

**Towards an effective approach of communicating  
Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in  
Central Gonja, Ghana**

by

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## **SUMMARY**

The main aim of this study is to develop an effective approach of communicating Scripture for evangelizing oral communities, with special reference to Central Gonja, Ghana.

Firstly, the study provides a literature review of the main developments of the Orality Movement in the history of the Church, regarding the work of evangelism and discipleship especially among the oral cultures. There is also a critical evaluation of the Orality Movement in this first part of the study.

Secondly, the study investigates the main obstacles to communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana. It is an empirical survey of the perceptions of church leaders regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by the churches in Central Gonja in the ministry of evangelism. The purpose was to determine the need for an effective oral approach of communicating Scripture for evangelizing the large oral communities in the district.

Thirdly, the study presents the Biblical foundations regarding the appropriate styles of communicating God's message to oral cultures, with special reference to Mark 4:33-34. In particular, it deals with a Biblical survey of the oral communication of Scripture, which includes a survey of the both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and a Biblical exegesis of Mark 4:33-34.

Finally, the study proposes practical strategies that can be implemented by churches in Central Gonja to effectively communicate Scripture for evangelizing their oral communities. This approach was based on the findings of the empirical survey in Chapter 3 and the Biblical foundations of communicating Scripture to oral communities in Chapter 4. The approach provides seven practical strategies for an oral approach to effectively evangelize and disciple the large oral masses in the world, with special reference to the Gonja people of Ghana.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

#### 1.1.1 Background to the Problem

##### **a. Orality and evangelism internationally with emphasis on Africa**

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into our world, which was condemned to eternal punishment because of sin. In his great love for his creation, Christ died and was raised from the dead to save all people, who believe in him (John 3:16). Therefore, he commissioned his followers to reach out to all nations with the message of salvation and make them his disciples (Matt. 28:19).

Chiang and Evans (2010:9) show the *undeniable fact* that most of the unreached people are oral learners, and that the literate approach is not successful in making them Jesus' disciples. Lovejoy points out the following: Two thirds of the world's population "can't, don't, or won't take in new information or communicate by literate means." They have no desire to learn how to read. Unfortunately, "90% of the world's Christian workers presenting the gospel use highly literate communication styles ... This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for oral learners to hear and understand the message and communicate it to others" (Lovejoy 2005:3).

As a result, Herbert V. Klem (1982:xiii) stated that "about 70% of the world's population" would not be interested in the Bible if we teach them using literary approaches of communication. Therefore, Hill raises the pertinent question whether literacy is part of the gospel or another way of confusing gospel and culture. She argues that "people groups that have been labelled 'resistant to the gospel' may actually have been 'resistant to literacy.'" She also refers to the International Orality Network, which came to realize that "literacy was an unnecessary barrier preventing many from coming to Christ!" (Hill 2010:215-16).

Klem explains that people frequently reject literacy because "they *prefer* other forms of communication." According to Kraft, oral cultures prefer lively, personal communication with interaction, while individual reading of foreign people's history does not interest them (Klem 1982:ix-xi). Agovi (1989:53,55,57) insists that written material is a form of communication "radically different" from the African traditions where meaningful communicators like drummers, poets, cantors, carvers, dancers and singers, integrate "visual, aural and verbal elements." However, Klem reports that most missionaries had the assumption that you cannot become a mature Christian without literacy. As a result, the western image given to the church in Africa by requiring literacy from its members has discouraged many who preferred their own oral cultures and those who were not confident in their ability to use a western style of communication (Klem 1982:xvii-xviii).

Madinger emphatically critiques the western literate methods of missions in Africa, which were not sensitive to the local cultures, but were imposed on the communities arrogantly claiming to be "biblical." In consequence, even though the majority of the Africans claim to be Christians today, "this Christianity promoted segregation and apartheid, genocide, corruption and civil war" (Madinger 2010:203).

Therefore, Oral Communicators Worldwide (OCW) underscore the hardship or even the barriers put by the literate missions in the way that oral communicators required literacy from them, and thus *prevented* them from hearing and understanding the Gospel (Greer 2011:6). Greer (p. 29) agrees that "by concentrating on written translations we are actually preventing oral communicators from having easy access to God's Word." Klem even warns us that:

After over 150 years of literacy based mission strategy, we will still miss half the world if we continue believing that people must read in order to receive the Word (Greer 2011:70).

So, Greer (p. 71) insists that literate Christians should not "produce another barrier for oral learners, which is not justified by Scripture" because, as Brown



(2004:177) concludes, "depending on literacy for primary access to the Bible can actually result in people valuing the Bible less."

On a positive note, Klem (1982:xxii-xxiii) advises that the majority of Africans can be effectively reached through the oral methods of communication which reduce people's resistance to Christianity. Wright also assures us that a story is universally seen as the best way to explain the world as it is (Greer 2011:59). Chiang and Evans (2010:8-9) report that God's story has power among oral communities for whom storytelling is a "way of life." They also testify that the "oral approach is working where other approaches have failed" (p. 14). Stringer also "believes that Bible storying is the key" to reaching the oral learners who form the "majority of the world's people" (Chiang and Evans 2010:16). Again Hill (2010:215) points out the break-throughs among previously "resistant" people, where Bible storying spreads "like wild fire." Therefore, Gilbert Ansre (1995:67) from Ghana concludes by saying:

Oral-Scripture in Africa is the highest potential medium of outreach for the salvation message on the continent ... This is because it is capable of reaching both the literate and the teeming millions of non-literate people.

## **b. Orality and evangelism in the Early Church**

We have the estimation from Søgård that "only 5% of the people in the New Testament churches were literate ... and the Word was mediated to most of the believers orally." Jesus' message took root, spread quickly from nation to nation and the "early church grew much in a strongly oral culture" (Lovejoy 2000:9). As Jewell (2006:56) said, "although few members of the early church could read or write, the message of the gospel took root, owing partly to its method of proclamation," that is, through stories, parables, and proverbs.

The studies show that the Gospel of Mark is a text meant for oral presentations, written in a style which communicates with vigour to a non-literary audience (France 2002). Kelber holds that even though "the Gospel of Mark is a written work," it has the features of oral communication. This agrees with the assertion

by Papias (125 A.D.) that Mark committed Peter's oral Gospel story to writing (Brown 2004a:176). The story-telling manner, repetition and dual expressions in Mark are features of a memorable text. This indicates that "Mark was designed for oral transmission — and for transmission as a continuous whole — rather than for private study or silent reading" (France 2002).

Lovejoy refers to Revelation 1:3 to show the customs of the early church, where one person would read aloud and the congregation would listen. This indicates that, at first, most Christians encountered God's word by hearing and not by reading. The only copies of the Scriptures were hand-written and expensive and not affordable to the common people. It was only 1500 years later, after the invention of printing press, that the Bible was available to common people to read for themselves. Lovejoy explains that the Gospel was proclaimed orally for a generation before the four Gospels were written. However, the church spread dramatically during that time "around the Mediterranean Sea and into the interiors of Asia, Africa and Europe" (Lovejoy 2010). Therefore, as Maxey (2010:180) states, it was the oral presentation of the Gospel that played a key role in transforming the lives of the hearers in the early Church.

### **c. Orality in Jesus' ministry**

Beckwith notes that the Word of God first came in oral form and in the person of Jesus Christ, but was later put in written form for the purpose of preservation (Greer 2011:33). Jesus and the disciples lived in first-century Israel about four decades before the destruction of temple in AD 70 (Arlandson 2011). "The rabbis taught by oral presentation. Jesus mimicked this oral approach to teaching. To our knowledge He never wrote down any of His teachings or sermons. To aid the memory, teaching presentations were repeated, summarized and illustrated" (Lawrence 2011).

Parables were the public persona of Jesus the teacher (Edwards 2002), since "with many such parables he spoke the word to them" and "he did not speak to them without a parable" (Mk. 4:33-34, ESV). It was his habit to teach the multitude through the vehicle of parables (Lane 1974); that was his characteristic form of teaching (Hurtado 1984). Klem affirms that even though

Jesus could read, he did not require literacy from oral learners, but committed his message “to the memory of his disciples” (Greer 2011:29). “There is little indication that Peter was literate, so we can believe he was a good memorizer of what Jesus said” (Lovejoy 2000:9):

Jesus was not afraid to let them wrestle with the meaning of his story. Jesus did sometimes explain the story while in dialog with his followers, but note that his chief way of answering them was with additional stories. It took multiple stories to accomplish his purpose (Lovejoy 2000:9-10).

“Jesus chose his teaching style to match his listeners’ capacities”; he used familiar oral means that they understood (Lovejoy 2005:10). He used teaching approaches that enabled the common people to listen gladly and to learn his message well (Klem 1982:xiii-xiv). So, the parabolic form of teaching was adopted by Jesus as being best adapted to the needs of His hearers (Blight 2003).

Therefore, “following the examples of Jesus’ teaching through parables, primary oral learners” can comprehend God’s word (Lovejoy 2005:75). As Jesus ministered orally, God’s word can be efficiently transmitted without literacy (Klem 1982:xxiii). Pederson also holds that God’s use of narrative communication gives us the effective means of proclaiming the Gospel (Greer 2011:40).

According to Jewell (2006:56), some mission leaders today are calling Christian workers back to Jesus’ oral approach of communicating the Gospel, because the majority of the world cannot be reached any other way! In other words, as Lovejoy reports, “four billion in our world are at risk of a Christless eternity unless literate Christians make significant changes” in their communicational approach. The reality is that “a written version of Scripture does not even exist for the majority of languages.” Even if people become literate they would still not have access to the message of salvation (Lovejoy 2005:69-70).

Brown (2004b:127) concludes that “God’s purpose for the Bible is to give mankind a new story to live by, one that reflects truth as God alone knows it and

love as God alone shows it." Therefore, Brown's purpose for missions "is to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to know God's story and live by faith in it." In conclusion, I side with (Lovejoy 2000:13) who declares that:

The missionary task is too important to do anything but find the best possible way of sharing the gospel with the oral communicators who make up the majority of the world's population. By God's grace we will seek to find that way and implement it enthusiastically.

### 1.1.2 The Problem Observed

#### **a. Orality and evangelism in Gonja-land, in the Northern Region of Ghana**

In Ghana, "telling stories is a pastime of both the young and old. Because the indigenous cultures all preserved their history orally, the elderly people of the clan will teach the children of their proud cultural past through the use of stories. Children will learn important moral lessons from the stories" and spend Friday evenings telling the stories (Missionary Atlas Project 2012).

Akyempong (2004:44) describes the literacy situation in Northern Ghana as follows:

National statistics indicate that the literacy rate among adults in Northern Ghana is lower than 5% and less than 40% of children up to 14 years attend school. This leaves about 60% of children out of school, most of whom are girls. Thus [the] majority of children do not complete the compulsory nine years of basic schooling and consequently do not attain a basic level of literacy ... The north also suffers from an acute shortage of teachers in rural areas leading to a situation where many schools are simply not productive ... many communities are still not close enough to a formal school which means that pupils have to walk long distances to reach them ... Distance to school is ranked with costs and child

labour as major reasons for many children not attending school in the north.

My target people group located in the Northern Region of Ghana is called Gonja. They speak Gonja, or Ngbanyito, an alternate name. Gonja comes from the Niger-Congo family of languages; it is part of the North Guang parent subgroup and Choruba is a child dialect (MultiTree 2012). The Gonja population is about 230,000 and increasing. The Gonja language is recognized as one of the national languages; it is vigorously used in all domains and by all ages, and it is "taught in primary and secondary schools." There is a dictionary and a grammar book in the Gonja language and the Gonja New Testament has been in use since 1984. But the literacy rate in Gonja language is around 5% (Lewis 2009). Ghana Districts (2006) give the highest literacy rate for the Eastern Gonja district, that is, 20%.

Chief Adam, the manager of the "Gonja Literacy and Translation Project" had reported by mid-2012 that the project has "translated over 94% of the biblical Old Testament into the Gonja language, and had Wycliffe translators check their work" (Gonja Development Foundation 2012). Thus portions of the Old Testament are also available in the language (Joshua Project 2012).

Furthermore, Gonja borders Tamale Metropolis, the capital of the Northern Region, which is the base for many Christian institutions that target the north. Yet, the statistics for religion in Gonja show 4% Christians with only 0.5% Evangelicals, while the progress indicator is on the red. This categorises the Gonja people among the least-reached people groups (Joshua Project 2012), in a country where Christianity percentage goes up to about 70% (GhanaWeb 2012).

Could the lack of oral approaches be a reason for the ineffective evangelism among this largely oral society?

#### **b. Personal observation regarding evangelism ministry in Gonja**

I serve in Ghana with the "Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation" (GILLBT), working in the "Scripture Engagement" department,

facilitating the use of the translated Scriptures by the language communities and churches in Northern Ghana particularly. This ministry also takes me to the Gonja-land, where I have the opportunity to see communities, to interact with church leaders and to observe things for myself. The following are some of the issues in Gonja-land that could be relevant to my topic.

On many occasions church leaders have expressed their concern regarding the growth of the church in Gonja. Their evangelistic efforts do not yield the expected results and people's hearts seem to be hardened toward Christianity. One reason some church leaders can think of is that Muslims have occupied most of the traditional and governmental leadership positions, which give them much influence in the society. They dominate the market and trade in such a way that people of other religions, who try to run a business, are marginalised and their businesses become inefficient. Therefore, this situation leaves people with not many choices in their religious affiliation, being compelled to side with Islam to do well economically and in the society.

The use of the Gonja language in churches is suffering, particularly because of the dominant Akan language - used in church - that comes from the south. Many church leaders in Gonja-land are not natives. This contributes to the lack of use of the Gonja language in churches. If Gonjas do not use their language on regular basis, it can affect their reading performance, which can even result in losing their reading skills. Personally, having worked in Ghana for almost nine years and worshipping in a local church, it pains me every time I hear people in the rural area stumbling and fumbling, trying to read a passage from the Scripture in the mother-tongue. The reading of 15 verses can take up to ten minutes, if I can call that reading. By the time that they finish reading, they have forgotten the beginning of the passage, let alone understanding the passage.

The attempts of the churches to reach out to the oral Gonja communities look so foreign and aggressive to the local culture. In form, the evangelistic actions look just like a church service; the difference is that it is held outside. Holding big crusades, using loud speakers, expositional sermons, big books, necktie and suit, Christians rather scare people away instead of attracting and inviting Gonjas to Christ.

The schools in the rural areas lack teachers and therefore some of the schools are not functional. Many teachers do not want to be posted to village schools, because they are not well supported by the government, and because the parents cannot afford to pay school fees. Therefore, even the teachers who are there in the villages are frustrated; many times they come late for classes or do not come at all. Because of that, the children and the parents are discouraged and lose interest in formal education; meanwhile they have a lot of work to do around the house and in the fields.

Professor Ansre (1995:66) from Ghana indicates that the official literacy statistics "tend to be on the inflated side." According to Ansre (1995:66), we should also consider that:

1. "Not all people who claim they can read actually can do so."
2. "Not all who can read actually do read."
3. "Not all who actually read do read well."
4. "Not all who read well do actually read Scripture."
5. "Not all who read the Scripture do so regularly."

Even so, using the official literacy records, a project "undertaken for Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, whose average percentage of claimed literacy is 39.7%, suggests that only about 5% read the Scriptures regularly" (Ansre 1995:66). Furthermore, this figure completely ignores the non-Christians, like Muslims and traditionalists. Therefore, professor Ansre affirms that "literacy, while desirable and useful, has not been a criterion for receiving the Gospel." He concludes by saying: "If oral-Scripture presentation is necessary for other parts of the world, it is even more so for Africa" (p. 68).

### 1.1.3 Summary of the research problem

The main research problem can be stated as follows:

- What approach can be used to effectively communicate Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana?

The following key questions can be derived from the main research problem:

- What are the main developments of the Orality Movement regarding the work of evangelism and discipleship among oral cultures? (Chapter 2)
- What are the main obstacles to communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana? (Chapter 3)
- What are the Biblical foundations of communicating Scripture for evangelizing oral communities? (Chapter 4)
- What practical strategies can be utilised as an effective approach for communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana? (Chapter 5)

## **1.2 Aims of the Study**

The main objective of the thesis can be stated as follows:

- To present an approach that can be used to effectively communicate Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.

Other key objectives that can be derived from the main objective are:

- To provide a literature review of the Orality Movement regarding the work of evangelism and discipleship, especially among the oral cultures (Chapter 2).
- To investigate the main obstacles to communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana (Chapter 3).
- To present the Biblical foundations of communicating Scripture for evangelizing oral communities (Chapter 4).
- To develop practical strategies that can be utilised as an effective approach of effectively communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana (Chapter 5).



### 1.3 Definition of Relevant Concepts

#### 1.3.1 Orality

The noun 'orality' comes from the word 'oral' or 'aural' and it "refers to the practice of relying on the spoken, rather than the written word for communication ... The oral art forms – that is words or sounds spoken, sung or chanted – were (and often still are) woven together with visual art into ceremonies, dramas and rites of passage." Orality starts from the beginning of humanity and continues up to the present time (Greer 2011:9).

#### 1.3.2 Communication

"The word 'communication' comes from the Latin 'communis,' meaning 'to share'" (Communication Studies 2012). Therefore "communication is the act of conveying information for the purpose of creating a shared understanding" (Communication Studies 2012). *Skills You Need* (2012) also emphasise *understanding* as being the goal of any communication process. It also talks about the importance of choosing the appropriate communication channel including the major categories like: verbal, non-verbal, written and visual. I find Engel's (1984) definition short and yet encapsulating well these concepts: "Communication is the process whereby audience understanding is created when a message is sent by a communicator through appropriate media/channels." Also Rick Warren (2012), referring to an appropriate style of communication, points out that since the word "communication" is derived from the Latin word that means *common*, communication cannot be achieved, unless the communicator finds something in common with the audience.

#### 1.3.3 Oral communicator/learner

Oral communicators learn "by the spoken word, by listening and speaking." They know only what they can remember, because they have to recall everything from memory; therefore, their thoughts must be easy to memorize. "Thus they put all their important information into easily remembered forms such as stories, songs, poetry, and proverbs." Oral communicators do not break the

information into outlines, categories or lists, because they are difficult to remember (Lovejoy 2000:4-5). “Jim Slack uses the term ‘Oral Communicator’ for those who either cannot or prefer not to communicate by written means.” The terms ‘oral communicator’ and ‘oral learner’ are interchangeable. Greer uses ‘oral communicator’ for those who pass on information, and ‘oral learner’ for those who receive information (Greer 2011:12).

#### 1.3.4 Oral culture

Ong explains the term “oral culture” as follows:

In primary oral or pre-literate cultures, people lived in close-knit communities that were limited by place. Knowledge was typically linked to doing and learned through apprenticeship. Knowledge was preserved through oral retelling, often communally. Oral cultures were homeostatic, changing slowly (Innovate Online 2012).

Oral cultures learn by memory and recall. “As a result, much effort goes into developing easily-remembered forms for every important truth or piece of information. Proverbs, poems and songs are all often easier to remember than simple lists of truths or facts. One of the outcomes of research by Lord and others has been to discover that oral cultures develop standard ways of structuring proverbs, poems, and stories” (Greer 2011:10).

#### 1.3.5 Oral tradition

Oral tradition generally means a collection of oral narratives, oral poetry, proverbs, riddles and sayings. “Oral traditions, therefore, refers to the works of art and culture that are transmitted verbally from earlier generations” (Mhando 2008:10).

Mhando (2008:10) indicates that oral communities transmit their knowledge over generations through oral traditions. He explains:

From the accumulated knowledge of elders, stories are repeatedly told for: entertainment and instruction; history is told to provide knowledge of the past; creation stories are told to reveal the origin of life; laws are told to guide ... and spirituality and beliefs are taught to instill morals in society (Mhando 2008:10).

#### 1.3.6 Oral community

Greer (2011:9) states that “both historically and today, primary oral societies pass down significant information without putting anything into writing.” He elaborates:

Before writing systems were developed, communities transferred their cultural traditions, including their history, identity, and religion, from one generation to the next through their stories and proverbs, poems and songs, drawings and drama, riddles and games (Greer 2011:9).

#### 1.3.7 Non-literate

Scholars today avoid using the word ‘illiterate’ since it carries a negative connotation. Instead they rather use the word ‘non-literate’ or ‘oral’ (Greer 2011:12). “**Non-literate** students (formerly illiterate) speak a language that has a written form, but they have not learned to read or write it themselves” (Shaughnessy 2012:1).

#### 1.3.8 Literate/Functional literate

According to UNESCO (2006:149,151,153), “the most common understanding of literacy is that it is a set of tangible skills – particularly the cognitive skills of reading and writing.” However, some scholars focus on the application of literacy skills, and have developed the notion of ‘functional literacy.’ So, literacy can also be seen as an ongoing learning process rather than a limited educational product. According to SIL International (1999), “A functional literacy approach is a method used to teach people how to read well enough to function in a complex society. Functional literacy incorporates reading materials that

relate directly to community development and to teaching applicable or useful life skills.” Lovejoy (2000:5) explains that literates “tend to define words as symbols written with ink on paper,” which has shaped their view of the world. They use lists of teachings or principles, outlines, or abstract propositions in their presentations.

#### 1.3.9 Evangelising/Evangelism

The word ***evangelism*** “is not in the Bible” – but we find “the words ***evangelist*** and ***evangelize***.” “The Greek word ***euaggelizo*** means ‘to preach, to proclaim the good tidings, to tell the good news.’” “Evangelism in the Bible was a ministry of the spoken word. Evangelism means ‘to make known the message of the gospel’” (Champion 2012). According to J. I. Parker, evangelism involves both “the faithful explanation and application of the gospel message” (Lyro 2012).

### 1.4 Contextualization

#### 1.4.1 Profile of the Gonja people in the Northern Region of Ghana

The Northern Region of Ghana covers almost a third of the country, meanwhile the region “is inhabited by about 10% of Ghana’s population, representing a population density of less than 25 people per square kilometre” (Akyempong 2004:43).

With a harsh climate and poor vegetation, the people are dispersed, nomadic and deprived. Poverty is endemic in Northern Ghana with people facing formidable challenges with regards to water, food and employment opportunities (Akyempong 2004:43).

Most people in the north (including Gonjas) are poor, making a living from farming, and living in mud or brick houses with thatched roofs. “Family incomes are often so low that children stay home to work fields rather than attend school” (Gonja Development Foundation 2012). “The region is among those with the lowest school enrolment rate, highest dropout rate and highest illiteracy rates in the country” (Ghana Health Service 2012).

Gonja-land is located in the southern part of the Northern Region (see maps in Appendix 1). It actually covers a major part of the region, reaching its eastern border and also goes almost to the western border (Lewis 2009). It shares boundaries in the north with Tamale Metropolis, and the Kintampo Northern District of the Brong-Ahafo Region in the south. "The area is traversed by two major rivers – the White Volta, which flows longitudinally through the (Central Gonja) district, and the Black Volta, which forms the district's southern boundary with the Kintampo North District." Agricultural activities depend on rainfall, which is limited to six months, and many times it affects the production negatively (Ghana Districts 2006). "Less than 10% of the population has access to potable water. A few communities depend on boreholes and hand-dug wells." "Agricultural production is the major activity" for about 80% of the population. They produce crops like maize, yam, groundnuts, rice and cassava (Ministry of Food and Agriculture 2011).

"In the West Gonja and East Gonja districts several villages are completely surrounded by the Volta Lake." The roads are bad. Only one stretch that goes through Central Gonja district to Tamale is tarred. "Most roads are not motorable in the rainy season thus hampering outreach" activities ... There has been a significant improvement in telecommunications over the past three years; most of the district capitals can now be reached by telephone" (Ghana Health Service 2012).

#### 1.4.2 Brief history of the Gonja people

In Gonja there are traditional drummers who tell the history of the people especially of the founder of the Gonja Empire, Ndewura Jakpa (Braimah, Tomlinson and Amankwatia 1997). This knowledge of past events is passed on by the drummers, because of the practice of circulating succession by which chosen members of different dynastic segments "move from town to town within the division" (Goody and Goody 1992:266). Apart from this, Gonja is fortunate to have its history recorded by Arab Muslims, who accompanied them to where they are now. According to Arabic manuscripts and oral tradition, Gonjas migrated from the country of Mande, of the Mali Empire (Braimah, Tomlinson and Amankwatia 1997), in the sixteen century (McCaskie 2001).

The ruling dynasty converted to Islam early in 1580-1599. By that time the capital of the kingdom was at “Buipe, in Central Gonja, on one of the trade-routes leading northwards...” That was a time of rapid expansion for the kingdom, which reached its full extent around 1600. During his rule (1623-1667), al-Lata divided the kingdom and gave it to his brothers. The reign of al-Lata’s son, Sulayman, was dominated by war. He was overthrown in 1689 and the “kingdom finally fell apart with the outbreak of civil war in 1692.” By 1709, Gonja was reorganized using a confederate system. The capital was moved from Buipe to Nyanga in western Gonja where a paramount chief was installed. Though the Buipe chief has had prestige, “his political power is negligible” (Flight 2012:95-97). In 1751-52 taking advantage of succession disputes, the Asantes invaded the Gonja kingdom. They captured towns and also traditional leaders, and took them as prisoners to Kumasi, the capital of the Asante kingdom. By the late eighteenth century, Gonja came firmly under Asante control (Herbstein 2012). After the fall of Asante kingdom, Gonja became part of the British Northern Territories (GhanaWeb 2012).

Gonja-land does not have many resources, but it had the fortune to lie where the gold routes were passing, going to Mali and to the Mediterranean world. In the fifteen century these routes were disrupted by the arrival of Europeans on the littoral in the south (McCaskie 2001). Salaga, in Eastern Gonja, became famous because of the slave-trade. It had a good location, in the north, near the source of the big Volta River, and it was independent being far from the coast and from the political influence. “Salaga was the main centre in the Western Sudan for collecting the goods produced by the African hinterland. The goods could easily be brought to the market by slaves, and for this reason it became the centre of the slave trade ... there was a turnover of 15,000 slaves annually at Salaga.” In secret, the slaves were “taken down to the Gold and Slave Coast on hidden paths, through the districts occupied by the Europeans” (Herbstein 2012).

Damango has been the capital of the Gonja state since 1944 when, with help of the colonial government of the then Gold Coast, the paramount moved from the previous capital of Nyanga (Goody and Goody 1992:266). The Gonjas are still

ruled by members of a dynasty - most likely originating from Mande - and the Arab Muslims, who accompanied the Mande invaders, have since occupied a special position and have a strong influence among the people as scribes and traders (GhanaWeb 2012).

## **1.5 Methodology**

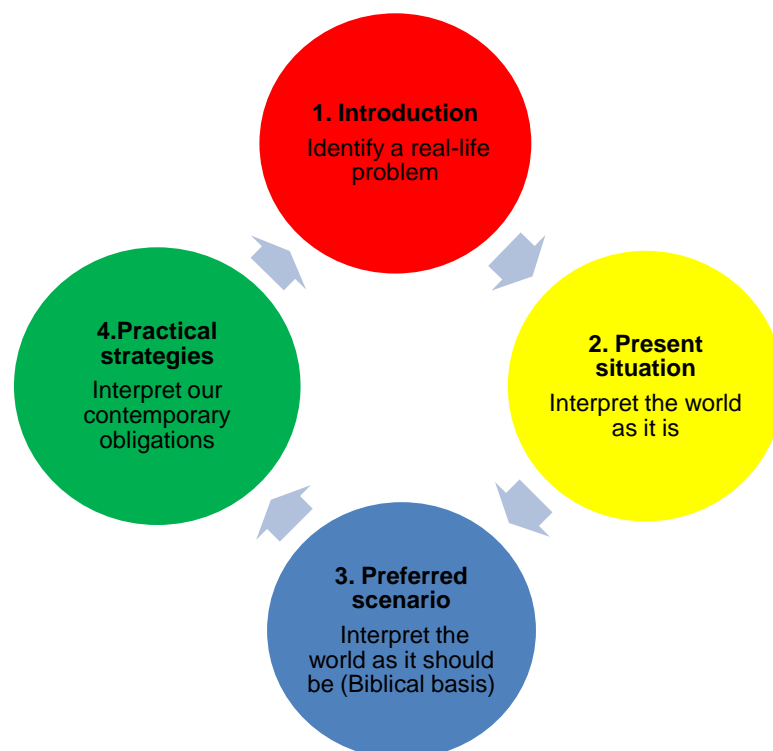
### **1.5.1 The LIM theological research model**

The model that is most suitable for achieving the objectives of this study in practical theology is the LIM theological “research model developed by Prof Michael A. Cowan” from the Loyola University (Cowan 2000). Cowan’s (2000) model firstly identifies and states a real-life problem, secondly, it presents *the present situation* of the problem on the ground as it is, thirdly, it analyses the Scriptures to identify *the preferred scenario* for that particular situation, as it should be, and lastly, it presents *possible action steps* to improve the situation.

This model requires the following four main steps in practical theology (Cowan 2000):

- (a) *Introduction*: identify a real-life problem
- (b) *Present situation*: interpret “the world as it is”
- (c) *Preferred scenario*: “interpret the world as it should be”
- (d) *Practical strategies*: interpret our contemporary obligations

**The LIM theological research model** (Cowan 2000)  
(Adapted with the help of my supervisor, Dr Woodbridge,  
Colloquium: 2012-10-03)



1.5.2 Present situation

**Chapter 2: Evangelising Oral Communities: A Literature Review of Orality and Christian Discipleship**

This chapter provides a literature review of the Orality Movement regarding the work of evangelism and discipleship, especially among the oral cultures. The research process applies literary methods only. The historical data comes from libraries, archives and internet sources.

**Chapter 3: An empirical survey of the perceptions of church leaders regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by the churches for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana**

This chapter will investigate the perceptions of church leaders regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by the churches in



Central Gonja, Ghana in the ministry of evangelism. This will be done by means of an empirical survey, which includes both quantitative and qualitative research: the collection of first-hand information through a questionnaire that requires structured and semi-structured responses.

### 1.5.3 Preferred scenario

## **Chapter 4: A Biblical approach of communicating Scripture/the Gospel to oral communities, with special reference to Mark 4:33-34**

After a brief biblical survey of the topic, this chapter applies an in-depth inductive study to discover the meaning and significance of Mark 4:33-34 for Christians who communicate the Gospel to oral cultures. This provides the preferred scenario, the ideal situation for the case in this study. It will apply the basics of Smith and Woodbridge's research model for Biblical Studies (2007) (Smith 2009:41). The following is the main structure used in this chapter:

### **Step 1: The context of the Gospel of Mark**

This section will study the general background of the book, including issues related to authorship, date, and circumstances. It also looks at the historical, cultural, religious and literary context of the book, and presents the major theological themes of the gospel.

### **Step 2: The meaning of Mark 4:33-34**

This section consists of an in-depth exegetical analysis of the passage in order to establish the author-intended meaning of Mark 4:33-34 for its original readers. This includes the preliminary, contextual, verbal and literary analysis and closes with a synthesis of the exegesis bringing together all the findings of the analysis.

### **Step 3: The significance of Mark 4:33-34**

This section addresses the contemporary significance of the text. Two kinds of significance are presented: the theological significance and the practical significance of Mark 4:33-34 for Christians today.

#### 1.5.4 Practical strategies

### **Chapter 5: Towards an effective approach of communicating Scripture for evangelising oral communities, with special reference to Central Gonja, Ghana**

This chapter looks at the findings of the research, the historical, empirical and biblical studies, and presents *practical strategies* that churches in Central Gonja need to implement, for an effective communication of Scripture to their oral communities.

### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The last chapter of this thesis presents a synthesis of the research by providing a restatement of the research problem and the research objectives; a summary of the research findings; recommendations regarding the implementation of this research; the contribution of this research to Practical Theology; and a conclusion.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Evangelising Oral Communities: A Literature Review of Orality and Christian Discipleship**

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” (Mat. 28:19 NIV).*

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The vast majority of oral communicators of the unreached nations have caused an increasing number of mission leaders today to raise the following critical question that pertains to the task of discipleship: Do you have to become literate to become a mature disciple of Jesus? (Hill 2010:215).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a literature review of the Orality Movement regarding the work of evangelism and discipleship, especially among the oral cultures. A secondary aim is to raise awareness in the Church of the existing oral strategies of communicating Scripture and their contribution to missions.

This chapter will deal with the following main topics:

- Profile of the Orality Movement
- Historical development of the Orality Movement
- Overview of Orality Theory
- Models and practices used worldwide
- Evaluation of the Orality Movement

#### **2.2 Profile of the Orality Movement**

Greer (2011:7) affirms that, “To reach Oral Learners for Christ we have got to become learners of orality.”

### 2.2.1 What is Orality?

According to Greer (2011:9), orality has existed since the beginning of the human race up to the present, and Lovejoy (2010) explains that before writing was introduced, all societies lived by the spoken word, or by orality. Lovejoy (2008:121-22) prefers to define orality as “a reliance on spoken, rather than written, language for communication” and puts emphasis on “reliance on”, because most people use the spoken word but do not rely on it as much as oral learners do. Chiang (2010:128) defines orality as “those who can’t, won’t or don’t communicate through the written word and those who are literate but prefer to communicate in an oral manner.”

- **Orality versus illiteracy**

To show how dominant literacy is in the English speaking world and other European countries, Lovejoy (2008:122) points out the fact that they do not even have a familiar word to describe oral societies. He says that “orality” is an “awkward” term used to refer to “profound, sophisticated, and beautiful ways oral cultures use language.” He also explains that ‘we try to minimize references to oral communicators in terms of what they are not - “non-literate,” “illiterate,” “pre-literate,” “non-readers” - as if such terms adequately described resourceful, complex, intelligent people’ (2009:7). Therefore, he critiques those defining orality by lack of literacy, making literacy “the norm” and thus seeing orality as something negative, which needs to be eradicated by literacy campaigns (2008:122). So we cannot equate orality with illiteracy because,

Focusing on orality rather than illiteracy highlights the fact that people who live by orality are capable of using beautiful, sophisticated, and moving speech. They are responsible for some of the world’s great verbal artistry, expressed in songs, stories, poetry, and proverbs. Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, widely recognized as the greatest examples of epic poetry in western civilization, are oral compositions. Parts of the Bible were also composed orally before being written. So, orality should never be

equated with backwardness, ignorance, or lack of intelligence (Lovejoy 2008:122).

- **Learning in oral cultures**

Oral communicators learn by listening and speaking. Since they do not read and write, they must store all information in memory, therefore they put information in forms that are easy to memorise like story, song, poetry and proverb. The literate style, using lists and categories, exposition and analysis, are rejected by oral learners, because they are not easy to remember. If oral people cannot remember lists of principles, outlines and abstract propositions, they cannot also reproduce or pass them on to others (Lovejoy 2000:5).

They learn by talking with people, listening to the radio, watching television, and by watching someone performing, and then imitating or working together (Lovejoy 2010). People in oral cultures learn a lot and have great wisdom, which they acquire not by study but by apprenticeship (Wilson 1999:18).

Oral communicators learn from events in real life or those that are imagined, events that are people-oriented. "They need stories that show sin, righteousness, prayer, faith, love, etc., more than exhortations about them." They understand better about God's qualities by telling stories which illustrate them, than by giving statements about them. They like genealogies and biographies. A series of stories about people in the Bible that "present the Biblical themes through the events that" happened in their lives, would be more effective with oral learners. They can watch movies that challenge their culture as it happens with many Muslims who are ready to watch "The Passion of the Christ" even though the Quran denies the crucifixion of Jesus (Brown 2004b:124).

Oral people learn by interactions. "They cannot think about something for very long without discussing it with others." They are usually found in groups discussing events. If one monopolises a conversation, people will start conversing with each other, and many can even talk at the same time. Therefore they highly value drama and dialogue, but not long speeches (Brown 2004:125).

Ponraj and Sah (2003:28) give four categories “of storing information by oral and non-literate societies”:

*“Memory: the use of poetry, songs, riddles and proverbs.”*

*“Symbols: the use of color, art, paintings, carvings, symbols.”*

*“Stories: the use of stories, dramas, and narrative dances.”*

*“Rituals: rituals are the enactments of their fundamental beliefs and speak of their ideas through actions.”*

- **Orality statistics**

Samuel Chiang (2010:128), “the Global Coordinator of the International Orality Network” (ION) presents some of their dataset figures, which show that approximately 70% or 4.35 billion of “the world’s population are oral learners”. He breaks down this figure as follows:

This includes 3 billion adults, 900 million very young children, and 450 million children between the ages of eight and fifteen. All of these have basic or below basic literacy skills. They are oral learners because of their limited literacy skills ... Out of the 4.35 billion people, there are 2.7 billion who are counted as the world’s unreached peoples resulting in approximately 3,500 unengaged unreached people groups ... Furthermore, there are 2,252 unengaged unreached people groups, composed of 350 million people without a single verse of Scripture! These people are known as ‘primary oral learners’ (Chiang 2010b:128-129).

Lovejoy (2009:1) also explains that some of these people are oral learners, because they have no other choice; their languages are not yet written. For others, even though their languages are written and have literacy programmes, orality is a preference. Many others who are not included in these figures are literate but do not enjoy reading. They switch to oral communication any time there is the possibility to do so. They like talking about their experiences, telling folk cultural stories, using proverbs to comment on various events, and singing and dancing with friends. When they finish school, some go back to their oral communities and their traditional oral style of communication, and lose their

reading skills (Lovejoy 2010). Even highly literate people, who live in traditional oral cultures, often prefer the oral approach to learning. This can be explained by the fact that orality influences people's "thought processes and decision-making" (Lovejoy 2005:6).

Studies done by NALS, IALS and NAAL in North America and Western Europe show that almost 50% of adults "have limited literacy skills" (Lovejoy 2008:130). Also, the role of reading is declining in these countries to such a degree that "less than half of the adult population now reads literature, and these trends reflect a larger decline in other sorts of reading." The situation is worse among the youth in America where literary reading "is not only declining rapidly among all groups, but the rate of decline has accelerated" in the last years. This shows that secondary orality is growing even among the students. So, if 50% adults have limited literacy skills in the most developed countries in the world, imagine the real situation, beneath the official literacy statistics, in the rest of the world. Their situation is worse "given their less-developed educational systems and weaker traditions of literacy" (pp. 131-32).

- **Towards a post-literate era**

As stated earlier, orality exists since creation, but things changed drastically in the West when in the fifteen century Gutenberg invented the printing press which made possible printing en mass. This was followed by the Reformation when "the Church enthusiastically declared that all should be able to read." As a result, reading took precedence over listening, privacy over community, and book over memory. The time from the fifteenth to the twentieth century is called the "Gutenberg Parentheses", an era of science, invention, and philosophy development, which came at the expense of creativity and community. In the twenty-first century we entered an electronic and digital era, where the use of audio-visual through internet, video and television has increased much, thus recovering creativity, collaboration and community. The social networking like Facebook made way to communal experiences, reinforcing "the F-Factor—fans, friends, and followers." Therefore, the electronic and digital era brings the Gutenberg era to a hard close (Chiang 2012:7-8).

Unfortunately, in spite of the reality of orality and its statistics, about 90% of all Christians working among the two thirds oral learners of world's population, use highly literate styles of teaching like "the printed page or expository, analytical and logical presentations." These methods are unfamiliar, difficult to understand, to learn and to reproduce by the oral people. Even though the Gospel is now taken to more people groups than ever before, many of them do not really hear it. "To effectively communicate with them ... our presentations must match their oral learning styles and preferences" (Lovejoy 2005:3-4). Taking orality seriously, the church in her efforts to make disciples of oral learners, must rethink her strategies to match the preferences of oral cultures, and use familiar approaches of communication to increase effectiveness (p. 6).

### 2.2.2 Three Major Distinctions of Orality

Professor Walter Ong (more information about him in the next section) in his popular book *Orality and Literacy*, gives three categories of oral communicators: primary, residual, and secondary oral communicators (Lovejoy 2000:5). Lovejoy (2000:5-8) elaborates:

**"Primary oral communicators** are those who live in contexts in which literacy is not known or practiced." Because they depend on their communities for information and learning, relationships are highly valued; otherwise the communication flow is interrupted. Their knowledge also depends on how much they can memorize "because they cannot look something up or study. A printed Bible is useless to them as a reference tool." Because they learn by memorization, "they put all their important information in easily remembered forms, such as stories, songs, poetry and proverbs" (p. 5).

On the other hand, *exposition*, which is central to the literate cultures, is defined by Neil Postman as "a high valuation of reason and order; an abhorrence of contradiction; a large capacity for detachment and objectivity; and a tolerance for delayed response." Therefore, as Rick Brown asserts, the materials designed for western literate societies, cannot just be translated and used in oral cultures, because they are difficult to be understood and passed on by oral learners without literacy (p. 6). Lovejoy (p. 6) points out that:



Research by New Tribes missionaries in the Philippines found that retention among rural and oral people seldom was higher than 29% of the knowledge shared when communicated by means of logical and systematized outlines of the information. However, when a storying or chronological teaching method was used, retention rose to at least 75-80%.

So, if we want to teach primary oral learners effectively, we have to use familiar communication tools like proverbs, songs, stories and drama (p. 5).

2) **Residual oral communicators** are those who attended literacy classes or even went to school, but are still oral in their learning preferences. So we should not be quick to think that, since they can read, they have switched to the literate preference of learning (pp. 6-7). According to Lovejoy (p. 7),

[It] takes at least ten to twelve years of effective, western-style education that emphasizes inquiry and creativity in order to produce a person fully at home with literate means of communication. If the educational approach employed is one of rote memory, students may remain residual oral communicators no matter how many years of education they complete.

If a literate "does not continue reading and writing regularly, that person will lapse back into functional illiteracy" and to the oral style of communication. In south Sahara Africa about 90% *prefer* to communicate orally, meanwhile about 90% of Christians working with them use literate styles of communication (pp. 7-8).

3) "**Secondary oral communicators** are ones who depend on electronic audio and visual communications." In these cultures the elite, who are literate, provide electronic forms of learning to the community. Orality is growing in countries where technology and industry is advanced. Secondary orality is also growing in developing countries, where primary oral communicators become secondary oral communicators without passing through literacy. Therefore, "[o]rality leaves us no option but to communicate in stories" (p. 8).

