theology and sound doctrine. Rather the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and anthropology must serve to aid and cooperate in communicating truth to all men. They are not designed to replace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, but rather to allow each person in his own cultural setting and through his own worldview, to know fully and completely The One who loved us and gave Himself for us.

2.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated six comprehensive ways in which the behavioral sciences of sociology, anthropology, and psychology all intertwine to form a deep understanding of our fellow man in a global dimension.

The behavioral sciences working together with theology can illicit a human response of harmony and unity. As a result, mission strategies will be strengthened and solidified through a deeper understanding of various tenets of cross-cultural ministry implied through the behavioral sciences.

Chapter three of this study demonstrates the tenets of ethnographic research as a framework and methodology in cultural anthropology. The ethnography will demonstrate the usefulness of participant-observation to demonstrate cultural patterns in human behavior and how those behaviors impact reception of the Gospel.

Chapter 3: Behavioral Science Research: Application to Mission

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the role of behavioral science research and its application to mission endeavors. This study will demonstrate that behavioral science research designs can make vital contributions to mission for several reasons: First, by identifying cultural patterns of human behavior cross-cultural ministry workers can more effectively understand the deeper values of a given society. This essential knowledge can best be accomplished through systematic study of the natural settings in which the culture is manifested.

Second, a cross-cultural worker who engages in behavioral research studies will discover rich information about the social life of a group and grasp a better understanding of *why* people act as they do; this has vital implications for mission work. How people behave and think is largely determined by the social structure in which they live. A deeper understanding of humans and their contexts is the first step in becoming culturally-sensitive and consequently more effective in mission strategy.

3. 1 Defining Ethnographic Research

Ethnography is a formal research design used in anthropological studies. It is the art and science of describing a group or culture. This research method tries to bring out for analysis, patterns and traits that constitute a people's culture; how

people think, behave and believe. This interpretative paradigm produces a deeper understanding of a particular social issue.

Ethnographers must produce cultural reality as it is perceived, ordered and lived by members of a society. Cultural reality must be produced from the native's viewpoint, or emic perspective. An ethnographer participates overtly or covertly in people's lives for a period of time as a participant observer – observing what happens, listening to what is said and asking questions. Thus, an ethnography involves an in-depth study of an intact cultural group in a natural setting. Finally, data is collected to shed light on the issue of interest (Leedy 1997).

3.2 The Ethnographic Process

Ethnography uses a variety of methods to obtain information. Participant observation is the technique most closely connected with the practice of ethnography. Observation attends to four major genres: place, objects, persons and activities. Cross-cultural workers often engage in prolonged settings to observe and record social interactions of a group. They systematically observe, interview, interact, and record the processes they observe; the cross-cultural worker becomes a complete observer and a complete participant. An example of this is Sherwood Lingenfelter who worked as a cultural anthropologist in the 1970s in the Pacific Island of Yap. From that research he developed a Model of Basic Values which is essentially an incarnational model for personal relationships. His valuable research is used today in training cross-cultural ministry workers (Lingenfelter and Mayers 1986).

Ethnographers construct their final reports to present a holistic description of the people they have observed. Their findings are often stated as assertions or broad statements for the observed or inferred relations between culture and behavior.

3.3 Purpose of Ethnographic Research

The purpose of ethnographic research is to seek to understand the relationship between human behavior and “culture.” Ethnography all begins with the same general questions: *What are the cultural meanings people are using to organise their behavior and interpret their experience?* Additionally, ethnographic research seeks to uncover the meanings which determine social behavior by seeking to understand a specific culture and all the dynamics of that culture.

From cross-cultural ministry workers, the ultimate aim of ethnographic research is to plant a church among every people group in order for them to have knowledge of the Word of God, knowledge of the will of God and fellowship of true believers in their midst (P. Vermeullen 2005).

3.4 Behavioral Sciences Application to Mission

Applying ethnographic research begins with questions in the heart of the ministry workers. There is an underlying pattern to which everything is related. An ethnographer will seek to find this pattern of values, ideas, and concepts by asking questions such as: *Who are these people? What is the history of these people? What significant religious changes have occurred over the last 100 years? Is there possibly a past poor Christian witness or misunderstanding of*

Christianity? Are there any believers among this people group and where are they located?