### 2.2.3 Professor Walter Jackson Ong - Leading Scholar in Orality

Professor Walter Jackson Ong was born in 1912 in Kansas City, Missouri, and died in 2003, after 91 years of hard work. He became a Jesuit Father in 1935. He did his masters in English at Saint Louis University and his PhD at Harvard University. Then Ong joined the faculty of St. Louis University and was Professor Emeritus of English, and Professor Emeritus of Humanities in Psychiatry. He was recognized by St. Louis University with its highest honour, the Sword of Ignatius Loyola. Author of 450 publications, Ong was "[k]nown for his work in Renaissance literature, intellectual history, and the evolution of consciousness." And "he was among the first to treat so-called 'primitive' societies as complex organizations with sophisticated oral modes of culture" (Saint Louis University 2012). He also wrote on "language and memory, media consciousness, communication theory, print culture, and literary theory." He studied the "differences between Aristotelian logic, oral rhetoric, and the arts of memory, and he showed how ... print culture absorbed memory into a new organization of knowledge." One of his main starting points was that "writing restructures consciousness" (van den Berg 2005).

The most popular work of Prof. Ong is "*Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*" which was translated in twelve languages in Europe and Asia (Saint Louis University 2012). Here he presents the fundamental differences of thought process and verbal expression between the primary oral cultures (with no writing system) and the print cultures (with a writing system). He affirms that the thought process of oral cultures is strange to the literate cultures. The main focus of the book is "how the shift from primary orality to literacy dramatically changes the way humans think." According to Ong, the Western cultures moved away from hearing to a sight dominated world, thus documents "were no longer necessarily written in order to be read out loud," which gave the document "a feeling of finality" unlike the oral storytelling. He also came up with the term "secondary orality" to describe Western societies that are "dominated by electronic modes of communication (e.g., television and telephones) ..." Like primarily orality, second orality "gives a sense of belonging to a group". Ong

concludes that orality and literacy are not superior to each other (Bingham 2012).

#### 2.2.4 International Orality Network (ION)

There was a growing awareness in the 1990s among mission organisations like CCCI, IMB, SIL, and UBS of the extent of oral cultures in the world and their communicational preferences. But it was at the Billy Graham's conference for evangelism in the year 2000 in Amsterdam, at the "Table 71" that the seed was planted for the movement that was going to become the International Orality Network (ION). With the new discovery that "70% of the unreached peoples of the world being oral preferred communicators" Marcus Vegh of Progressing Vision approached Table 71, where many mission leaders were exploring ways to reach the unreached peoples, and he asked Avery Willis, the Senior VP of Overseas Operations for the IMB, "How do you make disciples of oral learners?" This question motivated these mission leaders to hold subsequent meetings to explore oral strategies for discipleship (History of ION 2012).

At the initiative of Dr. Avery Willis, representatives from 15 organizations met in 2001 in California to further explore how to serve oral communicators effectively, and they established the "Oral Bible Network" (OBN). The movement grew fast and in 2002 and 2004 the meetings included members from 50 organizations. Under the leadership of Avery Willis and Steve Evans the group participated in the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) in 2004 in Thailand, where they came up with the book called, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (History of ION 2012).

The group that met in 2004 merged together with the OBN member organizations in 2005 to become the International Orality Network (ION). ION's mission is to:

... radically influence the way oral preferred communicators are evangelized and discipled in every people group. It serves to bring awareness and understanding of orality and oral preferred communicators and connects mission organizations, churches, people who are reaching oral communicators, especially

unreached people groups, to training resources as well as strategies that incorporate oral communication art forms, including various ways to implement storying programs (History of ION 2012).

## **2.3 Historical Development of Orality Movement**

Steffen Tom and Terry James (2007) in their article, *The Sweeping Story of Scripture Taught Through Time* show how, during the history starting from Jesus, Christians saw the need to present the "panoramic story of God" told in chronological order, and laid on a strong Old Testament foundation, in order to build a "comprehensive Christianity" in their communities. Steffen and Terry call "sweeping story" a panoramic, comprehensive story of the Bible (p. 115). Much of the information in the first two sections below comes from this article.

### **2.3.1 Church Era to Middle Ages**

It is clear that, according to Mark 4:33-34, Jesus' ministry of proclaiming the Good News was based on a storytelling approach to teaching. But one time Luke (ch. 24) mentions that Jesus presented a 'sweeping' story of the Scripture, after his resurrection, to two disciples during their three-hour journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Luke (24:27, ESV) says that "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" which resulted in hope restored in the hearts of the two disciples. In Acts 7 Stephen presents another panorama of the Scripture which touched the hearts of the listeners so much that they could not hear any more, and had him killed. Then Paul also presented a sweeping story of the Scripture in Acts 13:16-41. Again, the writer of Hebrews in chapter 11 gives a sweeping story including "19 carefully chosen characters" (Steffen and Terry 2007:317).

The early Church leaders also believed in a "coherent" narration to instruct new believers. Augustine (354-430), for instance, believed that his Bible teachers should teach a full narration and prepare "a comprehensive statement of all things, summarily and generally..." to be put in the memory of the people (p. 317). Caedmon (d. 680) had a divine gift of composing songs. His colleagues of the monastery taught him the entire story of the Scripture and he turned it into

poetic songs which helped people to convert. He even translated his songs in Latin Vulgate to "help illiterates better understand the sacred Story" (Steffen and Terry 2007:318).

From the fifth century liturgical dramas with singing started to develop. By the eleventh century Bible stories were performed in churches in Latin. During the thirteen to sixteen centuries they were performed outside by guilds in England and the Low Countries which, unlike the Catholic Church, used vernacular to ensure understanding of the Bible. "The Medieval cycle plays dramatized Bible stories from creation to consummation to teach their illiterate parishioners the stories of the Bible." Often this method motivated the audience to turn to God. But by the year 1560 the Catholic Church decided to stop these plays "due to their secular and anti-Catholic nature." Towards the end of the 16th century, the Protestant Church was also against such plays because of their Catholic influences (Steffen and Terry 2007:318-319).

### 2.3.2 Post-Middle Ages

In the 1730s, *Moravian missionaries* were sent to St. Thomas Island to serve the slaves on the fields according to their needs, both physically and spiritually, and they used Bible stories. Unfortunately, Zinzendorf, their leader, thought they should start with Jesus Christ since the slaves already believed in God the creator. What he failed to see was the distorted ideas the slaves had about God which affected their understanding about Christ (Steffen and Terry 2007:320).

Father *Francis Blanchet* of Quebec started work in 1839 among the Nisqually Indians. He had an interesting idea of presenting the Christian story through symbols, by making markings on ladder (a long flat stick). These ladders could easily be transported from place to place.

Father Blanchet presented many of the "Catholic Ladders" to the chiefs among the Northwest Indians as gifts, assuring that the Christian story would spread throughout the 100,000 Indians living in the territory (Steffen and Terry 2007:320).

*Johannes Gustav Warneck* worked in New Guinea in the 1860s and testified that Bible stories "are all listened to with keen interest and are cherished..." He affirms that Bible stories about God's deeds are the best way to communicate Scripture to animists, because they "speak most loudly to the needs of the people" and have great impact in their hearts (Steffen and Terry 2007:321).

*Christian Keysser* emphasised "tribal conversion" over individual decisions in Papua New Guinea. He asked his baptism candidates to learn 40 Bible stories as a "basic understanding of the Word of God" and based on these stories they had to decide which local customs and practices were in conflict with the Bible (Steffen and Terry 2007:321-322).

... research showed that Papuans who had made group decisions for Christ made more radical breaks from past tradition than those who made individual decisions (Steffen and Terry 2007:322).

Papuan evangelist started telling stories of biblical characters in "conversational fashion" using images and drama. This resulted in a church planting movement which "consisted of some 200,000 baptized Papuans among whom were 1,200 national evangelists" (Steffen and Terry 2007:322).

*George and May Ingram* worked among the tribes in North India during the early 1900s. In the beginning they were frustrated, because the Indians "found it difficult to profit from the common method of Christian teaching." Then they started using Bible stories, as Jesus did, and "spiritual eyes began to open." They used 30 Bible stories during a two-year programme. This programme used tools like memorisation, personal application, and song composition to help people remember the message. At the beginning of the month, the teachers would come together to learn the story and song for that month, and then go back to teach them in their districts. This model teaches topical study through telling Bible stories (Steffen and Terry 2007:322-323).

*Hans-Rurdi Weber* a Dutch missionary and theologian arrived in Indonesia in 1950. The synod of Luwuk-Banggai asked him to find a local way to disciple their workers (most of them non-literate). He realized that these non-literate people were very gifted, thinking and speaking "in colourful, glowing pictures,

actions and symbols" and needed to be liberated from the "abstract ideas of our catechism and doctrines." He also pointed out that, "We must proclaim picturesquely and dramatically rather than intellectually and verbally." Weber wrote a book called *Communicating the Gospel to Illiterates* (1957) where he emphasises that missionaries must change the way they teach the tribes, to use group interaction with storytelling and drawings model, which he calls "chalk and talk." He affirms that illiterates, better than western intellectuals, can see the "complete redemptive history." Therefore, we should give them a Bible story that presents "the whole history of redemption" (Steffen and Terry 2007:323-324). According to Weber,

We can only confront mythological thinking with redemptive history if our proclamation comprises the whole of the Bible, the message of the Old and the New Testaments. It is therefore fundamentally wrong to tell illiterates only stories from the New Testament, as is so frequently done. It is wrong to translate only the New Testament, or portions of it, as is the general practice (Steffen and Terry 2007:325).

Weber gave us the "first real emphasis on orality" explaining how oral communicators learn and how we should use their own style of communication through storytelling to share the Gospel with them (Terry 2012:44).

During the 1950s and 1960s *Jacob Loewen* used Bible stories in Panama. He wrote that narrative is an excellent form of sharing the Gospel because it is popular, cultural relevant, flexible, powerful, reproducible, and can be dramatized. He also realized that "sequence was as important as the truths contained in the stories." After years of ministry with little success evangelizing the Choco of Panama, F. Glenn and Billie Prunty (New Tribes missionaries) became discouraged. But then they tried Loewen's narrative model and the result was that the whole village decided to follow Christ. The Choco believers then used this approach to plant four other churches. "The stories sparked interest, capturing their hearts..." (Steffen and Terry 2007:325-327).

I will close this section with a case from East Africa, from the Masai people of Tanzania. *Father Vincent Donovan* worked among these people from 1955 until

1973. When he came, he realized that after seven years of work, there were "no adult Masai practising Christians from Loiondo mission." This was caused by two existing policies: "(1) missionaries bought slaves to Christianize them, and (2) schools forced the missionaries to focus their attention on children ..." He started telling Bible stories to tease truth out rather than force it upon people, because he believed that "no other method could better serve our purpose." So he sat around with "pagans" telling stories, using memorization and discussion methods. Unfortunately, he had a wrong principle of totally separating evangelism from discipleship which resulted in very little impact on the group even today (Steffen and Terry 2007:327-328).

### 2.3.3 Recent History

Trevor McIlwain is a NTM missionary, who worked with the Palawa nominal Christians in Philippines in the 1870s. He realized that he had to start teaching them from the beginning, from Genesis, going chronologically through the Old Testament in order to "give a firm foundation for the Gospel" (Terry 2012:45). The method he used finally resulted in the development of the Chronological Bible Teaching (CBT) model which later gave birth to the Chronological Bible Storying (CBS) used today by the International Mission Board (IMB) and by many other agencies (Steffen and Terry 2007:315).

The NTM started using the CBT in many of their projects and offering training opportunities to their missionaries in the use of it (p.330). In 1987 McIlwain developed a teaching material called *"Building on Firm Foundations: Guidelines for Evangelism and Church Planting."* The first part, which focuses on evangelism, "consists of 68 lessons (42 OT and 26 NT)." McIlwain also developed a model for the USA in 1991, and one for children in 1993. "CBT materials have been published in over 30 major languages with 25 more in preparation, and in over 200 tribal languages" (Steffen and Terry 2007:331-332).

Jim Slack from the IMB asked his colleague J.O. Terry, a media specialist working in Asia-Pacific, to help develop the CBT method. After trying different variations in many places, Terry realized that CBT was still too expositional and



literate based for oral learners. He "preferred telling the Bible story, not just talking about it," and taking the risk of facing "the power of the story," and the people's understanding of it. He believed that the discussion time would better give the feedback of the group than the top-down exposition. So, in 1992 Terry renamed this model and called it "Chronological Bible Storying" (CBS) (Steffen 2011).

Terry then saw the need to produce a "fast-track" Bible story for limited time contacts. He also developed short story sets on various topics like, hope, food, death, water, and grief, and a story set for short term mission teams (See: [www.churchstarting.net/biblestorying/Books.htm](http://www.churchstarting.net/biblestorying/Books.htm)). Therefore, in 1994 Terry dropped the word chronological from CBS and simply called it "Bible Storying." Slack and Terry approached the preaching department of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas in 1994, to introduce CBS. That is how Grant Lovejoy joined the orality ministry. In 2005 Lovejoy became the International Director for Orality Strategies for IMB (SBC). Regular courses on orality are now offered at Southwestern, Southeastern, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminaries (Steffen 2011).

In 1995, Tom Steffen developed the course *Narrative as an Educational Philosophy* for the Biola University. In 1996 he published "*Reconnecting God's Story to Ministry: Crosscultural Storytelling at Home and Abroad*", and in 1999 he also published *Business as Usual in the Missions Enterprise*, a textbook for short-term missions (Steffen 2011).

In 1998, Dorothy Miller developed The God's Story Project (TGSP), which produced an 80-minute video using paintings. It summarizes the Bible from creation to eternity. It is now available in over 250 languages and it is extending to other languages (Steffen 2011). In 2006 Miller also introduced Simply the Story (STS).

Fifty-three stories and passages are used in the STS workshops with an additional 158 stories suggested for use in Oral Bible Schools ... STS stresses the supracultural power of a told story to address the needs of all cultures without an extensive study of a receptor's worldview... (Steffen 2011).

In addition, they instituted the Oral Bible Schools (OBS) where they teach 200 Bible stories over a period of "two weeks on, two weeks off school schedule" (Steffen 2011).

*Bridges Global Training Network* was formed in 1998 and included "50 countries within South Asia, Islamic Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia with the goal of starting church planting movements among unreached peoples through systematic oral communication of the Scriptures in the mother tongue." There are two such networks, one in South Asia and the other in Africa. They have trained "over 60,000 grass roots church planters resulting in more than 10,000 oral Bible churches in just the last three years" (Steffen 2011).

In the same year, "1998, Jim and Carla Bowman founded *Bridges Training Network*" through their organization, Scripture In Use (SIU). The programme has three training modules "for nationals to become Bible storytellers capable of starting church planting movements." The training course is available in 17 languages. Carla produced *Bridges for Women* which "includes 120 Bible stories of women in Bible times." In 2002 they also produced *The Ancient Path*, a 3-hour video available in 12 languages to accompany their training programme. SIU further developed a training programme for newly planted oral churches, towards a holistic transformation of the community through Scripture. Since 2010, in partnership with Belhaven University, SIU provides certificates for grass roots church planters, and for Master Trainers (Steffen 2011).

I have already introduced earlier the formation of the International Orality Network (ION). I just want to add here that in 2009 "The Mission Exchange presented ION the Innovation in Mission Award based on the values of excellence, innovation, partnership, and finishing well." ION has produced two significant publications; one is *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* published in 2005, and a follow-up publication in 2010 called *Orality Breakouts*. Regarding secondary orality, Avery Willis and Mark Snowden have published, "*Truth that Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World*" (2010) "for the use of oral communication in a postmodern world" (Steffen 2011).

"It is very difficult to keep abreast of the players and new innovations" that are developing in the world today through the Orality Movement. Fortunately, Bryan

Thompson the founder of "Story4all" tries to keep people updated and make products available "through podcasts, show notes, resources, and links," such as <[www.story4all.com/index.shtml](http://www.story4all.com/index.shtml)> (Steffen 2011).

I can only convey here briefly the major recent developments in orality. There will be more information in section 2.5. For more details please read the document by Steffen Tom 2011 (see bibliography).

## **2.4 Overview of Orality Theory**

### **2.4.1 Missions in Africa Mishandling Oral Cultures**

According to Tucker, the protestant mission in Africa made literacy and education a condition for effective evangelism (Klem 1982:27). On the assumption that African cultures are so evil that they can never be used to properly express Christian truth, children were taken out of their cultures to be educated in "godly or western environment" (p. 33). Beaver instructs that,

It is an essential feature of the plan, that the pupils be taken young, board in the mission, be kept separate from heathenism, under Christian superintendency night and day (Klem 1982:28).

On the basis of another assumption, that vital Christian information "is to be learned from books by reading," literacy became a condition for Christian maturity. Therefore, converts who could not read well were denied, not only leadership positions in the church but even membership, baptism and Lord's Supper (Klem 1982:32-33). According to the policy of the Methodist missions in Ghana, converts had to be able to:

[R]ead and to know for themselves the word of God ... Part of the test for membership shall be a test of their ability to read (Klem 1982:31).

In consequence, the vast majority who preferred their oral cultures were denied access to God's word, because the missions decided to teach through the written word (p. 35). People associated Christianity with western education often rejecting Jesus because they were not ready to become literate (p. 37).

The elderly and traditional leaders were humiliated "by being refused baptism and church membership." Non-literate older members in churches often had to pretend singing from the hymn books, even though they were on the wrong page or sometimes holding the book upside down! (p. 38)! (Klem 1982:35, 37, 38). Klem affirms that,

Such men and women have all the potential for genuine Bible knowledge and Christian maturity if literacy were not considered the only gateway to it (p. 39).

As a result, the loss of literacy also meant the loss of Christianity (Klem 1982:39).

#### 2.4.2 Understanding Oral Cultures

The identity of traditional communities is sustained by "the language and the oral literature of songs, proverbs, wise sayings, stories, epics and rituals." When literacy is seen as a threat to the traditional culture, wisdom and leadership, the community can reject it together with the western Christianity (Klem 1995:61). Klem observes that, "It is possible, therefore, that we are actually not dealing with an inability to read, *so much as a resistance to literacy and education out of loyalty to the group ...*" Many communities feel that "sending their children off to school, is to risk sending them off into another world—a different world which is guided by different values" (p. 62). Thus many old people have said "they were too old to become Christians," others said Christianity is the "white man's religion" that does not belong to Africa, and yet others thought Christianity does not "suit their people" (p. 63).

Writers like Ajayi, Ayandele, Okot p'Bitek, and Klem lament the division that missions produced in African societies through literacy. Klem says that two groups were formed, the middle class and the non-literates. The two groups,

[D]id not know the same things, nor did they think the same way even when they had the same information. Each developed very different value systems. The "educated" youth, including some of the High School students I taught, did not even know how to

communicate with the their parents who had sacrificed to send them to school (Klem 1995:60).

Therefore, traditional leaders are often justified to oppose literacy and western Christianity when these changes threaten to divide their communities (Klem 1995:62). Missions were also frustrated to see that only a minority became literate, and the young who embraced education were more interested to "advance their careers and personal wealth than to spread the Gospel" (p. 60). Another great loss that the missions faced, because of their preference for the young and educated, were the community leaders who could have given stability and growth to the church (p. 63). Klem (1982:xviii) asserts that,

There was and is an indigenous communication system perfectly capable of being used to communicate the gospel effectively to the majority of the people. They do not have to learn a new method of communicating.

#### 2.4.3 Foundations of Orality Theory

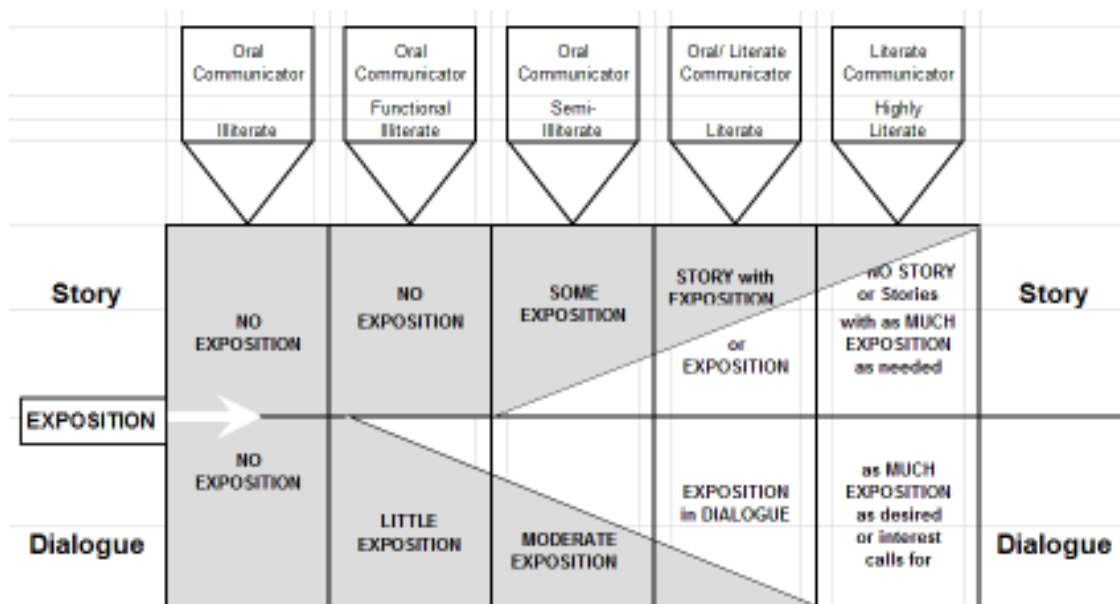
##### 2.4.3.1 Orality and Literacy

McLuhan identifies four epochs of history that undermine each other: hand-writing undermined oral communication, printing undermined hand-writing, and the electronic age undermined printing. McLuhan indicates that people "did not just have to learn to use the new inventions but actually had to 're-invent' themselves and their thought processes as well" (Greer 2011:18). Ong further asserts that "literacy dramatically changes the way humans think" (Bingham 2012).

Greer summarizes the differences given by Ong between oral and literate people as follows: oral people "learn by hearing, observing, imitating, listening, repeating, and memorizing proverbs, traditional sayings, stories, songs, and expressions. Print communicators, on the other hand, tend to learn by seeing, reading, studying, examining, classifying, comparing, and analyzing." Oral people talk about events in time or in a story and store them in memory. Literate people talk about concepts and principles which they store in print or digital

format. Oral people value tradition and group interaction, while literate people enjoy reading and learning, individually (Greer 2011:23-24). See Appendix 2 for more details on differences between oral and literate cultures.

James Slack identified five levels between orality and literacy: "1. Illiterate 2. Functional Illiterate 3. Semi-illiterate 4. Literate (sometimes called 'functionally literate') 5. Highly literate." Slack sees the first three as 'Oral Communicators' who learn orally through stories and discussions without exposition. "The last two are 'Literate Communicators' who can learn orally from stories or dialog with exposition but are often more comfortable in learning from reading..." Slack points out that all these five categories of people enjoy listening to a good story. See the Learning Grid below (Greer 2011:24-25):



According to Paul Dyer, a definition for literacy from the Christian discipleship perspective would be the ability to read and understand an advanced book like the Bible (Greer 2011:14). Thus Lovejoy (2000:7) indicates that "it takes at least ten to twelve years of effective, western-style education" to turn a non-literate into a fully literate person. Furthermore, research by IMB shows that "a community moving from illiteracy to a literacy rate of only 30% has generally taken 125 years" (Greer 2011:25). Literacy experts on their side also warn us that despite all the efforts to promote literacy since 2000, there is not much progress, and literacy can even reverse due to rising poverty in the world. Therefore, Lovejoy advises that, "embracing oral strategies now is wiser than

hoping the world will soon become literate enough to benefit from existing print-based strategies" (Lovejoy 2010). Peterson also affirms that,

All the literacy trainers can relax with this [orality] development. People will move from storying groups into the text and learn to read. This is not an orality versus literacy conflict. It is a movement where both strategies flourish, but sequencing with orality first is essential (Chiang 2010a:Testimonials).

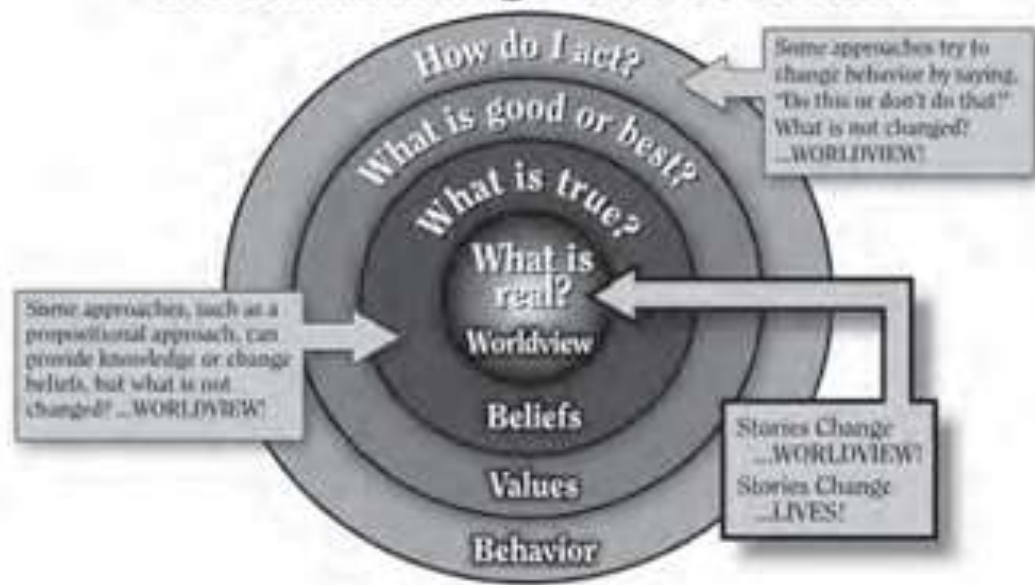
Lovejoy also explains that many unreached people "may have both literate aspirations and strong oral preferences." They may want to use literacy for some domains while maintaining oral communication for others (Lovejoy 2009:10).

#### 2.4.3.2 Orality and Worldview

The Great Commission makes studies of worldview compulsory because, "Making disciples among the *panta ta ethne* (each and every ethnolinguistic people group) is at the heart of Christ's Commission." A worldview is the way people view the world, their core values, beliefs, practices and habits (Slack 2010:73-74). The Great Commission is about life transformation, which can only come by firstly changing the heart. But the heart can only be changed if the worldview of the person is changed (Evans 2010:186). According to N.T. Wright, stories are the key element that forms our worldview (Slack 2010:77-78). He goes on to say that the worldview can be changed by hearing a better story. And there is no better story than the Word of God (Evans 2010:196).

According to Lovejoy (2005:34), there are four areas that affect people, and they are represented in the image below:

## The Transforming Power Of Stories!



Wright explains that "worldviews and the stories which characterize them represent the realities of one's life," therefore stories have the potential of changing worldviews and lives (Lovejoy 2005:34-35).

Curtis and Eldredge state that,

The heart does not respond to principles and programs, it seeks not efficiency, but passion ... Art, poetry, beauty, mystery, ecstasy. These are what rouse the heart ... It is why Jesus so often taught and related to people by telling stories and asking questions. His desire was not just to engage their intellects but to capture their hearts ... We have lived for so long in a 'propositional' approach to Christianity we have nearly lost its true meaning ... Life is not a list of propositions; it is a series of dramatic scenes. Story is the language of the heart (Evans 2010:193).

Wright warns us that if we "do not present biblical stories to challenge existing worldview stories, we run risk of syncretism" (Evans 2010:197). Kraft explains that syncretism occurs when missionaries "fail to separate the evangelizers' own culture adequately from the biblical message" and impose their culture upon the target group (Lovejoy 2005:32). So, Lovejoy (2005:30-37) gives four



key elements that can help disciple oral learners with the minimum risk of syncretism:

- Communicate with people in their mother tongue.
- Develop resources that are "worldview specific instead of generic ones."
- Use "Biblical stories extensively" for worldview transformation.
- Provide a recorded "oral Bible" in the mother-tongue to ensure reliability of Biblical truth.

Slack (2010:75) affirms that it is the failure to consider the worldview of the oral ethnic groups and to communicate with them in their own language that caused them to be unreached for centuries.

#### 2.4.3.3 Orality and Discipleship

As stated earlier, "two-thirds of all people in the world are oral communicators." Making disciples of them means using communicational approaches familiar to the culture: "stories, proverbs, drama, songs, chants, and poetry." The literate approaches are not effective in making them Jesus' disciples (Lovejoy 2005:69). Lovejoy (pp. 70-71) presents "five aspects of making disciples of oral learners:"

1. "Make the word of God available to unreached peoples using appropriate oral strategies."
2. "Use oral communication patterns ... in their mother tongue."
3. "Avoid syncretism by making disciples of oral learners using oral means."
4. "Equip relational-narrative communicators to make disciples."
5. "Increase Effectiveness among Secondary Oral Learners."

The last project of Dr. Avery Willis was a vision God gave him in 2009 which he called *DNA21: A Discipleship Revolution*. His vision was "to see 21st-century churches and disciples making disciples the way Jesus did in the first century, enhanced with all the tools and technology of our era." This would result in a "rapid revitalization and multiplication of churches." According to his vision, discipleship is built on "the Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit" and "built from four basic components:"

- "small group transparency,"
- "intentional discipling,"
- "Bible storytelling, and"
- "multiplication" (Sells 2011:6).

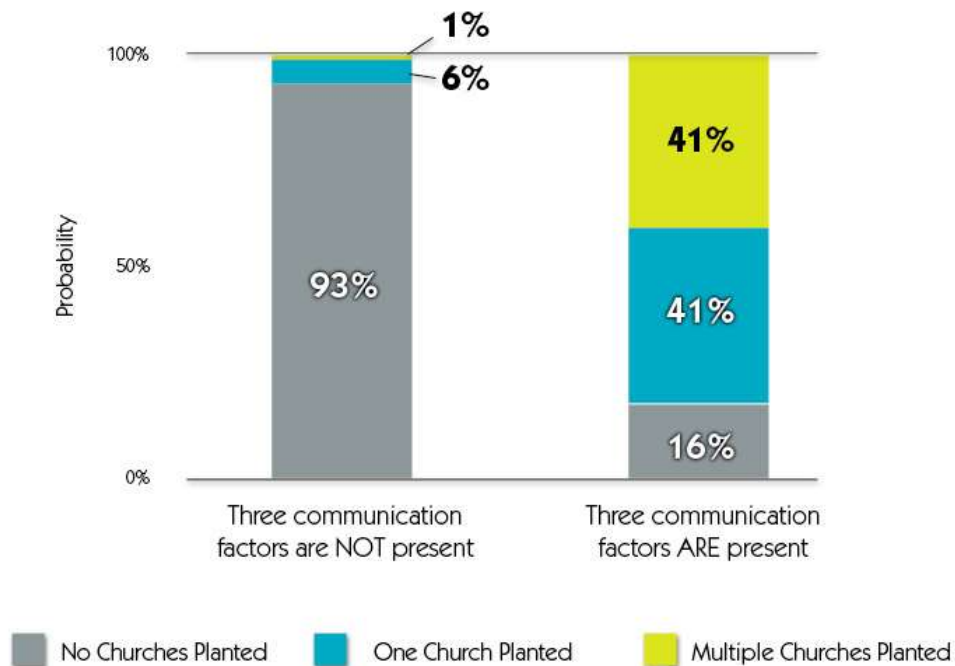
Willis tested his model on a very successful church in the USA called Real Life Ministries (RLM). "He told Putman [the senior pastor] that the American culture was becoming more oral in learning style and that he was afraid the American church was going to be left behind." So, RLM "decided to try Bible Storytelling in a few small groups. The experiment was so successful that they trained all their pastors," in the use of this tool (Sells 2011:9). They found out that Bible Storytelling...

- "helps people learn the Bible,"
- "makes it easier to recruit small group leaders,"
- "facilitates real learning,"
- "equips members for ministry,"
- "empowers parents to disciple their kids, "
- "helps small group leaders understand the spiritual needs of those they are discipling,"
- "keeps small groups from becoming boring, and"
- "encourages transparency and real relationships" (Sells 2011:9).

Research "*From Seed to Fruit*," has identified "Three Communication Keys" that lead to successful church planting (Lovejoy 2012: slides 35-36):

- "Use of local rather than regional language,"
- "At least one team member fluent in the local language," and
- "Appropriate communications strategy (oral or literate) that matches the communications preference of the people group."

## Are **All Three** Factors Included?



When the three communication factors are not present, 93% of the projects are not likely to plant even one church. When the three factors are present there is the probability that 82% of the projects, plant at least one church (Lovejoy 2012:slide 52).

### 2.4.3.4 Orality and the Bible

The Bible came to us as a book, therefore most Evangelical Christians believe that "the Bible is the divinely inspired 'Word of God'" (Greer 2011:31). However, Beckwith notes that revelation was given in oral form and in Jesus Christ, "but for the sake of permanence" it was later put in written form (Greer 2011:33).

Greer points out that God's ideal form of communication with man is face to face conversation because "God is a God of relationship" and he intends to have a personal relationship with man, as he had with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, sin has interrupted this personal relationship, but God took the initiative to restore it through the incarnation when "he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2) (Greer 2011:35).

Lovejoy (2005:10) emphasises that "the hope of reaching the four billion persons who are oral learners" and "getting God's word to the speakers of the four thousand languages still without His word," is to follow Jesus' model who used "familiar oral means" that people understood (Mark 4:33-34). Some indicate that Peter was not literate but was a good memorizer. "Paul was literate, but he seems to have orally dictated many of his letters. They were intended to be read aloud in the churches (Col. 4:16; 1 Th. 5:27)." John did the same with the book of Revelation (Lovejoy 2000:9).

Moreover, "Tom Steffen points out that that the Bible is 75% narrative, 15% poetry, and only 10% 'thought-organised.'" Therefore, the Bible gives us the appropriate material to use with the oral learners (Greer 2011:38). The New Testament was composed in a predominantly oral setting, and it was the oral presentation of the Scripture that was instrumental in transforming the lives of the hearers in the early church (Maxey 2010:179-80).

Unfortunately, Bible Translation ministry "has historically set its goal as a literary conversion of the population" (Maxey 2010:182). Maxey (2009:2) indicates that Bible translation must rethink its methods and goals to reflect the Bible's oral roots and to be relevant to today's communication styles. Lovejoy (2009:9-10) shares an interesting idea about the printed Bible from Swanson:

Richard Swanson compares a printed Bible to a printed musical score. He argues that the written musical notation is a means to the recovery of the performed music. We do not sit in front of a piece of sheet music and silently enjoy the music that the notes recall ... Simply as an expression of faithfulness to what the Bible is, we need to think long about the implications of translating Scripture with a view to the oral performance of it and the aural encounter with it.

Lovejoy says that developing oral strategies does not stand in the way of Bible translation, actually the opposite is true. The projects that begin with an oral Bible and continue with Bible translation and literacy have got "the most comprehensive strategy for communicating the word of God" (Lovejoy 2005:11-12).

## **2.5 Models and Practices Used Worldwide**

As understanding about the relevance of orality in missions spreads wider, there are various programmes developed today trying to reach out to the oral learners in the world. All of these programmes have both strong and weak points; therefore, it would be beneficial to share their experiences with each other (Greer 2011:57).

### **2.5.1 Verbal Approaches**

- **Chronological Bible Storying (CBS)**

As introduced earlier, the CBS model has been endorsed by the International Mission Board and used by many other organizations (Lovejoy 2000:4). This model emphasises “telling the stories of the Bible, in the order they happened”, from creation to the early church, for a better understanding of God's plan of salvation. It also uses participatory learning that generates new storytellers and story groups or churches (Evans 2004:39-40). CBS does not provide a generic set of stories but assists local evangelists to develop a set that is relevant to the worldview of the people (Greer 2011:59). See Appendix 3 for how to prepare stories in ten steps.

The following is a short introduction of partnering organizations with ION that use Bible story methods (ION 2009). For more details see the full document at: [http://oralbible.com/workspace/resources/docs/ION\\_TrainCurrMatrixR-1333955941.pdf](http://oralbible.com/workspace/resources/docs/ION_TrainCurrMatrixR-1333955941.pdf).

- **OneStory Partnership**

OneStory focuses on the 2,251 oral people groups that are unreached, least-reached, or without a Bible. It develops sets of stories, and songs (optional), with redemptive themes that are relevant to the local cultures. They provide advanced consultants that check all the stories and songs via email and hold at least two training workshops onsite. It offers training to both local and cross-cultural evangelists, and based on that, the project takes between 24-36 months (ION 2009). See more at: [onestory.org](http://onestory.org).

- **Scripture in Use (SIU)**

SIU offers an Oral Bible to the unreached groups with the church planting movement in mind. Their strategy is: every believer a storyteller, every storyteller a church planter, every church planter a trainer. They use a training manual called *Communication Bridges to Oral Cultures* in three modules, and tell 50-60 stories over a period of 2-3 years. They select worldview specific stories but do not craft stories. They have 15 church planting movements and 26 training hubs in South Asia and Islamic Africa (ION 2009). See more at: [Siutraining.org](http://Siutraining.org).

- **StoryRunners**

StoryRunners train indigenous people to develop story sets for the unreached groups in 24 countries in Asia, Africa and Middle East. The organization offers specific training for church planters, women's teams and Jesus film teams. They do consultant checks of recorded stories crafted according to the worldview (ION 2009). See more at: [Storyrunners.com](http://Storyrunners.com).

- **Simply the Story (STS)**

STS trains both literate and non-literate in oral inductive Bible study, giving them the capacity to train others. They have training teams in Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia and Central America. The story set remains the same worldwide, trying to keep the stories as they are in the Bible without crafting them. It takes 3 days to become a practitioner and 10-20 days to become an instructor. They check and test the recordings (ION 2009). See more at: [SimplyTheStory.org](http://SimplyTheStory.org).

- **Storying Training for Trainers (ST4T)**

ST4T merges church planting with cross-cultural communication to train trainers to make disciples and plant churches. They have projects in 11 countries and training teams in 18, most of them in south Asia. The training programme is divided into two parts over a period of 2-3 years. The first part equips in the use of stories and the second in developing the story set. They use 21 initial stories, then 22 stories from Acts (ION 2009). See more at: [st4t.org](http://st4t.org).

- **Finishing the Task (FTT)**

FTT introduces believers to storying with the purpose of developing interest for long-term involvement. The model is worldview sensitive and reproducible. Training is accomplished in one week when they practise 12-15 stories (ION 2009). See more at: [finishingthetask.com](http://finishingthetask.com).

### 2.5.2 Audio Approaches

Both primary and secondary oral learners can be reached by non-print means like, electronic, audio and visual communication (Brown 2004:123). Prof. Ansre from Ghana points out that at the end of the 20th century a new era has set in, which he calls the "Post-Literacy Age" or others call it "the Multi-Media Era." He claims that audio-Scripture has the highest potential to reach both the literate and the majority of oral learners in Africa (Ansre 1995:68). In the same year, Klem (1995:63) was also convinced that Bible on tape "can reach all the people of the world with a solid understanding of the Word of God..." Brown (2004b:126) advises that,

The use of conversation, dialogue, and drama in recorded Scripture portions can draw listeners, keep their attention, and help them remember what they heard.

Lovejoy affirms that the new technology makes "production and delivery of audio and video products easier, faster, and cheaper." He indicates that the rapid spread of mobile phones in the developing countries is an opportunity for audio and video Scripture engagement (Lovejoy 2009:12).

- **Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH)**

Snowden and Willis (2010:19-20) advise that, according to Romans 10:17, we should respect the oral preference of learners "to bring them faith by hearing..." FCBH is a very effective programme developed by Hosanna (Sogaard 1995:74), which has recorded dramatised "New Testaments in 150 languages, with 50 more in progress" (Greer 2011:63). Training is offered to local church leaders to form and lead listening groups. They have 12 recording centres with 25 national recording teams in the world, using portable recording and editing

equipment (Greer 2011:63). Reports from Ghana indicate that both Christians and non-Christians benefit from this programme. "Some church leaders claim that they themselves have improved their reading by listening to the tapes and following the text in Scripture." Others testified that they heard some New Testament portions for the first time. Also itinerant Christian groups found the recordings very useful. Even some interested Muslims gather near the listening groups before their prayer time begins (Ansre 1995:67).

- **The Radio Bible Project**

This project reaches both literates and non-literates with 365 fifteen-minute broadcasts in an interesting dramatized story format from the Old and the New Testaments. It is a "global partnership between Hosanna/Faith Comes By Hearing, the International Bible Society, Trans World Radio, and the United Bible Societies..." (Greer 2011:64).

- **Trans World Radio (TWR)**

"TWR has identified orality as one of five top strategic initiatives" (Greer 2011:63). One of their programmes in Cambodia is to bring hope through Bible story broadcasts to many children who are suffering. Many children are being sold by their own mothers to casinos into sexual slavery because of poverty. Since much of the population is not literate, literate materials do not help, but mass media can transform lives and worldviews (Sundar 2010:81-82).

They produce 15-minute chronological Bible stories to broadcast on twelve radio stations throughout Cambodia. More than 12,000 children respond to these programmes every year. They draw pictures based on the stories heard and send them to TWR through church volunteers. TWR partners have more than 500 churches in Cambodia, and have 51 local believers, who coordinate the children clubs listening to the radio stories. In 2008, more than 300 children gave their life to Christ in these clubs. TWR Cambodia also has a programme for women called *Women of Hope* to address the issue of child trade, and another programme for youth. "Mass media is one of God's solutions to reach beyond barriers and boundaries ... people who sometimes cannot be reached by traditional methods" (Sundar 2010:82-83).



- **The Global Recordings Network (GRN)**

"GRN has produced audio and audio-visual Bible-based evangelism and discipling resources in more than 5500 languages designed specifically for non- and minimally-literate people groups." They use Bible stories crafted by native speakers in their own languages (Greer 2011:63).

### 2.5.3 Visual Approaches

"As Christians and communicators of the Good News, we must constantly seek to utilize all forms of technology, and take advantage of new innovations to ensure wider and more efficient communication of our message worldwide" (Conkey 2010:55).

- **Visual Arts**

Paula Dubill, an artist and lecturer, instructs us regarding the use of arts in communicating the Gospel. We often think of communication to be verbal, but remember the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." God and Jesus communicated through visual and metaphoric images like: the burning bush, vine, bread, mustard seed or wind (Dubill 2010:39).

By seeing, hearing and doing, visual arts enable people to remember God's word and character. Dubill shares an experience she had with children in a South African prison. These children are victims of alcohol, abuse, neglect and drugs. Duhill's purpose was to share with them that "there was a 'Daddy God' who loved them and wanted them to belong to Him" (Dubill 2010:40-41).

An artist missionary friend painted a large image on the wall, of God's huge hands holding a little boy. While painting he told them how God met him and changed his life, how he forgave his abuser and led him to Christ. Then they talked about Isaiah 49:16 which says that our names are engraved on God's palms. The children were invited to place themselves in God's hands by writing their names and sticking them on God's palms on the wall. They all decided to do that. One week after, the children were able to retell the stories heard on that occasion (Dubill 2010:40-41). Dubill (p. 42) concludes by saying that:

[T]he act of storytelling (hearing), and the visual and sensory stimulation of utilizing art materials in the memory-building process will engage the mind and enter the heart, bypassing the ingrained defense mechanisms. In a fun, delightful context, God's truth is shared and remembered. Hearts are changed as the story of God's love becomes real to them.

- **Jesus Film Media**

Jesus Film Media is a project of Campus Crusade for Christ and "exists to digitally help The JESUS Film Project® accomplish the goal of creating and providing media tools that share Jesus with everyone in his or her own heart language." The film is "based on the Gospel of Luke" and has been produced in more than 1,150 languages. Based on the Jesus Film they produced other resources like *Jesus for Children* in 149 languages, *Magdalena* for women in 100 languages, *Christ's Crucifixion* in 40 languages, *My Last Day* a Japanese anime film, and the discipleship series of films, like *Walking with Jesus* created by Africans for Africans, and *Following Jesus* made for Indians by Indians. Jesus Film Media provides free, easy and fast access to all their resources online and on the smart phone (Jesus Film Media 2012).

- **Create International**

Create International is a media ministry of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) that started in 1989. They use effective media strategies and technology to disciple especially the "194 unreached people groups with a population over one million." As part of the process, they start work in a group at the invitation of local leadership to ensure the use of the programme. They also focus on prayer and on the leading of the Holy Spirit, while doing research to decide which group to reach and what media to use (Conkey 2010:49-56).

It "addresses community issues such as revenge killings, ancestor worship, and stealing. The salvation message is interwoven in a drama of conflict and resolution." The team chooses local cultural advisors to ensure cultural and linguistic accuracy of the film. Some of the media forms they use are: arts, film, radio, internet, satellite, mobile phones and microchip players. "In many

countries, Internet usage is doubling every one hundred days, and even in impoverished countries many people go online in various ways..." (Conkey 2010:49-56).

Here are two testimonies, one from Turkey, and the other from Indonesia (Conkey 2010:52, 55):

Because our film was very Turkish and adapted to the culture, the local media and Muslim leaders were open to receiving the presentation into their society (p. 52).

After viewing the film, one of the Muslim leaders said, "I believe in *Isa al Masih* [Jesus the anointed Savior]. How can I become a believer and be baptized?" (p. 55)

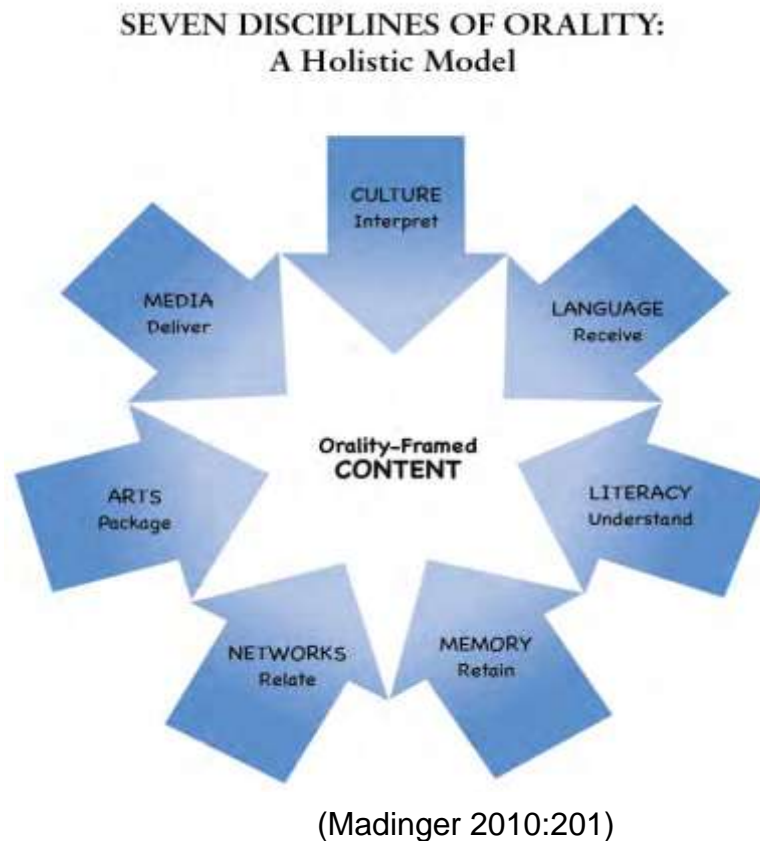
Willis and Snowden (2010:27) draw attention to the fact that today the population that prefers to learn through non-print forms is increasing rapidly. "It took thirty-eight years for radio to reach an audience of 50 million, television only thirteen years, and the computer four years," Apple's iPod in three and Facebook in two (p. 25). Today, the entertainment industry is the greatest influential factor on our worldview (p. 28). Therefore, Christians should learn to use it in their ministry.

- **A Holistic Model of Orality**

I conclude this section by briefly presenting Charles Madinger's (2010) holistic approach to orality, which he defines as "a complex whereby oral learners receive, remember, and replicate news, information, and truths" (p. 201). This complex consists of seven disciplines which, according to Madinger, "as they are more fully incorporated, can proportionately increase the transformative power of a message" (p. 201). Here are his seven disciplines and their meaning (See also the diagram below) (p. 201):

1. Culture (interpreting the message)
2. Language (receiving the message)
3. Literacy (understanding the message)
4. Social Networks (relating the message)

5. Memory (retaining the message)
6. The Arts (packaging the message)
7. Media (delivering the message)



## 2.6 Evaluation of the Orality Movement

Lakoff brings out the different functions and values of orality and literacy:

It is generally acknowledged that written and oral communication involve very different kinds of strategies: what works orally does not work in print, and vice versa ... oral communication works through the assumption of immediacy, or spontaneity; writing on the other hand, is planned, organized and non-spontaneous ... many commentators are not so much interested in the different values, the different advantages of each medium, as in perceiving the two as locked in deadly combat (Wilson 1999:22).

### 2.6.1 Strengths of the Orality Movement

A major strength of the orality movement comes from the fact that it addresses the needs of the majority of the world's population, approximately two thirds or 70%, who are oral communicators. Besides, it has the potential to provide an oral Bible to the 4,000 Bibleless groups much earlier than Bible translation will reach them (Lovejoy 2005:10). As a result, using appropriate oral means of communicating Scripture, "Christians have the opportunity to keep 1.5 billion unreached peoples of the world from a Christless eternity in our generation" (Lovejoy 2005:75).

A second strength of the orality movement within oral cultures is related to effectiveness. Oral forms of communication match the learning preference of oral cultures, and are familiar to them, which make them effective in discipling oral learners (Lovejoy 2005:69). Jesus, our Master communicator, chose to use familiar oral means that matched people's style of communication, which made His teaching effective (p. 10). Therefore, an oral Bible enables oral learners to hear, understand, respond, accurately memorize and retell God's message, which will spread freely and rapidly. Lovejoy (p. 70) claims that,

The "oral Bible" is the singular key to unlocking Church Planting Movements among unreached people groups ... The only Bible that will be effective during the lifetime of the vast majority of unreached people is an "oral Bible," probably best presented in narrative form. It is important for the church to understand that a written version of Scripture does not even exist for the majority of languages. Even if literacy were achieved, the Bible would still not exist in some 4,000 languages..."

According to Wilson, the oral means of communication works effectively in oral cultures, which are "face-to-face societies where the immediacy and warmth of speech and the social and participatory characteristics of oral communications are both understood and esteemed." Their model of communication is also appropriate for retention. The speech is dynamic, because they consider words to have great power since they come "from the very heart and being of a person, expressed by the vital breath of life itself." Furthermore, the use of

orality goes beyond communication; it also contributes to the "contextualization and indigenization of Christianity within the culture" (Wilson 1999:23-24).

Rosenberg (1987:75) affirms that even in literate cultures the most important information is transmitted orally. Oral communication is "more specific and less ambiguous" using "gesture, expression, intonation, and so on, and various self-correcting mechanisms of which fixed print is incapable" (p. 76).

A third strength of orality is its emphasis on reproducibility and sustainability in oral cultures. It provides the most effective training models, which will produce new leaders among oral people, who in turn "will facilitate church-planting movements to rapidly disciple and equip leaders for the new churches as leaders are raised up by the Holy Spirit" (Lovejoy 2005:70). Lovejoy points out that, oral strategies have succeeded, where literate ones have failed (p. 14), and stories were able to go where the printed Bible could not (p. 16).

Klem (1982:xxii) says that "oral methods have the potential of effectively reaching the vast majority of Africans living today." Using local media reduces people's resistance to both literacy and Christianity. It enables people to use their own skills to memorize the message and to become teachers in a short time. It produces Christian leaders in an indigenous pattern. This would even facilitate the use of the written Bible because the Christian knowledge and growth produces desire to read the Bible for oneself. People will also find it "easier to learn to read a familiar message than to read completely foreign materials" (p. xxiii).

A fourth strength of orality is its emphasis on storytelling for worldview transformation which reduces syncretism. Wright argues that since "stories lie at the core of a worldview," Bible stories have the power to transform cultural worldviews and therefore avoid syncretism (Lovejoy 2005:35). Furthermore, Lovejoy explains that the Bible storytelling method is *chronological* which offers a "powerful alternative worldview" that can "replace or refine" our cultural worldview (p. 33). He also points out that this method keeps the story *pure*, free from the missionary's cultural interpretation, theology and philosophy, which promotes syncretism, and allows the local people to have a Biblical theology that is relevant to their own situation (p. 37). Oral communication of the Gospel

in the mother tongue that is relevant to the worldview of the target group, avoids syncretism in churches of oral cultures. Accuracy and standardization of the oral message can be secured by audio and video recordings (pp. 70-71).

Fifthly, oral strategies are also effective in reaching the secondary oral communicators, who receive information "through radio, television, film, internet and other electronic means" (Lovejoy 2005:71).

Oral Bible stories help oral cultures see the story of God in a cultural relevant way, which is not possible through the printed Bible. At the end of a Bible storytelling workshop a Bible translator testified that even though he had translated all these passages, he has now learned, through discussing the stories orally, so many things he never knew about the Bible. Also, after learning the Bible storying method, a literate gentleman in Uganda said, "I am not an educated person and I never thought of myself as someone who can teach. Now I am learning and I am able to teach others who are also able to teach" (Wafler 2006:6).

#### 2.6.2 Weaknesses of the Orality Movement

Firstly, oral cultures cannot develop much without literacy. According to Ong, even though orality produces beautiful oral performances, it needs to be supported by literacy in order to develop. Therefore, orality must produce writing, which is vital for the development of science, history, philosophy, literature, and language, including oral speech. There is also a "vast complex of powers forever inaccessible without literacy." Often the motivation for writing comes from associating with literate cultures; meanwhile oral cultures do not come much in contact with other cultures. Therefore, literacy is needed for cross-cultural partnerships, which facilitates development (Wilson 1999:23).

Secondly, according to Rosenberg (1987:78), oral traditions are not as accurate as the written records. "Useless data are forgotten in an oral tradition, while remembered phenomena are updated—made consistent with current beliefs and attitudes" (p. 78).

Thirdly, Wafler points out the simplistic view of orality practitioners regarding the cross-cultural communication. Many do not know that orality involves translation

and are ignorant of the checking procedures for accuracy developed in translation. This may result in oral material which is "non-communicative or erroneous." Therefore, he advises oral practitioners to learn and employ translation principles and procedures for accuracy and relevance (Wafler 2006:8-9).

Fourthly, an oral Bible does not provide the "whole council of God," or the entire Bible, but it can prepare the way for it and fasten the process (Lovejoy 2005:11-12).

Therefore, instead of seeing orality and literacy in conflict, or one above the other, Christian literate communicators must appreciate the strength of oral communication "as different, not lesser, quality" (Wilson 1999:22). When literate Christian communicators overvalue literate strategies and do not appreciate the potential of orality, they, the receptor culture, and the propagation of God's message will suffer (p. 23). Wafler (2006:6) affirms that,

Neither Bible translation nor orality alone can accomplish the job of providing access to the Scriptures for all the people of the world in their heart language. However, there are ways that Bible translators and proponents of orality can assist one another in accomplishing this shared goal of providing access to the Word of God for all.

### 2.6.3 Barriers to the Orality Movement

Greer (2011:65-66) points out six causes why the Christian community might be reluctant to embrace oral strategies:

1. There is "a lack of biblical scholarship which includes a genuine appreciation of orality studies."
2. Many "practitioners do not come from oral communities." They have been trained "to think in 'literary, linear, and visual terms.'"
3. There is a "*lack of awareness*." Many do not even know what orality is. In spite of the recent focus on orality by ION, Lausanne and other organizations, Christians do not realize that so many people do not access the Scriptures because they cannot read.



4. There is a "*lack of understanding*." "For some in missions work 'orality' means 'Bible storying' and that is all. There is a need to highlight the range of methods that are available to reach oral communicators."
5. There is a "*fear of doctrinal error*." Some think that Biblical truth cannot be communicated adequately through oral means. There is also a concern for the lack of a reference point and an adequate check in oral cultures. This can be solved through current technology and available training.
6. There can be a "natural *reluctance to change*. This is especially so when there is no perceived need." "If progress in making disciples is slow then this may be excused by suggesting that it is all part of the spiritual warfare. Logical, expositional ministry can also seem to be more Biblical than 'telling stories' which are associated with Children's ministry."

- **Evaluation in oral cultures**

Peter McLain has written a challenging article that deals with issues on effective evaluation and research in oral cultures. McLain has got extensive experience working cross-culturally. Since 2003, he focused on oral cultures, first as Executive Director at Voice of Humanity, and then as President of T4 Global. "He has overseen dozens of orality projects ... and designed mixed-methods evaluations to measure impact among oral cultures in Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, and Sudan" (McLain 2010:126).

According to McLain, evaluation in oral culture appears to be easy. Since they understand and interpret things by experience, you simply ask: "*Has it changed their everyday life experience? ... Has their story changed? ... Do they explain their world differently as a result of the project? ...* if the story has not changed—then it is likely the project had no significant impact" (McLain 2010:122).

However, even though it appears to be easy, we face great challenges. One reason is that our evaluation is designed using literate culture methodologies that often fail in oral cultures. Written questionnaires do not work in oral cultures. Also reading the questions to them is not culturally appropriated; they do not use question-answer techniques. This process is unnatural; they do not

understand its purpose or the questions. Many refuse to answer, or would say what they think you want to hear (McLain 2010:122-123).

Because test scores are not part of their life, they cannot evaluate it. They do not sit down to say "yes/no" or "strongly agree/disagree." Their whole concept of evaluation is different. Oral cultures do not evaluate individually but collectively. And they demonstrate something practically, experientially through story, song, dance and drama (p. 124). Therefore, McLain (2010:124-125) presents five keys to evaluation in oral cultures:

1. Establish the current community stories related to your topic; stories that "reveal worldview (Why are things the way they are?), knowledge (How do they do things, or how do things work?), and behavior (What do they do, or how do they live?)."
2. At the end of the project "assess whether any of the worldview, knowledge, and/or behaviour stories have changed, and if so, by what degree."
3. Use known and trusted indigenous people to collect data.
4. Collect data in the local language; do not use translators.
5. Do not use written questionnaires or individual surveys, but oral methods like:
  - **Observation** of community in action for behaviour patterns.
  - **Focus groups** using open-ended questions that facilitate storytelling. Treat each group as a unit for statistical analysis.
  - **Conduct tests** as part of the focus group by asking "people to tell a story, sing a song or act out various topics of interest (e.g., What is your creation story? How/why do children get sick?)."

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that orality is not a backward, inferior style of communication, but a beautiful, lively and colourful way of sharing information. Historically, orality has existed from the beginning of time to the present, and the church had gradually discovered and learned how to use the oral strategies of evangelising the unreached, following the model of Jesus and of the early

church. Orality becomes increasingly relevant today, since secondary orality is a growing phenomenon in both the developed and developing countries.

The literature review has demonstrated that literacy is not a prerequisite for evangelism and discipleship. Actually, for an effective discipleship ministry in oral communities, we must use oral means of communicating Scripture. The review also made it clear that orality is not just storytelling, but a wide variety of verbal, audio, visual and electronic means of communication, which has the potential of reaching many people and cultures all over the world. The literature review has also helped us to understand that orality does not come in conflict with literacy or Bible translation; rather it prepares the way for more effective and acceptable print approaches that complement and support the oral ministry in oral cultures.

Even though a growing number of mission organizations are embracing oral strategies today, they still form a minority. Therefore, there is a great need for awareness and scholarship in the new field of orality.

## **Chapter 3**

### **An empirical survey of the perceptions of church leaders regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by the churches for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the main obstacles to communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana. An attempt will be made to investigate the perceptions of church leaders regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by the churches in Central Gonja, Ghana in the ministry of evangelism. This will be done by means of an empirical survey, which includes both quantitative and qualitative research: the collection of first-hand information through a questionnaire that requires structured and semi-structured responses. Once the research has been completed, recommendations and conclusions will be presented.

This chapter will follow the main outline below:

- The purpose of the investigation
- Research methodology (Data collection techniques)
- Description of the empirical survey
- Presentation of the data (Results and analysis)
- Key findings, conclusions, recommendations and further research

#### **3.2 The purpose of the investigation**

Lovejoy (2005:70-71) presents five vital aspects to consider in making disciples of oral learners:

1. "Make the Word of God available to unreached peoples" using an oral Bible that can be memorized and retold.

2. Use local, reproducible, oral communication patterns in the mother-tongue.
3. "Avoid syncretism by making disciples of oral learners" developing a worldview specific and recorded oral Bible in the mother-tongue.
4. "Equip relational-narrative communicators to make disciples."
5. "Increase effectiveness among secondary oral learners" using oral strategies through electronic media.

Research *From Seed to Fruit* has identified Three Communication Keys that lead to successful church planting (Lovejoy 2012: slides 35-36):

- "Use of local rather than regional language"
- "At least one team member fluent in the local language"
- "Appropriate communication strategy (oral or literate) that matches the communications preference of the people group."

Hill Harriet and Hill Margaret (2008:13) also affirm that "the more Scripture products match the community's needs and expectations, the more likely they will be used."

For this reason, the main purpose of this investigation is to determine the perceptions of church leaders regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by churches for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.

The investigation will also seek to meet the following objectives through the empirical survey:

- Determine whether the church leaders are native speakers of the target language group.
- Identify the language/s used for evangelism and discipleship.
- Determine the methods used by churches to communicate the Scripture to the oral learners in their communities.
- Understand the reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by churches for evangelising their oral communities.

- Discover the reasons for the reluctance among Christian workers in the target area to embrace oral strategies of communication.

### **3.3 Research methodology (Data collection techniques)**

Data was collected by means of a Questionnaire (Appendix 6) which was personally distributed (by the researcher) to and collected from church leaders in the Central Gonja District in Ghana.

#### **3.3.1 The design of the Questionnaire**

The Questionnaire was divided into four main sections:

- The Front page
- Section A: Information about the church
- Section B: Information about the community
- Section C: Semi-structured Questionnaire

##### **3.3.1.1 The Front page**

The front page states the purpose of the research, assures the respondent of the confidentiality of the information, and requires information about the respondent, necessary for the study.

##### **3.3.1.2 Self-administered Questionnaire**

Sections A and B form the self-administered Questionnaire. They require background information about the church and the community and include some quantitative research.

###### **a. Section A: Information about the church**

Section A requires information regarding the church, such as: age, size, major ethnic groups represented, language use, and literacy rates.

###### **b. Section B: Information about the community**

The first part of section B requires some background information about the community, specifically related to language use, ethnic groups represented, and literacy rates. The second part requires data on the learning styles of the non-

literate, and their interest in school and literacy programmes. It also requires information regarding the methods of communication and languages used by the church in evangelizing the community.

#### 3.3.1.3 Semi-structured Questionnaire

The semi-structured Questionnaire (Section C) has a qualitative research component and it is divided in two parts:

##### a) Use of oral Scriptural tools

The first part of section C presents eight oral tools identified in the book by Chiang Samuel (2010) entitled, *Orality Breakouts*. The Questionnaire then asks the respondent to rate out of 10 the use of Samuel's eight oral tools in evangelising the community by his or her church, and then to provide reasons why the three tools that received the lowest rate, were the least used.

##### b) Reasons for reluctance in the use of oral strategies

The second part of section C presents six reasons identified by Greer C Ivor (2011:65-66) that prevent Christian workers from using oral methods of communicating Scripture, and asks the respondents to indicate three of the six reasons that are most common among Christian workers in their areas.

#### 3.3.2 The validation of the Questionnaire: A pilot study

The Questionnaire went through a process of six revisions with the supervisor before it was tested. A pilot study was then conducted to discover if the Questionnaire was clear and easy enough for use in an area with a low level of English. For the purpose of the pilot test, the Questionnaire was distributed to five church leaders in an area similar to the targeted district. The participants for the pilot study were asked not only to fill in the Questionnaire but also to provide feedback and recommendations for improvement. Based on their feedback, further changes were made to the Questionnaire before the final draft (draft eight) was approved for distribution.

### **3.4 Description of the empirical survey**

#### **3.4.1 Procedure**

I personally distributed the Questionnaires on January 22nd and 23rd, 2013, and collected them on January 29th, 2013, being assisted by Mr. Adam and Pastor Issah, Gonja church leaders from Buipe. Each participant received a pen to use in filling the Questionnaire, and as a token of appreciation for their assistance. The Questionnaires were distributed to 35 church leaders in the Central Gonja District, more specifically in the towns of Buipe, Fufulso, and Yapei, and they were collected one week after distribution. The Questionnaire was accompanied by two introductory letters. The first one was a letter from the researcher (Appendix 4) requesting the respondent for assistance in the survey, presenting the title of the thesis and the purpose of the survey, and assuring the respondent of the confidentiality of his information. The second letter came from my supervisor (Appendix 5) representing the institution under the auspices of which the survey was being conducted, and confirming the legitimacy and support of the survey.

As the Questionnaires were distributed, the details of the respondents including name, church, location, phone numbers, and the dates of distribution were recorded on a document, which made the collection easier. The dates for the collection of Questionnaires were also recorded on the same document.

#### **3.4.2 Sampling method**

The *representative sampling method* was used for the purpose of this survey which gives "a lot of information from not so many people." This method uses the "same types of people in the same proportion in which they appear in the total population" (Smith 2008:237).

A sample of church leaders from the Central Gonja District participated in this research, as representatives of the broader population of church leaders in the District. Since the survey took place in a predominantly rural area where the level of English was low, the ability to read and write English was a significant part of the selection process. The churches involved represented people from diverse backgrounds, denominations and locations within the District.



### 3.4.3 Sample size and response

As mentioned earlier in chapter 1 of this thesis, Central Gonja is an area where the percentage of Christianity is very low; therefore the number of churches and church leaders for that matter is also low. Thus the Questionnaire was distributed to most of the church leaders that are literate in English, in the towns of Buipe, Fufulso and Yapei. Most of the villages in Central Gonja do not even have a church.

Out of the 35 Questionnaires distributed, 32 were returned. The respondents came from 19 churches representing 12 denominations. A text message was sent through a mobile phone one day before the collection of questionnaires, to remind the respondents about the collection time and to prepare the Questionnaires for the following day. However, some of the Questionnaires were not ready on the day of collection, because some of the respondents had travelled, and so, five Questionnaires were returned to me nine days later (on February 7, 2013) by Pastor Issah.

## **3.5 Presentation of the data (Results and analysis)**

When the Questionnaires were collected, the data was recorded on a spread sheet in preparation for analyses. The responses were then assessed and evaluated. The data from the structured section was converted into percentages and averages for better analysis. The responses from the semi-structured section were grouped together and analysed to determine common themes.

### 3.5.1 Biographical details of respondents

The following information of the respondents relating to their gender, age, ethnic group, and position in the church, is provided and in most cases represented graphically.

### 3.5.1.1 Gender

The church leaders who participated in the survey were predominantly male according to the tradition of the churches in Central Gonja:

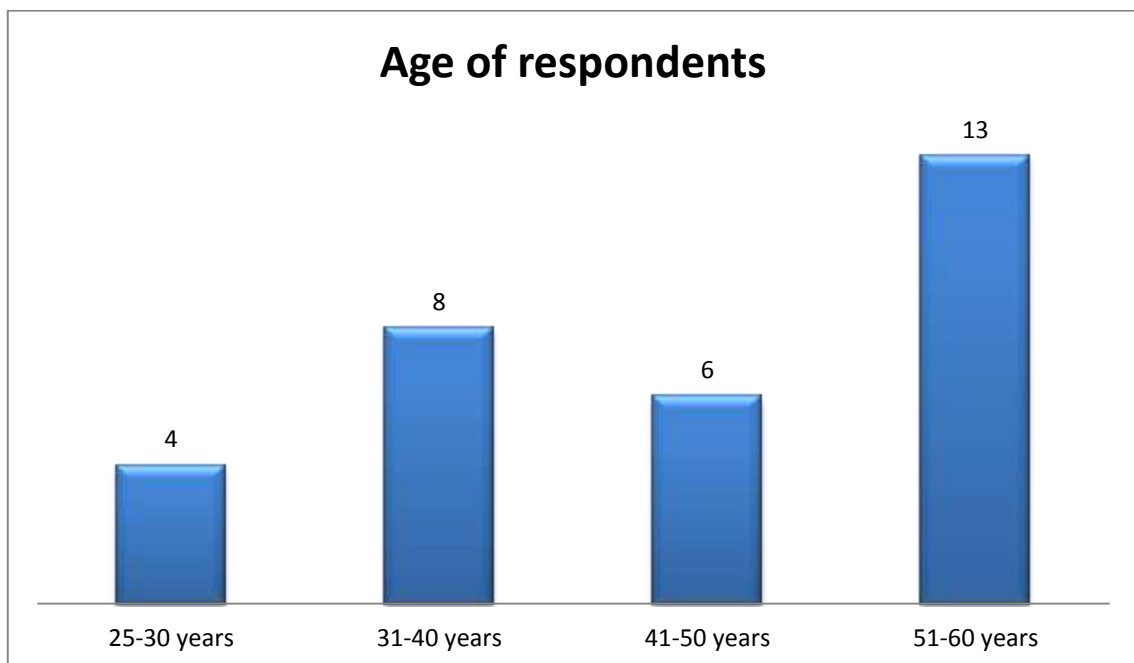
Male	29
Female	3

### 3.5.1.2 Age

The participants were comprised of the following age groups and are reflected in Figure 1.

25-30 years	4 participants belonged to this age group.
31-40 years	8 participants belonged to this age group.
41-50 years	6 participants belonged to this age group.
51-60 years	13 participants belonged to this age group.

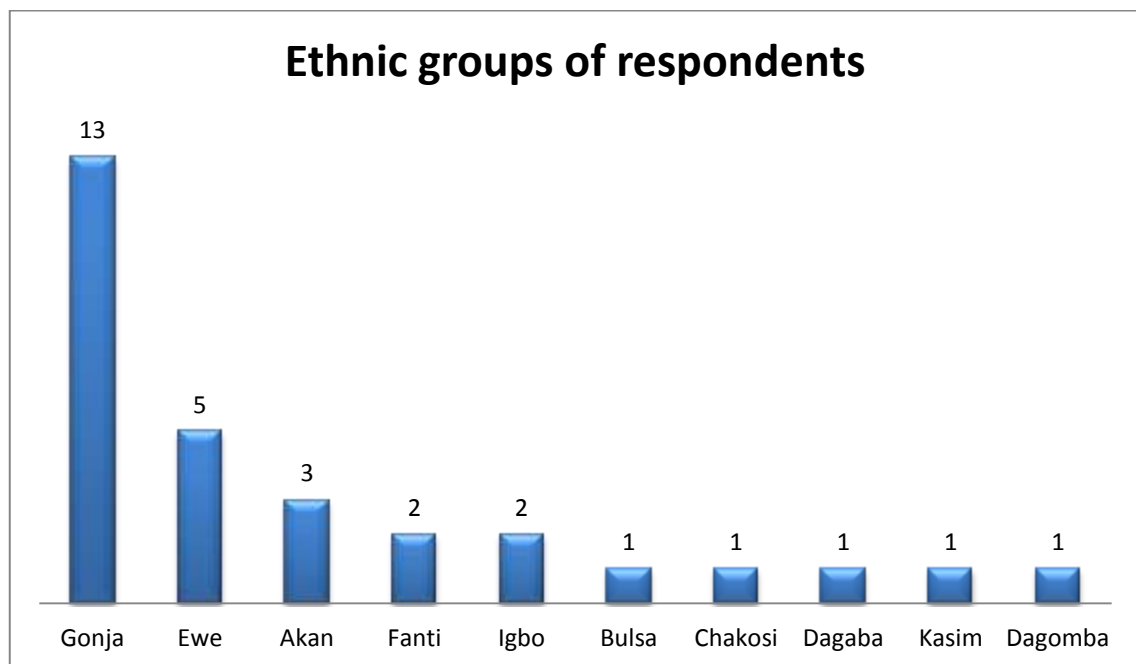
The average age of the respondents was 44 years old.



**Figure 1: Number of respondents according to Age**

### 3.5.1.3 Ethnic group

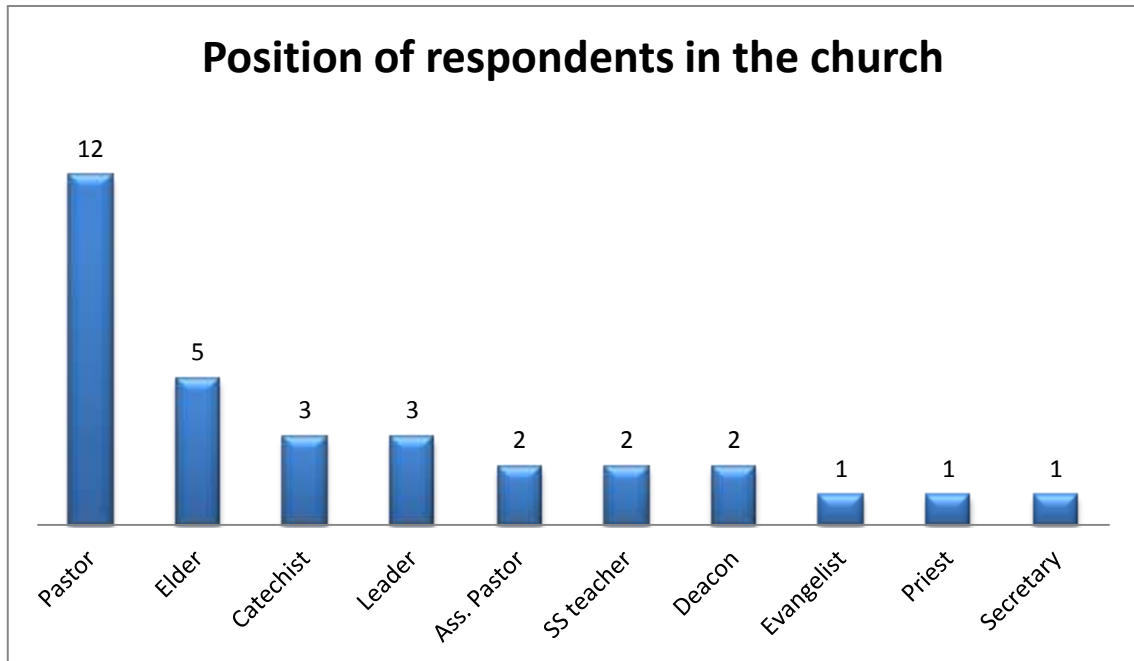
Figure 2 indicates the distribution of the respondents according to their ethnic groups. The chart shows that 44% of the participating church leaders were from the Gonja ethnic group; natives of the place where the survey was conducted. The other participants belonged to other ethnic groups.



**Figure 2: Number of respondents according to their ethnic groups**

#### 3.5.1.4 Position in the church

Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents according to their role in the church. The pastors, assistant pastors and the priest make up 47% of the respondents, who form the top leadership of the participating churches.



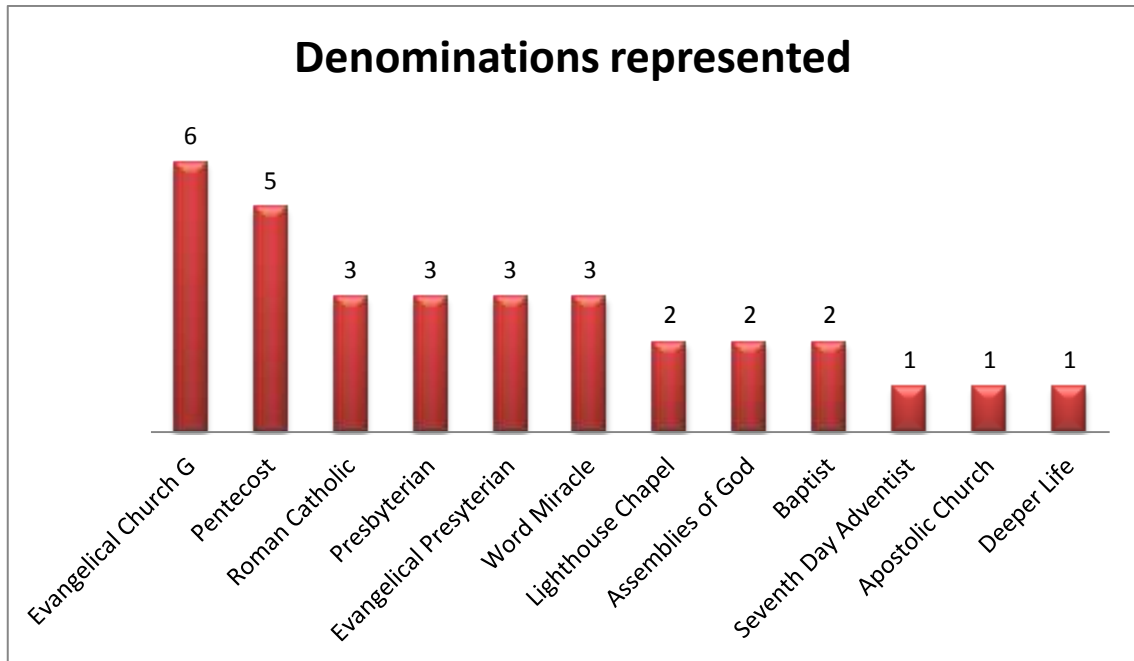
**Figure 3: Number of respondents according to their position in the church**

#### 3.5.2 Church background

The information requested under church background was in relation to the denomination, the group age of the congregation, the number of church members, the ethnic group, the literacy rate, the average age of church members, and the language use.

### 3.5.2.1 Denominations represented

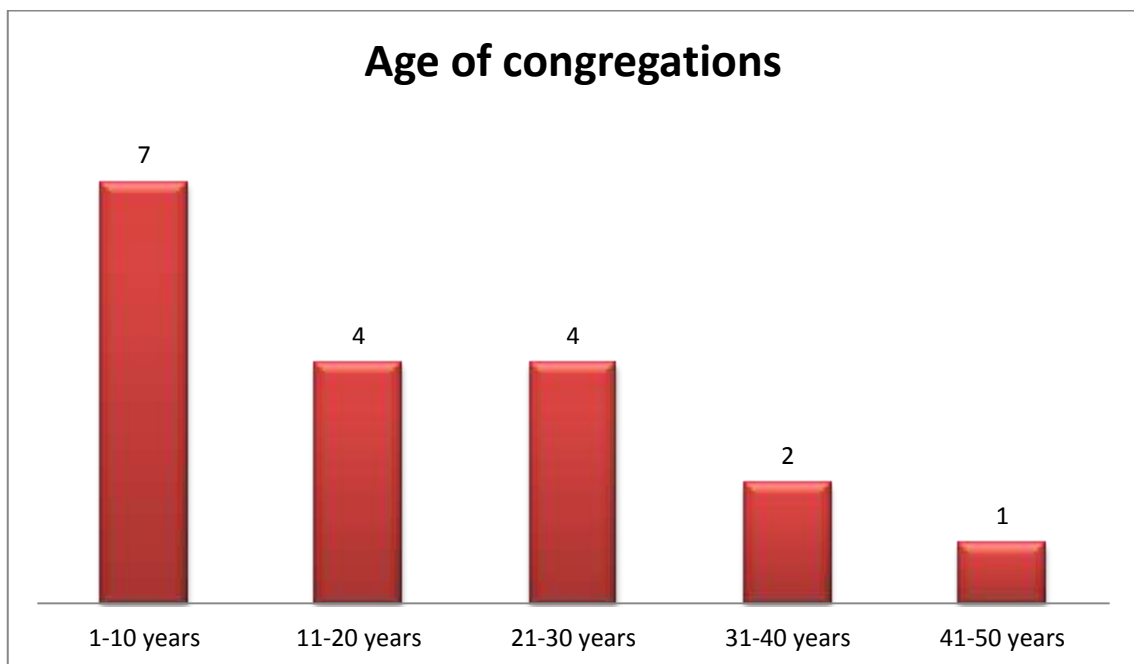
Figure 4 shows the distribution of respondents according to their church denominations. The participants came from 19 congregations belonging to 12 denominations.



**Figure 4: Number of respondents according to their denominations**

### 3.5.2.2 Group age of the congregation/church

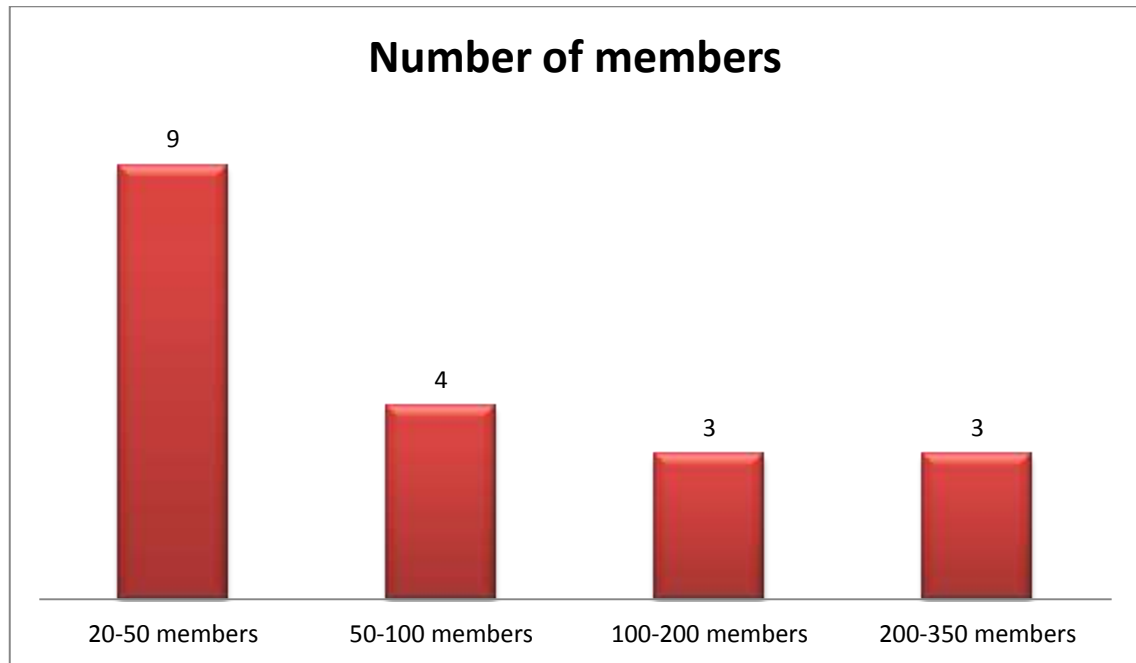
Figure 5 indicates how old the congregations were at the time of the survey. The numbers on top of the graphs in figure 5 indicate how many congregations belonged to that particular group age. The average group age of the congregations involved in the survey was 16.7 years old.



**Figure 5: Number of congregations according to their group ages**

### 3.5.2.3 Number of members

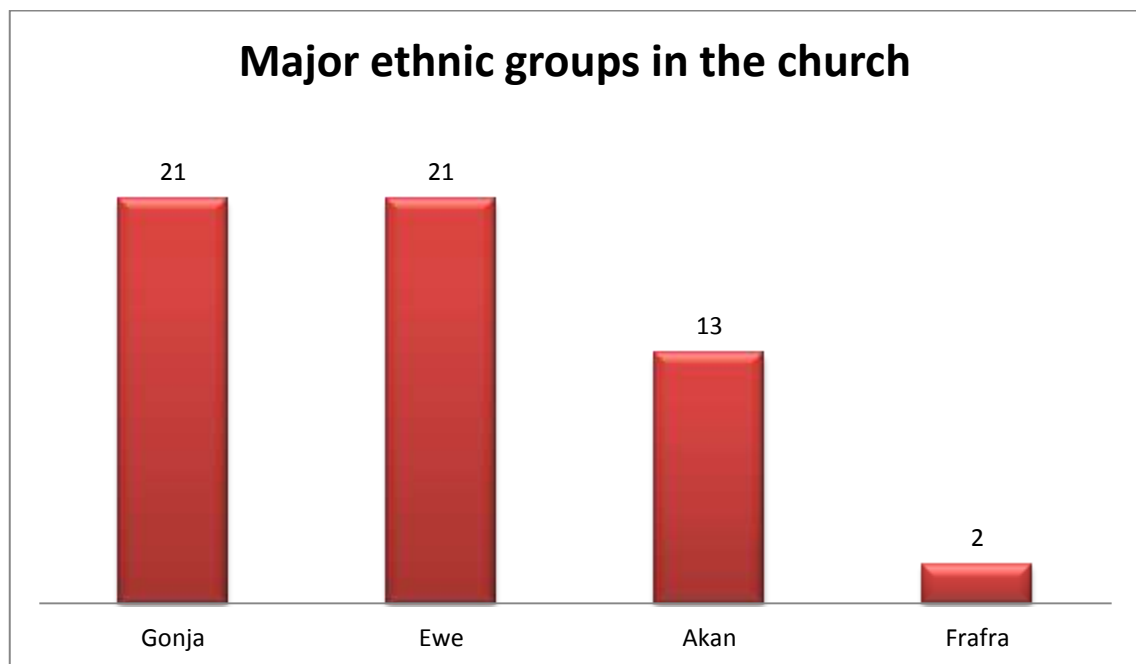
Figure 6 shows the number of churches according to their membership size. The chart indicates that 47% of the congregations have between 20 and 50 members. The average number of members per congregation is 95.