An ethnographer will continue to seek answers to questions pertaining to the social habits of the people: *Where in the community do people gather? Why do they gather? What are their social gathering patterns?* Gathering information from these questions will prove valuable when developing a mission strategy in their community.

In terms of leadership, the ethnographer would gather profiles of esteemed community leaders to discover what constitutes a good leader in their culture. Again, this knowledge can prove most valuable when choosing future church leaders. In regard to social dynamics, it must be determined how the communities are shaped by external forces such as migrations from tribal areas to the cities. *Has there been changes in lifestyle due to migration (ie: abandonment of home culture) or new technologies.* An ethnographic research must identify concepts related to religious life: *How does religion shape their lives and their society?*

Ethnographic study will assist missions in providing information from an emic or insiders' perspective. Information gathered from an etic or outsider's viewpoint will not provide a reliable picture of the culture of a people group.

An ethnographer who has done research into government policies and economics will have a broader understanding of how government policies affect the lives of the people in the community.

An ethnographic research design can impact mission by helping ministry workers to gain valuable knowledge about a cultural group that is essential and relevant in establishing culturally-appropriate churches amongst a people group.

3.4.1 Example

This chapter will conclude by presenting a brief synopsis of an ethnography conducted by this researcher. The purpose of presenting this case study is to practically illustrate the contributions that behavior science research can make toward mission endeavors by explaining and systematically discussing ethnographic research.

3.4.2 Ethnographic Case Study:

The Role of Paternal Kinship in the Familial Social Structure of Somalia, Africa

This study focused on a brief person-centered ethnography through semi-structured interviews with a Somali seminarian. The purpose of this study was to describe one aspect of culture in Somali society: that of the paternal kinship role in the familial structure. By identifying patterns of thought and behavior within the familial structure of Somalia, cross-cultural ministry workers will have a deeper understanding of the strength of kinship ties and the impact of social context on Somali families.

Two research questions guided this study:

- (1) *What weight of impact does the paternal kinship role exert in the familial social structure of Somalia?*

(2) *How can an understanding of the paternal role, enhance a deeper understanding for cross-cultural ministry workers evangelising in Somalia?*

This researcher used a social organisational structure for formulating questions and responses pertaining to the kinship role of men and women / marriage and family.

3.4.3 Significance of Findings: Implication for Mission

Two important recurring issues emerged from this study: First, obedience to the clan is absolutely foundational to Somali culture. Second, the maternal role component is more powerful than the paternal role status. While the paternal role is clearly definitive, it exerts less influence in the familial social structure than does the maternal role. Whereas the paternal role is the link between maternal-child bond, the maternal role is more powerful, influential and lasts for a lifetime. This study holds several missiological implications for cross-cultural ministry workers. First, this ethnography provides a deeper understanding of the strong maternal role status and its impact on Somalia society. This knowledge can assist mission workers to take account of the strong maternal role when developing mission strategies.

Finally, this study has shown the missiological significance of foundational familial roles which are based on strong clan system ties. Group conversion methodologies would need to be considered by mission workers with respect to the clan system. Somalis identify themselves by a group identity, do their thinking in a group process, and make important decisions together as a clan.

Therefore, strategies for evangelism must involve a group-consciousness paradigm. In addition, a thorough knowledge of Islam is imperative to pre-mission work.

3.5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss and demonstrate the role of behavior science research and its contributions to mission. It was clearly established that mission workers who engage in behavior science research studies, particularly ethnographic studies, will discover rich and valuable information about the social, political, economic and religious structure of a people group. A deeper understanding of humans and their context is the first step in becoming culturally-sensitive and consequently more effective in mission strategy.

Mission workers who engage in behavior science research can make positive and lasting contributions to mission endeavors by applying their research to assist the church to express a culturally-acceptable and biblically-authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4

Behavioral Science: Enhancing Spiritual Growth of Multicultural Workers

The contribution of the behavioral sciences in mission lie in two important areas: One, through more effective cross-encounters for witness; two, by impacting the personal spiritual growth of the missionary. Witness methodologies must consider that people in any society must be GUIDED into the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior. They must not find themselves pressed to embrace a new culture or lifestyle, or another cultural way of viewing Christ.

Several studies have been compiled over the years with regards to the behavioral sciences contributions in reducing personal and interpersonal tension among mission workers (O'Donnell and O'Donnell 1988, Heibert 1985). Foundational training in the behavioral sciences will assist to learn how to develop patience with one another and control their own erratic behavior. Studies indicate that training in the BS will aid in reducing the tensions felt between cross-cultural and indigenous workers.