**Figure 6: Number of churches according to their number of members**

#### 3.5.2.4 Ethnic groups in the church

Figure 7 shows the major ethnic groups in the participating churches. Note that only the *major* ethnic groups are presented. The chart shows that 74% of the responses indicated the ethnic groups of Gonja and Ewe, while the other 26% indicated other ethnic groups like Akan and Frafra.

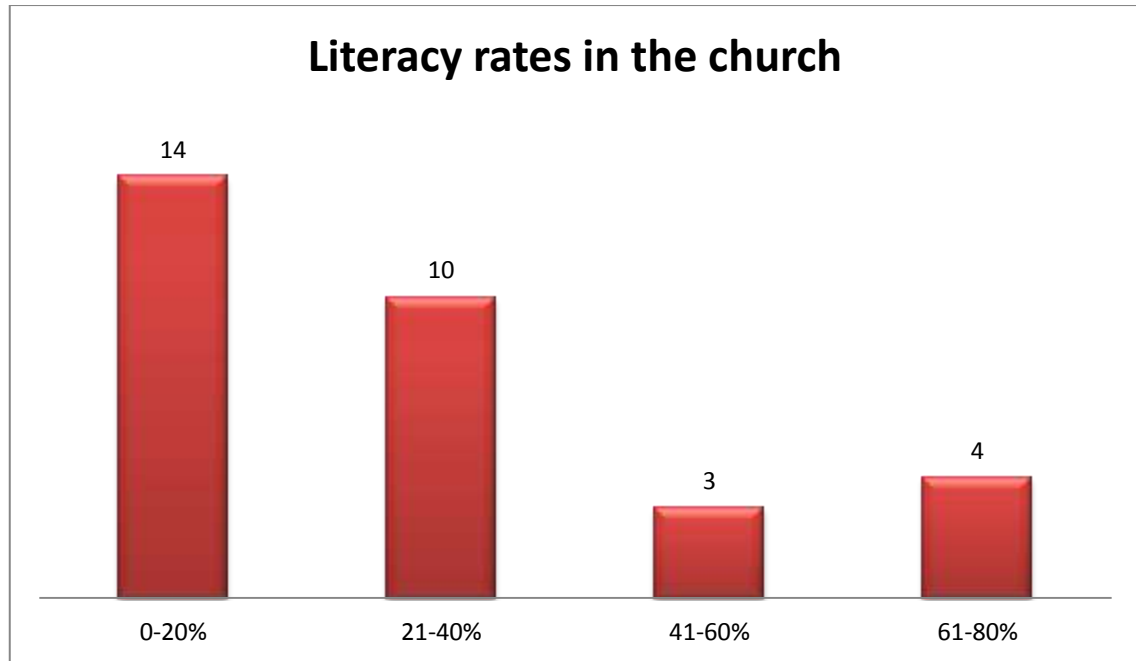


**Figure 7: Major ethnic groups in the churches**



### 3.5.2.5 Literacy rates in the church

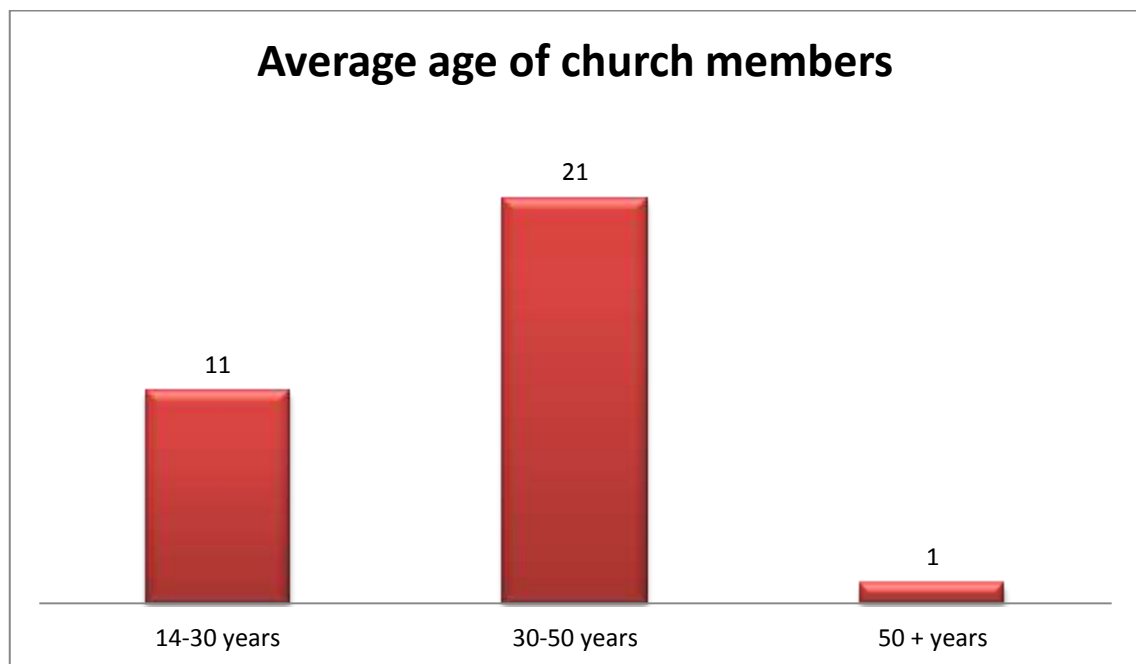
Figure 8 shows the literacy rates in the church, according to percentage. The average rate of church literacy, according to the respondents, was 33%.



**Figure 8: Literacy rates in the churches**

### 3.5.2.6 Average age of church members

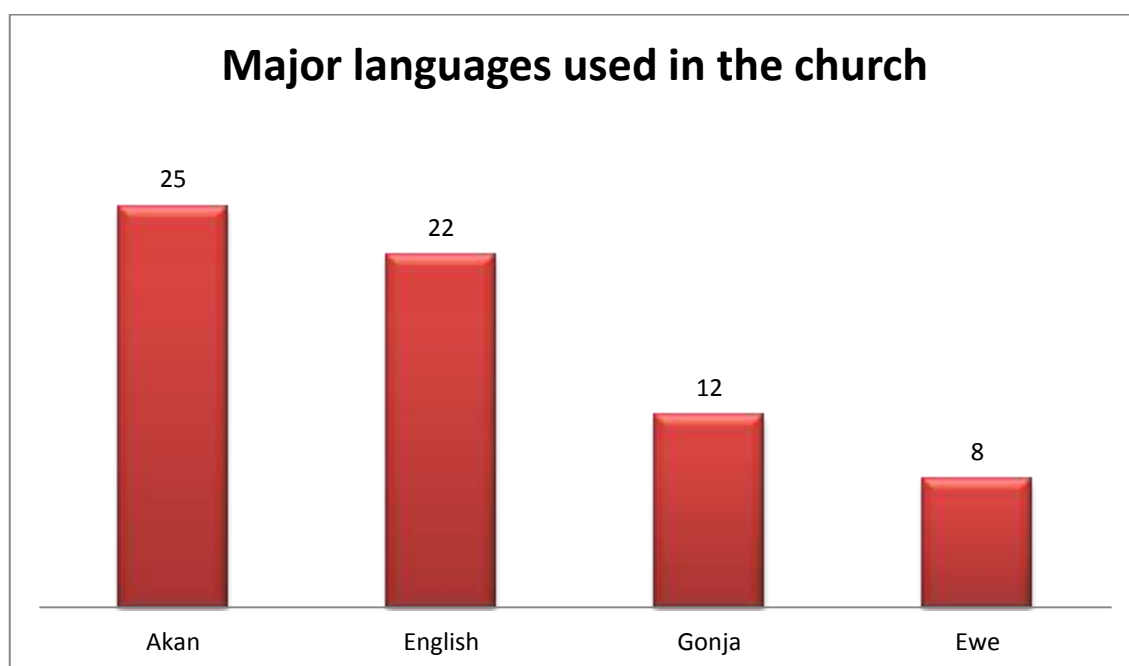
Figure 9 shows the average age of the church members in the participating churches. The chart indicates that 64% of the church members are between 30 and 50 years old, 33% are between 14 and 30 years old and only 3% are above 50.



**Figure 9: Average age of church members**

### 3.5.2.7 Language use in the church

According to figure 10, the churches use mainly the language of wider communication (Akan, 37%) and the national language (English, 33%). 18% indicated that they use the Gonja language and 12% that they use the Ewe language.



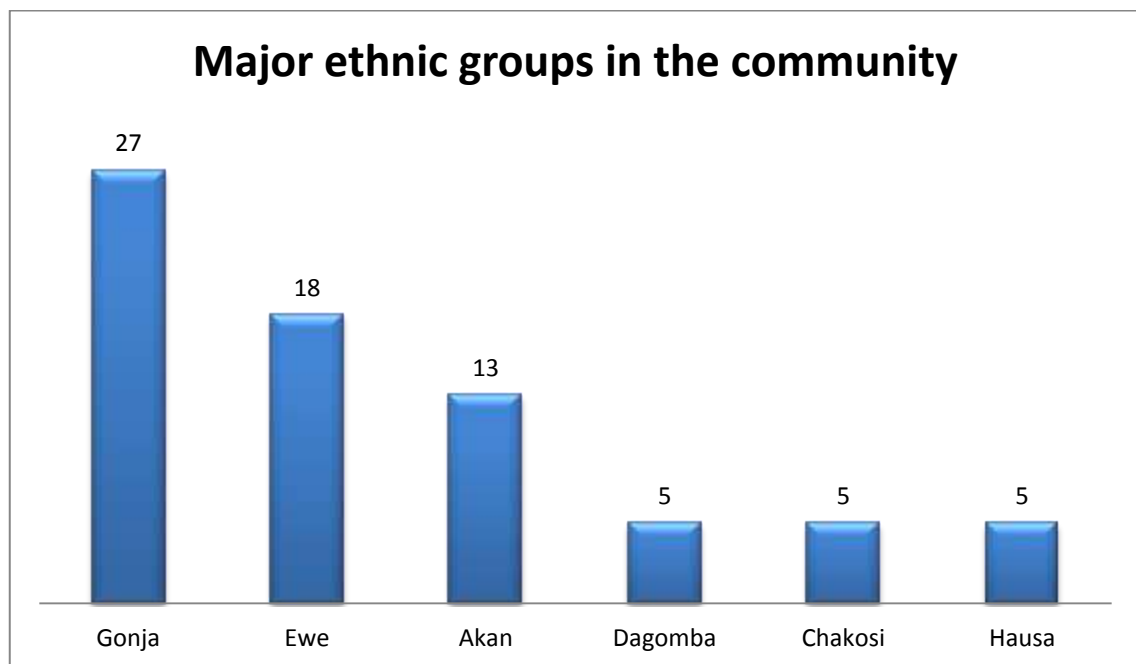
**Figure 10: Major languages used in the church**

### 3.5.3 Community background

The information requested under community background was in relation to the ethnic groups, the language use, and the non-literates' forms of communication in the community. The Questionnaire also requested information about the methods and languages used by churches in evangelism. Lastly, there was a request for information about the non-literates' interest in school and literacy programmes.

### 3.5.3.1 Major ethnic groups in the community

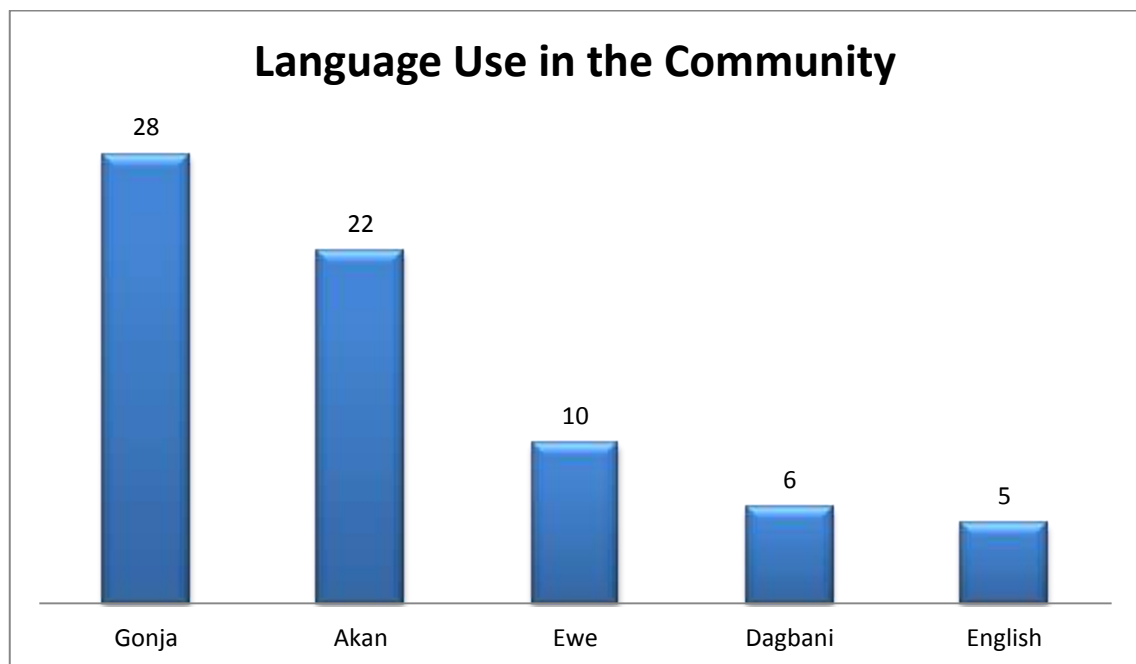
Figure 11 indicates the six major ethnic groups residing in the communities where the participating churches were located. These ethnic groups are, in order, beginning with the ones mentioned most: Gonja, Ewe, Akan, Dagomba, Chakosi and Hausa.



**Figure 11: Major ethnic groups in the community**

### 3.5.3.2 Major languages used in the community

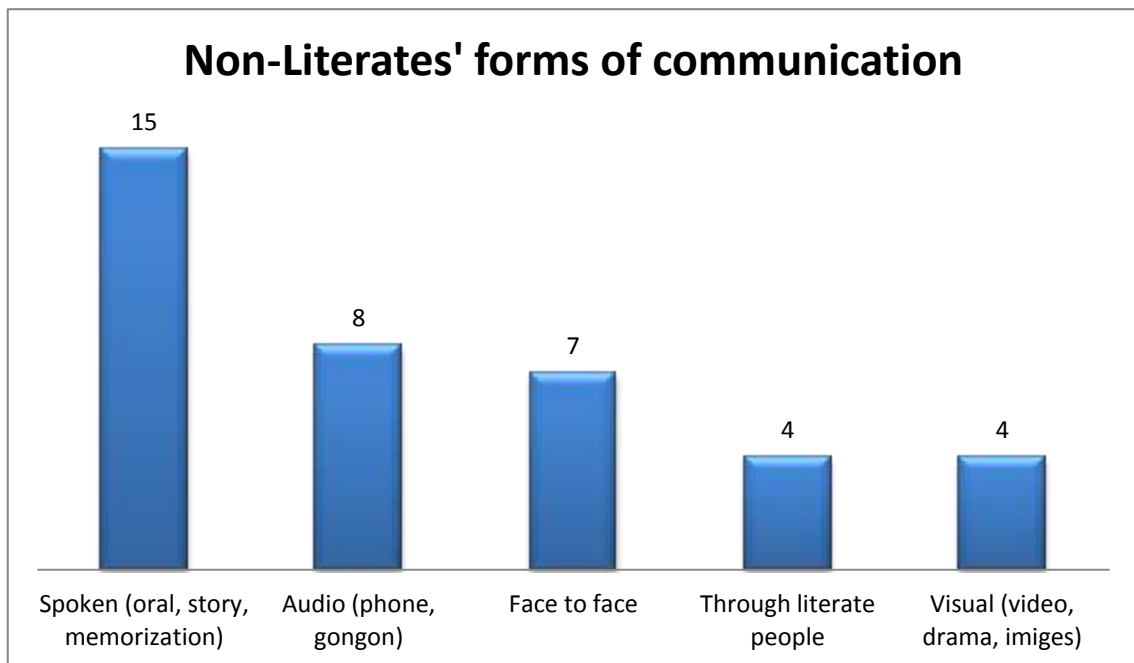
Figure 12 shows the major languages used in the communities. According to the chart, 70% of the responses indicated that the communities use Gonja and Akan languages for communication, while only 30% of the responses indicated the use of other languages like Ewe, Dagbani and English.



**Figure 12: Major languages used in the community**

### 3.5.3.3 Non-literates' forms of communication

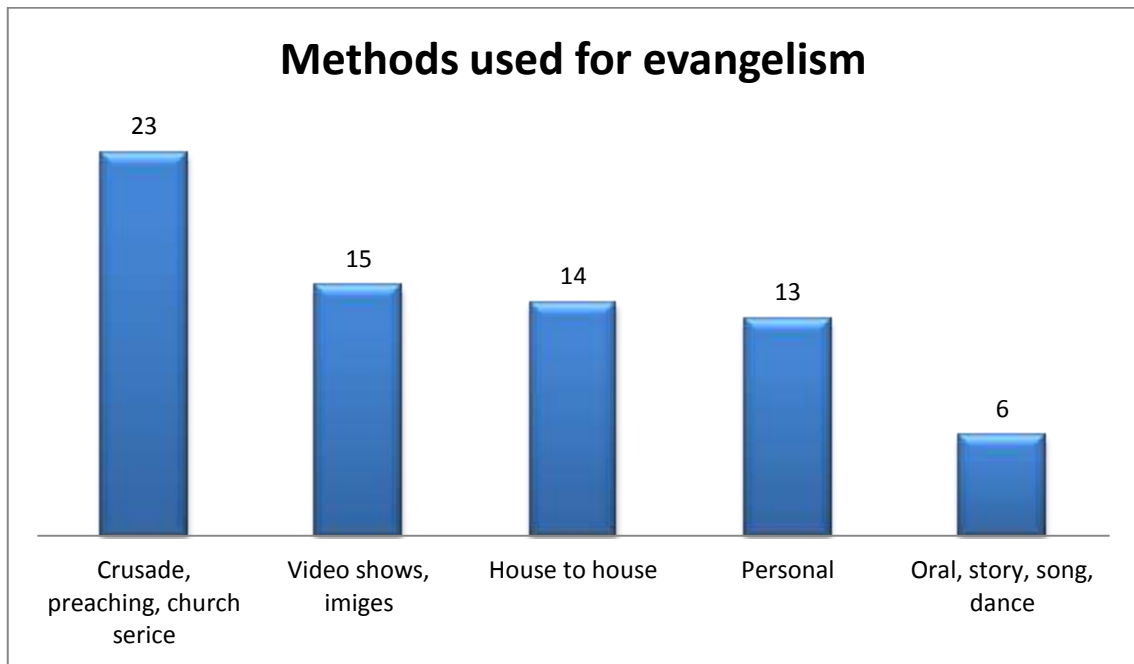
The forms of communication used and indicated by the respondents were grouped in five categories that represent all the responses: spoken, audio, face-to-face, through literate people, and visual. Figure 13 indicates that the non-literates learn and communicate mainly by speaking, listening and seeing.



**Figure 13: Non-literates' forms of communication in the community**

#### 3.5.3.4 Methods used to evangelise non-literates

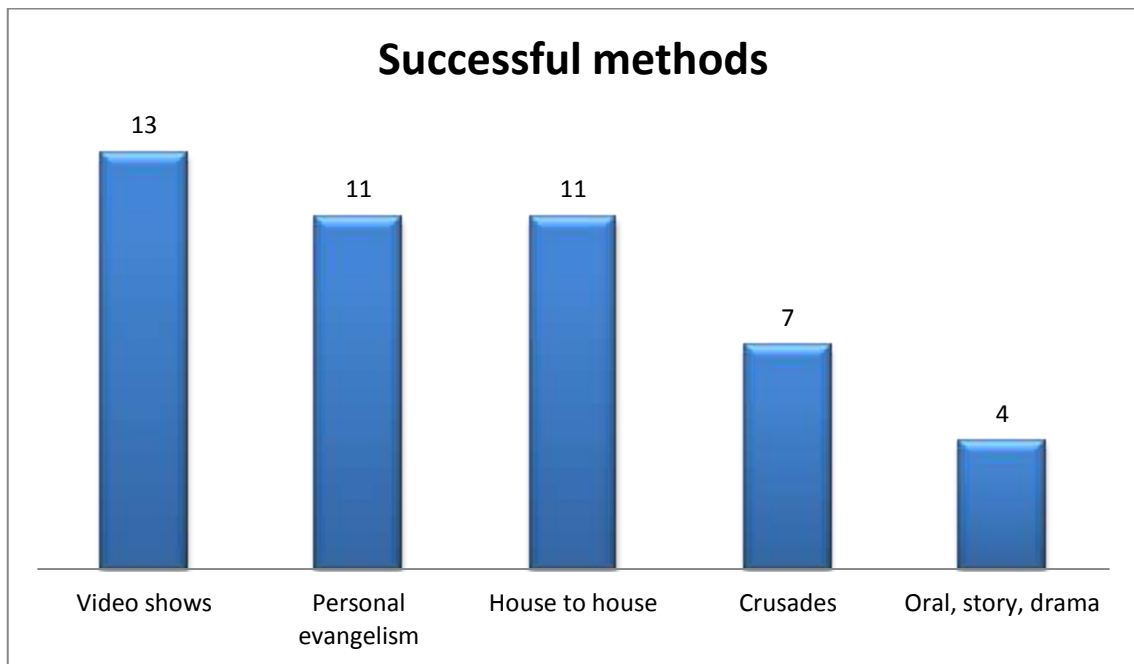
The methods used by the participating churches in evangelism were also grouped in five major categories: crusade, personal, house to house, video shows, and oral (story, song, dance, pictures). Figure 14 shows that the most used method of evangelism is “crusade, preaching and church services”, which comprise 32% of the methods used.



**Figure 14: Methods used to evangelise non-literates**

a. Successful methods

Figure 15 shows the successful evangelistic methods used by the churches and how successful they are in reaching the non-literates in the communities. According to 76% of the respondents, the most successful methods of evangelism are video shows, personal, and house-to-house evangelism.

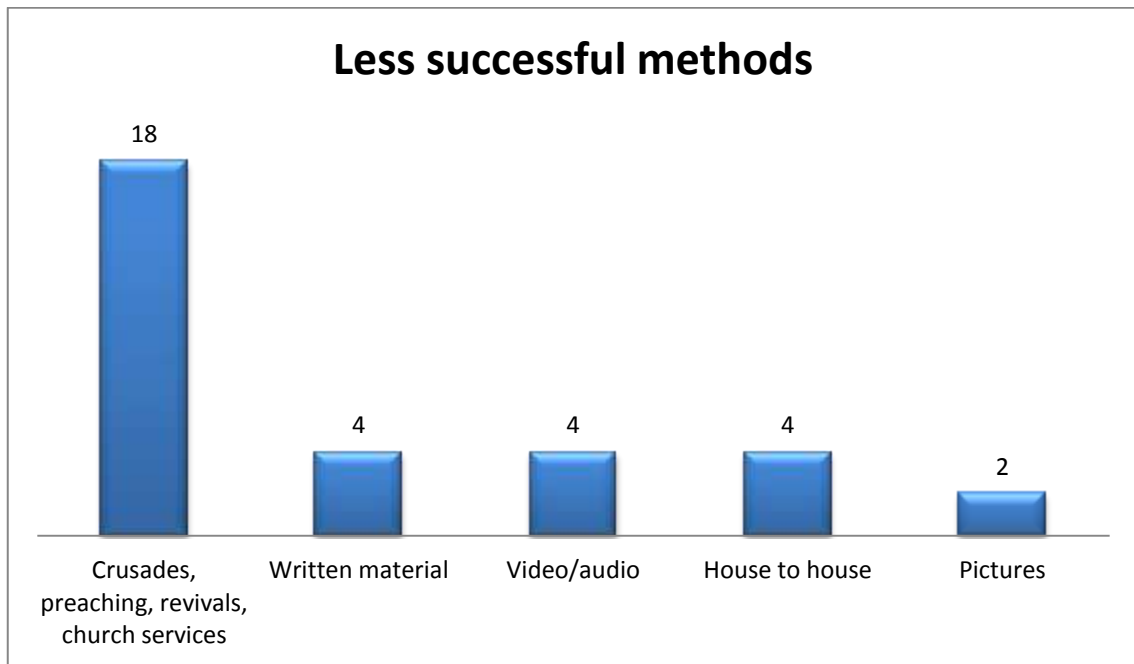


**Figure 15: Successful methods used to evangelise non-literates**



b. Less successful methods

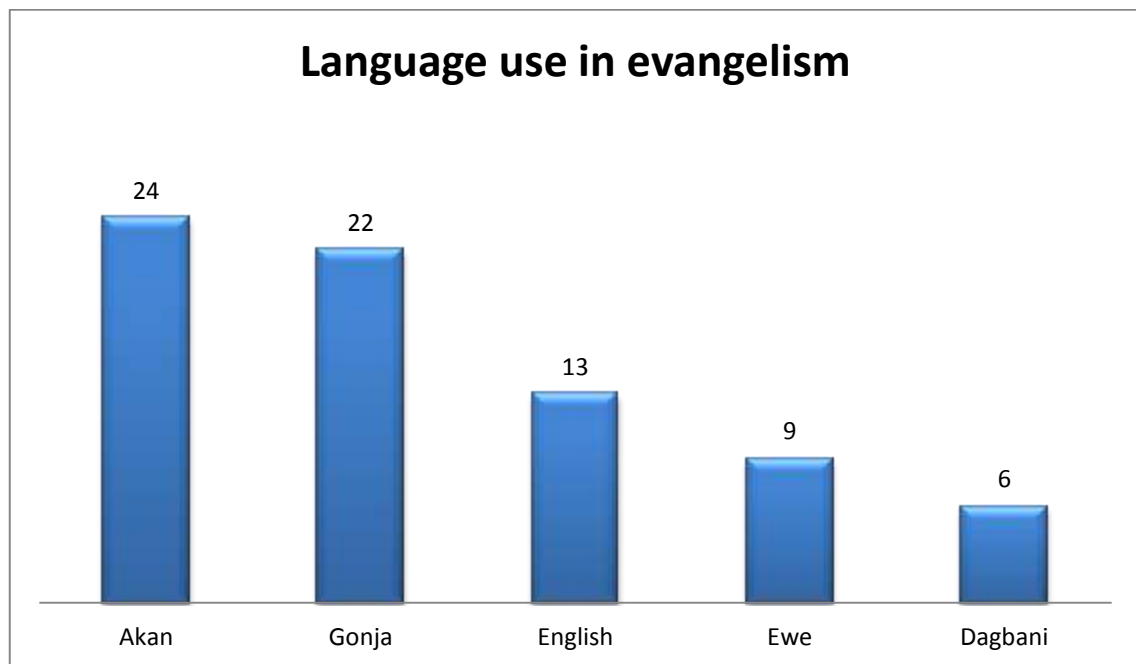
Figure 16 shows the methods of evangelism used by the churches that are less successful. They are grouped under five categories. According to the findings, 56% of the respondents indicated that “crusades, preaching, revivals, and church services” were the least successful methods used in evangelising non-literates.



**Figure 16: Less successful methods used to evangelise non-literates**

### 3.5.3.5 Language use in evangelism

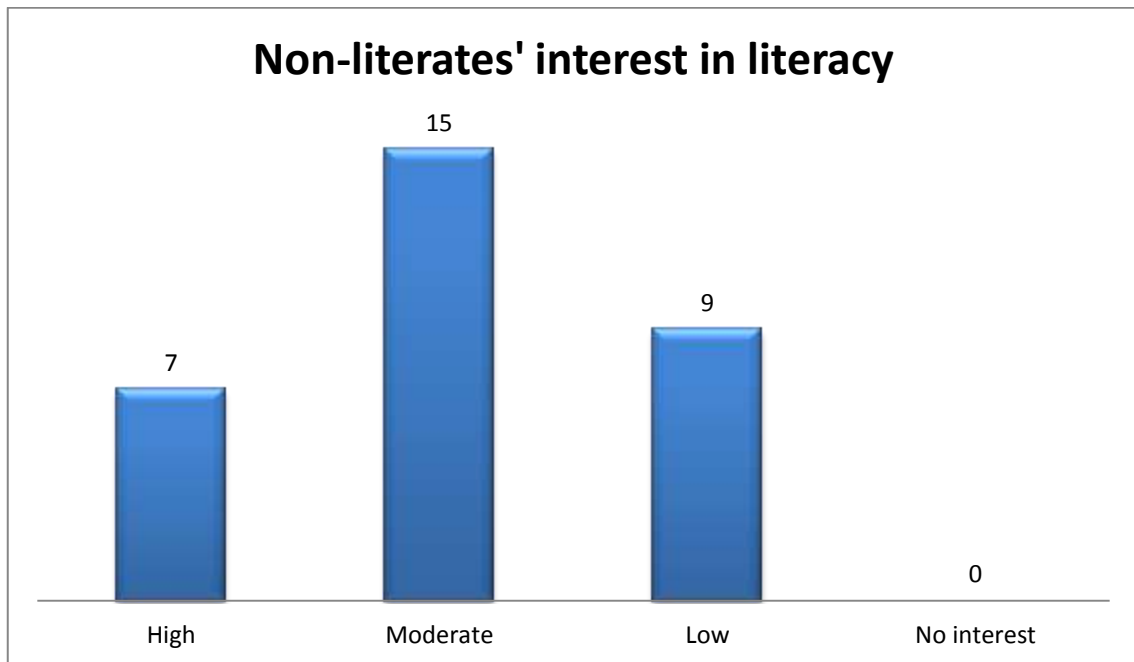
Figure 17 presents the languages used by the participating churches to evangelise their communities. According to 62% of the respondents, the Akan and Gonja languages are used by their churches in evangelism, while 38% of the respondents indicated that they used other languages, like English, Ewe and Dagbani.



**Figure 17: Language use in evangelism**

#### 3.5.3.6 Non-literates' interest in literacy

The respondents were requested to select one out of four options to indicate the interest of the non-literates in literacy in their communities. No respondent indicated that the non-literates had no interest at all in literacy. 48% of the respondents indicated that, amongst the non-literates, there is a *moderate* interest in literacy.



**Figure 18: Non-literates' interest in literacy**

#### 3.5.4 Results regarding the churches' use/non-use of oral Scriptural tools for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.

The first part of the semi-structured Questionnaire (Section C) requested the respondents to rate out of 10 the use of the eight oral tools (as identified in the book by Chiang Samuel (2010) entitled, *Orality Breakouts*) by their churches in evangelising their oral communities. The first part of section C has a qualitative research component, which will be presented later under section 3.5.6, where I discuss the reasons why three of the tools are least used.

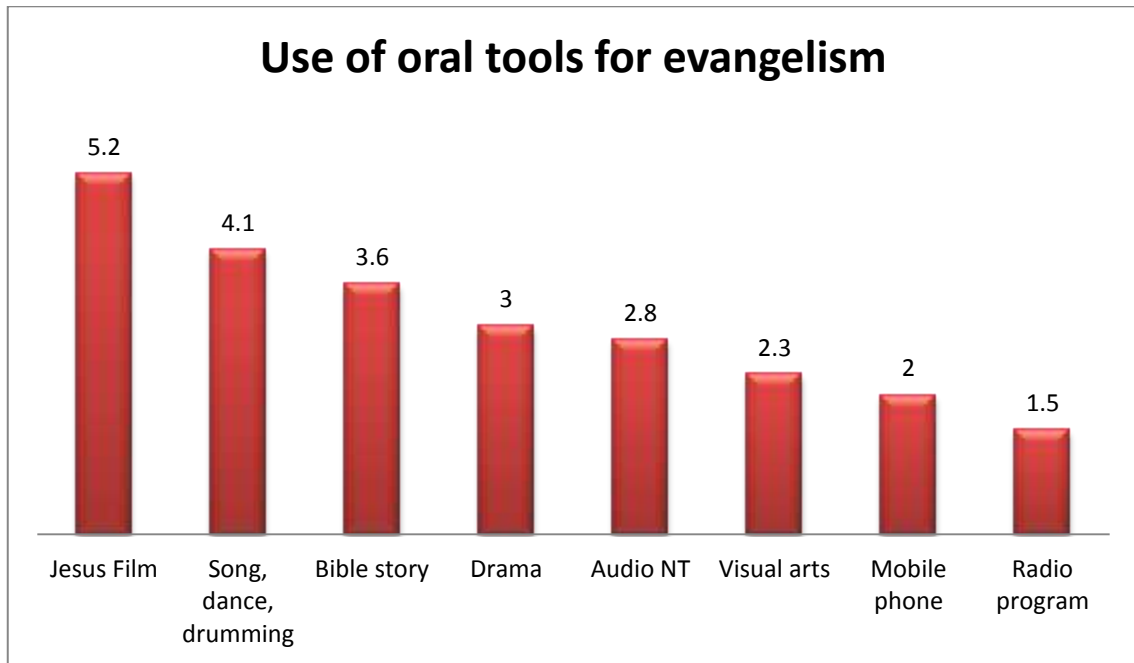
#### 3.5.4.1 Rankings of the oral Scriptural tools used by churches

The following are the eight oral tools for evangelism presented in the Questionnaire, and their average percentages, presented in order from the highest score to the lowest, as indicated by the respondents:

1. Showing the Jesus Film or other Scripture videos in the community.	21%
2. Scripture songs, dance, and drumming in the traditional style using local instruments.	17%
3. Bible storytelling and proverbs in the local style.	15%
4. Performing drama based on Bible stories.	12%
5. Listening to the audio New Testament in a small community or house groups.	12%
6. Visual arts (images, symbols, paintings, etc.).	9%
7. Audio/video Scripture material on a mobile phone memory card.	8%
8. Radio programme using a Bible story, song or drama.	6%

#### 3.5.4.2 A Graphic representation of the findings

Figure 19 represents the average scores resulting from the respondents' rating of the use of oral tools for evangelism, on a scale of 1 to 10, from the highest to the lowest.



**Figure 19: Rating the use of oral tools for evangelism (the average scores)**

Figure 19 shows that most of the oral tools are not used much in evangelism. Only the use of Jesus Film received a score above 5. Most of the oral tools received scores below 4.

#### 3.5.5 Results regarding the main reasons why there is reluctance among Christian workers to embrace oral methods for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana

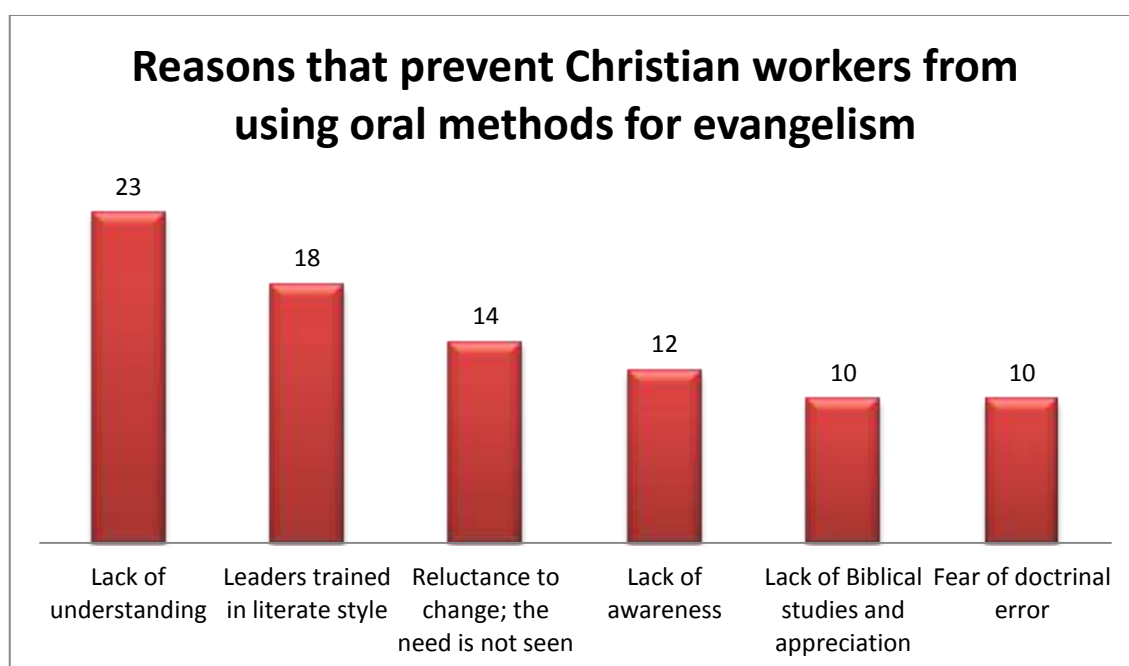
The second part of the semi-structured Questionnaire (section C) presents six reasons identified by Greer C Ivor (2011:65-66) that prevent Christian workers from using oral methods of communicating Scripture, and asks the respondents to indicate three of the most common these reasons for the reluctance of Christian workers to use oral methods for evangelism in their areas.

### 3.5.5.1 Rankings of the main reasons for the reluctance among Christian workers to use oral methods for evangelism

The following table presents the rankings of the reasons that prevent Christian workers from using oral methods for evangelism in their ministry, in order from the highest to the lowest. The first three indicated in the table below were selected by the respondents as the most common reasons given by Christian workers in their area.

1. There is a lack of understanding. For some Christian workers 'orality' only means storytelling. They do not know all the different forms of communication that exist in orality.	26%
2. Christian workers have been trained in literary style to use literary methods.	21%
3. There can be a natural reluctance to change, especially when Christian workers do not see the need for oral strategies. Preaching can be seen to be more Biblical than 'telling stories' which are associated with children.	16%
4. There is a lack of awareness. Many do not even know what orality is.	14%
5. There is a lack of biblical studies on orality which includes a lack of appreciation of it.	12%
6. There is a fear of doctrinal error. There is a concern that Biblical truth cannot be communicated adequately by storytelling.	11%

### 3.5.5.2 A Graphic representation of the findings



**Figure 20: Ranking of the reasons that prevent Christian workers from using oral tools for evangelism**

### 3.5.6 Themes gleaned from the semi-structured Questionnaire relating to the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by the churches for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana

It was indicated in section 3.5.4 that the first part of the semi-structured Questionnaire (Section C) has a qualitative research component, which requires respondents to indicate the reasons why the three tools for evangelism with the lowest ratings, are least used. These three tools for evangelism are presented in order in the table below, beginning with the lowest rate of use:

1. Radio programme using Bible story, song or drama.	1.5	6%
2. Audio/video Scripture material on mobile phone memory card.	2	8%
3. Visual arts (images, symbols, paintings...).	2.3	9%

The responses given by the participants for the low use of the above-mentioned three tools of evangelism can be grouped in terms of the following four main reasons:

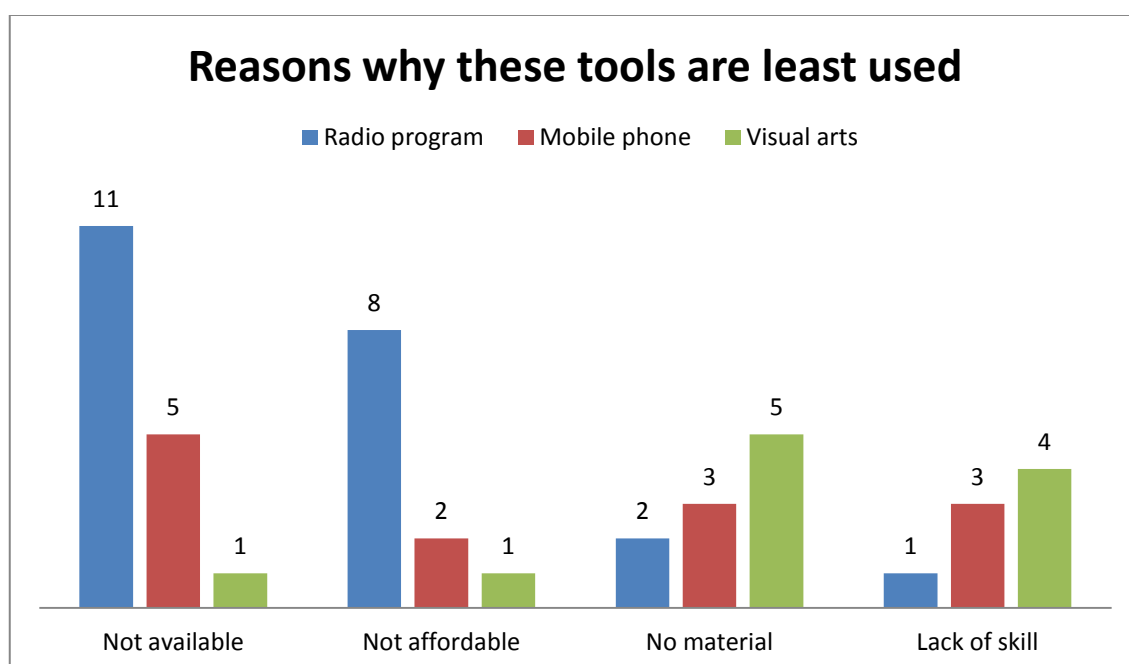
- a. The tool is not available.
- b. The tool is not affordable.
- c. There is no material to use with the tool.
- d. People do not have the necessary skills to use the tool.

When a radio programme is described as "not available", it means there is no radio station in the community. In the case of mobile phones, "not available" means that people do not own a phone that is compatible with the relevant memory card. In the case of visual arts, "not available" means that it has not been developed in the community. Below is a presentation of the four main reasons for the low/non-use of three tools of evangelism, and the number of respondents that selected each reason:

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Reason for low/non use</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
1. Radio programme	Not available (no radio station)	11
	Not affordable	8
	No material (no audio Scripture)	2
	No skill	1
2. Mobile phone	Not available (no compatible phones)	5
	Not affordable	2
	No material (no Scripture for phones)	3
	No skill	3
3. Visual arts	Not available (not developed)	1
	Not affordable	1
	No material (for painting/crafting)	5
	No skill	4



The data can be presented in a chart as follows:



**Figure 21: Ranking the main reasons why three oral tools are least used**

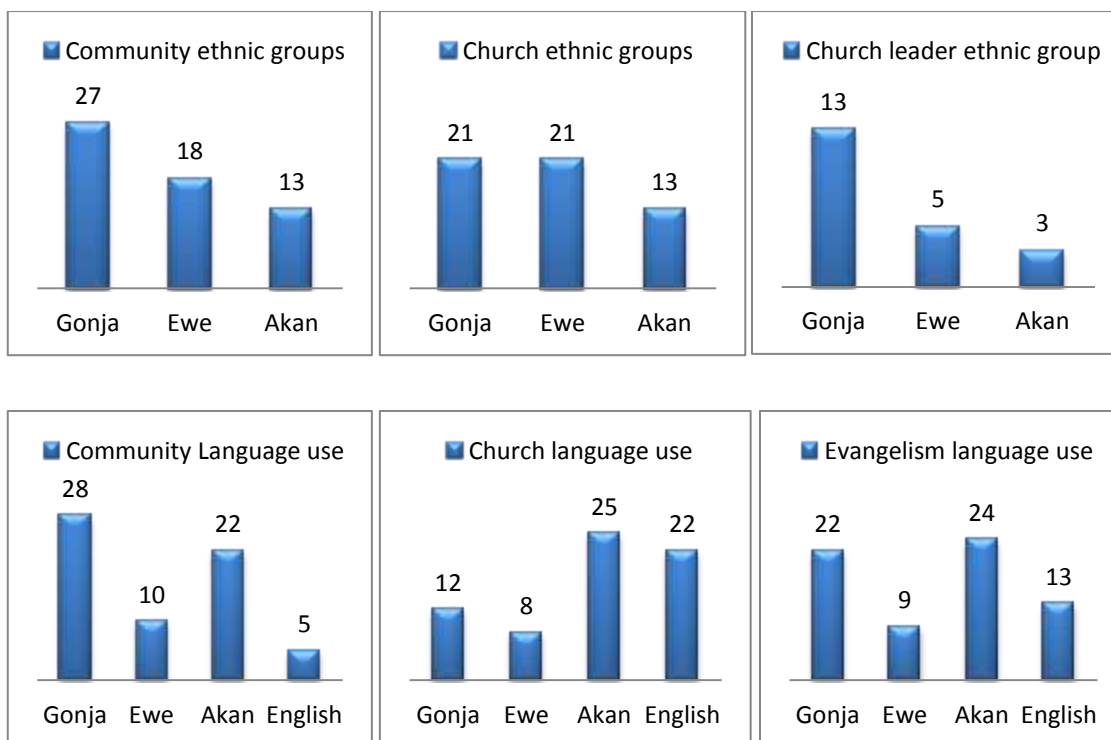
### 3.6 Key findings, conclusions, recommendations and further research

#### 3.6.1 Key findings

The findings of the empirical survey will be presented according to the aims of the investigation stated in section 3.2. The three main conditions for a successful discipleship among oral learners presented by both Lovejoy (2005:70-71) and *From Seed to Fruit* (Lovejoy 2012: slides 35-36), are:

- Equip relational-native communicators to make disciples.
- Communicate in the mother-tongue.
- Use appropriate strategies of communication.

For easy comparison the key findings have been arranged in six charts below, indicating, under each topic/heading, the number of respondents relating to the three major ethnic groups and/or the four relevant languages.



#### a) The ethnicity of the church leaders

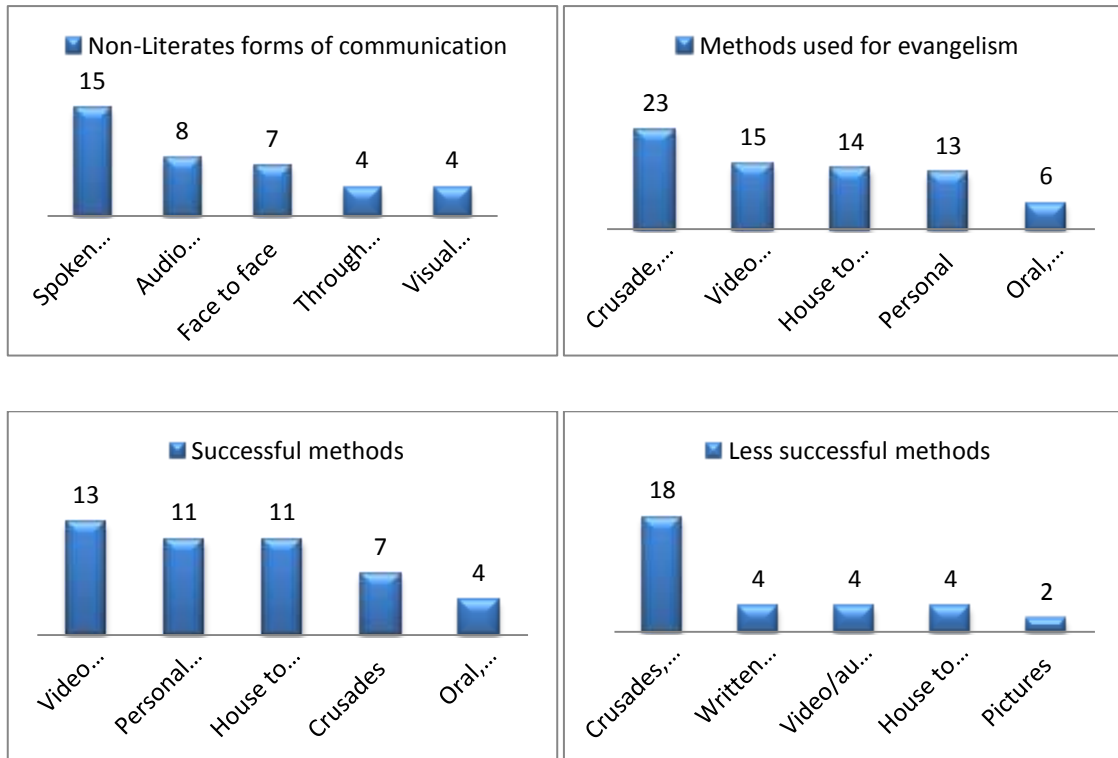
According to the findings, the condition to have native communicators for a successful discipleship is partially met, since 44% of the participating church leaders are Gonja natives of the place where the survey was conducted (see right upper chart above, and also figure 2). Since there are a good number of Christian workers who are fluent in Gonja, the local language, they could easily use it in evangelism and discipleship.

#### b) Language use in church and evangelism

The second condition for a successful discipleship among oral learners is to communicate in the local language of the people. There could be a problem here (compare the two middle charts above). The major ethnic groups in the churches are Gonja and Ewe, which form about 74% of the respondents (see also figure 7), but their languages are not used very much in the churches, only 30% (see figure 10). This could hamper the growth of the church both in numbers and spiritually.

### c) Appropriate style of communication

The third condition for a successful discipleship is the use of appropriate communication strategies. The respondents were asked to indicate both the non-literates' forms of communication and the methods used by their churches to evangelize non-literates. The following charts compare the respondents' perceptions regarding the various communication strategies:



The non-literates' methods of communication could be basically summarized as, spoken, audio and visual. Meanwhile the method that is most used by the churches is crusades and preaching (32%), which are literate in style, since sermons are expositional, using outlines and points; they are unfamiliar methods in the culture. The respondents clearly indicated that crusades are the least successful (56%) in evangelizing non-literates. On the other hand, the most successful methods are video shows, personal and house to house (76%), which are relational approaches.

#### d) Reasons why certain oral tools are least used by churches

It has already been shown in figure 19 that most of the eight oral tools are not used very much in evangelism. Only the Jesus Film received a score above 5. Most of the other oral tools received a score below 4. The four major reasons why three of these tools were least used, were identified as: the tool was not available, it was not affordable, there was no material developed, and people did not have the skill to use it. It can be concluded that the oral Scriptural tools are not used significantly by the churches in the area of survey. The next section could further clarify why the oral methods for evangelism have not been used and developed by the churches.

#### e) Reasons for the reluctance to embrace oral strategies

Out of the six reasons for the reluctance to embrace oral strategies given, the respondents chose the following three in order from the least common to the most common reason. I suggest there is a relationship between them which could lead to the root cause of the reluctance to use oral strategies as follows:

The third most common reason why there is a reluctance to embrace oral strategies is that there could be a natural reluctance to change, especially when the need is not seen. Preaching can be seen to be more Biblical than 'telling stories' which is associated with children. This leads to the second most common reason, namely, that Christian workers have been trained in literary style and to use literary methods. That means there was no training available on orality in Bible schools. However, the first most common reason selected by most respondents, which could be seen as the root cause of the reluctance to embrace oral strategies, is that there is a lack of understanding about orality. For some Christian workers 'orality' only means storytelling. They do not know all the different forms of communication that exist in orality.

It is encouraging to see that there is not much fear of doctrinal error, and also it is not that church leaders do not appreciate the oral approach. These are the two reasons that received the lowest score, which indicates that Christian

workers in Central Gonja are not against oral approaches as such, but that there is merely a lack of understanding and information about the approach.

### 3.6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the empirical survey show that there are native church leaders who could use the local language in evangelism and discipleship. But the reality is that they do not use their mother-tongue in their ministry very much.

Secondly, the findings also show that churches frequently use an evangelistic style, which is not familiar to the non-literates in their culture, and which is actually the least effective method.

Thirdly, the reasons identified for the low use of oral strategies of communication are not negative ones. It is not that people do not want to use oral strategies, or that they do not appreciate them, or that they are afraid of doctrinal error. The reasons are rather related to the lack of understanding and information about orality. The church leaders were not trained in the use of oral strategies.

### 3.6.3 Recommendations

Since the Central Gonja District is blessed with a good number of native Gonja church leaders, they should make good use of their language which will facilitate an understanding of God's Word among their people, and will therefore increase the effectiveness of evangelism and discipleship in their communities and churches.

Since the majority of the people in the district are oral communicators, who use oral styles of learning, the churches would be more successful in reaching out to them by developing and using familiar local methods of communicating God's message that are oral in style.

Because there is a lack of understanding and training regarding orality, and since churches are not against oral strategies of evangelism and discipleship, they should look for training opportunities, and partner with organizations that

develop oral tools for evangelism to better serve their communities, using their own learning style.

Some of the oral programmes are already available in the Gonja language and in other languages used in the district, which some churches are not aware of, such as the New Testament in audio format, God's Story in video format using images, the Jesus Film, and training in Bible story telling. I recommend that churches in Gonja-land partner with organizations like as the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), Ambassadors for Christ, Great Commission Movement, and Campus Crusade for Christ that have the expertise to develop oral tools and train churches in their use.

Finally, since the majority of the people are oral learners in Ghana, and for that matter in Africa, there is a great need to introduce orality courses in Bible Schools, Christian institutions, and church training programmes, to better equip the Christian workers for more effective ministry within oral communities.

#### 3.6.4 Further Research

Since orality is a new field of study, there is the need for further research in a number of areas such as:

- The understanding that church leaders have about orality and about the need for oral strategies.
- The existence of orality courses in Bible schools and other Christian institutions.
- The effectiveness of oral strategies in those churches that have existing programmes.
- Developing effective training programmes in orality.

The next chapter (chapter four) will present a Biblical approach of communicating Scripture to oral communities. The objective is to provide a preferred scenario, or an ideal strategy for reaching out to oral cultures.

## **Chapter 4**

### **A Biblical approach of communicating Scripture for evangelising oral communities, with special reference to Mark 4:33-34**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to present the Biblical foundations of communicating Scripture for evangelizing oral communities. Various passages of Scripture will be analysed and the views of different writers will be discussed to reach conclusions regarding the appropriate styles of communicating God's message to oral cultures.

In pursuit of this aim the following three main sections will be covered:

- A Biblical survey of the oral communication of Scripture/the Gospel
- A Biblical exegesis of Mark 4:33-34
- Conclusions: summary of the research

#### **4.2 A Biblical survey of the oral communication of Scripture/the Gospel**

The word "Scripture" is perceived by most Christians today to mean the written Bible which must be read by believers daily and individually, and during church services. However, God's own approach of communicating his message to his people in history should be our major source to learn about the role of Bible stories in people's lives (Stahl 2010:166).

According to Steffen (1997), "The Bible begins with the story of creation and ends with a vision of God's recreation. Peppered generously between alpha and omega are a host of stories." Terry explains that "the Bible is a story" that shows God's relationship with humans. The stories link together, describing how that relationship was broken by people's sin, the consequence of their sin, and the people's need of God's forgiveness. The focus of the story moves

towards "God's provision in Christ for restoring the broken relationship" (Terry 2008:2). Brown (2004b:126) affirms that:

... God's greatest revelation is not written or even verbal, but is presented in the life of Christ himself, who is the visible picture of the invisible God.

Charles Kraft gives ten Biblical communication principles based on the way God communicated in the Bible. The following are three of them (Brown 2004b:126):

- "God shapes his communications in terms of the audience's frame of reference, or at least begins by addressing that frame of reference. He does not embrace their worldview but he does speak to it."
- "God usually addresses people personally, encouraging them to respond, especially in commitment to him."
- "God's message usually deals with concrete events and needs in the lives of those addressed."

"Tom Steffen points out that that the Bible is 75% narrative, 15% poetry, and only 10% 'thought-organised.'" Therefore the Bible gives us the appropriate material to use with the oral learners (Greer 2011:38). Leland Ryken indicates in a rhetoric way that the Bible contains so many stories because stories reveal truths "in a way that no other literary form does" (Steffen 1997).

According to Klem, most of the Bible characters used books far less than us. "Jesus and David did not write any of their teachings in books, but rather used oral tradition, including poetry, to keep their teachings alive" (Klem 1995:59). So, Lovejoy (2009:9) advises that when we try to understand the historical context of the Bible we should keep in mind that many of its teachings were originally communicated orally, and were even transmitted orally for many years before they were recorded.

#### 4.2.1 A survey of the Old Testament

Peter Au affirms that, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth through His oral words" (Chiang 2010a: Testimonials). Greer points out that God's ideal form of communication with man is face-to-face conversation



because "God is a God of relationship" and he intends to have a personal relationship with man as he had with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, sin has interrupted this personal relationship, but God took the initiative to restore it through the incarnation when "he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2) (Greer 2011:35).

Lovejoy (2010) asserts that both the New and the Old Testaments came in an oral environment, and the fact that we find in the Bible traditional oral art forms, such as stories, poetry, proverbs and songs, is a proof of that. For instance, Jenkins (2008) indicates that Job is the oldest story in the Bible and one of the oldest in the world "existing from prehistory as oral literature."

According to Ben Witherington,

The literacy rate in those biblical cultures seems to have ranged from about 5% to 20% depending on the culture and which sub-group within the culture we are discussing. Not surprisingly, then, all ancient peoples, whether literate or not, preferred the living word, which is to say the spoken word (Lovejoy 2010).

In the Old Testament culture there was the practice that one person would read and the group would listen. The priests of Israel were instructed to "read the law to all the people at the end of every seven years (Deut. 31:10-13; cf. Josh. 8:33-35)." When Israel returned from captivity, Ezra read the law in the hearing of his people (Neh. 8:1-3) (Lovejoy 2010).

Most of the people in ancient Israel had never touched the scrolls of God's Word and the majority of Israelites could not read even if they had access to them. The believers used to learn God's instructions by coming together to the Temple or to the Synagogue and listening to the scribes reading the text or reciting the Word to them from memory. As part of the transmission of religious teachings, the leaders also interpreted to the people the oral traditions - called Targums - developed in daily lessons by the experts of the Law, which were not put into writing until 200 AD, when they were called Mishnah (Stahl 2010:166-167).

People's faith in God was also sustained by celebrating various festivals like the Passover, when they retold the wonderful story of their people, remembering God's works and words for their people through prayer, singing, animal sacrifices, and re-enacting part of the events. For their daily living with God, people depended on the story of God's people that they could remember. They developed the habit of retelling God's story to their children as God Himself commanded them to do (Deut. 6:21-25) (Stahl 2010:167).

The book of Deuteronomy was purposed for the time when Israel would settle in the land of Canaan, where they would be surrounded by pagan nations, and would live their lives far apart from each other, which would cause changes in their story. As Weisburg affirms, "Deuteronomy is a contextualization of God's revelation for this change in situation and leadership." When they stopped participating in their religious ceremonies and listening to their stories, they no longer identified themselves with the God of their ancestors and his teachings, and were rather influenced by the pagan nations around them (1 Kings 13:33-34) (Stahl 2010:167).

#### 4.2.2 A survey of the New Testament

According to Bible scholars, the literacy rate among Jews during the New Testament era was between 3% and 20% (Lovejoy 2009:9). Jesus was an "audience-sensitive communicator" using deliberately, familiar forms of communication such as parables, "stories, object lessons, miracles, and his own example to teach" people according to their ability to understand (Lovejoy 2010). Rajendran points out that, "even to the most educated, Jesus Himself told stories to make a point" (Chiang 2010a: Testimonials).

During the lifetime of his disciples, Jesus' story and stories were told and retold first-hand among the believers in Israel and across the borders in communities that Jesus had not visited. The believers were organized into groups that met regularly to worship, and they were encouraged to hold on to the Scriptural teachings they had received (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Mature believers were travelling, visiting the churches, and teaching the new believers by retelling both the story of Jesus, and stories from the Jewish Scriptures as they pointed to the Messiah and his life on earth (Stahl 2010:167).

Jesus' disciples were considered "uneducated and untrained men" (Acts 4:13) by the Jewish leaders who were surprised by the power of the disciples' teachings and how effective they were in "telling the stories they had heard and the experiences that they had had with God" (Lovejoy 2010).

The stories about Jesus and his teachings were told orally for about a generation before they were collected and put into written form, and "Christianity grew dramatically during that period," from Judea to Asia, Africa and Europe (Lovejoy 2010). Other writers, like Paul, sent letters to the early churches in various places, and used other images like those of an athlete and of a soldier, which helped people from those cultures to understand the message in their own contexts (Stahl 2010:168). Brown affirms that the Bible does not present a system of theology but describes the character of God and man using narration and many symbols, such as baptism, the Lord's supper, and the cross (Brown 2004b:126). "Even the letters of the New Testament have more oral character than casual readers recognize." Usually the authors would orally dictate the message to a scribe and request that the letters be read aloud in churches (Lovejoy 2010).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the moving oral story of God's struggle with his people in a way that his audience was "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37), and about three thousand people gave their lives to Christ and were baptised that day. Stephen told the same story to a different audience in such a way that they could not bear it anymore and responded by stoning him to death. Both audiences were compelled to respond to the story in their own way (Danita 2010:33).

Referring to Romans 10:17, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ," Snowden and Willis explain that the word "hearing" was used among the Roman soldiers who delivered messages orally using words and styles, with which the soldiers were familiar. And Snowden and Willis urge us to treat the lost people who prefer to learn orally with respect and bring them faith by hearing the Word (Snowden and Willis 2010:19-20).

In Revelation 1:3, the change from the singular “one who reads” to the plural “those who hear” shows the common practice in the first century church service where, because of the lack of Scripture copies, one would read and the others would listen (1Tim. 4:13) (MacArthur 1999:22-23). “The practice of reading a printed Bible silently to oneself developed 1500 years later when the Gutenberg press made printed books cheap and thus widely available” (Lovejoy 2010).

Brown (2004b:126) concludes that “The Bible is very appropriate for oral communicators, if presented in the way it presents itself.”

#### 4.2.3 Scripture as both: literary document and orally communicated word

Colgate (2008:200) sees a balance between Scripture “as a literary document (holy writ) and as an orally communicated word (holy word).”

##### 4.2.3.1 Scripture as a literary document

Colgate gives a list of the roles of Scripture as a literary document (2008:200):

- Firstly, God instructed some people to write down information (Ex 17:14; Num 33:2; Ex 34:27–28; Dt 31:19–22; “Is 30:8; Jer 30:2; 36:2; Hab 2:2;” “Rev 1:9, 11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14”). Based on these passages, Colgate supports Klem’s statement that “it is God’s desire that there be a written text.”
- Secondly, some Bible passages show a sense of permanence of the written word for the future generations (Job 19:23-24; Ps 102:18; Is 30:8; Hab 2:2-3).
- Thirdly, other passages indicate the authoritative role of the written word in matters of faith (Lk 1:3-4; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Acts 24:14).
- “Finally, there are numerous scriptural passages that point to the role of the written word as an authoritative standard or measure” (Jos 8:31; Ez 43:11; Acts 17:11; Mat 4:4).

##### 4.2.3.2 Scripture as an orally communicated word

When it comes to the Bible as an orally communicated word, Colgate affirms that Biblical passages abound, since “much of the content of the Bible itself existed as an orally communicated word, as oral tradition, before it was written

down." Therefore, he summarizes the ways the Bible was communicated orally in three main points giving only the major examples (Colgate 2008:200-201):

- "Both the Old Testament and New Testament contain many passages that were originally sung" (the book of Psalms; Ex 15:1-18, 21; Jos 5; Luke 1-2; "Col 1:15–20; Eph 5:14; Phil 2:6–11; 1 Tim 3:16").
- The Bible shows the importance of both hearing and speaking of God's message:
  - People were called to *hear* the word of the Lord ("Dt 4:1; 5:1; 6:3, 4; 9:1; 20:3").
  - Parents were instructed to tell their children the stories of God's works ("Ps 78; Ex 12:26–27; 13: 8, 14–15; Dt 6:7, 20–25; Jos 4:6–7, 21–24").
  - The written word was "to be read publicly (Dt 17:19; 31:11; Jos 8:34–35; 2 Kg 23:2; cf. 2 Ch 34:29–30; Neh 8:1–8; cf. Lk 14:16–19; Acts 13:15, 27; 15:21;" "1 Tim 4:13;" "Col 4:16; 1 Th 5:27;" "Rev 1:3").
- "Jesus himself provided an example of powerful oral communication of the Scriptures" without writing it down or using a printed copy (Lk 24:27).

Colgate (2008:201) concludes that "Engaging Scripture for gospel sowing and discipling in an oral context should not depend on literacy," but it should also not abandon its commitment to the written word.

It can be concluded, as Greer and Brown affirm, that God desires face-to-face communication with humans which is demonstrated in His initial relationship with Adam and Eve, and also by revealing Himself to people in the person of Jesus Christ who used the spoken word to deliver God's message to them. Furthermore, many other scholars like, Terry, Steffen, Lovejoy, Stahl, Snowden and Willis, confirm that the genre of the Bible is mostly narrative and it was successfully proclaimed in an oral environment. According to Colgate, the role of the written Word was mostly to ensure the standardization of God's message, and to preserve it for posterity, or to provide a sense of permanence. Today there are new methods of preserving the oral communication through the media services (audio and video recordings), as presented in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Therefore, the oral communication of the Gospel is not only legitimate, but it should have priority, especially when transmitted in oral cultures.

### **4.3 A Biblical exegesis of Mark 4:33-34**

This section will attempt to answer the question: What is the significance of Mark 4:33-34 for Christians who communicate the Gospel to oral cultures today? Since Jesus is the perfect model for Christian life and ministry, I have chosen this passage, because it presents a statement regarding His style of communicating the Gospel that could provide us with an effective approach of communicating the Scripture to the oral communities of today.

This exegesis will use the following main structure:

- The context of the Gospel of Mark
- The meaning of Mark 4:33-34
- The significance of Mark 4:33-34

#### **4.3.1 The context of the Gospel of Mark**

##### **4.3.1.1 Introduction**

The ancient church saw Mark as an "abridged Gospel, a view which is specifically stated later by Augustine," therefore they neglected it in preference to Matthew and Luke (Utley 2011). But opinion on the value of Mark underwent a radical shift in the first half of the nineteenth century when scholars proposed that the Gospel of Mark did not follow closely the Gospel of Matthew but it is rather the "the *earliest* of the Gospels, and a primary source for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke" (Edwards 2002). "Here for the first time the words and deeds of Jesus were remembered and proclaimed in a written form" (Lane 1974), and so it becomes the foundational document of the church (Utley 2011). Therefore, Lane labelled Mark as "a witness document that found its creative impulse in the early apostolic preaching of salvation through Jesus Christ" (Lane 1974).

Recent scholarship has also succeeded in proving wrong the judgments of earlier scholars that Mark was a clumsy and artless writer. Mark rather portrays a profoundly theological conception of Jesus as the authoritative yet suffering

Son of God (Edwards 2002). He writes a straightforward defence for the Cross and for Jesus as the Crucified One (Gundry 1993).

This section will study the general background of the book, its historical and literary contexts, and the major theological themes, aspects relevant to the selected passage.

#### 4.3.1.2 General background

##### 4.3.1.2.1 Authorship

- **External evidence**

"The external evidence in support of Markan authorship is very strong;" the tradition is unanimous in favour of him as the author. "As early as the first half of the second century, the gospel was ascribed to him. Further, Papias, Irenaeus, the Muratorian Canon (most likely), Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome all link the Gospel with Mark" (Herrick 2001). Papias for instance (about 130 A.D.), "asserts that Mark was Peter's interpreter who recorded accurately, but not chronologically, Peter's memories of Jesus. Apparently Mark took and adapted Peter's sermons and organized them into a Gospel presentation" (Utlely 2011).

- **Internal evidence**

There is nothing against Markan authorship "in Mark or in the rest of the NT;" rather we may find some evidence that seems to confirm it (Herrick 2001). Utlely suggests that the unusual and unexpected detail in 14:51-52 "where a man flees naked from the garden of Gethsemane" seems to confirm "Mark's personal knowledge of the life of Jesus." He goes further to say that Mark "was possibly the unnamed man who fled 'naked' from Gethsemane" (Utlely 2011).

"The fact that Mark's gospel roughly follows Peter's gospel preaching (cf. Acts 10:36-41) seems to corroborate this idea" that Mark was Peter's interpreter. Also "Peter and John Mark were associated in the early 40's when they probably met regularly in John Mark's mother's house (Acts 12:12)" (Herrick 2001). "The same dwelling was apparently the site of the Last Supper (Acts 1:13-14; Mark 14:14)" (Edwards 2002). According to 1 Peter 5:13, Mark was

with Peter in Rome, during his last days. Here "Peter refers to Mark as 'his son,' implying in this case a deep and long-time, mentor-oriented friendship" (Herrick 2001).

"Luke refers to Mark and Paul as 'assistants' (*uJphrevth*) in Acts 13:5 and 26:16", which "may indicate Mark's service in writing an account of the ministry and passion of Jesus—an account which Luke himself used" (Herrick 2001).

The authorship of Mark is not clearly stated in the Gospel, but based on the strong external and internal evidence there is a general consensus among Bible scholars that Mark was the author.

#### 4.3.1.2.2 Date

Both the external and internal evidence for dating the book of Mark is limited, so conclusions must be tentative (Edwards 2002).

- **External evidence**

With respect to external evidence, the tradition is divided. Irenaeus and the Anti-Marcionite Prologue report the death of Peter prior to Mark's composition of the Gospel. On the other hand, Clement and Origen report that Mark composed the Gospel in Rome during Peter's lifetime. We cannot say which of the two traditions is correct but if we combine the two, the composition of Mark would be located toward the end of Peter's life or shortly after (Edwards 2002). Or, "perhaps Mark began his gospel before Peter's death, and completed it after Peter's death." Peter was probably martyred in A.D. 64 (Malick 2011).

- **Internal evidence**

The emphasis placed by the evangelist upon suffering and persecution suggests that it was "the Neronian persecution following the great fire of Rome (A.D. 64) that called forth the Gospel" (Lane 1974). This coincides with the approximate dating of Mark's Gospel suggested by the external evidence (Edwards 2002). Furthermore, "the description of Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem" seems to be a future event even for Mark and so it "suggests that Mark's Gospel was written before A.D. 70 (Mk. 13:2, 14-23)" (Malick 2011).



In summary, the composition of Mark appears to have taken place "between the great fire in 64 and the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70, that is, about the year 65" (Edwards 2002).

This possibility seems to be the best option, but as stated in the beginning by Edwards, it remains tentative.

#### 4.3.1.2.3 Audience and circumstances

"The church fathers ... affirm that Mark's Gospel was written in Rome for Gentile, Roman Christians" (Malick 2011). Also the Bible indicates that Mark was probably in Rome during the last days of Peter and Paul (2Tim. 4:11; 1Pet. 5:13) (Barker 1998:1460).

Furthermore, evidence from the Gospel supports the affirmations of the church fathers regarding the audience of Mark's Gospel: Mark explains Jewish customs "(cf. 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42)," he translates Aramaic expressions "(cf. 3:17; 5:41; 7:1,34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22,34)," and uses "many Latin words (cf. executioner, 6:27; sextanus, 7:4; census, 12:14; quadrans, 12:42; praetorium, 15:16; centurio, 15:39; flagellare, 15:42)" (Utley 2011).

This is also evident from Mark's special emphases on "persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13) - subjects of special concern to Roman believers" who were suffering under Nero's persecution. So, "a Roman destination would explain the almost immediate acceptance of this Gospel and its rapid dissemination" (Barker 1998:1460).

The book's historical circumstance also reflects the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles, so this Gospel can be seen as part of the movement of Christianity out into the larger Greco-Roman world of the first Christian century (Hurtado 1984:xx). The Roman Empire, "with its common language and excellent transportation and communication systems, were ripe to hear Jesus' message which spread quickly from nation to nation" (Barton 2007:1610).

There are four major indications presented here in favour of Mark's Gospel being written in Rome for Gentile, Roman Christians: (1) Mark was with Peter and Paul in Rome towards the end of their lives, (2) the terms chosen by the

author with a Roman audience in mind, (3) the emphasis of the Gospel on persecution which coincides with the persecution of Christians in Rome by Nero, and (4) the readiness of the Roman Empire (transportation and communication systems) which facilitated the rapid spread of the Gospel. These arguments presented in favour of a Roman context provide evidence to support the rest of the arguments in this chapter.

#### 4.3.1.3 Historical context

##### 4.3.1.3.1 Occasion

There was already a church in Rome before the early 60s when Peter and Paul first arrived there. And there is actually no indication that any of the apostles went there before to plant a church (cf. Rom. 15:20) (Wallace 2011).

The church was probably established shortly after Pentecost, since proselytes and Jews came from Rome (Acts 2:10). The church would have been quite immature since these converts had very little information about Jesus (Wallace 2011).

Wallace suggests that after Mark's exposure to Peter's sermons as a translator, and the mission experience he acquired with Paul on his missionary journeys, he came to Rome sometime in the 50s. "He then composed the gospel for the Roman Christians" (Wallace 2011).

"When Roman believers received the Gospel of Mark they found that it spoke to the situation of the Christian community in Nero's Rome." "In Mark's Gospel they found out that nothing they could suffer from Nero was alien to the experience of Jesus." Jesus had also spoken openly of the persecution that could be expected in the Christian life. Also his resurrection provided the Christians in Rome with the hope of their own resurrection. Furthermore, in the command to share these joyful tidings with the disciples (16:7) they found the encouragement to continue their mission activity, in spite of imperial opposition. Their needs provided the major incentive for the preparation of the Gospel (Lane 1974).

#### 4.3.1.3.2 Purpose

"Guthrie lists the following options that scholars have seen: catechetical, liturgical, apologetic, conflict with the Twelve, Christological, ecclesiastical, pastoral, and editorial." He concludes that "Mark had several purposes in writing his gospel" (Wallace 2011). One purpose more emphasised by the scholars is to encourage the Roman Christian how to be a disciple, and "how to suffer during persecution--as Jesus did" (Malick 2011; Herrick 2001). Lane too said that "Mark's task was the projection of Christian faith in a context of suffering and martyrdom." "The Gospel of Mark is a pastoral response to this critical demand" (Lane 1974).

Gundry proposes one unified purpose and that is "An apology for the Cross," overcoming the shame of Jesus' crucifixion with glory. He sees Mark writing "not to keep Christians from apostatizing out of shame for the Cross ... but to convert non-Christians despite the shame of the Cross" (8:34-38). He affirms that Mark is aiming at conversion rather than perseverance, presenting a missionary message to be read in public especially for non-Christians (Gundry 1993).

There are two major purposes presented here. The first which is supported by most scholars is to encourage the Roman Christians to remain faithful to Christ in persecution in the same way that He suffered for them. The second is a missionary purpose emphasised by Gundry, namely, "to convert non-Christians despite the shame of the Cross." I see that both views have support in the Gospel therefore I give credit to both. Even though Gundry does not seem to support the first purpose, I see his view based on the same principle, namely, that whether you are a follower of Christ or you wish to become one, you need to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Christ (8:34). Gundry's view is simply the second level of the same principle. I suggest a reconciliation of the two views as follows: encouraging Christians to remain faithful in persecution and to proclaim Christ crucified for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, without shame (Mk. 8:38; Rom. 1:16).

#### 4.3.1.3.3 Cultural Background

- **Rome and its society**

Rome was praised for its impressive public buildings, aqueducts, baths, theatres and roads that would lead to distant provinces. The most prominent features were the Capitoline Hills with temples to Jupiter and Juno and the nearby Palatine with its imperial palaces, including Nero's "Golden House." It was also described as "the glorious crowning achievement of mankind and as the sewer of the universe" where people from every corner of the empire gathered (Barker 1998:1668). Roman society was dependent on sixty million slaves from the countries conquered by its army. Many male slaves were used as gladiators for the entertainment of crowds in the amphitheatres, while female slaves were used as prostitutes (Beasley 1997).

- **The Jewish and Christian Communities in Rome**

According to Moo (1996),

The decentralized nature of the Jewish community from which the Christian community sprang would also make it likely that the Christians in Rome were grouped into several house churches. Confirmation that this was the case comes from Rom. 16, where Paul seems to greet several different house churches.

Rome's Jewish community was predominantly poor, many of the Jewish house churches being located in the Jewish ghetto across the Tiber. The Jewish population here was perhaps fifty thousand and their primary language was not Latin but Greek. The Christian community was made up of both "Jewish and Gentile Christians [who] had different cultural ways of expressing their faith in Jesus" (Keener 1993).

Jewish Christians had long been accustomed to the Jewish food regulations and the observance of special days such as the Sabbath and yearly festivals commanded in the Old Testament. Gentile Christians had no such traditions but entered more wholeheartedly into Christian freedom (Morris 1987).

#### 4.3.1.3.4 Religious background

At first, little attention had been given by imperial authorities to the gatherings of Christians for worship. Their assemblies appeared insignificant from the vast number of religious societies found throughout Rome. Christians were occasionally accused of the hatred of men, for their refusal "to participate in pagan guild feasts and other social affairs where idolatrous practices and immorality were common" (Lane 1974).

The Roman church consisted originally almost entirely of Jews who presumably worshipped in synagogues (Morris 1987). But many Roman conversions to Judaism created resentment among other aristocratic Romans and led to tension between the Jewish and Gentile elements in the city. So, "in the 40s A.D., the emperor Claudius, like the earlier emperor Tiberius, expelled the Jewish community from Rome" (Acts 18:2). "The Roman church was thus composed entirely of Gentiles until Claudius's death, when his edict was automatically repealed, and Jewish Christians returned to Rome (Rom 16:3)" (Keener 1993). At their return, they found Gentiles in control of the church and the two groups found it difficult to adjust to one another (Morris 1987).

Matthew Black thinks that the Roman church was a large one ("next to Jerusalem, it was probably the largest in the Empire"), and that it was, from Paul's point of view, "reactionary", "imperfect", "immature", "still probably little more than a sect within Judaism" (Morris 1987). But the absence for a time of all Jews from Rome meant "an acceleration in the movement of the Christian community away from its Jewish origins" (Moo 1996).

Following with interest the development of the church in Rome, I realize again how God can use adverse situations to refine or mould and perfect His church. The outcries of the emperors to expel the Jews from Rome have helped the Roman Church to be liberated from its strong Jewish traditions and leadership, and advance more rapidly and healthier into the Gentile world.

#### 4.3.1.3.5 Historical setting

"The emperor at this time was Nero. After five years of responsible rule (A.D. 54–59) he had shown himself recklessly despotic..." The situation got worse

when the "disastrous fire ... swept Rome in the summer of A.D. 64." There were widespread rumours that the fire had been officially ordered by Nero. When his measures to allay suspicion and resentment did not succeed, "blame for the fire was placed squarely upon the Christians" (Lane 1974). Tacitus explains that,

Dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight ... Despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man's brutality rather than to the national interest (Lane 1974).

So, "life became precarious for the Christians in Rome and Italy," who were now introduced to martyrdom (Lane 1974).

#### 4.3.1.4 Literary context

##### 4.3.1.4.1 Structure of the book and its influence on the meaning of Mark 4:33-34

- **Structure of the book**

According to Wallace, "the book divides neatly into two halves: Jesus' ministry in Galilee (1:1–8:21) and Jesus' journey to and ministry in Judea (8:22–16:8). Clearly Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi is the turning point." "Up until 8:21 it is clear that Jesus' ministry is as the servant of the Lord, while after 8:21 it is more focused: he is the *suffering* servant of the Lord" (Wallace 2011).

Wallace (2011) proposes the following outline for Mark's Gospel:

- I. "The Beginning of the Servant's Ministry (1:1-13)"
- II. "The Servant's Ministry in Galilee (1:14–6:6a)"
- III. "The Servant's Withdrawals from Galilee (6:6b–8:21)"
- IV. "Revelation of the Servant's Suffering at Caesarea Philippi (8:22-38)"
- V. "The Suffering Servant's Journey to Jerusalem (9:1–10:52)"
- VI. "The Suffering Servant's Ministry in Jerusalem (11:1–13:37)"
- VII. "The Culmination of the Suffering Servant's Ministry: Death and Resurrection (14:1–16:8)."

- **The structure's influence on the meaning of Mark 4:33-34**

France explains the significance for the placing of the 'explanatory discourses' in chapters 4 within the overall narrative flow of the gospel as follows: "In chapters 1–3 Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God" and his miracles have led to a wide variety of reactions, from the enthusiastic commitment of the disciples to the abusive hostility of the Pharisees from Jerusalem. So far the narrative has moved on at a high speed, but now in chapter 4 Jesus sits down to explain what is happening, first to the crowd and then in more depth to the disciples. The parables present "what happens when the message of the kingdom of God is 'sown' and why people react to it so differently." Then, the explanation of why Jesus teaches in parables gives a new perspective for his continuing ministry in the chapters that follow (France 2002).

I observe that Wallace and France are in agreement. According to Wallace's structure, Mark 4:33-34 fits within section II: "The Servants ministry in Galilee (1:14-6:6a)." So, Jesus was serving in Galilee, his homeland, where according to Him, no prophet is welcomed (Mark 6:4), and where he started facing hostility, as France also asserts. Therefore He speaks in parables to the crowds and explains everything to his disciples, because the time was not yet ripe for him to be revealed as the "Suffering Servant" which comes later in section IV: "Revelation of the Servant's Suffering at Caesarea Philippi (8:22-38)." The timing causes Jesus to withdraw from Galilee out into the land of the Gentiles (see section III), and by so doing, the Gentiles benefit from His presence and ministry.

#### 4.3.1.4.2 Argument of the book and its influence on the meaning of Mark 4:33-

34

- **The argument of the book**

The people of Israel at that time were expecting the Messiah to come as a military saviour. Mark starts to show some of the features of the Messiah in Jesus' life as a "great teacher and healer," but later in his Gospel, he makes it plain that the main role of Jesus as the Messiah at that time was that of a "Suffering Servant." Actually, Jesus' sufferings during the last week of his life

occupy one third of the Gospel. "The theological significance of the Passion Week is obvious" (Utley 2011).

- **The argument's influence on the meaning of Mark 4:33-34**

"The servant's authority over demons and disease is then demonstrated (1:21-45), with a subtle interjection as to the source of his authority: he relies on God (1:35-39)." But the religious leaders rather accuse him of relying on Satan (3:20-30). "Mark shows Jesus turning to the crowds with his message (3:31-4:34). He begins with an invitation to join his family by simply pleasing God (3:31-35)," then he also invites them to enter the kingdom (4:1-34) (Wallace 2011).

The parables were given in a context of both hostility (from the religious leaders) and enormous popularity (from the crowd). Ironically, the religious leaders had a better grasp as to who Jesus really was—better than the crowd's, better than Jesus' own disciples. Their rejection of him, therefore, is all the more damnable (Wallace 2011).

Therefore, Wallace sees the concluding remark of the parables as a "sombre" one: "He did not say anything to [the crowds] without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (4:34). "This shows how the purpose of the parables (4:10-12) was carried out by Jesus" (Wallace 2011).

Wallace interprets Mark's conclusion on the use of Jesus' parables as being "sombre," which, in my opinion, is only one aspect. It does not present the complete meaning of verse 34, as the further study in this chapter will clarify. Section 4.3.1.4.1 has already shown another aspect that needs to be considered, namely, the reason why Jesus spoke in parables. Jesus was very cautious about the timing. The time had not yet come for him to be fully revealed.



#### 4.3.1.5 Major theological themes

##### 4.3.1.5.1 The Suffering Servant

"Mark's Gospel presents Jesus as the Servant." "The heart of this gospel can be seen in 8:27-33 where Peter wants to affirm that Jesus is the Christ without the necessity of the cross." But Jesus rebukes Peter emphasising that God's plan for Him is to suffer and die. The verse which best captures this is Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus is portrayed then as "The Suffering Servant" (Wallace 2011).

##### 4.3.1.5.2 Insiders and outsiders

Speaking to an inner circle, Jesus says, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside, everything is said in parables (4:11)." Among Jesus' followers are an inner group that is privy to the secret of the kingdom of God and an outer group that cannot be taken into its confidence. The surprise, however, is in who belongs to each group. "Outsiders" — women, Gentiles, or Jews considered "unclean" — frequently demonstrate understanding and faith in Jesus, whereas the religious leaders, his family, and even his disciples do not. Mark frequently portrays Jesus as an "outsider" (1:45; 5:17; 8:23; 11:19; 12:8; 15:22). As the Son of Man serves in humility and even in suffering, so, too, must his disciples (10:42–45). "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (8:34) (Edwards 2002).

##### 4.3.1.5.3 The secret of God's kingdom

Mark summarises the good news which Jesus brings "in terms of the coming of the 'Kingdom of God' (1:15)." The first explanatory discourse (4:1–34), which helps the reader to grasp the whole nature of Jesus' ministry and its effects, centres round this term. The word 'secret' in 4:11, means something which is available only to those to whom it has been revealed (France 2002).

Many times "Jesus warns his disciples or the person for whom he has worked a miracle," and also commands demons, to keep silent about who he is or what

he has done (1:25, 34, 44; 3:2; 5:43; 7:36-37; 8:26, 30; 9:9) (Barker 1998:1461). They have been let into the secret which has so far been withheld from people in general, and the time is not yet ripe for it to be more widely known. The time will come for what has been hidden to be revealed (4:21–22) (France 2002). Until the cross Jesus cannot be rightly known for who he is, 'the suffering Son of God' who reveals the triumph of God to those who are willing to deny themselves and follow him in costly discipleship (Edwards 2002).

France and Edwards explain here again the importance of timing in Jesus' ministry, in a context where the people's expectation of the Messiah was wrong. A crucial point in time was the cross, which was going to throw light on the identity of Jesus.