4.1 Cultural differences

Because many of our personal life patterns are based on what we learned in childhood, problems can arise when these patterns differ; we think our own way is the right one. As a result, these can cause strained relationships. Several areas of conflict can erupt: language, work ethics, financial disparity between indigenous and cross-cultural workers.

English is frequently the language that CC workers use to communicate in a multi-cultural setting. However, people who do speak English sometimes use variance of that language. For example, a Briton may say “boot” for the American equivalent of an automobile’s “trunk.” A “rain check” may mean nothing to a Briton. It is always best for CC workers to ask people what is meant, rather than imply meaning.

A strong work ethic in one culture implies: arriving to work on time, working diligently all day long. Laziness is seen as leisurely doing minimal work. In another less time-oriented culture, those same work ethic aspects are not highly considered or viewed as important. CC workers must find a workable compromise.

Often financial disparity between CC and indigenous workers can induce interpersonal conflict. Many indigenous workers conclude that all foreign CC workers are at the rich end of the economic scale. CC workers must seek effective ways to live incarnationally with the people they serve – taking note of personal dress and lifestyle against the backdrop of the socio-economic level of indigenous workers.

4.2 Attrition of Cross-Cultural Workers

The reasons CC workers leave their host country are varied and more current research needs to be conducted and evaluated in this important area. Frank Allen, in *HELPING MISSIONARIES GROW* (1988) disputes the research on missionary attrition that asserts the paramount reason for missionaries leaving the field is because of poor interpersonal relationships.

Although, he feels it may be one problem, it is not the major reason. Unrecognized culture shock is often a major reason for missionary attrition. An improper adjustment to cultural frustrations and jolts, can negatively impact a worker's influence upon his host culture. Major mission organisations today see a rise in missionary attrition. Perhaps further research may indicate that the lack of pre-deployment training in assisting the CC worker to learn about his/her host culture through the study of missionary anthropology, impacts whether or not CC workers remain in their host country.

4.3 Behavioral Sciences and Spiritual Formation of CC Workers

A research survey was done to determine the felt needs of mission workers who served in cross cultural , church planting situations (O'Donnell & O'Donnell 1988). Researchers identified twenty nine (29) felt need categories. Of the top three felt needs were: spiritual renewal, personal devotional time and family time. Improved interpersonal relationships among missionaries ranked as number seven (7).

The authors suggested three areas where mental health professionals could benefit the CC worker: preparation of ministry workers, counseling and therapy, research and consulting services. Specific involvement in the training process of all mission workers should include: college and seminary training, orientation programmes, and importantly, furlough seminars.

Counseling and therapy opportunities should be available for individuals, groups, and families. Each missionary family or individual should have access to psychological health services. These services should be available in pre-deployment as well as on-site areas.

Behavioral scientists can use empirical research studies on the unique dimension of cross-cultural living to inform mission administrators on ways in which they can enhance the work of missions. Many studies have been compiled with regards to family life, singleness, isolation, and schooling of missionary children (Wolff, 1986; Bowers 1998; Walters 1991; Pollock & Van Rheeken 2002). Additional research is needed so that the recommendations and results can serve to advise mission executives.

The mental health care of the CC worker and his/her family should be a unique concern because of the unusual ingredients that comprise cross cultural living.

Thus, the exchange of ideas with Christian counselors/therapists who are directly involved in providing mental health services to CC workers, can be extremely valuable to long term mission needs.

A 1981 survey was done (O'Donnell and O'Donnell 1988: 461) as to the most frequent problems of missionaries requiring psychological counseling: The highest to lowest ranking problem includes the following:

- Interpersonal relationship issues with other missionaries
- Cultural adjustment
- Stress

- Children
- Marriage difficulties
- Financial pressures
- Loneliness
- Individual problems
- Finding God's will

As this study indicates, the top of the list for stressors is interpersonal relationship issues with other mission workers. It is interesting to note that this is in contrast to Allen's (1988) research seven years later which did not identify interpersonal relationship issues as the number one difficulty that mission workers face. Perhaps the improvement in interpersonal relationships among cross-cultural workers over the past seven years, may be attributed to more intensive pre-deployment training of ministry workers. However, this is speculation on the part of this researcher and further empirical research is needed to substantiate this assumption.