#### 4.3.1.5.4 The Gospel to the Gentiles

Not only is Mark written for a Gentile audience, but it also portrays Jesus ministering to Gentiles as well as to Jews (Edwards 2002). "When the Jewish leaders opposed him, Jesus also went to the non-Jewish world, healing and preaching. Roman soldiers, Syrians and other Gentiles heard the Good News. Many believed and followed him" (5:1-20; 7:24-37; 8:1-10; 15:39). Furthermore, "Jesus' final message to his disciples challenged them to go into all the world and preach the gospel of salvation" to everyone (16:15) (Barton 2007:1611).

#### 4.3.2 The meaning of Mark 4:33-34

##### 4.3.2.1 Introduction

This section consists of an in-depth exegetical analysis in order to establish the author-intended meaning of Mark 4:33-34 for its original readers. This analysis will include the following:

- Preliminary analysis of Mark 4:33-34
- Contextual analysis of Mark 4:33-34
- Verbal analysis of Mark 4:33-34
- Literary analysis of Mark 4:33-34
- Exegetical synthesis of Mark 4:33-34

#### 4.3.2.2 Preliminary analysis

##### 4.3.2.2.1 Textual Criticism (Comparison of various translations)

- 33 "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear *it*." 34 "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples" (KJV 1769).
- 33 "With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it;" 34 "and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples" (NASB 1995).
- 33 "With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it." 34 "He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything" (ESV 2007).
- 33 "With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand." 34 "He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (NIV 1993).
- 33 "Jesus used many stories like these to teach the crowd God's message—as much as they could understand." 34 "He always used stories to teach them. But when he and his followers were alone, Jesus explained everything to them" (NCV 1991).
- 33 "Jesus spoke [God's] word to them using many illustrations like these. In this way people could understand what he taught." 34 "He did not speak to them without using an illustration. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them" (GW 1995).
- 33 "Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand." 34 "In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when

he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them" (NLT 2004).

Hb: *Such* indicates that all the parables spoken that day were similar in nature and aim, all setting forth some aspect of the kingdom of God (Blight and Smith 2003).

NIC: "The term (*word*) is an echo of the explanation given to the parable of the sower, where it occurs eight times" and means clearly "the word of God," or more concretely "the word of the Kingdom" (Blight and Smith 2003).

*To them* points to the huge crowd, including non-disciples, as well as disciples (Gundry 1993).

My: *as they were able* (in virtue of their capacity) to take in the teaching. Not as though they could have apprehended the inner doctrinal contents of the parables (4:11), but they were capable of apprehending the narrative form, the parabolic narrative in itself, in which the teaching was veiled, so that they were thus qualified only in this form (*kathōs*) to hear the doctrine. Accordingly, *akouein* here is not to understand, but simply to hear, to perceive (Blight and Smith 2003).

Analysing the various translations and interpretations, it can be concluded that "understanding" can be obtained at different levels. You can understand the form of communication which comes in an appropriate, familiar, cultural style, but not necessarily understand the deep meaning of the story, which requires a higher level of understanding. The phrase "as much as they were able to understand" actually indicates that the people's level of understanding was low, because of their preconceptions about Messiah. However, the narrative style of communication was the best possible way by which Jesus challenged people's minds to think and meditate about the deeper meaning of the message.

#### 4.3.2.2.2 The suggested translation of the researcher

33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word of God to the crowds, as they were able to apprehend the narrative form. 34 He did not

speak to the crowds without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

#### 4.3.2.3 Contextual analysis of Mark 4:33-34

##### 4.3.2.3.1 Historical setting

- **Non-Christian Destination**

Gundry affirms that Mark is aiming at conversion, presenting a missionary message to be read in public especially for non-Christians (Gundry 1993). Also, according to Hurtado, the book's historical circumstance reflects the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles, so this Gospel is to be seen as part of the movement of Christianity out into the larger Greco-Roman world of the first Christian century (Hurtado 1984:xx). Again the Life Application Bible says that the Roman Empire, "with its common language and excellent transportation and communication systems, was ripe to hear Jesus' message, which spread quickly from nation to nation" (Barton 2007:1610).

So, for the non-Christian context, Mark wrote 4:33-34 to show that by means of parables Jesus teased, tantalized, and tested his audiences, inviting them to an insider experience of the kingdom and of fellowship with himself, where fuller understanding becomes possible, for "when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything." "Only in association with Jesus can one learn to understand the language about God" (Edwards 2002). "The parables incited curiosity and deeper thought on the part of true seekers (cf. Proverbs 25:2; Mark 4:10, 34)" (Deffinbaugh 2004).

Edwards and Deffinbaugh bring new insight regarding the purpose of the parables, explaining that they were also meant to make people curious and to invite them to a closer relationship with Jesus, in which they could understand more about Him and His message. This is in sharp contrast to the view that parables were used to condemn some people by hiding the meaning of the teaching.

- **Christian Destination**

On the other hand, the church fathers (Anti-Marcionite Prologue, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria) affirm that Mark's Gospel was written for Gentile Christians living in Rome (Malick 2011). Mark's special emphases on "persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13) [were] subjects of special concern to Roman believers" who were suffering under Nero's persecution. So, "a Roman destination would explain the almost immediate acceptance of this Gospel and its rapid dissemination" (Barker 1998:1460). Mark thus demonstrates in an active way to the Roman Christians, "how to suffer during persecution--as Jesus did," and "Christ is presented as the One who continues to speak and act meaningfully in the context of crisis" (Malick 2011).

Thus, Mark 4:33-34 shows to the Christians in Rome the motive for Jesus' use of the parables, namely, to accommodate the stage of preparation of the crowd, or the level of understanding that he found in his listeners (Lane 1974).

Had Jesus spoken to the crowds in a direct manner, they would have been forced to make a decision immediately. That decision could have expressed only unbelief and rejection. Jesus' adoption of the indirect address of the parable was accordingly an expression both of grace and of judgment. It was an expression of grace which allowed time for reflection on his appeal to penetrate beneath his words to "the word." It was an expression of judgment upon their lack of preparation to receive directly the word of the Kingdom of God (Lane 1974).

Also, even though Jesus was teaching publicly, his opponents could not gain evidence to accuse him because he was teaching in parables (Matthew 21:45, 46) (Deffinbaugh 2004). So, Jesus is presented as the Christian model of how to live and witness in times of crisis.

Malick, Lane, and Deffinbaugh point to another aspect related to the purpose of Jesus' parables, namely, witnessing wisely in a sensitive area of opposition, where people's minds are not prepared to understand and receive the

message. The parables in this case fulfil the function of softening the ground in preparation for the seed of God's Word.

Lane has got a more balanced view, since he sees the parables first as God's grace for the listeners who did not have to take a decision immediately, but could take time to reflect upon the message. Secondly, the parables are seen as judgement, because the people were not ready to receive the plain, straightforward message.

- **Jesus' Audience**

Jesus and the disciples lived in first-century Israel about four decades "before the destruction of temple in AD 70" (Arlandson 2011). "The rabbis [at that time] taught by oral presentation. Jesus mimicked this oral approach to teaching. To our knowledge He never wrote down any of His teachings or sermons. To aid the memory, teaching presentations were repeated, summarized and illustrated" (Lawrence 2011).

There is little indication that Peter was literate, so we can believe he was a good memorizer of what Jesus said. It has been estimated that only 5% of the people in the New Testament churches were literate (Søgaard 1995), certainly no more than 10-15%, and the Word was mediated to most of the believers orally (Lovejoy 2000:9).

Clearly "the early church flourished in a strongly oral culture" (Lovejoy 2000:9).

Therefore, "Jesus chose his teaching style to match his listeners' capacities"; he used familiar oral means that they understood (Lovejoy 2005:10). "Stories are powerful communication tools because of their familiarity, simplicity, and memorability," and they impact the human imagination (Lovejoy 2000:11). Hn: Thus, his parables were able to arrest and hold the attention of the crowd (Blight and Smith 2003). "Although few members of the early church could read or write, the message of the gospel took root, owing partly to its method of proclamation" (Jewell 2006).

EC: So, the parabolic form of teaching was adopted by Jesus as being best adapted to the needs of His hearers (Blight and Smith 2003).

Two other reasons why Jesus chose to use parables are presented in this section by Lawrence, Lovejoy, and Blight and Smith. First, oral teaching was practised by teachers in Jesus' time, because most of the people were oral learners. Jesus chose to use the same familiar teaching style that people understood. Second, Jesus used stories because they are powerful tools of communication.

#### 4.3.2.3.2 Literary context

"In chapters 1–3 Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God" and his miracles have led to a wide variety of reactions, from the enthusiastic commitment of the disciples to the abusive hostility of the Pharisees from Jerusalem. So far the narrative has moved on at a high speed, but now in chapter four of Mark's Gospel Jesus sits down to explain what is happening, first to the crowd and then in more depth to the disciples (France 2002). "The servant's authority over demons and disease is then demonstrated (1:21-45)," with a reference to the divine origin of his authority (1:35-39; 2:10) but the religious leaders rather accused him of relying on Satan (3:20-30). Jesus then turns "to the crowd with his message (3:31–4:34)" inviting them first "to join his family by simply pleasing God (3:31-35)," and secondly to enter the kingdom (4:1-34) (Wallace 2011).

The paramount purpose in the interpretation of Mark 4:14–20 is the stress on hearing. Discipleship hangs on this term, for everything depends on receptivity. The first three types of hearing imply a quick, superficial hearing, without effort or heeding. Their failure to hear confirms them as outsiders, and the word of God becomes fruitless to them (v. 19). But people who are engaged in the fourth kind of hearing (v. 20) are insiders who "hear, receive and bear fruit," qualities that mark a disciple of Jesus. For the tenth time in chapter 4, Mark emphasizes the importance of hearing: "[Jesus] was speaking to them the word, as they were able to hear." Those who hear find parables revelatory — and even more will be given to them (4:24–25). Hearing is the all-important first step that leads to fellowship with Jesus, where fuller understanding becomes possible, for "when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained



everything.” So, parables were the public persona of Jesus the teacher who invited his audiences to an insider experience of the kingdom and of fellowship with himself (Edwards 2002).

Jesus' habit of teaching (4:1-34), was to teach people "many things by parables," and when the disciples asked him to explain the parables, "he gave them a brief clarification followed by many other parables" (vv. 21-32) (Lovejoy 2000:9). Mark concludes his account of Jesus' discourse with verses 33 and 34 which Lovejoy (2000:9) explains as follows:

This passage affirms that telling a story *is* teaching, even if it consists of simply telling a story without giving its explanation. Jesus was not afraid to let them wrestle with the meaning of his story. Jesus did sometimes explain the story while in dialog with his followers, but note that his chief way of answering them was with additional stories. It took multiple stories to accomplish his purpose.

So, Jesus considered people's ability to understand when he chose his communication style. This strategy could also "keep potential followers from making a quick superficial response of commitment (see Mt. 13:11-12)" (Lovejoy 2000:10).

However, "God's truth, though temporarily withheld from public proclamation, is shortly to be broadcast from the housetops (Luke 12:3)." "Nothing which was then conveyed in secret was to stay that way for long" (4:22) (Deffinbaugh 2004). Until the cross Jesus cannot be rightly known for who he is (8:27-33), 'the suffering Son of God' (10:45) who reveals the triumph of God to those who are willing to deny themselves and follow him in costly discipleship (Edwards 2002).

The lamp, coupled with the theme of disclosure in 4:21–25, testifies that God's purpose in Jesus is to enlighten and reveal. Even the concealment of the present hour (reflecting back on vv. 11–12) contains the seeds of what will be revealed (Edwards 2002). So, as a candle's design is not to be hidden but to

give light, in the same way Jesus' "preaching by parables is not designed to obscure the truth, but to throw light on it" (4:21-22) (Barnes 1872).

I believe the point made by Edwards and Barnes throws more light on this dilemma about Jesus' use of parables. Ultimately, the purpose of Jesus' coming on this earth was not to conceal but to reveal the truth. We should keep that in mind as we study this subject. However, I also give credit to Deffinbaugh that even if the message was withheld from some people for some time, because it was not the appropriate time, at the right time it was going to be proclaimed publicly.

Looking at the context of Mark 4 (vv. 14-20, 24-25) to explain "as much as they could hear" (v. 33), Edwards places the responsibility for access to revelation and discipleship upon the hearers and how they hear the message of the kingdom. Lovejoy seems to make a similar point when he says that parables were also used to prevent hearers from making superficial decisions. However, Lovejoy makes a strong point about Jesus' heavy reliance on teaching people "many things by parables" (4:2), stating that "telling a story is teaching" even without explaining it. Jesus actually explained his stories by telling more stories.

#### 4.3.2.4 Verbal analysis of Mark 4:33-34

##### 4.3.2.4.1 Lexical analysis of key words

- **"Parable(s)"** (Gk, *parabolé* 3850, Strong's) - "a *similitude* ('parable'), that is, (symbolically) *fictitious narrative* (of common life conveying a moral), *apothgm* or *adage*: - comparison, figure, parable, proverb" (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries 1890).

"A **parable** (Greek *parabolê*) is a saying or story that has a second meaning," teaching some underlying truth. Usually no direct explanation is given; the hearer has to discover the underlying truth for himself (Barnwell, Dancy & Pope 1995).

'Parable' is "literally 'putting things side by side'." "'Parable' is the somewhat protracted simile or short descriptive story, usually designed to inculcate a single truth or answer a single question" (New Bible Dictionary 1982).

"Parables are best defined as stories with two levels of meaning; the story level provides a mirror by which reality is perceived and understood.' taken from *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, (p. 594)." "A parable is a saying or story that seeks to drive home a point that the speaker wishes to emphasize by illustrating it from a familiar situation of common life.' taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia* (p. 590)" (Lawrence 2011).

The definition of Barnwell, Dancy & Pope confirms Lovejoy's statement that Jesus was teaching by telling stories without explanation. This method allows people to discover the meaning of the story for themselves.

The definition presented by Lawrence agrees with the idea suggested under section 4.3.2.2.1 that understanding can be attained at two levels; one can understand the events in the story, without knowing how to interpret and apply them.

- **"Speak/spoke"** (Gk, *laléō* 2980, Strong's) - "to *talk*, that is, *utter* words: - preach, say, speak (after), talk, tell, utter" (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries 1890).
- **"Word"** (Gk, *lógos* 3056, Strong's) - "something *said* (including the *thought*); by implication a *topic* (subject of discourse), also *reasoning* (the mental faculty) or *motive*; by extension a *computation*; specifically (with the article in John) the Divine *Expression* (that is, *Christ*)" (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries 1890).

"*lógos* ('reason,' 'discourse,' 'speech') ... is a *spoken word*, with reference generally to that which is in the speaker's mind." "*Logos* in Philo and Greek-Jewish philosophy meant both reason or thought and its utterance, 'the whole contents of the divine world of thought resting in the *Noús* of God, synonymous with the inner life of God Himself'" (Orr and Orr 2012).

- **"Hear/heard"** (Gk, *akoúō* 191, Strong's) - "to *hear* (in various senses): - give (in the) audience (of), come (to the ears)" (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries 1890).

"hear; receive news of; give heed to; understand; recover one's hearing; give a judicial hearing" (Greek-Trilingual Lexicon 2001).

The definitions of the word "hear" indicate that the word could also mean (to a certain degree), "to understand."

**"Disciple(s)"** (Gk, *mathētēs* 3101, Strong's) - a *learner*, that is, *pupil* (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries 1890).

*mathētēs* "always means the pupil of someone, in contrast to the master or teacher." "In all cases it implies that the person not only accepts the views of the teacher, but that he is also in practice an adherent" (Orr and Orr 2012).

- **"Explain," "expound"** (Gk, *epilýō* 1956, Strong's) - "to *solve further*, that is, (figuratively) to *explain, decide*: - determine, expound" (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries 1890).

*epiluō*—AG (295d): "set free, release"... figurative "explain, interpret" (Blight and Smith 2003).

- **"Without," "apart from"** (Gk, *chōrís* 5565, Strong's) - "at a *space*, that is, *separately* or *apart* from (often as preposition): - beside, by itself, without" (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries 1890).

#### 4.3.2.4.2 Grammatical analysis

"Mark rounds off the discourse not now with words of Jesus, but with his own summary of Jesus' teaching method; the use of imperfect tenses throughout indicates that what is here described is Jesus' normal practice, not just a temporary phase in his ministry." "With many such parables" reminds of what verse two has already indicated, that the parables recorded in this discourse are only a selection. "He did not speak to them without a parable" sounds a remarkably broad generalisation. But on the rare occasions when Mark records the content of any public teaching before Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, the focus of that teaching is indeed in parabolic sayings which need subsequent elucidation for the disciples (7:14–15, 17–18; 10:5–12).

All the rest of the teaching recorded is directed to his disciples, and contains just the sort of explanatory material this verse suggests ... Mark has therefore been remarkably consistent in observing the parameters of this verse in the teaching actually recorded in the rest of his gospel ... we need not doubt that Jesus' reputation outside the circle of his own followers was as one who taught [in parables] (France 2002).

There is also a recurrent emphasis throughout the discourse on the importance of rightly hearing the word. "The parable of the sower has asserted that people's ability to 'hear' is quite varied, and is determined by factors in their own character and situation rather than by the form of teaching." But parables serve to bring out that variety. "Because they need to be interpreted and applied, and call for a response which is likely to be more than intellectual, the same parables will leave some cold while others respond with enthusiasm — and by seeking further enlightenment" (France 2002).

#### 4.3.2.5 Literary analysis

##### 4.3.2.5.1 Genre

France (2002) points out that Mark's own heading to his book is "the gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1), but he explains that,

There is, however, equally broad agreement that when Mark wrote those words he was not using [*gospel*] to designate a literary genre, but simply to indicate the nature of the subject matter of his work: it is a presentation in written form of the 'good news' about Jesus ... The term which for Mark had designated the (hitherto oral) message of the first-century churches had thus come to mean something like 'a church book about Jesus' ... It is a book about Jesus, a historical figure of the recent past ... the story of (part of) his life and his death together with a selection of his teaching. Such a description sounds like what most people would call a biography (France 2002).

And there is fairly general agreement that an ancient librarian would have placed the gospel of Mark in his biography section (France 2002).

But, if the other gospels are ignored, Mark on his own contains quite a high percentage of teaching in comparison with other biographical writings of the period, certainly enough to support his emphasis on teaching as a characteristic activity of Jesus. About 40% of the verses of Mark contain sayings of Jesus with some “teaching” content, not to mention a further roughly 12% of narrative contexts required to introduce important sayings and dialogues - where the teaching is the reason for the narrative (France 2002).

Utey says that "the Gospels are not modern biographies or histories. They are selective theological writings used to introduce Jesus to different audiences and bring them to faith in Him" (cf. John 20:30-31). Thus, "the four Gospels are unique in Near Eastern and Greco-Roman literature. The inspired authors had the Spirit-led task of selecting Jesus' teachings and actions which clearly revealed His character and/or purpose" (Utey 2011).

From a different angle, Kelber has shown that "although the Gospel of Mark is a written work ... it has the features of oral communication." This agrees with the view of Papias (125 A.D.) that Mark committed Peter's oral Gospel story to writing (Brown 2004a:176). The story-telling manner, repetition and dual expressions are features of a memorable text. It seems that "Mark was designed for oral transmission — and for transmission as a continuous whole — rather than for private study or silent reading" as probably most literary biographies of the ancient world were. It is a text for oral presentation, in a style which communicates with vigour to a non-literary audience (France 2002).

There are four views about the genre of Mark presented here: biography, teaching, theological writing, and intended for oral transmission. I see the genre of Mark as a combination of all four views. It was written as theological teaching about the life of Jesus intended for oral transmission.

#### 4.3.2.5.2 Structure

CGTC (pp. 13–14): "The gospel falls naturally into two parts. The second of these ... opens with the narrative of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah

and the first prediction of the Passion (8:27–33)" (Blight and Smith 2003). "Up until 8:21 it is clear that Jesus' ministry is as the servant of the Lord, while after 8:21 it is more focused: he is the *suffering* servant of the Lord" (Wallace 2011).

Even though the discourse in chapter 4 is designed by Mark to be read as a whole (France 2002), it can be divided as follows (Wallace 2011):

"Invitation to Enter the Kingdom (Parables) (4:1-34)"

1. "The Setting (4:1-2)"
2. "The Responsibility of the Hearers (4:3-25)"
  - a. "The Parable of the Sower (4:3-9)"
  - b. "The Purpose of the Parables (4:10-12)"
  - c. "The Parable of the Sower Explained (4:13-20)"
  - d. "The Parable of the Lamp (revelation and response) (4:21-25)"
3. "The Parables of the Character of the Kingdom (4:26-32)"
  - a. "The Parable of the Growing Seed (4:26-29)"
  - b. "The Parable of the Mustard Seed (4:30-32)"
4. "Conclusion [editorial comment - parables and explanations] (4:33-34)"

#### 4.3.2.5.3 Composition

The first part of the gospel presents the story of Jesus' public ministry in and around Galilee, and of his disciples' gradual perception of who he is. Then comes Peter's recognition of Jesus as Messiah (8:29) and Jesus' declaration that his messianic mission is to culminate in rejection and death (8:31), a fate which those who follow him must expect to share (8:34–38). After that, the story moves rapidly downhill to Jerusalem where his rejection and death are to take place, and "the focus is less on public ministry than on the preparation of the disciples for what lies ahead" (France 2002).

CGTC (pp. 13–14): It is clear that "the story of the Passion and Resurrection is the climax of the book" and that it dominates the second part of Mark's Gospel (8:27-16:20). But an analysis of the structure of Mark makes it abundantly clear that the whole of the gospel is dominated by its climax. Thus, the arrest of John the Baptist the forerunner of Jesus (1:4); "the mounting opposition to Jesus indicated in 2:1–3:6 culminates in a plot to compass his death; the rejection of

Jesus by his home town (6:1–6a); ... and the grim narrative of the forerunner's execution, carry unmistakable implications. From the time of Peter's confession the references to the approaching Passion and Resurrection become increasingly plain—see 8:31, 9:13, 31, 10:32–4, 38f., 45" (Blight and Smith 2003).

"Mark makes it clear that he sees [the parable of the sower in the first part of chapter 4] as the key parable by which the whole parabolic method is to be interpreted" (v. 13). Some independent proverbial sayings follow in vv. 21–25, which again relate to the question of Jesus' teaching method; they fall into two small paragraphs, vv. 21–23 on concealment and revelation, and vv. 24–25 on the effects of such teaching on the hearers. Two further agricultural similes depicting the surprising character of God's kingship (vv. 26–32) complete the collection, after which Mark adds his comment (vv. 33–34), emphasising the theme of vv. 10–12 and turning it into a description of Jesus' method of teaching. With verses 3 and 9 we are also introduced to what is in fact a main theme of the discourse, the importance of 'hearing'. And we see that "the division between insiders and outsiders is connected with how each group can 'hear the word'" (France 2002).

The composition of the book shows that the use of parabolic speech by Jesus is related to people's ability to "hear" or in other words, to their limited perception about the identity of Jesus and his mission on earth.

#### 4.3.2.5.4 Rhetoric

In his Gospel, Mark tells the story of a recent historical figure (Jesus) in such a way as to praise the man and his message, and to call those who read or hear it to follow him as his first disciples were called to do. It is a Christian work inspired by the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was more than just a great man, and that he remains alive as the worthy object of devotion and commitment. But for those accustomed to laudatory biographies, it presents this "more-than-human" figure as the object of rejection and humiliation culminating in the most shameful form of death (France 2002).



Mark is master of the unexpected and his Gospel is characterized by irony. Throughout the Gospel, Mark portrays Jesus as one who challenges, confronts, and sometimes breaks the religious, social, or political customs. Readers of Mark's Gospel find it necessary to drop their preconceptions of what God and God's Messiah are like in order to experience a "new teaching with authority" (1:27) (Edwards 2002).

A clear conception of Mark's intention in the Gospel sheds light on the distinctive character of his style. "Mark's task was the projection of Christian faith in a context of suffering and martyrdom." So, "he selected and arranged the tradition to present the Christ who continues to speak and act meaningfully in the context of crisis." The literary style used by Mark through "simple sentence construction, parataxis, direct speech and the historical present" make the readers or the hearers feel Jesus present with authority among them (Lane 1974).

Also Mark's concern to involve non-Christians in the crisis of decision prompted by Jesus' presence is reflected in the care with which he has structured the material of the Gospel. For instance, the contrasting accounts in 3:7-19 and 3:20-35 force the recognition that a decision has to be made. Either Jesus is the divine Son who liberates the possessed or he is the agent of Satan. By drawing conclusions with notes of confession like, "He has done all things well" (Ch. 7:37), and "You are the Messiah" (Ch. 8:29), Mark encourages the reader to take his place within the confessing Church as one who has recognized the truth (Lane 1974).

#### 4.3.2.6 Exegetical synthesis of Mark 4:33-34

##### 4.3.2.6.1 What are the major issues the passage addresses?

- **Jesus' approach to teaching**

Parables were the public persona of Jesus the teacher (Edwards 2002) since "With many such parables he spoke the word to them" and "He did not speak to them without a parable." It was his habit to teach the multitude through the vehicle of parables (Lane 1974); that was his characteristic form of teaching

(Hurtado 1984). He used oral methods of teaching because they were familiar to and understood by the oral communities at that time (Lovejoy 2005:10).

- **Parables allow time to reflect**

Because of people's "lack of preparation to receive directly the word of the Kingdom of God," Jesus adopted the indirect address of the parable, "which allowed time for reflection on his appeal." "Had Jesus spoken to the crowds in a direct manner, they would have been forced to make a decision immediately. That decision could have expressed only unbelief and rejection" (Lane 1974). Wright argues that parables are peculiarly good at modifying other worldviews. Thus Jesus used them "to challenge the existing Jewish worldview and to provide an alternative picture of reality that Jesus called 'the kingdom of God'" (Lovejoy 2005:34). Lovejoy elaborates:

Where head-on attack would certainly fail, the parable hides the wisdom of the serpent behind the innocence of the dove, gaining entrance and favour which can then be used to change assumptions which the hearer would otherwise keep hidden away for safety (Lovejoy 2005:34).

- **Parables are invitations to discipleship**

Because "the parables incited curiosity and deeper thought on the part of true seekers (cf. Proverbs 25:2; Mark 4:10, 34)" (Deffinbaugh 2004), Jesus used them to invite the crowds to an insider experience of the kingdom. Mark emphasizes the importance of hearing, because discipleship hangs on this term and determines whether one is an insider or an outsider, for everything depends on receptivity. Thus, hearing leads to fellowship with Jesus, where fuller understanding becomes possible, for "when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (Edwards 2002).

There is a progression in these three points relating to rhetoric indicating that Jesus' intention was to take his audience from the known to the unknown. He used a familiar teaching style that people understood, to present a new perspective about the Messiah and His kingdom, so that they would become disciples of Christ and part of this new kingdom where understanding increases.

#### 4.3.2.6.2 What is the impact of the combination of genre and structure on the meaning of the passage?

A clear conception of Mark's intention in the Gospel sheds light on the distinctive character of his style. "Mark's task was the projection of Christian faith in a context of suffering and martyrdom." "He selected and arranged the tradition to present the Christ who continues to speak and act meaningfully in the context of crisis" (Lane 1974).

The combination of genre and structure of Mark's Gospel reveals the following:

- It shows that the gospel of Mark is the story of Jesus' life and death written for evangelistic purposes.
- It shows that it is intended to be an oral presentation for non-literate audiences, inviting them to join the Kingdom of God.

The impact of this on Mark 4:33-34 therefore is that Jesus' style of teaching in parables was appealing to his oral audience and it was an invitation to discipleship and to a deeper revelation of the truth.

#### 4.3.2.6.3 What is the relationship between the motif and the concerns of the passage?

The question arises: Why did Jesus use parabolic speech? It should be noted that "The Messiah was not the expected conquering military general, but a Suffering Servant" (Utley 2011). However, people's "concept of the Messiah was shaped by their literature and national hopes," therefore, they could not associate him with suffering. But "one cannot have Christ without the cross ... there must be suffering before glory" (Wallace 2011). Therefore, readers of Mark's Gospel find it necessary to drop their preconceptions of what God and God's Messiah are like in order to experience a "new teaching with authority" (1:27) (Edwards 2002). So, the parabolic speech was used by Jesus (see Mark 4:33) because the time was not yet ripe for this mystery to be widely known (France 2002). Meanwhile Jesus revealed the triumph of God to those who were willing to deny themselves and follow him in costly discipleship (Edwards 2002).

#### 4.3.2.6.4 What is the relation of these motifs (themes) and concerns to the historical setting of the book?

There are three main issues arising from the historical setting of Mark's Gospel, and their relation to the themes and concerns of Mark 4:33-34 (especially relating to Jesus' parabolic speech) are presented below:

Firstly, "the church fathers affirm that Mark's Gospel was written in Rome for Gentile, Roman Christians" (Malick 2011) suffering under Nero's persecution (Barker 1998:1460). And so, "Mark's task was the projection of Christian faith in a context of suffering and martyrdom" (Lane 1974). Thus, "Jesus is constantly presented as one who speaks and acts meaningfully in the context of crisis" (Malick 2011), which gives us the reason for Jesus' parabolic speech.

Secondly, the book's historical circumstance also reflects the movement of Christianity out into the larger Greco-Roman world (Hurtado 1984:xx). So, Mark was also writing to "convert non-Christians despite the shame of the Cross" (Gundry 1993). Therefore, Mark shows that by means of parables Jesus was inviting his audiences to an insider experience of the kingdom and of fellowship with himself, and for a deeper revelation of his message, for "when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (Edwards 2002).

Thirdly, we have the estimation from Søgaaard that "only 5% of the people in the New Testament churches were literate" (Lovejoy 2000:9). Therefore, Mark was written as a text for oral presentation, in a style which communicates with vigour to a non-literary audience (France 2002). So, from the study of the context, the researcher also sees Mark's emphasis on Jesus' use of parables as a powerful evangelistic tool to be used with the Gentile oral audience similar to that of Jesus.

"The early church flourished in a strongly oral culture ... and the Word was mediated to most of the believers orally" (Lovejoy 2000:9). As Jewell said it, "although few members of the early church could read or write, the message of the gospel took root, owing partly to its method of proclamation", that is, through stories, parables, and proverbs (Jewell 2006).

### 4.3.3 The significance of Mark 4:33-34

#### 4.3.3.1 Introduction

This section addresses the contemporary significance of Mark 4:33-34, and determines the relevance of its meaning and the difference that it makes for us today. The study will be presented in two main sections:

- The theological significance of Mark 4:33-34
- The practical significance and application of Mark 4:33-34

#### 4.3.3.2 The theological significance of Mark 4:33-34

##### 4.3.3.2.1 Universal truths

- **About God**

Mark 4:21-22 likens Jesus to a lamp, the lamp of God who has come to bring light and revelation to a dark world (cf. John 1:4-5; 8:12). The universal truth about God's purpose in Jesus is to enlighten and reveal since "the very humanness of Jesus governs the glory of God." Although there was temporal concealment of His glory for some people for some time (4:11–12), even that contained the seeds of what was going to be revealed; so Jesus fulfils God's purpose of revelation (Edwards 2002). Barker (1998:1470) also affirms that,

As a lamp is placed to give, not hide, light, so Jesus, the light of the world (Jn 8:12), is destined to be revealed.

Again, what Jesus was trying to say through the parable of the lamp, according to Barnes (1872), shows the purpose of his parables: As a candle's design is not to be hidden but to give light, "so my preaching by parables is not designed to obscure the truth, but to throw light on it."

- **About creation (especially man)**

People showed little perception about the kingdom of God which did not conform to the general expectation (Hurtado 1984:64). "The crowds hoped that Jesus would deliver the nation and defeat Rome ... to restore the kingdom and bring back Israel's lost glory, but His response was to announce a new

kingdom, a spiritual kingdom" (Wiersbe 2008:37). And Utley (2011) pointed out that,

This Messiah was not the expected conquering military general, but a Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53).

Because of their literature and national hopes people could not associate Jesus with suffering (Wallace 2011). Thus, readers of Mark's Gospel find it necessary to drop their preconceptions of what God and God's Messiah are like in order to experience a new teaching (1:27) (Edwards 2002).

Even though Jesus demonstrated his divine authority over demons and disease, the religious leaders accused him of relying on Satan (3:20-30) (Wallace 2011). Even Jesus' family misunderstood him, expressing doubts about his sanity, and they tried to seize him out of concern for him (3:21) (Hurtado 1984:50). People in general were not ready to receive the full truth of the gospel. When Jesus was alone with his own disciples he taught more specifically, but even they usually did not understand everything (Barker 1998:1471). Hurtado (1984:64) shows Mark's emphasis on the spiritual deafness of the people:

[N]ote the statements in 4:12 about failing to listen with understanding and in 8:18 about the disciples having unperceptive ears. There are also two accounts of Jesus healing deaf individuals in 7:31-37 and 9:14-29 and for Mark these events serve not only as straight miracle stories but also as symbolical accounts dramatizing the spiritual deafness that must be cured to perceive Jesus' message properly.

So, "the truth is clear, but our ability to understand is imperfect" (Barton 2007:1625).

- **About the relationship between God and His creation (especially man)**

"The human heart is like soil: it must be prepared to receive the seed before that seed can take root and produce a harvest" (Mark 4:1-20) (Wiersbe

2008:41). Therefore, Jesus considered people's ability to understand, when he chose his communication style (Lovejoy 2000:10). And because "parables incited curiosity and deeper thought on the part of true seekers (cf. Proverbs 25:2; Mark 4:10, 34)" (Deffinbaugh 2004), Jesus used them to invite the crowds to an insider experience of the kingdom, where fuller understanding becomes possible (Edwards 2002). Wiersbe (2008:38-39) also explains how our Lord helped the people (including his disciples) "understand the nature of His kingdom" through parables:

A parable begins innocently as a *picture* that arrests our attention and arouses our interest. But as you study the picture, it becomes a *mirror* in which we suddenly see ourselves. If we continue to look by faith, the mirror becomes a *window* through which we see God and his truth. How we respond to that truth will determine what further truth God will teach us.

EC: So, the parabolic form of teaching was adopted by Jesus as being best adapted to the needs of His hearers (Blight and Smith 2003). Barker (1998:1471) also explains that,

Jesus used parables to illustrate truths, stimulate thinking and awaken spiritual perception.

Therefore, Jesus fulfils God's purpose of revelation by inviting people to discover the kingdom through experience (Edwards 2002). "The light of Jesus is revealed to us, not hidden," but only as we listen and respond will we increase our understanding of Jesus' message (James 1:22-25) (Barton 2007:1625).

#### 4.3.3.2.2 How Mark 4:33-34 harmonises with the whole teaching of Scripture

All the nations of the earth are conceived as being in spiritual darkness and ignorance (Is. 60:2-3), and in need of light. God promised to send the light when people would be delivered from their darkness and nations will come to it (Is. 49:6). This *light* is Jesus as he declared when he came in flesh, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) (Young 1972). Northern Palestine lay in a darkness of the mind and spirit, but when Christ came to them they saw the light (Mat. 4:16) (Morris and Carson 1992).

"Throughout the Bible, God's presence is equated with light ([Isa] 42:16; 2 Sam. 22:29; Job 29:3; Ps. 139:11, 12; 1 John 1:5)" (Oswalt 1998). And even before the Messiah was born, God had chosen him to bring the light of the Gospel to the world (Is. 49:1-6) (Barton 2007:1169). Actually the whole work and blessings of Christ may be characterized by light (Young 1972).

T: Jesus, "the light of the world" (Jn 8:12), opens the eyes of men's spiritual understanding and guides them into the truth about themselves and about God's salvation. H: He is "the source of men's illumination regarding spiritual matters" (Trail and Blight 1982).

Salvation is characterized by Paul as turning from darkness to light (Acts 26:17–18). And many other texts also develop the metaphor of salvation as enlightenment (Ps 107:9–10; Isa 2:5; 9:2; 42:7; 60:1–3; Mic 7:8; Lk. 1:78-79) (Green 1997).

So, the ultimate purpose of Jesus for using parables is that people would understand his message and become his disciples. This is in agreement with the general teaching of the Scripture about Jesus being light, and about His mission on earth: to reveal the truth about God and his kingdom.

#### 4.3.3.2.3 What contribution does Mark 4:33-34 make to Christian doctrines?

Jesus' ultimate goal was not to hide but to reveal God and his message to the ignorant people of Israel, and to a world found in spiritual darkness for that matter. Our passage depicts Jesus' main style of communicating the truth of God through parables as being the best adapted to the level of preparation found in his audiences and to their learning preferences, in order to open the spiritual eyes and ears of the people.

Therefore, "Jesus used parables to illustrate truths, stimulate thinking and awaken spiritual perception" (Barker 1998:1471). And since parables are peculiarly good at modifying other worldviews, he used them "to challenge the existing Jewish worldview and to provide an alternative picture of reality that He called 'the kingdom of God'" (Lovejoy 2005:34).



#### 4.3.3.3 Practical significance and application of Mark 4:33-34

##### 4.3.3.3.1 The central idea in the exposition of the text

This passage presents Jesus as the Master communicator, knowing what, when and how to communicate God's word to a diverse audience. His main approach to teaching through parables was the best possible tool used with a mixed audience of admirers, opponents, seekers of personal interest, followers, the majority being non-literates and all those who were misled in their preconceptions about the Messiah and his ministry. He used this powerful approach because it was familiar to the learning preferences of his oral audiences and also as a strategy to challenge the existent worldview of the people in order to reveal the truth about God and his Messiah. His parables incite people's interest and curiosity and invite them to come closer and have fellowship with Jesus for a deeper revelation of the Gospel's truth.

##### 4.3.3.3.2 Application of the text in a Contemporary Setting

- **To the general Christian community**

Here are some implications of this text for us as Christians. Often we cannot understand a message simply because we are not yet at that level of maturity and comprehension. We can only comprehend as we are "able to hear" (4:33). We should not look down upon ourselves, but try to understand those things which are at our level (Dwight 1997:9). All the same, those who are fortunate enough to hear the word of God "are obliged to practice what they know and also to proclaim it to others." Otherwise, biblical teaching will not profit us, and we prevent any additional biblical understanding for ourselves (Deffinbaugh 2004).

Regarding evangelism we learn that, as Christ had such a variety of responses, we should expect the same reactions "to the proclamation of the gospel." A negative response to the gospel is not because of the Word, "or necessarily" because of the messenger. "It is the condition of the soil which ultimately determines the response to the seed" (Deffinbaugh 2004). However, in evangelism, parables are particularly good because they attract people, incite their curiosity and so they invite people to an insider experience of God's

kingdom and for a deeper revelation of God's truth (Edwards 2002). Through parables we communicate the unknown by means of the known. So, we should look around for good illustrations in order to make clear the eternal word of God (Dwight 1997:9-10).

Since parables are peculiarly good at modifying other worldviews (Lovejoy 2005:34), evangelists have to carefully study the worldview of the target group and use "a set of biblical stories chosen expressly for their worldview" (Lovejoy 2000:11).

We also learn that it is wise to use parables in the context of a crisis, because parables do not call people to make a decision immediately, but give them time for reflection (Lane 1974), and allow people to wrestle with the meaning of the story (Lovejoy 2000:9). Parables also make public teaching possible even in a hostile context because they do not provide the hard evidence against the communicator (Deffinbaugh 2004). As Lovejoy (2000:11) affirms:

If listeners do react against the story, the indirect form probably will allow any animosity to be directed more at the story and less at the storyer, thereby maintaining the relationship between storyer and listener that is so important.

Wright confirms the same thing (Lovejoy 2005:34):

Where head-on attack would certainly fail, the parable hides the wisdom of the serpent behind the innocence of the dove, gaining entrance and favour which can then be used to change assumptions which the hearer would otherwise keep hidden away for safety.

- **To Christians who communicate the Gospel to oral cultures today**

We have learned from Jesus to present the message in a form that is familiar and accessible to our audiences. Brown (2004a:177) pointed out that,

Oral cultures have their own preferences for ways to communicate truth, and these will often be different from what print-oriented

people prefer. In order to share the message most effectively, we need to find out what media and methods work best for them.

"If our favorite methods of communication are foreign" and difficult to the target group, we must change them "in order to facilitate communication with them." "We cannot justify asking them to adopt our communication preferences" but rather we must adopt the indigenous methods that they have been using to transmit their "heritage and culture for generations." We have to learn to present the gospel using a narrative form instead of our expositional and propositional forms and "to develop discipleship approaches based on storytelling and dialog" (Lovejoy 2000:11-12).

We should support Bible translation and literacy because of their value, but we should not depend on them, nor should we allow "the pace of Bible translation or the pace of literacy training determine with whom we will seek to sow the good seed of the gospel ... when we know oral means are available to present the gospel meaningfully and establish Christ-honoring churches" (Lovejoy 2000:10).

Especially in Africa, the vast oral community demands "multiple ways of distributing God's word in oral form" (Lovejoy 2000:13). Therefore, if the Church wants to finish the Great Commission task, she must "make the word of God available to unreached peoples using appropriate oral strategies" (Lovejoy 2005:69-70). And since "the Christian message is one large story composed of many sub-stories" (Lovejoy 2000:11), it is our God-given responsibility to tell His story to the waiting unreached peoples of the world.

#### **4.4 Conclusions: summary of the research**

The aim of this chapter was to present a Biblical approach to communicating Scripture to oral communities.

The first part of the chapter, the Biblical survey, shows that God is a God of close relationships and He initially intended and began to have a face-to-face communication with his people. Even though that relationship was interrupted by sin, God made a plan to restore it. The major step in this plan was His incarnation when He communicated to us through his Son, Jesus Christ. This

makes the relational approach of communicating God's message not only legitimate but also desirable. Lovejoy concludes his historical review by saying, "... God expected many people to hear his word proclaimed live—audibly. The Bible was inspired and written with that oral/aural encounter in view" (Lovejoy 2010).

The survey also shows that the Scripture came into an oral context, and it was first used as oral tradition for many years before it was recorded. During that time the faith of the people was sustained, grew much and spread rapidly. It is clear that the Bible uses many oral forms of communication that provide the appropriate material to use with the oral communities today. Steffen urges that, if the Bible uses imagination so much to communicate God's Word, we should "respect the story quality of the Bible" and be confident in using it for the expansion of God's kingdom (Steffen 1997).

The second part of this chapter, the Biblical exegesis, shows that Mark was written, on one hand, to strengthen the church in Rome that was facing persecution, presenting Jesus as a model of living and witnessing in a context of crisis. The use of parabolic speech was particularly suitable for such an environment, because it attracts and incites curiosity and gives the listener time to reflect upon the message without giving the opponents evidence against the communicator. Parables are not aggressive but a friendly approach of communication.

On the other hand, the book of Mark also served as a missionary tool, designed for oral transmission to the non-literary communities of the Greco-Roman world. Through this powerful, attractive and familiar teaching approach of parables which is able to transform one's worldview, the crowds were invited to discipleship, where deeper revelation of Jesus was possible by fellowshiping with himself. And so Jesus' message took root and spread quickly from nation to nation in a strongly oral culture.

The exegesis of Mark 4:33-34, presents Jesus as the Master communicator of God's message to a mixed audience. The ultimate goal of Jesus' use of parables was not to conceal the nature of God's Kingdom from the world but to reveal it. His use of parables was the best adapted strategy to the needs and

learning preferences of his listeners. Furthermore, the revelation had to be done gradually and at the right time, according to the people's ability to receive his teaching and perceive the mystery of the suffering Messiah. Lovejoy (2000:10) says that "it is obvious that the example of Jesus and the apostles gives more than enough reason for us to use biblical stories as our means of presentation."

Jesus did not exclude his unschooled followers from spreading the Gospel, and they were actually very effective in expanding His Kingdom. Thus we should also not exclude the ordinary believers who have not been to school because they have great potential to be tremendously effective in proclaiming their faith by oral learning and sharing of Biblical stories. Therefore, by following Jesus' approach of communication that ordinary people can understand, we demonstrate to them His love, humility and service (Lovejoy 2010).

If we insist on our own literary style of communication, Lovejoy says that this will "make it difficult, if not impossible, for oral learners to hear and understand the message and communicate it to others" (Lovejoy 2005:3). "Four billion in our world are at risk of a Christless eternity unless literate Christians make significant changes in evangelism, discipleship, leader training and church planting." But by "following the examples of Jesus' teaching through parables, primary oral learners who comprise two-thirds of the world can comprehend God's word" (Lovejoy 2005:74-75).

Klem states that, "The extent to which we use books to teach the Bible is a cultural choice, not a biblical requirement." He also affirms that using oral strategies is not going "away from being biblical" but rather "going back to the basics" (Klem 1995:59). Colgate (2008:201) also advises that "engaging Scripture for Gospel sowing and discipling in an oral context should not depend on literacy," but at the same time, it should also not abandon its commitment to the written word. Brown (2004b:126) concludes by saying that, "The Bible is very appropriate for oral communicators, if presented in the way it presents itself."

The next chapter (chapter 5) will apply the findings of the previous research chapters in order to present a *practical strategy* (in terms of the LIM model) that can be used by the Church in general, as an effective approach of

communicating Scripture for evangelising oral communities, with special reference to the Church in Central Gonja, Ghana.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Towards an effective approach of communicating Scripture for evangelising oral communities, with special reference to Central Gonja, Ghana**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to develop practical strategies that can be utilised as an effective approach for communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana. This approach will be developed using the following practical strategies:

- Strategies for developing an Oral Bible
- Strategies for developing an worldview-specific story set
- Strategies for oral methodologies in training leaders
- Strategies for oral reproducible Church Planting Movements
- Strategies for accuracy in oral approaches
- Strategies for oral media production
- Strategies for effective partnership in orality

Furthermore, this approach will be based on the findings of the previous chapters which are briefly summarised below:

##### **5.1.1 Summary of findings 1: Present situation**

###### **5.1.1.1 Literary findings about the people of Gonja, Ghana**

As stated in the first chapter of this thesis (cf. section 1.1.2), my target people group is Gonja located in the Northern Region of Ghana (MultiTree 2012). The literacy rates in Gonja language show that the Gonja people are highly oral in their style of communication. The religious statistics categorise the Gonjas among the least-reached people groups (Joshua Project 2012), in a country where Christianity rate has gone up to about 70% (GhanaWeb 2012). Therefore, the main problem identified in this thesis (cf. section 1.1.3) is: Which

approach can be used to effectively communicate Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana?

#### 5.1.1.2 Empirical findings for the Central Gonja District

The empirical research indicated that the form of communication of people in the Central Gonja District is basically oral; meanwhile churches frequently use an evangelistic style, which is not familiar to the culture, and which is actually the least effective method. The most successful methods identified are the oral relational approaches (cf. section 3.6.1 c). The findings also indicated that the oral Scriptural tools are not used very much by churches in the district, basically because they have not been sufficiently developed in the area (cf. sections 3.5.6 and 3.6.1 d). Another major finding indicated that Christian workers in Central Gonja are not against oral approaches; rather there is merely a lack of understanding and training relating to orality (cf. section 3.5.5.1).

#### 5.1.2 Summary of findings 2: Preferred scenario

The preferred scenario presented a Biblical approach of communicating Scripture to oral communities. The following are the main findings.

##### 5.1.2.1 God's model of communication: Relational

God is a God of relationships. His ideal form of communication with man is face-to-face as he had with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Sin has interrupted this type of communication but God took the initiative to restore it. As Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son..." (Greer 2011:35). His plan is to fully restore this relationship in His new world when God and man will live and have fellowship together for eternity (Rev. 21:2-4). This provides us with the appropriate relational model of communicating God's message especially in oral cultures.

##### 5.1.2.2 Jesus' model of communication: The use of parables

Jesus was an "audience-sensitive communicator," deliberately using familiar forms of communication, such as parables, "stories, object lessons, miracles,



and his own example to teach" people according to their ability to understand (Lovejoy 2010). Lovejoy (2005:10) affirms that "the hope of reaching the four billion persons who are oral learners" and "getting God's word to the speakers of the four thousand languages still without it," is to follow Jesus' teaching model (Mark 4:33-34).

#### 5.1.2.3 The Early Church model of communication: Oral transmission

The stories of Jesus were told orally for about a generation before they were collected in a written document and "Christianity grew dramatically during that period," from Judea to Asia, Africa and Europe (Lovejoy 2010). "The early church flourished in a strongly oral culture" while "the Word was mediated to most of the believers orally" (Lovejoy 2000:9). As Jewell (2006) said it, "although few members of the early church could read or write, the message of the gospel took root, owing partly to its method of proclamation."

#### 5.1.2.4 The genre of the Bible: The story of God

Revelation was given in oral form and in Jesus Christ, and existed in oral tradition before it was later put into written form (Greer 2011:33). According to Tom Steffen, as much as 90% of the Bible is made up of stories, poetry and proverbs and only 10% is abstract content (Greer 2011:38). Since the Holy Spirit has chosen narrative as the predominantly genre for the Bible, it is time we come back to that narrative theology used by Him in history (Steffen 2011). Don Pederson writes,

In searching for effective means of communicating the Gospel, we find in the narrative structure of the Bible God's choice for communicating with mankind (Greer 2011:40).

So, using oral strategies is not going "away from being biblical" but rather "going back to the basics" (Klem 1995:59).

## **5.2 Strategies for developing an Oral Bible**

### **5.2.1 Strategies for the church in general**

The first of the five vital conditions presented by Lovejoy for making disciples of oral learners is to use an Oral Bible that can be memorized and retold. He affirms that this will be only effective Bible during the lifetime of the unreached, and the only way to unlock Church Planting Movements among them (Lovejoy 2005:70-71). The Lausanne Commitment at Cape Town (Part 2 Section IID, 2), also urges the Church to "make available an oral format Story Bible in the heart languages of unreached and unengaged people groups as a matter of priority" (The Lausanne Movement 2011). Therefore, we need a clear description of an Oral Bible, and how we can practically give it to the oral learners.

#### **5.2.1.1 Description of an Oral Bible**

The following information is taken and adapted from "The Miao Unreached People Group" (2008). The following website (<http://www.miaoupg.com/>) provides more information on how to develop an Oral Bible and strategies to use it in outreach ministry. The information includes details about the various phases and tracks (evangelism, discipleship, church planting, characterization, end times, church strengthening) used in a comprehensive programme.

An Oral Bible is part of the "oral culture" and it comes in the form of stories, parables and memory verses that people can remember and retell. The Oral Bible "is God's Word to oral culture people just as much God's Word in written form is to literate people." An Oral Bible is immediately available to the oral learners in their heart language, and travels rapidly from one village to another.

A practical Oral Bible would give an overview of God's plan of salvation through history, beginning with creation, and selecting stories about the patriarchs, Israel, prophets, "the story of Jesus and his death, resurrection and ascension, the young church," part of the epistles, and the return of Jesus. "This can be done in about 100 stories typically taught over a two year period."

This is the only Bible for many who will never become literate for various reasons; some prefer their own oral cultures, while others, especially the

elderly, have partially lost their sight or feel it is too late for them to learn to read. Even when the printed New Testament is produced for the younger generation in their heart language, the oral Old Testament can still provide a solid understanding for the New Testament message. For the literate people, the Oral Bible is still useful, helping them "to hide God's Word in their hearts" and thus, having the Word with them everywhere.

The best structure of the Bible should follow the chronology of God's work in history. The story from the Beginnings to the Ascension will focus on revealing the characteristics of God and his works. For discipling purposes, the Epistles can be structured following the timeline of Paul's missionary journeys.

The strategy for "evangelizing a people and planting a New Testament church" fits into the timeline of the Oral Bible strategy. "There is a perfect correlation of purpose and content" (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008). For the purpose of spiritual maturity and training new leaders, the Oral Bible strategy inserts relevant stories into the initial panorama. Bible stories are chosen to present the Biblical truth according to the purpose for a specific group of people. The worldview of the people is considered reflecting the "barriers and bridges" of the culture to understanding the Gospel. The Oral Bible should be shared "in a culturally appropriate place and manner by an appropriate person at the appropriate time for sacred teachings" (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008).

"To keep an Oral Bible alive and accurate" there is the need to provide opportunities for repetition and recall which is acceptable in oral cultures. "Oral Bible passages may be associated with times of celebration when a people develop a liturgy to guide their celebration and give it additional meaning and solemnity" (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008).

Realities about the Oral Bible can be summarised as follows (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008):

1. "An oral Bible becomes the permanent possession of an oral communicator and cannot be taken from him."

2. "An oral Bible is in the oral communicator's most compatible learning and communication format."
3. "An oral Bible is not an obvious possession and can be 'taken across delicate borders' and into delicate places."
4. "An oral Bible will be culturally seen as a 'document' similar to other 'documents' that oral communicators possess and therefore more easily accepted as a cultural document within that culture."
5. "An oral Bible can be used at any time and in any place."
6. "Possessors of an oral Bible can evangelize, disciple, train leaders and plant churches anywhere and at any time."
7. "An oral Bible possessed by a true oral communicator can be adapted and rearranged to fit the particular situation that the oral communicator faces."

#### 5.2.1.2 Strategies for giving the oral learner an Oral Bible

The following strategies can be used to produce an Oral Bible that an oral learner can possess and use effectively "under the impetus of the Holy Spirit" (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008):

1. "Research adequately the story style of the target people," which can be "in the form of drama, proverbs, parables, chant, song," and prepare each story in that style.
2. "Maintain the story style within each story. Do not vary the story style," especially for the evangelistic and discipleship tracks.
3. "Prepare each story as a 'told story' and not as written story that is told."
4. "The story should be a close replica of the biblical text." Chose key words carefully and do not try to modernize the story.
5. Maintain the chronology while telling the story and during discussion time. Always look backward and never forward (jumping ahead).
6. Manuscript or record each story. Do not edit out the oral elements "to be printed as, or to read like, a written story."
7. Do not read the stories but tell them.
8. "Avoid the use of exposition" (lists and points) in the story or during the discussion time.

9. "Each dialog session following the story should regularly include a rehearsal of the story by participants" in smaller groups where each of them can rehearse.
10. "Each pre-story time should include a rehearsal of the previous story."
11. "Participants should be encouraged to tell each story in the chronology to outsiders as often as possible."
12. Researchers show that for maximum retention and accuracy in story-telling, the best time span between story sessions is between five and fourteen days. Anything less or extra "leads to loss of retention and accuracy."
13. "The dialog session following the story is critical" for understanding the story and for a correct application of the story within the culture.
14. The ultimate acceptance and retention depends on "the Holy Spirit as He places His story among the people as holy 'literature.'"
15. "The story must be seen as appropriate for all ages and not just good stories to tell children. Telling the story to children" could also be used as a strategy to reach out to adults.

#### 5.2.2 Strategies for the church in Central Gonja, Ghana

Since the full Gonja Bible is almost finished, it will be easier and faster to provide an Oral Bible in the Gonja language. The Gonja Oral Bible would be immediately available to the majority of the Gonja people who are oral learners (at least 80%), and increase effectiveness in evangelism among this group which is counted among the least-reached in the world (4% Christianity, 0.5% Evangelicals) (cf. section 1.1.3).

The Church in Gonja land could contact the Gonja Bible translation team which will soon be finished with the printing of the Bible, and would be available to start a new project. They have most of the skills needed for an Oral Bible project, and they have the infrastructure (office, computers, means of transport, etc.) to make this new project an effective tool to reach out to the Gonjas.

The Bible translators are native Gonjas with much knowledge about their language and culture, and about their traditional oral narrative forms. They have studied both the Biblical culture and the worldview of the Gonja people, and

have already worked on the Biblical key terms which could enhance the crafting of the stories. They could use their checking skills to check the stories for accuracy. Even though there are a few differences between checking Biblical text and checking Bible stories, the full Bible will soon be available to provide the basis for both crafting and checking Bible stories.

These Bible translators may need some training in crafting Bible stories, songs, dramas and how to use them for evangelism, discipleship, leader training and church planting movements. They will need recording devices and skills. They may need some basic training on how to check Bible stories, songs, drama and other Scripture materials in other forms. Most of this training and recording skills can be provided by the "Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation" (GILLBT), the organization to which the Gonja translation team belongs. The remaining information in this chapter also provides practical instructions in the development of an Oral Bible project.

"The following ten-step process is taken from Following Jesus: Discipleship for Oral Learners. These ten steps can serve as a guide for developing and using biblical stories" for the Gonja people group (Evans 2004:26):

### **Bible Stories and the Ten-Step Process**

1. "**Identify** the Biblical Principle that you want to communicate – simply and clearly."
2. "**Evaluate** the Worldview Issues of the chosen people group."
3. "**Consider** Worldview – the Bridges, Barriers and Gaps."
4. "**Select** the Biblical Stories that are needed to communicate the Biblical principle."
5. "**Plan** (craft) the Story and plan the Discussion that is going to follow the Story, focusing on the task to be accomplished."
6. "**Communicate** the Story in a culturally appropriate way, using narrative, song, dance, object lessons and other forms."
7. "**Apply** the Principle by facilitating discussion with the group, helping them to discover the meaning and application of the Story to their own lives."

8. "**Obey** the Discovered Principle by implementing steps to be taken by the individuals."
9. "**Accountability** – establish Accountability between group members by mutual and reciprocal commitments to implement the Biblical principle in the conduct of their personal lives between members of the group, their families, and other personal relationships."
10. "**Reproduce** – encourage group members to reproduce the Biblical Principle, first by demonstrating the principle in their own life-witness, then by sharing the Story and Principle with others."

### 5.3 Strategies for developing a worldview-specific story set

#### 5.3.1 Strategies for the church in general

According to Wilson, the use of orality goes beyond communication; it also contributes to the "contextualization and indigenization of Christianity within the culture" (Wilson 1999:24). Wright argues that since "stories lie at the core of a worldview," Bible stories have the power to transform cultural worldviews and therefore avoid syncretism (Lovejoy 2005:35). Thus the Lausanne Cape Town Commitment instructs the Church to "encourage local churches in the Global South to engage with unreached people groups in their area through oral methods that are specific to their worldview" (The Lausanne Movement 2011). Also, the third condition for an effective discipleship among oral learners presented by Lovejoy (2005:70-71) is to develop a worldview-specific Oral Bible in the mother-tongue to avoid syncretism. Steffen (2011) explains it this way:

The deconstruction of a person's worldview should be part of the storytelling process in that this will help mitigate syncretism ... Good storytelling demands deconstructing and challenging everyone's worldview with a critically contextualized rival story, the gospel. Such an endeavor assumes that the audience's worldview is understood on more than a superficial level (Steffen 2011).

Oral communication of the Gospel in the mother tongue that is relevant to the worldview of the target group, avoids syncretism in churches of oral cultures

(Lovejoy 2005:70). Lovejoy provides four key elements that can help disciple oral learners with minimum risk of syncretism (2005:30-37):

- "Communicating with people in their mother tongue."
- "Develop discipling resources that are worldview specific" instead of generic ones.
- "Utilize biblical stories extensively" for worldview transformation.
- Provide a recorded "oral Bible" in the mother-tongue to ensure reliability of Biblical truth.

#### 5.3.1.1 Discovering the worldview of a people group

A careful worldview study needs to be done to identify the cultural bridges and barriers of a people group; then the Biblical stories are selected to address the cultural issues that are not consistent with the Biblical worldview. Dealing with these issues before people make a commitment for Christ reduces the risk of syncretism in the Church (Lovejoy 2000:11). If we do not seek to understand the cultural values and beliefs of the people that we want to evangelize, we may proclaim the Gospel based on misunderstanding and may not produce the desired change in people's lives and communities (Lovejoy 2010).

Therefore, Terry (2008) presents a guide to discover the worldview of a people group. He first gives the major areas to explore in this process, followed by practical ways to actually get the information. These are the major four worldview areas to explore:

1. Explore the perceived needs and strengths of the people group. Find out what they think are the major needs and problems in their lives and communities. Addressing these issues may lead to solutions, and can open people's minds and hearts to what you have to say. Also look for areas that people feel strongly about. Usually these are the areas that they are reluctant to change, and which may influence their understanding of salvation and how to obtain it.
2. Find out about changes among these people in history, culture, beliefs, attitudes, fears, religion, safety, education, health, shelter, work and politics.



- a. Changes in the past that can either produce openness or opposition to the Gospel.
  - b. Present changes that preoccupy them; topics they discuss in public, or in the media.
  - c. Changes that are feared and could disturb the harmony of the community. There may be openness for change that comes from a desire for peace and harmony in the community.
3. Observe the barriers that religious and political opinion leaders openly talk about in order to preserve their positions and control.
4. Note the bridges in the community that are more freely expressed by the younger generation who do not feel fulfilled in their traditional religion and are more open to change. Peers who have made good changes may also provide bridges.

#### 5.3.1.2 Developing a practical working list of worldview issues

Terry (2008) provides ten typical ways to gather information about the worldview of a people group; information which can then be put into a usable form:

1. Write down what is already known about people's understanding of their relationship with God. What is sin for them and what are its consequences? Where do they find forgiveness of sin?
2. There may be a wealth of information already written about your people. Look for topics like birth, death, festival and religious rituals, work, and family structure. Check Internet sites and compare them with the other sources.
3. Interview various kinds of people. Focus on nonbelievers and new believers. The old believers have often developed a Christian worldview and have lost much information about the community's worldview. The elderly know more but are more conservative. The young are more open, and have a desire for change. Do not ask "why" questions but ask "what, when and how" questions: What do you do when you feel guilty? How do you worship? When do you pray? etc.

4. Look for trends in the worldview. Some issues are not likely to change much over time, others are unstable, or no longer offer satisfactory explanations for life, or are influenced by westernization and secularization.
5. Bring up questions about life and spiritual life in informal discussion groups; questions about the source of blessing, protection, restoring relationships, revenge, forgiveness, restitution, and about death and the life after death.
6. Compare notes with other Christians working among the same ethnic group.
7. Read or observe the stories of the people; how do they tell their stories, and what are the morals or teaching passed on to the next generation?
8. Put together your information and sort it out in categories. A relational database computer programme can help with this.
9. Look for relationships and dependency between the issues in your list. Can some be addressed collectively as a group?
10. Give priority to issues on your list that are of interest to the people and would produce openness and receptivity to Bible truth and to change. Other issues can be addressed later on during the discipleship phase.

The list can be updated during the story-telling process as you get feedback from the group through their questions and answers in the dialogue sessions.

#### 5.3.2 Strategies for the church in Central Gonja, Ghana

The empirical survey shows that there are many Ewes and Akans in the churches in Central Gonja District (cf. section 3.6.1), therefore, if they want to use an Oral Bible meaningfully in reaching out to the local people, they need to do a careful research into the worldview of their target group using the process described above, and address specific cultural issues by choosing relevant stories.

According to Terry (2008), this would also apply to pastors and older believers who may be native Gonjas but have lost contact with the traditional worldview of the community. They need to proclaim God's message in a narrative communicational style which is relevant to the local worldview, and address

those issues that are not compatible with the Biblical worldview, using their heart language that can lead to life transformation.

For instance, if sacrifice is a prominent feature in the Gonja worldview, pick the theme of Sacrifice for your story set and choose Bible stories that talk about this theme culminating with God sacrificing His Son, the Lamb of God, for the forgiveness of sin. See Appendix 9 for two short examples of theme sets based on worldview, from Hill Harriet and Hill Margaret (2008:150). If the Gonja Bible translators have developed Gonja worldview documents and Biblical key terms that could help in the production process of an Oral Bible project, these documents and Biblical key terms could be used in the process described above.

It is clear from the third condition of Lovejoy (cf. section 5.3.1) that, in order to have an effective discipleship and minimise the risk of syncretism among the oral learners, it is important, not only to choose worldview-specific stories, but the stories must be told in the heart language of the target group. The best language to address traditional cultural issues is the heart language of the people, because it uses the local cultural terminology, and it touches their hearts, facilitating change in their lives.

The findings of the empirical survey indicated that there are a good number of native church leaders in the Central Gonja District, who could use the Gonja language in evangelism and discipleship, but actually they do not use it very much (cf. section 3.6.1). For the Oral Bible to be effective amongst the Gonja people, the story crafters and tellers have to use the Gonja language, which speaks clearly to the worldview of the Gonja people and can produce the desired change.

## **5.4 Strategies for oral methodologies in training leaders**

### **5.4.1 Strategies for the church in general**

#### **5.4.1.1 Theological training for oral students**

The Lausanne Movement (2011) challenged the Church to "encourage seminaries to provide curricula that will train pastors and missionaries in oral methodologies." Dr. Grant Lovejoy, professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, pointed out that some of the seminary students who have great difficulties in coming up with a sermon outline, often can handle narrative messages very well. This shows that they are still oral in their style of communication, which is "something to be celebrated and cultivated rather than a weakness to be eradicated." He challenged theological seminaries to take orality serious and accept that literary communication styles are not the only ways to preach. The students should be taught the differences between literary and oral styles of speech and use them according to the preferences of their audiences. In doing this we make God's Word more accessible to the many oral learners of the world (Lovejoy 2013:9).

Holt voices the concern raised by some educators who attended a workshop on theological education for oral learners regarding the challenges oral learners face in higher education. Considering that "70% of the world's population learns primarily through oral methods, and so they may be disadvantaged in higher education," because universities favour print learners (usually students from Europe and the USA). The challenge for these universities and theological seminaries is how to develop oral teaching methods to accommodate oral learners, instead of forcing them to adopt the western models. "How can online learning, which inherently focused on print methods, be adapted to oral learners?" (Holt 2013).

Holt affirms that, for so long universities and seminaries have ignored the powerful methods of oral learning that can empower educators with many more "creative ways to help students remember and digest the information." There is great potential in teaching oral learners using stories, proverbs, and symbols, which aid understanding and memory (Holt 2013).

A survey done in seminaries shows that 52% of the students "actually fell on the oral learning side of the spectrum. However, a larger majority of seminary professors are primarily print learners." These differences in style of communication increases confusion and gaps in education. "Professors, therefore, need to understand oral learning patterns and methods and intentionally incorporate them into curriculum" (Holt 2013).

Holt (2013) presents some suggestions of "oral learning methods ... that could be used in online education:"

- "Have professors include video introductions of themselves"
- "Include videos of teachers talking about the readings"
- "Have the students share about the essence of a book or reading, and give their own application and life experience related to the content"
- "Use more audio books"
- "Accept reflective journal assignments in oral form"
- "Consider online education not as a written medium but as a visual medium"
- "Think about what analytical thinking looks like in an academic context for oral learners"

For more information on oral theological education read "Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts" edited by Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (2013).

#### 5.4.1.2 Training local church planters in oral cultures

The fourth vital aspect to consider in making disciples of oral learners presented by Lovejoy (2005:71) is to equip relational-narrative communicators to make disciples. The Lausanne Movement (2011) also encouraged "mission agencies to develop oral strategies, including: the recording and distribution of oral Bible stories for evangelism, discipling and leadership training..."

One of the greatest losses of mission organizations in Africa caused by their own preference for the young and educated, are the community leaders who could have provided stability and growth to the church (Klem 1982:63). Klem

advises that using local media enables people to use their own skills to memorize the message and to become teachers in a short time, and it produces Christian leaders in an indigenous pattern (Klem 1982:xxiii). After learning the Bible story-telling method, a literate gentleman in Uganda said, "I am not an educated person and I never thought of myself as someone who can teach. Now I am learning and I am able to teach others who are also able to teach" (Wafler 2006:6).

Since literacy, from the Christian discipleship perspective, is the ability to read and understand an advanced book like the Bible (Greer 2011:14), "it takes at least ten to twelve years of effective western-style education" for a non-literate to become a fully literate person who can benefit from a printed Bible (Lovejoy 2000:7). However, Lovejoy points out that the early Church flourished in an oral environment, but if the Church would have made literate forms of training a requirement for church leaders, it could not have developed as it did (Lovejoy 2013:7).

Lovejoy, in his missiological considerations, emphasised Christian leadership training in the indigenous style. The Church should empower local believers with training that is locally owned and sustainable for three reasons: it does not require print or other expensive material; it uses the communicational approach used by the community for transmitting their cultural heritage for generations; and it can survive persecution or economic hardship. An Oral Bible gives people competencies to teach others using the personal model, Biblical stories, songs and other local arts. Lovejoy urges the Church to recognize "biblically qualified pastors" and "biblically sound congregations irrespective of their literacy or lack thereof" (Lovejoy 2000:12).

In a North African country dominated by Islam, 17 young non-literate and semi-literate believers were trained for two years to become leaders through the Chronological Bible Storying method. "At the end of two years, students mastered approximately 135 biblical stories in their correct chronological order, spanning from Genesis to Revelation." They also composed a couple of songs for each story and performed dramas based on those stories. "A seminary professor gave them a six-hour oral exam," where the students were able to

"answer questions about both the facts and theology of the stories" referring to specific events within the stories. They demonstrated excellent understanding about God's nature, the message of the Gospel, and their new life in Christ. When they went back to their villages, people eagerly came together to learn their stories and songs, and the people themselves often stayed late in the night to sing and tell these Biblical stories (Lovejoy 2005:46-47).

Oral strategies are easily reproduced by those who have been evangelized and disciplined through the same methods. They are equipped to lead while they are disciplined. They are ready to start the storytelling cycle again beginning new storying groups of their own (Lovejoy 2005:71).

I present here a simple mechanism of the oral church leadership development, extracted from an article by an IMB missionary called by the pseudonym, Danita Ralph (2010:37-38), who used the OneStory project in North Africa as a model:

- Have a story group led initially by a storyteller.
- Each member of the group learns the stories by heart and retells them to the group which leads to rapid and deep spiritual growth.
- After learning each story, the storyteller asks the same five discussion questions that can generate deep, provocative and life-changing discussions.
- In the process, by the power of the Holy Spirit, members experience God and personal life transformation.
- Each member of the group tells each story to his or her family and friends, and asks the same five dialogue questions after each story.
- By so doing, each member can begin his or her house story group and become a group leader.

The five generic discussion questions adapted from Hill and Hill (2008:146) are:

1. What did you like in this story?
2. What did you find difficult or troubling in this story?
3. What do we learn about God in this story?
4. What do we learn about people in this story?
5. Based on this story, what does God want us to do?

Group members experience first-hand how to plant a house church, using short stories and five simple questions. "Every story group has what it needs to help start new story groups. They know the stories, they know the discussion questions, and they've seen the results in their own lives" (Ralph 2010:38). Please see Appendix 7 for "14 Essentials for Storytelling," including "7 Steps for Dialogue" from *Scriptures In Use* (2005). For more information on oral leadership training see the next section (section 5.5 Strategies for oral reproducible Church Planting Movements).

#### 5.4.2 Strategies for the church in Central Gonja, Ghana

In Ghana, "the indigenous cultures all preserved their history orally; the elderly people of the clan will teach the children of their proud cultural past through the use of stories" (Missionary Atlas Project 2012). The reasons identified for the low use of oral strategies of communication by the churches in the Central Gonja District are not negative ones. It is not that churches do not want to use oral strategies, or that they do not appreciate them, or that they are afraid of doctrinal error. The reasons are rather related to the lack of understanding and training in orality. The church leaders were not trained in the use of oral strategies for communicating the Gospel (cf. section 3.5.5 and 3.6.1e).

Therefore, the churches in Gonja-land should look for training opportunities, and partner with organizations like GILLBT and Scripture Engagement department that develop oral tools and training programmes for evangelism, discipleship and leader training, to better serve their communities using their own learning styles. The simple oral leadership development model described above can help churches to begin training leaders using oral storytelling strategies.

Since the majority of the people are oral learners in Ghana, and for that matter in Africa, there is a great need to introduce orality courses in Bible Schools, Christian institutions, and church training programmes, to better equip the Christian workers for a more effective ministry within oral communities. There is also the need for theological training institutions in Ghana to adapt their teaching styles to their many oral preference learners. Section 5.4.1.1 gives some suggestions in this regard.



Mission agencies and national organizations in Ghana that have knowledge and experience in the use of oral strategies should write scholarly articles that can be used in seminaries. They may even have qualified staff that can teach orality courses in theological institutions.

## **5.5 Strategies for oral reproducible Church Planting Movements**

### **5.5.1 Strategies for the church in general**

One strength of orality, is its emphasis on easy reproducibility within oral cultures. It provides the most effective leadership training model which "will facilitate church planting movements to rapidly disciple and equip leaders for the new churches" (Lovejoy 2005:70).

The remaining information in this section is taken from "The Miao Unreached People Group" (2008), which presents in detail a reproducible Church Planting Movement (CPM) that can be applied in oral cultures. It presents the description, the elements, the characteristics and the phases of a CPM. More information can be obtained from their website (<http://www.miaoupg.com/>).

#### **5.5.1.1 Description and example of a Church Planting Movement (CPM)**

A simple description of a CPM is, "a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment." There are three major components in this definition:

Firstly, the movement is **rapid**. There is a rapid increase in new church plants. Saturation church planting does not qualify as a CPM.

Secondly, the increase is **exponential**. It "is not simply incremental growth—adding a few churches every year or so," but exponential, doubling every time. This only happens when "new churches are being started by the churches themselves – rather than by professional church planters or missionaries."

"Finally, they are **indigenous churches**." The Gospel enters from outside through missionaries, but the movement quickly becomes indigenous - the churches are generated and driven from within the people group and not from outside. "The resources are in the harvest!"

For example, suppose you want to reach out to a people group and decide that you need to plant 5,000 churches. If five missionaries plant a church each, every year, they will need 1000 years to complete the task. If you have 20 church planting teams, each planting a church every year, it will take them 250 years to finish. But, if you have ONE church, planting one planting church every year - which makes them double every time - in only 13 years you will have 4,096 planting churches. In the next two sections the elements of a CPM and the characteristics of such churches, will be discussed.

#### 5.5.1.2 Elements of a Church Planting Movement (CPM)

A survey of CPMs around the world has found that in each of them ten elements, which any CPM strategy needs to consider in order to be successful (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008):

1. **Prayer** was fundamental in every CPM observed. From the beginning, the first missionary must live an exemplary prayer life that will be imitated by the new believers and incorporated in the new churches. "By revealing from the beginning the source of his power in prayer, the missionary effectively gives away the greatest resource" for a successful movement.

2. **Abundant Gospel sowing** was evident in every CPM. Unless you sow abundantly you cannot expect an abundant harvest. This requires both mass-media and "personal evangelism with vivid testimonies to the life-changing power of the gospel."

3. **"Intentional church planting"** strategy was implemented before any successful movement got under way. CPMs do not just happen. In many parts of the world thousands of people come to Christ, but unless there is an intentional strategy, these do not result in CPMs.

4. **Scriptural authority.** The Bible in the heart language of the people, either in oral or written form, has been the foundation for life, doctrine and church policy in any CPM surveyed.

5. **Local leadership.** When the missionary assumes the role of "the primary church planter or pastor, it is difficult for him ever to assume a backseat profile

again," which becomes a barrier for the CPM. Missionaries involved in successful CPMs have focused on mentoring church planters rather than doing the work themselves. Working alongside local church planters is a good practice.

6. **Lay leadership.** CPMs are driven by lay or bi-vocational leaders. They "come from the general profile of the people group." If the people are primarily oral communicators, the lay leader should be one of them. If people are farmers, the leader is one of them. As the movement grows, some of the leaders may be paid. But the majority will continue to be lay leaders. This ensures that the largest sector of the community remains the pool that provides local church planters. Depending on seminary trained pastors, or upon the educated in oral societies, the work will always suffer.

7. **Cell or house churches.** The vast majority of churches in a CPM do not have church buildings; they are small and reproducible groups of "10-30 members meeting in homes or storefronts." *Cell Churches* are linked to each other and to a larger, single church authority. They are easier to guide and to conform to a doctrine. *House Churches* are more autonomous, more dynamic, less vulnerable to hostile governments, but lack unifying structures.

8. **"Churches planting churches."** In CPMs the local planted churches plant new churches. The members have to believe "that no external aids are needed to start a new church." Reproduction is natural and is done all locally.

9. **Rapid reproduction** is evident in every CPM and is vital to the movement itself. The ordinary believers are fully empowered for the work, and they emphasise the urgency of coming to Christ, therefore there is no time for non-essential debates.

10. **Healthy churches.** "Most (church growth experts) agree that healthy churches should carry out the following five purposes: 1) worship, 2) evangelistic and missionary outreach, 3) education and discipleship, 4) ministry and 5) fellowship." All the five functions were evident in each CPM studied. But for a CPM, the *mission* function is most significant.

#### 5.5.1.3 Characteristics of a Church Planting Movement (CPM)

Apart from the ten universal elements found in every CPM, there are ten characteristics found in most CPM (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008):

1. **Worship in the heart language.** Missionaries who "embrace the heart language of the people" come to know their worldview at a more intimate level, and are well positioned to stimulate a CPM. This also allows local believers to come closer to God and to fully participate in the ministry.

2. **"Evangelism has communal implications."** CPMs "typically rely on a much stronger family and social connection." "In many cases, the churches come to consist of family units and are led by the family's head" (see Acts 16:31-32).

3. **"Rapid incorporation of new converts into the life and ministry of the church."** "Discipleship typically precedes conversion and continues indefinitely." New believers are expected to witness immediately after conversion. They quickly become disciplers and even church planters. In fact, they are encouraged to "help start new churches, rather than simply adding larger numbers to existing congregations."

4. **"Passion and fearlessness."** CPMs are characterized by the urgency of salvation and boldness in proclamation which "may invite persecution, but it fuels a Church Planting Movement (see Joshua 1:6)."

5. **"A price to pay to become a Christian."** Often CPMs occur in sensitive areas where new believers face suffering and death. The testimony of Jesus' life and of the early Church brings comfort in such cases (Mat. 10:17-25). Many times persecution produces dedicated believers.

6. **"Perceived leadership crisis or spiritual vacuum in society."** The time of crisis in a people group, such as loss of leadership, stability or security, disintegration of society, calamities, war, compel people to reconsider the everlasting purpose in life which is a good environment for CPMs.

7. **"On-the-job training for church leadership."** Effective leadership training is vital for a CPM that grows fast. On the other hand, "if new church leaders have to leave their churches for extended periods for theological training, the

momentum of the movement will be diminished." Theological Training by Extension with practical learning and ministry on the field has proven to complement the CPMs.

8. "**Leadership authority is decentralized.**" Hierarchy and bureaucracy kill the dynamism of CPMs. The local church leader should have all the authority needed in matters related to evangelism, discipleship and church planting.

9. "**Outsiders keep a low profile.**" Missionaries involved in CPMs point out the importance of indigenizing the movement. Build up leadership capacity in local believers through participatory work, while keeping a low personal profile.

10. "**Missionaries suffer.**" Many missionaries involved in CPMs have gone through calamities caused by local opponents, but also by their own wrong choices or behaviours. Ultimately this is the price paid for advancing God's kingdom into dark territories (Rev. 12:12). Therefore, they need a strong supporting team.

#### 5.5.2 Strategies for the church in Central Gonja, Ghana

Beside the fact that the Gonja people are mostly oral communicators and non-Christians, they are also resistant to the Gospel, while Christian converts experience persecution. However, the Oral Bible has proven to be highly effective among such people groups. An oral Church Planting Movement uses phases and tracks designed to be used by literates to give the Gospel to "oral communicators in such a way that they can duplicate" the process without becoming literates. Therefore, I recommend the following phases and tracks for a CPM among the Gonja people. For more details please check the website (<http://www.miaoupg.com/>) of The Miao Unreached People Group (2008):

##### 1. "Church Planting Phase:"

- a) "**The Evangelism Track**" is designed to expose the unbeliever, within his worldview, to God's overall plan of salvation starting from Genesis through to ascension at least. At the end of this track people are invited to give their lives to Christ.

- b) **"The Discipleship Track."** In this track the new believers are taken again through the same stories in the evangelism track, but the stories are seen from a discipleship view, and discussion is taken to a higher level with personal application. At the end of this track the disciples adequately possess an Oral Bible that they can use as an evangelistic track with another group. Occasionally, other discipleship stories can be added.
- c) **"Church Planting Track ...** is designed to plant a church among the new believers," and it covers the book of Acts.
- d) **"The Characterization Track** covers the books of Acts and the Epistles through a storying format." People involved are maturing believers.
- e) **"The End Times Track** is a presentation of the book of Revelation through storying." Completing this track the whole Biblical panorama is covered. There are still numerous Bible passages uncovered at this point.

2. "The Church Strengthening Phase:" This phase has an "indefinite number of tracks," designed to complete the Bible, teach thematically, train leaders, teach the oral church planting movement, etc. "The approach is the same as in the church planting phase," using Bible stories starting from Genesis and going chronologically through the Bible, but the aim and the themes of the story sets are different.

"Through this means, a chronological storying of the Bible, an oral (Gonja) communicator can be evangelized, receive and retain an oral Bible, and can minister as effectively as a literate communicator" (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008).

## **5.6 Strategies for accuracy in oral approaches**

### **5.6.1 Strategies for the church in general**

#### **5.6.1.1 The need for accuracy in oral approaches**

There is a fear of doctrinal error among the Christian community regarding orality. Some think that Biblical truth cannot be communicated adequately through oral means. There is also the concern of the lack of a reference point and an adequate check in oral cultures (Greer 2011:65-66). Wafler actually points out the simplistic view of some orality practitioners regarding cross-cultural communication. Translation issues such as differences between Biblical cultures and local cultures, "biblical key terms, figurative language, and unknown ideas exist in both oral and literate communication." Many do not know that orality involves translation and are ignorant of the checking procedures for accuracy developed in translation. This may result in oral material which is "non-communicative or erroneous." Therefore, Wafler advises oral practitioners to learn and employ translation principles and procedures for accuracy and relevance (Wafler 2006:8-9).

Similarly, Lovejoy draws the attention to the fact that many missionaries involved in crafting Bible stories do not pay attention to cross-cultural issues and are likely to communicate unnaturally and with inaccuracies. Therefore, he emphasises the need for cooperation between orality practitioners and Bible translators. Lovejoy asks for help from the Bible translation organizations to produce high quality, reliable Oral Bibles. With a limited amount of training regarding the specifics of checking Bible stories, Bible translators could do this job. Furthermore, he requests that Bible agencies assist church planters to develop a simple Bible story checking procedure which can be used by church planting organizations to conduct checking themselves (Lovejoy 2009:14-15).

#### **5.6.1.2 Bible translation procedures in oral approaches**

Wafler (2006:9) concludes that "employing translation principles and processes in the use of oral communication strategies is appropriate and necessary." Therefore, he proposes a few Bible translation procedures that he personally

used in Northern Uganda, which could be used for producing an accurate Oral Bible (Wafler 2006:14-17):

1. Before the actual story crafting process began, a team of three expatriate missionaries focused on language and culture learning for eight months (p. 14).
2. After that, a group of local believers with good English skills were taught 30 Bible stories in English which produced an enthusiastic response (p. 14).
3. Each Bible story was thoroughly discussed with the story crafters, such as figures of speech like idioms and metaphors, until the crafters felt they understood the story. The story was divided into logical parts which were recorded separately in the local language. These parts were used for learning the entire story, which was recorded as a first draft ready for checking (p. 15).
4. For checking purposes, "the oral draft was transcribed or keyboarded from the tape. Next the oral draft was back-translated orally or in writing (into English) by a person other than the story crafter ... The translation principles were used to generate open-ended questions to check the crafter's knowledge of the figurative language and content." Further revision was done based on the discussion and "a new oral draft was recorded." This recorded draft and the back-translation were further checked by other literate people who gave more suggestions "about culture, language, organization and flow for improvement of the stories" (p. 16).
5. "The checked story was presented orally to the other story crafters," who discussed "word choices based on various ... dialects, cultural implications, and consistency issues with other stories. The group acted out a drama based on the new story. The drama served to help decide the proper way to form direct speech with emotions like joy, anger, sadness, embarrassment, and surprise as well as appropriate natural expressions for story sequencing and dialogue." Each week, every story crafter taught his new story to the group and they discussed problems and solutions. The dialogue questions after the story also helped to check the group's understanding of the story. "By the end of this process the group reached an agreement about the story" and made a final



recording considering the revisions suggested. This became the standard story for training other storytellers (pp. 16-17).

#### 5.6.2 Strategies for the church in Central Gonja, Ghana

Even though the empirical research shows that there is not much fear of doctrinal error among the church leaders working in Gonja-land regarding the use of oral strategies (cf. section 3.5.5), there is always the need to ensure accuracy and reliability of the Oral Bible. From this point of view, Gonja people are blessed, because they have the Gonja Bible translators who have finished translating the whole Bible. Gonja translators have the technical knowledge and an extended experience in Bible translation, a good understanding of the Bible, and of both Biblical and Gonja cultures, which could help them in checking Bible stories.

The Bible story checking process described earlier could give the Gonja Bible translators an idea of checking Bible stories. This process, together with the other oral strategies presented in this chapter, could also help pastors and church planting organizations begin an Oral Bible project that is accurate and trustworthy. They could also contact Bible translation organizations like GILLBT, Bible Society, and Lutheran Bible Translators, to help with a final consultant check of the stories before the final recording is done.