Foyle (1989) sites several causes that contribute to poor interpersonal relationships. One cause is feeling threatened by people different from ourselves –those who may possess different levels of ability.

We go into self-protection mode and instinctively want to feel safe in a haven of what is most familiar to us. This reaction can be closely connected to stereotypical behavior often based on childhood learning. For example, some people view Americans as loud and brash and the English as snobberish and high brow. As a result, a stereotype is operating in our minds when we meet an

American or a Briton and we raise our defenses, thus creating interpersonal conflicts (Foyle 1989).

Social scientists have discovered an interesting behavior that often arises in conflict situations. For instance, when someone does something that perplexes us, we tend to provide our own explanation by fabricating our own interpretation of the facts which usually include negative characteristics. To illustrate this point: there are many black South Africans who typically place great value on courtesy to a stranger and help to the needy. When asked a question, for example, on how to find directions to a street in Johannesburg, usually they will NOT say, "I'm sorry, I don't know." Rather, they will fabricate directions. Why? Because you are a stranger in need and they do not want you to think badly of them.

But, to view the above illustration from a western perspective, where a very high value is placed on accuracy and truth, and where lying is a grievous sin – mistrust ensues and the black South African is viewed as untrustworthy. Outside the western world, however, greater value is placed on *relationship*. The reality is that the majority of the world thinks differently on this issue.

That does not make the majority right – but as CC workers, it might be wise to try to understand why they see it that way and consider the following sobering questions:

How much does God value relationships?

How much does God value truth?

Is one more important than the other?

Or, are both equally important?

By evaluating an issue through the lens of another culture, we often find ourselves being less stressed and more able to function effectively in Christian witness to our host culture. Thereby we are best able to keep a balance between our spiritual sides and our emotional sides - both of which serve to further our spiritual formation.

4.3.1 Enhancing Spiritual Formation

Marjory Foyle (1989) served cross-culturally for many years as a physician and psychiatric counselor. She identifies the following five areas of interpersonal stress experienced by ministry workers:

4.4 Physical Challenges: Although considerable research has been done into the physical aspects of stress, Foyle (1989) contends that people function at different levels according to their physical or emotional make up. Learning to understand how people function can clear misunderstandings among mission colleagues.

The key to harmonious relationships is to give the person room to function on his/her level of coping skills. Pre-judging a CC worker for evidencing a low level of coping mechanisms in stressful situations will only serve to alienate and cause division among CC workers. A genuine spirit of understanding, empathy, and grace will be of great benefit to maintaining lasting and quality Christian relationships .

4.5 Employment challenges:

Often there is friction between old and new workers. New workers may demonstrate positive enthusiasm and rush in with suggestions for improvement,

whereas older workers sometimes demonstrate an attitude of resentment and view it as personal criticism and feel professionally inferior when new workers arrive. Educational mission workers often cite this problem when assigned to an area where indigenous workers feel threatened by them due to their credentials and qualifications. These challenges must be met with grace and patience.

4.6 Expectations:

Another job-related stressor is when the assignment is not what the cross-cultural worker envisioned it to be. This can be most demoralising. Felt needs must be expressed early with field directors in order for this problem to be resolved. An example of this stressor is a ministry worker who may feel called to serve in compassionate ministries only to be assigned in field education. This lack of fulfillment in his/her calling causes extreme frustration and multiple stress factors emerge.

4.7 Overloading:

Mission workers become so overloaded with professional work that there is neither time nor energy left for spiritual ministry. Professionals involved in higher education often take on multi-tasks of administration due to lack of capacity at institutions. Many professionally trained CC workers experience overloading by a struggle to balance between the demands of home, work, and spiritual life.

4.8 Talk Time: Expressed needs

Foyle (1989) gives a very helpful recommendation for new CC workers. She posits that they must be given ample opportunities to voice their early frustrations with a trusted person who will not sit in judgment, but rather offer supportive

emotional and spiritual counsel. This trusted person could be an experienced CC worker who could be assigned to mentor them once a month to listen to their expressed needs and offer prayerful assistance.

4.9 Administrative Challenges:

Clear channels of communication must be available to CC workers through their immediate supervisors. Administrative policies and procedures must be presented to all involved in order to create a team spirit. Regular email correspondence is helpful in developing a positive team spirit.

On the other hand, Foyle (1989:118) stresses the importance of needing an impartial person with which to share frustrations regarding administrators:

Missionaries need access to an impartial third party in case of complaints against the administration. In well organised missions, this is usually incorporated in pastoral care... Some missionaries carry heavy loads of frustrations because there is no one to whom they can turn to if the administrative set up is causing them concern.

4.10 Interpersonal Conflicts

Interpersonal relationship problems can arise from several dimensions. Often, however, it is due to differences in personality type and maturity level. CC workers with similar personality types who work closely together, as well as opposite personality types, may create tension in the work place. The key to harmonious relationships here is to give room to the other person to be who God created him/her to be. Patience and tolerance with the help of the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit, can do much to restore harmony in relationships. Colossians chapter three is useful in putting relationships in proper biblical perspective.

4.11 Integrity of Person:

Maintaining integrity as a person will take deliberate and God-dependent effort. Reading about the wider world will help to stimulate the mind; an interesting hobby will help to lessen stress. Sharing in the lives of the local people and journaling the findings can be a valuable ethnographic study. A healthy integration with the outside community should be cultivated by:

- Mixing with various people groups
- Joining a local society
- Participation in cultural activities
- Entertaining at home
- Making friends with local shop keepers

To guard against over pre-occupation, it is wise for CC workers to take all of their holiday/vacation time.

Most importantly, cross-cultural workers must keep their spiritual focus and evaluate questionable practices through the lens of Scripture.

4.12 Spiritual Renewal

Spiritual development in the life of cross-cultural workers is not a matter of self-achievement, self-help, or self-discipline, It is strictly a matter of *relationship* with God. To discuss spiritual renewal as a means of reducing stress or as a route to psychological wholeness, is to miss the primary point. At the very center of spiritual renewal is a carefully nurtured *relationship* with Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God describes that relationship with man as “walking together.” (Gen 3:8; 17:1; Mt 22:37-38).

Thus we learn that spiritual renewal is a life-long journey – an upward call to walk the highway of holiness with God. All human relationships require careful nurture; so too, it is with our spiritual relationship with God. Consistent personal encounters with God are the cross-cultural worker’s only hope for ongoing and enduring spiritual growth.

4.12.1 Prayer as Central to Spiritual Life

Prayer vigils remain the foundational strong point of the spiritual life of cross-cultural witnesses. Personal and family-lifestyle must be considered as basic to a daily Christian walk. Prayer holds to the essential key in understanding the nature of the demonic and one’s spiritual warfare must also be developed.

Cross-cultural witnesses, particularly find themselves often under heavy demonic and psychological oppression. Therefore, it is essential to know the weapons of spiritual warfare and to develop a consistent life of prayer (Taylor 1991:182).

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter explored the many dimensions of the emotional and spiritual care required of cross-cultural workers. Marjory Foyle, former missionary and psychiatric counselor identified five areas of interpersonal stress that affect cross-cultural workers. Additionally, she offered suggestions for resolution of these conflicting areas.

This chapter demonstrated ways in which mental health care personnel such as Christian counselors, can be a spiritual life-line to over-stressed, and spiritually

depleted ministry workers. However, to enhance the on-going spiritual formation of cross-cultural workers, human endeavors alone are inadequate.

Foundational to the lives of ministry workers is the dynamic and ongoing personal relationship that they establish with our Lord Jesus Christ through consistent personal encounters with him. These encounters include:

- Formative personal prayer
- Spiritual readings: The Word of God; classic devotionals; hymnals and other spiritual songs, and holiness literature.
- Spiritual journaling to record God's daily activity
- Corporate and personal worship

Living in a dynamic relationship with God assures the ministry worker of continued spiritual formation.

Chapter 5

Summary and Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis examined comprehensive ways in which insights gained from the behavioral sciences such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology can be applied to mission strategies. Historical evidence gave credence to the behavioral sciences by showing that they are scientifically-based disciplines that probe the various individual and corporate parameters of human behavior which serve to enhance and contribute to an effective paradigm of missions.

Escobar (2003) concurred and asserted that insights from biblical and historical studies as well as the social sciences, can assist in gaining a clearer understanding of the church's missionary calling. The *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1992:2) recognises the positive impact that the behavioral sciences may exert on missions:

The Christian movement can be advanced by employing the insights and research tools of the behavioral sciences, including the gathering and graphing of relevant statistical data for mission analysis, planning, control and critique.

This study has demonstrated what Escobar (2003) contends in that missions is a team effort, led by the Spirit of God working with the cooperation of theologians, behavioral scientists, mission professors and administrators to accomplish the supreme mandate of Christ's great commission. Additionally, this study has shown how the church has benefited greatly from the systematic and critical observation of mission facts given to us by the social scientists.

5.1 Major Objectives of the Study

The three major objectives of the study were: First, to show that multi-cultural ministry training is not complete unless training comprises both theology and the behavioral sciences, particularly missionary anthropology. Research was discussed which indicated that cross-cultural workers who were trained solely in the discipline of theology without instruction in cultural and missionary anthropology, more often experienced the greatest difficulties in adjusting to cross-cultural living (Heibert 2002).

In addition, this study demonstrated that although the behavioral sciences are complimentary and supportive of theology, they must never be used to supplant theology. All aspects of the behavioral sciences must be viewed, evaluated and validated through the lens of Scripture.

Finally, this thesis demonstrated practical and comprehensive ways in which the behavioral sciences can aid and cooperate in communicating God's Truth, globally – to all men and women in the most productive and expeditious way as possible. At the heart of 'mission' should be the drive to cross geographical, social and cultural barriers in order to share the good news of the Gospel with all people. This study has demonstrated that it is essential today that this passion be met with adequate pre-mission training to include: the biblical sciences, theology, history, social sciences and mission strategy.

5.2 Missiological Implications of the Study

It is essential that cross-cultural workers grasp the comprehensive definition of 'missiology' as defined by Luzbetak (2002:12) when he states that the word

'missiology' connotes a sending forth with a special message or a special task to perform. Kraft (2002:15) asserts the value of missiological training to cross-cultural workers:

The study of missions helps us not only to communicate the gospel more effectively to people around the world, but also to understand ourselves, our contexts, and the gospel more fully.

Understanding ourselves more fully will impact the way in which the gospel is presented cross-culturally. This thesis demonstrated how the behavioral sciences can serve missions well. A comprehensive example included the research study of an ethnography which showed cultural patterns in human behavior of the Somali culture. It showed that ethnographic research is a valuable, reliable, and effective tool in analysing cultural mores. By analysing the tenets of another culture, ministry workers will be better equipped to communicate Christ cross-culturally.

Importantly, this thesis demonstrated ways in which the behavioral sciences can be used to enhance the spiritual growth of mission workers. Research indicated the felt needs of mission workers (O'Donnell & O'Donnell 1988) and indicated how Christian mental health workers could assist in these identified needs thereby reducing attrition rates of cross-cultural workers.

Research by Marjory Foyle (1989) former missionary-physician and psychiatric counselor, identified five areas of interpersonal stress most experienced by ministry workers in cross-cultural living.

5.3 Spiritual Renewal of Cross-Cultural Workers

All human relationships require careful nurture. Equally important is cultivating our personal relationship with God. Consistent and on-going personal spiritual encounters with God are the CC worker's lifeline for spiritual growth.

Tracy (1994) posits that spiritual development in the life of cross-cultural workers is not a matter of self-achievement, self-help, or self-discipline, rather it is strictly a matter of relationship with Jesus Christ. That vital relationship may be cultivated by various spiritual disciplines well known to all followers of Jesus Christ.

5.4 Strategy: Effective Communication

This thesis demonstrated that in order for cross-cultural workers to most effectively communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ, they must have a thorough grasp of the man-to-self relationship and the man-to-man relationship.

Understanding ourselves in relation to our fellow man and understanding the complexities of our fellow man, is paramount to communicating Biblical truths.

Theology rightfully and fully assists the ministry worker in the "Message" to communicate; whereas the behavioral sciences of psychology, sociology and anthropology give perspectives on "how" to communicate that vital message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all men and women everywhere. To know Christ and to make Him known fully – must be our message to the nations.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Suggestions for future research include a survey of cross-cultural workers to demonstrate current felt needs and suggestions for meeting those needs. This research could be presented to world mission agencies for seminary training of ministry workers. If the felt needs of ministry workers are not identified and met, attrition rates will escalate and valuable workers will be lost to the Church and the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God – globally.

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