Churches and organisations working with the Gonja people, who want to produce oral Bible stories in the local language, should learn more about Bible translation and its checking procedures. Bible translation organizations, including the Gonja Bible translation office, would be the right places to look for such training.

Bible translation organizations should make their translation principles courses and even translation checking sessions open to the churches that are interested to learn. They should also make it available to those involved in orality, training material on: translation principles, Bible translation checking processes, including "back-translation process and examples of checking questions," and a set of core Bible stories (Wafler 2006:18-19).

On the other hand, Bible translators should also learn about orality and oral strategies to use in Bible translation (Wafler 2006:19). This skill will not only help with checking Bible stories, but will help with producing a Bible that is more natural and accessible to the local oral cultures.

According to Lovejoy (2005:70-71), for an Oral Bible to remain accurate over generations and free of syncretism, it has to be recorded. Therefore, some training in recording is needed. See Appendix 8 for Tips for recording video and audio, from the Mobile Ministry Made Easy (2012). Also see the next section for more information on media production.

## **5.7 Strategies for oral media production**

### **5.7.1 Strategies for the church in general**

Just translating the full Bible and printing it does not make it available to oral cultures. An effective Scripture engagement strategy will consider the media preferences of oral learners, such as audio and video Scripture products, using both local and modern technology like radio, mobile phones, and local arts (Lovejoy 2010). The oral strategies are also effective in reaching the secondary oral communicators, who receive information "through radio, television, film, internet and other electronic means" (Lovejoy 2005:71). This is relevant today when the entertainment industry is the greatest influential factor on our worldview (Willis and Snowden 2010:28).

#### **5.7.1.1 Radio ministry**

Terry (2009) in his book "Developing Bible Storying into Radio Programs" provides the following information:

##### **1. Characteristics of radio related to Bible storying**

- a) Radio programmes are available to a large number of listeners, and some will listen in groups which will interact and thus increases its effect.
- b) Radio crosses boundaries in areas where storytellers cannot go physically; therefore they can freely convey God's truth to those people.
- c) Radio is an entertainment medium that catches the attention of the people and provokes curiosity and interest.

- d) Where there is the need, recorded programmes can be easily repeated or they can be distributed in other forms.
- e) The cost of a radio programme is low considering the potential listeners.

## 2. The use of a Chronological Bible Storying programme on radio

Chronological Bible Storying is a set of stories arranged chronologically and linked to each other, forming one large story. They are chosen to fit the broadcast schedule and timing, but also to cover the Biblical truth of salvation or other objectives, and any related worldview issues. To avoid wrong interpretations, this type of programme needs to summarize the teaching of the previous stories of the series and relate it to the following ones (pp. 6-7).

There are two main weaknesses with this type of programme on radio. First, in a programme that uses progressive storying and sequence, some people in the audience will miss some of the stories, some will join in after the programme starts, and others will drop out on the way. The best possibility in this case is to repeat the same series programme immediately after the first run. This will give people the opportunity to catch up with the earlier programmes (pp. 7-8).

The second weakness is that the storyteller is not with the listeners and therefore has to anticipate some typical questions that may come up during his programme and try to address them using the following possibilities (p. 8):

- a) The storyteller himself asks the questions and then proceeds to answer them. This means that he has good knowledge of his audience's worldview.
- b) A better option is to have an announcer who raises the questions for the listeners and the storyteller answers in dialogue with the announcer.
- c) Another possibility is to have "studio listeners" reacting to the story and asking the typical questions. The storyteller should not sound preachy in his answer, but rather use illustrations to explain. Especially in hostile areas, sensitive questions could be answered by giving another story.
- d) You can also invite questions from the listeners, which are then selected to be answered.

#### 5.7.1.2 Mobile phone ministry

Lovejoy affirms that the new technology makes "production and delivery of audio and video products easier, faster, and cheaper." He indicates that the rapid spread of mobile phones in the developing countries is an opportunity for audio and video Scripture engagement (Lovejoy 2009:12).

In order "to help you begin using mobiles in personal ministry and church-planting strategies" the remaining information in this section comes from the publication, *Mobile Ministry Made Easy* (2012). The manual contains information and helpful links for Christian mobile resources to download, and mobile ministries available.

There are six easy general steps for a mobile strategy (p. 17):

- 1) "Identify your strategy (e.g. entry, evangelism, discipleship, etc), and target audience."
- 2) "Identify the heart language of your audience."
- 3) "Identify the most common type of mobiles within your audience."
- 4) "Find or create the appropriate media to use."
- 5) "Decide how you will distribute the media (e.g., which national partners, what technology, etc.)."
- 6) "Start sharing!"

For the African rural context, I have chosen the **Feature Phone** option, which is likely the best choice for a mobile strategy. It does calls and texting, plays audio and video, it uses a memory card, can share media with others via Bluetooth, and uses simple Apps (applications), possibly Bible apps. "Nokia 3000 series" is recommended (p. 7).

#### 1. Mobiles in evangelism

The Memory Card "has become the international standard for storing and moving content." It comes in various storage capacities, but the 2GB option is recommended, since it works on most feature phones. Media can easily be loaded on a memory card from a computer and can be freely transferred from one phone to another through bluetooth. This is a natural way to multiply

distribution. For easy transfer "it is advised not to exceed 5MB in file size" (p. 19).

## 2. Mobiles in discipleship

Use text messages to share with literates: "1) daily verses, 2) ministry helps, 3) tips for evangelism, and 4) devotional questions with Scripture references." For oral disciples you can share memory cards with audio and video media for discipleship, and files that they can share with non-Christians, like the Oral Bible (p. 22).

## 3. Mobiles in leadership development

With your literate church leaders you can use text messages to send: "1) church-planting tips; 2) reminders on foundational training points; 3) encouraging notes; and 4) key Scripture verses." You can also share, through memory cards or bluetooth, training materials for your leaders, and useful material for training others. You can share audio leadership stories and music for oral leaders. Have them listen over and over to a story and memorize it during the week, then come together and retell the story, ask questions and discuss it. Then send them out to share it with others (p. 23).

## 4. Mobiles in church planting

Globally, most church members own a mobile phone, which they can use to share Christian media. They can impact groups by sharing this media with families and friends. Give your leaders mobile resources for church planting and train them how to use these resources in sharing and teaching their new groups, which can turn into newly planted churches. The steps presented for evangelism, discipleship and leader training apply in church planting too (p. 24).

### 5.7.1.3 Visual arts ministry

Smith (2006) in his book "Visual Art and Orality" provides the following information:

The elements of art, such as lines, shapes, colours, forms, value, texture and space, are used to produce drawings, paintings, sculptures, architectures, and

symbols, and are important forms of communication in oral cultures. Moreover, Leonard Sweet says that "humans think in images, not words" and that post-modern cultures are *visualholic* (pp. 2-3). David Hesselgrave affirms that simple media like, drawings, diagrams and drama is especially important and has great potential for missionaries "in cultures where concrete-relational thinking predominates to reproduce and comprehend" (p. 4).

Visual art can bridge time and space between people of different cultures. They "have helped us to understand how people lived in the days of Christ" and have helped people pass on over generations, the events in Jesus' ministry. Images also facilitate a better understanding and recall of the chronological Bible stories (p. 7).

### **The Process of Creating Visuals for an Oral Culture**

As a general rule, "artwork should be determined by its function." According to Smith (2006), in the process of creating visuals for oral cultures the following components should be considered:

#### **1. The ground rules**

Respect the knowledge and desire of the local people and develop a partnership with them for creating a visual message (p. 14).

#### **2. The plan**

Identify the selected audience, the message to communicate, the learning location, and how you are going to present the message (p. 15).

#### **3. Preparation stage**

(a) Learn the worldview of the people; (b) Learn (observe, ask and listen) how local arts reveal the culture of the people (festivals, rituals, beliefs, fears and needs); (c) Research the existing documents about the people; (d) Determine the information needed for accurate drawings; (e) Find local artists to assist; and (f) Think how the Biblical scene would appear in this culture, the "clothing, animals, houses, landscape, interiors of houses, furniture, household items, tools, etc." (p. 15).

#### 4. Pre-production

(a) Check how local artists would express the message; (b) Gather information about the date of the story, and the difference of size and shape of the objects between the historical context and the local culture; (c) Compose the image for the first testing; (d) The image should be both accurate and understandable; and (e) Pictures representing lapse of time should be accompanied by oral explanations (p. 15).

#### 5. Pre-testing/Field testing interviews

(a) Test the material with the audience to see if it is understood and if they like it; (b) Find out if the audience can see properly or if they need glasses; (c) Make sure that the person you interview does not see the test as a test for himself but for the material; (d) Prepare interview questions and be ready to record the answers; (e) Ask how they see the illustration (What do you see? What are the objects in this picture? What do you like in the picture? What is not clear? How can I make it better? Is there something missing in the picture?); and (f) Ask how the illustration is understood (What is happening in this picture? Why does this happen? Does it happen in your situation? What problems does it cause? What can be done about it?) (p. 16).

6. Re-draw the pictures according to the results of pre-testing (p. 16).

7. Re-test the material with your audience and make sure there is 80-90% comprehension (p. 16).

#### 8. Production

The material can be produced in the following formats: large posters, pocket photo album for portability, digital format, booklets, printed on cloth, etc. Note that the desired end is not material production but changed lives (pp. 16-17)!

##### 5.7.2 Strategies for the church in Central Gonja, Ghana

The empirical survey regarding the usage of certain oral tools in evangelism and discipleship showed that three of the oral tools presented are the least used by the churches ministering among the Gonja people of Ghana. These tools are

radio programme, mobile phone, and visual arts, which got scores under 10% usage (cf. section 3.5.4). Section 3.5.5 (see also section 3.6.1 (d)) further shows that the main reasons for their low usage are that they have not been developed in the area of survey.

Therefore, the practical strategy under oral media production (section 5.7) specifically focuses on how to develop the oral ministry through these three tools: radio, mobile phone, and visual arts, that can be applied within the context of the Gonja people in Ghana.

Regarding the **radio programme**, many survey respondents indicated that there is no radio station in the area and that it is not affordable to the local people. In this case I suggest that a partnership should be initiated between the local Christian community and the missionary churches from southern Ghana that are reaching out to the Gonjas, and which have the necessary resources for such a project. The next section will discuss more about strategies for partnership. The strategy presented for the oral radio programme above, could provide guidelines for the Gonja Christian community involved in developing an oral radio programme.

**The mobile phone ministry** would be much simpler to develop, because many people in Gonja-land own a feature phone that can easily be used in evangelism and discipleship, as it was presented above. The strategy presented for the mobile phone ministry uses feature phones that can be loaded with audio and video material through a memory card at a minimal cost, and can be passed on freely from phone to phone via Bluetooth. Churches could contact GILLBT for material like the New Testament, Bible stories and songs in the Gonja language. They could also ask for help with producing other material that they need for a mobile phone ministry.

Regarding the **visual arts**, some research should be done about the use of local Gonja visual arts, and follow the process described above to revive this medium of communication in the community. The churches could then develop Christian material for an effective oral/visual approach of communicating the Gospel. This would not take much funding, if churches were to make use of the local cultural means to produce Christian visual art material.



## 5.8 Strategies for effective partnership in orality

### 5.8.1 Strategies for the church in general

#### 5.8.1.1 Critical principles for partnership

The basis for partnership is found in the Divine Trinity, where Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in love, sacrifice, and humility. Jesus prayed in John 17 for the unity of his Church to be the same as within the Trinity with the purpose that "the world would know that the Father has sent His son Jesus into the world to save it" (Mochar 2012). Where there is no cooperation in the Body of Christ both the Gospel and the headship of Christ over his church lose their authenticity. As a result, God's resources are wasted; it creates disunity, isolation, competition and pride in the Church, which cause the eternal peril of many unreached people. However, the Great Commission of Jesus requires cooperation in the Body of Christ (Mochar 2012).

There are over 2,200 people groups in the world with a population of over 300 million "without a single verse of Scripture" in their language (Chiang 2010b:129). Unfortunately, according to Todd Johnson, only 0.3% of funding, or US\$1.7 billion per year go to the unevangelised people of the world (Chiang 2010b:135). Chiang (2010b:133) urges that there is the need for "a global network of collaborative structures to focus on the 4,350,000,000 oral learners" in the world.

### **Eight principles for successful Kingdom collaboration**

The following eight principles for successful Kingdom collaboration presented by Butler (2012), have been tested on the field over the recent years, with input from over 90 countries:

1. **A powerful, commonly owned vision** must have specific outcomes with measurable objectives understood by all partners.
2. **Limited achievable objectives** are specific to God's Kingdom, and larger than the objectives of any single partner involved, but relevant to each of them, and can be done by working together.

3. **Trusting relationships** demonstrate "evidence of real salvation (John 17:21-23, etc.)."

4. **The facilitator** is passionate about the vision and the partnership, being neutral but committed to all partners.

5. **The process** of building great effective collaboration takes time for careful planning, preparation, laying the foundation and execution. It is not an event.

6. **Partners with clear identities and vision** understand their role in the collaboration and are able to measure the impact of the partnership on their own organizations.

7. **Meeting expectations of key constituencies** such as: (a) the target audience; (b) the active partner participants; (c) the administration of the partnering agencies; and (d) the supporters providing resources and prayer.

8. **Focus on common progress and ends** that draw partners together. Communicating and celebrating progress together is vital to the collaboration.

### **Five essentials for "Global Cooperation to Extend the Kingdom"**

Mochar (2012) provides the following five "pillars" of cooperation that "should be lived out with excellence in the global church:"

1. **"Sense of urgency"** for the unreached. If we are not moved when people die without hearing about Christ, we have not understood God's love for them.

2. **"Clarity."** We need clear understanding about the remaining needs in the world so that we can focus our efforts. With the information available today, we cannot say "I didn't know."

3. **"Willingness"** to bring our gifts into the cooperative effort, setting aside "self-interest, egos and pride for the greater cause of Christ" (Mochar 2012).

4. **"Agreement."** It is essential to have a basic agreement on common standards and understanding about "terms related to reaching the lost."

5. **"Resolve."** Christian cooperation is not a short project that we do, but a life-long sacrifice for God's clear cause.

#### 5.8.1.2 Key participants and their roles in an Oral Bible partnership

1. **The local community.** Christianity is growing among oral cultures in the southern hemispheres, and their familiarity with orality can be an advantage in reaching out to the other oral cultures where the greatest remaining needs are. The oral Christians know the value of communicating in stories, songs and drama; therefore they should share the value of learning by apprenticeship with the other partners. Local artists should assist their partners to identify the best local arts for conveying Biblical truth (Lovejoy 2010).

The Lausanne Commitment charges the local churches in the southern continents to reach out to the "unreached people groups in their area through oral methods that are specific to their worldview" (The Lausanne Movement 2011). Sogaard challenges church leaders to give priority in their budgets to oral/audio products even if that means taking from programmes aimed at literate strategies. He also draws attention to the fact that most of the people who need audio Scripture are poor, therefore, a percentage of our products should be distributed free of charge to them, otherwise we will continue to provide for the literates who can pay (Sogaard 1995:75).

2. **Bible translators** will bring into the partnership their expertise in developing key Biblical terms, and documents that are sensitive to the worldview of the people. They also assist with checking procedures that ensure reliable and accurate stories (Lovejoy 2009:5). Furthermore, aiming at local ownership and sustainability, Bible agencies could assist churches to develop a simple checking procedure that can be used by the church planters themselves which will facilitate reproducibility without always depending on translation specialists (Lovejoy 2009:14).

3. **Media specialists** strengthen the partnership by facilitating the production of songs, dances and drama, in addition to the stories. They also develop teaching material using Bible pictures or booklets that are appropriate to the local culture (Lovejoy 2009:5). They assist local churches in recording an Oral Bible and broadcast it on radio for mass evangelism and discipleship. In addition to storytelling, the radio programme should also use dialogue to address the cultural issues that are in conflict with the Biblical truth (Chiang 2010b:134). The

media specialists should also provide workshops and seminars to train local Christian communities in the production of audio Scripture and other materials (Ansre 1995:67).

4. **Theological schools.** Chiang points out the need for seminaries to provide curricula for training church leaders in the use of oral strategies. An alternative to seminaries is a body of trainers developed by regional partnerships and agencies to train leaders in oral methodologies (Chiang 2010b:134). Theological training by extension with practical learning and ministry on the field should be provided, which has proven to complement church planting movements (The Miao Unreached People Group 2008).

#### 5.8.2 Strategies for the church in Central Gonja, Ghana

Because there is a lack of understanding and training regarding orality, and since churches are not against oral strategies (cf. section 3.5.5 and 3.6.1 e), the Christian community in Central Gonja should initiate a partnership with organizations that develop oral tools and training programmes, and produce an Oral Bible that could be used for a more effective evangelism and discipleship strategy.

Some oral tools are already available in the Gonja language, such as the New Testament in audio format, God's Story in video format, the Jesus Film, audio Scripture songs, and training in Bible storytelling that could be incorporated into an oral strategy. Therefore, I recommend the initiation of the following partnership for the development of an Oral Bible strategy to effectively reach out to the large oral Gonja communities.

First, the Gonja Oral Bible Partnership should be initiated by the **Local Council of Churches** in Buipe that comprises of most of the church denominations represented in the area.

Second, the **Gonja Bible translation office** could be of great help to this partnership, because they have translated the whole Bible and could provide key Biblical terms, insight into worldview issues, and checking skills.

Third, the partnership could include the **Scripture Engagement department of GILLBT** that can provide media production such as quality recording. They can also offer training in the use of the Oral Bible in church planting movements.

Fourth, the partnership should include **churches in southern Ghana** that are reaching out to the Gonjas and are blessed with more resources. The Gonja Christian community should share information about this project with them and, as the Holy Spirit leads, they could come to an agreement with them.

Fifth, this partnership could provide material and courses in orality for **Bible schools in Ghana**, to produce church leaders that are equipped to serve the masses of oral learners in Ghana.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter provides practical strategies for an oral approach to effectively evangelize and disciple the large oral masses in the world, with emphasis on the Gonja people of Ghana. Practical strategies are presented for each of the following seven specific components: developing an Oral Bible, producing a worldview-specific story set, oral training for leaders, developing a reproducible church planting movement, ensuring the accuracy of the stories, oral media production, and developing an effective partnership for an oral approach.

The strategies provided for the *church in general* were prepared with the Gonja people in mind, in such a way that they could be applied to the oral, rural context of the Gonjas. However, at the same time, they could be implemented in a similar context elsewhere. These strategies can be initially started by a partnership between a missionary Christian community and a local Christian community, which can then be run locally on a long-term basis to ensure indigenous ownership, sustainability and reproducibility.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter 6 of this thesis presents a synthesis of the research by providing: (1) a restatement of the research problem and the research objectives; (2) a summary of the research findings; (3) recommendations regarding the implementation of this research; (4) the contribution of this research to Practical Theology and; (5) a conclusion.

#### **6.2 Restatement of the research problem and the research objectives**

##### **6.2.1 Restatement of the research problem**

The main research problem can be stated as follows:

- What approach can be used to effectively communicate Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana?

The following key questions can be derived from the main research problem:

- What are the main developments of the Orality Movement regarding the work of evangelism and discipleship among oral cultures? (Chapter 2)
- What are the main obstacles to communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana? (Chapter 3)
- What are the Biblical foundations of communicating Scripture for evangelizing oral communities? (Chapter 4)
- What practical strategies can be utilised as an effective approach for communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana? (Chapter 5)

### 6.2.2 Restatement of the research objectives

The main objective of the thesis can be stated as follows:

- To present an approach that can be used to effectively communicate Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.

Other key objectives that can be derived from the main objective are:

- To provide a literature review of the Orality Movement regarding the work of evangelism and discipleship, especially among the oral cultures (Chapter 2).
- To investigate the main obstacles to communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana (Chapter 3).
- To present the Biblical foundations of communicating Scripture for evangelizing oral communities (Chapter 4).
- To develop practical strategies that can be utilised as an effective approach for effectively communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana (Chapter 5).

## **6.3 Summary of the research findings**

### 6.3.1 A review of the Orality Movement

Chapter 2 provided a historical overview, a literature review, and critical evaluation of the Orality Movement. This included (1) a profile of the Orality Movement; (2) the historical development of the Orality Movement; (3) an overview of Orality Theory; (4) models and practices used worldwide; and (5) an evaluation of the Orality Movement.

It was concluded that literacy is not a prerequisite for evangelism and discipleship. Actually, for an effective discipleship ministry in oral communities, we must use oral means of communicating Scripture. The research also showed that there is a great need for awareness and scholarship in the new field of orality.

### 6.3.2 A review of the empirical survey of Central Gonja, Ghana

In Chapter 3 an empirical survey was conducted among church leaders in the Central Gonja District of Ghana, in order to ascertain their perceptions regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by their churches in the ministry of evangelism and discipleship. The purpose of the research was to determine the need of an effective oral approach of communicating Scripture for evangelizing the large oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.

The empirical research revealed, amongst other things, three oral Scriptural tools of evangelism that are least used by churches in the Central Gonja District of Ghana. In order, beginning with the lowest rate of use, they are:

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Radio programme using Bible story, song or drama           | 6% |
| 2. Audio/video Scripture material on mobile phone memory card | 8% |
| 3. Visual arts (images, symbols, paintings...)                | 9% |

The responses given by the participants for the low use of the above-mentioned three tools of evangelism can be grouped in four main reasons:

- a. The tool is not available.
- b. The tool is not affordable.
- c. There is no material to use with the tool.
- d. People do not have the necessary skills to use the tool.

It can be concluded that the oral Scriptural tools have not been properly developed in the area of survey.

Furthermore, the empirical research revealed the following three major reasons for the reluctance to embrace oral methods for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana:

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. There is a lack of understanding about orality            | 26% |
| 2. Christian workers have been trained in literary style     | 21% |
| 3. Christian workers do not see the need for oral strategies | 16% |



So, basically there is a lack of understanding and training on orality amongst the churches in the Central Gonja District of Ghana.

### 6.3.3 A review of the Biblical foundations of communicating Scripture to oral cultures

Chapter 4 presented a Biblical survey regarding the appropriate styles of communicating God's message to oral cultures, with special reference to Mark 4:33-34. In particular, Chapter 4 dealt with (1) a Biblical survey of the oral communication of Scripture, which included a survey of the both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the fact that Scripture is both a literary document and orally communicated word, and (2) a Biblical exegesis of Mark 4:33-34.

It was found that God's ideal way of communicating with man is relational or face-to-face, Jesus' model of communication was the use of parables and stories, the method of communication in the Early Church was the oral transmission of the Word, and the genre of the Bible is mostly narrative. Therefore, the oral style of communicating the Gospel is not only legitimate but also ideal.

### 6.3.4 A review of an effective approach of communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana

Chapter 5 presented an effective approach (practical strategies) of communicating Scripture for evangelizing the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana. This approach was based on the findings of the empirical survey in Chapter 3 and the Biblical foundations for oral communication of Scripture in Chapter 4. With the help of the Holy Spirit, this oral approach of communicating Scripture can be effectively used to evangelize and disciple the oral learners in Central Gonja, Ghana.

## **6.4 Recommendations**

There are seven components recommended in this study for an effective approach of communicating Scripture orally for evangelizing and discipling oral cultures, especially the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.

They are briefly presented below.

#### Recommended components of an oral approach for evangelism

1. *Strategies for developing an Oral Bible*: A clear description of an Oral Bible, and how to practically give it to the oral learners.
2. *Strategies for developing a worldview-specific story set*: How to discover the worldview of a people group, and how to develop a practical working list of worldview issues, necessary for an Oral Bible.
3. *Strategies for oral methodologies in training leaders*: How to provide theological training for oral students, and how to train local church planters in oral cultures, for an Oral Bible programme.
4. *Strategies for oral reproducible Church Planting Movements (CPMs)*: Description, elements and characteristics of a CPM, as well as the Phases and Tracks of an Oral Bible in a CPM.
5. *Strategies for accuracy in oral approaches*: A description of the need for accuracy in oral approaches, and how to use the Bible translation procedures in an Oral Bible project.
6. *Strategies for oral media production*: How to develop and effectively use oral media such as radio, mobile phone and visual arts, in an Oral Bible programme.
7. *Strategies for effective partnership in orality*: What are the principles and essentials for Kingdom collaboration, and who are the key participants and what are their roles in an Oral Bible partnership.

#### **6.5 The contribution of the findings to Practical Theology**

The research topic of this thesis, namely, the oral communication of the Gospel, is just one facet of Practical Theology. Although the study was confined to the Central Gonja District of Ghana, the research also presented Biblical principles for oral communication of the Gospel that can be applied to all oral cultures. Furthermore, the empirical survey confirmed the need for oral strategies to evangelize and disciple oral learners and to address obstacles in reaching out to the large masses of oral communicators of the world.

The findings of this study logically fit within the parameters of Practical Theology. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings of this study, the proposed Oral Bible strategy based on the Biblical principles of oral proclamation of God's Word, will help the Christian community fulfil the Great Commission and reach out sooner and more effectively to the majority of the world population who are oral communicators.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

I, the researcher, as a missionary in Ghana, am concerned about reaching out to the oral cultures in the country, where most of the people prefer to learn orally. On the other hand, serving with a Bible translation organisation, I am much concerned about the effectiveness of our products in reaching out to these cultures, and how we can serve them better.

Mark (4:33-34) presented our Lord Jesus as the Master Communicator, and referred to his approach of communicating God's message to the crowds when he wrote: "With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (NIV 1993).

I, the researcher, on the basis of this study, am of the opinion that by implementing the Oral Bible strategy presented in this thesis, it would enable the Christian community in Central Gonja, Ghana to evangelize and disciple their oral communities in a way that is faster and more effective.

## Abbreviations

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- CGTC Cranfield C E B 1959. *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*. Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary. Cambridge: The University Press.
- EC Earle Ralph 1957. *The Gospel According to Mark*. The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Hb Hiebert D Edmond 1974. *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Hn Hendriksen William 1975. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*. New Testament Commentary. New Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- My Meyer Heinrich August Wilhelm 1884. *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospels of Mark and Luke*. Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament. Rev. ed. New York: Funk and Wagnalls.
- NIC Lane L William 1974. *The Gospel According to Mark*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- T Tasker R V G 1960. *The Gospel According to St. John*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

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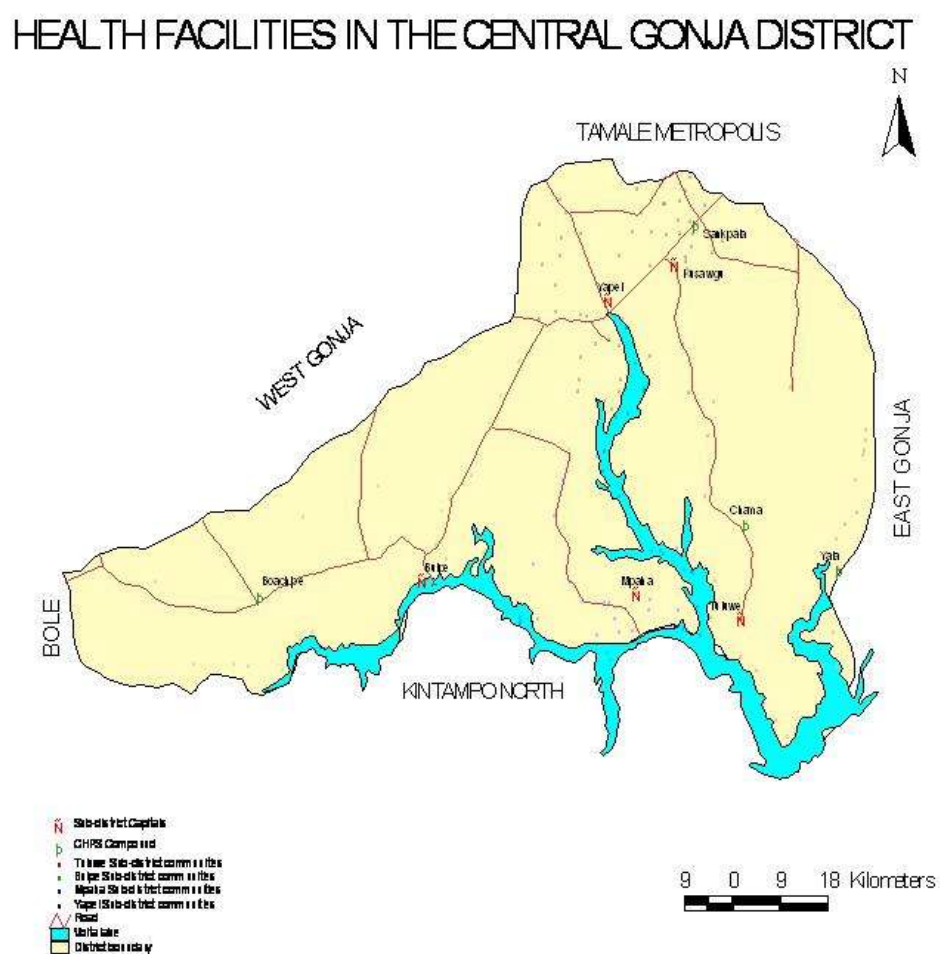


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## Appendices

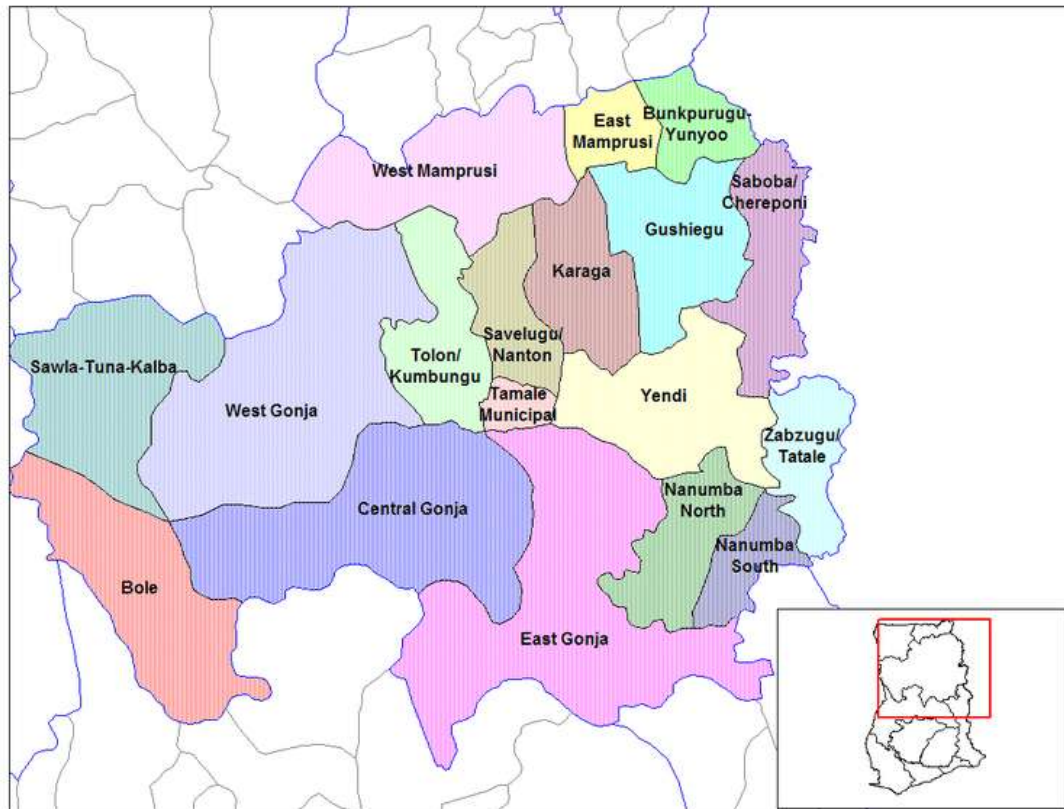
### Appendix 1

Central Gonja District, Ghana



Ministry of Food and Agriculture (2011)

## Districts of Northern Region, Ghana



Northern Region, Ghana (2013)

## Appendix 2

"The following are some characteristics of oral and print communicators" from Evans (2004:4):

<i>Oral Communicators Learn by Hearing...</i>	<i>Print Communicators Learn by Seeing...</i>
<i>Oral Communicators Learn by Observing and Imitating...</i>	<i>Print Communicators Learn by Reading, Studying, Analyzing...</i>
<i>Oral Communicators Think and Talk About Events, not Words...</i>	<i>Print Communicators Talk about Words, Concepts, Principles...</i>
<i>Oral Communicators Use Stories to Package Information...</i>	<i>Print Communicators Manage Knowledge in Categories and Store it in Print...</i>
<i>Oral Communicators Memorize Information Handed Down from the Past...</i>	<i>Print Communicators Seek to Discover New Information...</i>
<i>Oral Communicators Value Tradition...</i>	<i>Print Communicators Value Novelty...</i>

# COMMUNICATION STYLES

## Literate or Book Cultures

vs

## Non Literate or Traditional Cultures

- Analytical
- Expository
- Outline
- Summarize
- Divide into Parts
- Study
- Preach
- Individual

- Listening
- Repetition
- Narrative
- Event Oriented
- Holistic Overview
- Stories,drama,music
- Memorization
- Community oriented

Bridges 1, Lesson 1 Overhead TransparencyOverhead

(Scripture In Use 2005:11)

## Appendix 3

### "Bible Stories and the Ten-Step Process"

"The following ten-step process is taken from *Following Jesus: Discipleship for Oral Learners*. These ten steps can serve as a guide for developing and using biblical stories" (Evans 2004:26).

1. "**Identify** the Biblical Principle that you want to communicate – simply and clearly."
2. "**Evaluate** the Worldview Issues of the chosen people group."
3. "**Consider** Worldview – the Bridges, Barriers and Gaps."
4. "**Select** the Biblical Stories that are needed to communicate the Biblical principle."
5. "**Plan** (craft) the Story and plan the Discussion that is going to follow the Story, focusing on the task to be accomplished."
6. "**Communicate** the Story in a culturally appropriate way, using narrative, song, dance, object lessons and other forms."
7. "**Apply** the Principle by facilitating discussion with the group, helping them to discover the meaning and application of the Story to their own lives."
8. "**Obey** the Discovered Principle by implementing steps to be taken by the individuals."
9. "**Accountability** – establish Accountability between group members by mutual and reciprocal commitments to implement the Biblical principle in the conduct of their personal lives between members of the group, their families, and other personal relationships."
10. "**Reproduce** – encourage group members to Reproduce the Biblical Principle, first by demonstrating the principle in their own life-witness, then by sharing the Story and Principle with others."

## Appendix 4

Dear Pastor/Church Leader,

I am writing to request your assistance with the research component of my MTh which I am completing through the South African Theological Seminary (SATS). The title of my thesis is:

*“Towards an effective approach of communicating Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.”*

The purpose of my thesis is to find practical strategies that can be implemented by churches in Central Gonja to effectively communicate Scripture for evangelizing their oral communities.

Please find attached to this letter a questionnaire with the necessary instructions for the completion of it. Both your personal information and responses to the questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential. If you prefer to remain anonymous in your responses, then please complete the questionnaire leaving the space for your name blank.

I also have attached a letter from my Supervisor confirming the legitimacy of this survey and humbly requesting your cooperation in assisting with my research. Please complete the questionnaire within one week of receipt when I will personally come and collect the completed questionnaire. Thank you for your assistance.

Yours in Christ,

Mr. Ruben Dubei

MTh Student with SATS

Tel. 0247090867

Email: ruben\_dubei@sil.org

## Appendix 5



Dear Pastor/Church Leader,

**A survey to discover the reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by churches for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.**

This is to certify that Mr. Ruben Dubei is presently involved in doing research towards his MTh degree under the auspices of the South African Theological Seminary, entitled:

*“Towards an effective approach of communicating Scripture for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana.”*

The contents of the Questionnaire will be kept in strict confidence.

Your cooperation in completing the attached questionnaire is greatly appreciated as we believe your input will significantly contribute towards the success of the research project.

Yours in Christ,

***Dr Noel B Woodbridge***

MTh Supervisor

**South African Theological Seminary**

Tel: +2711234 4440

Email address: Noel@sats.edu.za

## Appendix 6

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

A survey of the perceptions of church leaders regarding the main reasons why certain oral Scriptural tools are least used by the churches for evangelising the oral communities in Central Gonja, Ghana, conducted by Ruben Dubei in association with the South African Theological Seminary (SATS).

- Please note that your Questionnaire will be held in strict confidence. So please complete the Questionnaire as honestly as possible.
- Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey.

#### **Instruction:**

Please answer within the spaces provided in the Questionnaire.

1. Date Questionnaire completed: .....
2. Name: .....
3. Gender: .....
4. Age: .....
5. What ethnic group do you belong to? .....
6. Name of your church and of the community where it is located?  
.....  
.....
7. The denomination/affiliation of your church?  
.....
8. What is your position in the church?  
.....



## SECTION A

### I. Information about your congregation

1. Please give some background information on your congregation:

a. How old is your church?

.....

b. Number of members?

.....

c. What is/are the major ethnic group/s of your congregation?

.....

.....

d. What percentage of your church members are literate?

.....

e. Please indicate the average age of your church members. Tick one of the following age categories:

☐ 14 - 30

☐ 30 - 50

☐ 50 and above

2. What language(s) is/are used during your church service?

.....

.....

.....

## SECTION B

### II. Information about your community

1. Please give some background information on your community.

a. What are the major ethnic groups of your community?

.....  
.....

b. What language/s do people mostly use to communicate in your community?

.....  
.....

c. What percentage of the population do you think are literate in your community?

.....

2. How do non-literates in your community learn and pass on information, since they cannot read and write?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. Please indicate the methods your church has been using to evangelise the non-literates in your community.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

a. Indicate two evangelistic methods that seem to be more welcomed by the community and more successful in bringing people to Christ.

.....

.....

.....

b. Indicate two evangelistic methods that are less welcomed by the community and less successful in bringing people to Christ.

.....

.....

.....

4. What language/s do you use to evangelise your community?

.....

.....

5. Please indicate the non-literates' interest in school and literacy programmes in your community. Tick one of the following:

☐ Much interest    ☐ Moderate    ☐ Low interest    ☐ No interest

## SECTION C: Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Chiang Samuel (2010) in his book, *Orality Breakouts*, mentions a number of oral tools available for Christian ministry.

### I. Rate the use of the following oral Scriptural tools by your church for evangelism.

1. Please score, out of 10 (from 0 to 10), HOW MUCH (if at all) your church uses the oral Scriptural tools below for evangelising the non-literates in your community. (0 indicating that the Scriptural tool is never used and 10 indicating that it is much used).

HOW MUCH your Church uses these oral Scriptural tools for evangelising your community		Score out of 10 (from 0 to 10)
<b>Tool 1.</b>	<b><i>Listening to the audio New Testament in small community or house groups.</i></b>	
<b>Tool 2.</b>	<b><i>Showing Jesus Film or other Scripture videos in the community.</i></b>	
<b>Tool 3.</b>	<b><i>Bible storytelling and proverbs in the local style.</i></b>	
<b>Tool 4.</b>	<b><i>Scripture songs, dance, and drumming in the traditional style using local instruments.</i></b>	
<b>Tool 5.</b>	<b><i>Performing drama based on Bible stories.</i></b>	
<b>Tool 6.</b>	<b><i>Visual arts (images, symbols, paintings...).</i></b>	
<b>Tool 7.</b>	<b><i>Radio programme using Bible story, song or drama.</i></b>	
<b>Tool 8.</b>	<b><i>Audio/video Scripture material on mobile phone memory card.</i></b>	

2. Please place in the left column below, the number of the THREE tools that you gave the LOWEST score in the table above, and then, in the right column below, motivate why these tools are the LEAST used by your church for evangelising your community.

Tool Number	Motivate why these THREE tools are the LEAST used by your church for evangelising your community
<i>Example: Tool 5</i>	This tool is never/hardly ever used by my Church because... etc. etc.

**II. Greer C Ivor (2011:65-66) has proposed a number of reasons that prevent Christian workers from using oral methods of communicating Scripture.**

Consider the following six reasons that prevent Christian workers from using oral methods of communication, and indicate by placing an X in the right-hand column below, which THREE of these reasons you believe are the most significant among Christian workers in your area.

<b>Reasons that prevent Christian Workers from using Oral Methods of Communicating Scripture</b>		<b>Indicate with an X the ONLY THREE most significant reasons</b>
<b>Reason 1.</b>	<i>There is a lack of awareness. Many do not even know what orality is.</i>	
<b>Reason 2.</b>	<i>There is a lack of understanding. For some Christian workers 'orality' only means storytelling. They do not know all the different forms of communication that exist in orality.</i>	
<b>Reason 3.</b>	<i>There is a lack of biblical studies on orality which includes a lack of appreciation of it.</i>	
<b>Reason 4.</b>	<i>Christian workers have been trained in literary style to use literary methods.</i>	
<b>Reason 5.</b>	<i>There is a fear of doctrinal error. There is a concern that Biblical truth cannot be communicated adequately by storytelling.</i>	
<b>Reason 6.</b>	<i>There can be a natural reluctance to change, especially when Christian workers do not see the need for oral strategies. Preaching can be seen to be more Biblical than 'telling stories' which are associated with children.</i>	

***The researcher will collect the completed questionnaire in a week's time from the receipt. For any question regarding the questionnaire please call Mr. Ruben Dubei at 0247090867. Thank you.***

## Appendix 7

14 Essentials for Storytelling (Scriptures In Use 2005:10):

# 14 Essentials for Storytelling:

## 7 STEPS TO TELL STORIES

1. Choose the Story
2. Learn the structure of the story and divide it into parts
3. Imagine the setting of the story in your mind
4. Imagine the action taking place in the story
5. Read the story aloud. Use your voice to project the images you've imagined
6. Memorize the story
7. Practice telling the story until it comes naturally

## 7 STEPS FOR DIALOGUE

1. Review the story you told in the previous session.
2. Use the natural cultural patterns to introduce and tell the story .
3. Ask listeners to retell the story. Accuracy is very important.
4. Ask questions that help the listeners review the story without explaining it or preaching.
5. Ask questions that help you discover what the listener has understood.
6. Be sensitive in dealing with incorrect answers or retellings.
7. Use the discussion time to help develop positive relationships with the learners.

Bridges 1, Lesson 4 Overhead Transparency Overhead



## **Appendix 8**

**Tips for recording video testimonies** from Mobile Ministry Made Easy (2012:28):

- 1) "Ideally, videos should be no more than 3 minutes long. 5 minutes is the maximum acceptable length."
- 2) "Make sure the sound is clear."
  - a. "Ask testimony giver to talk as if he is on a busy street. No whispering or soft talk."
  - b. "Background noise is acceptable and can make the testimony real. Just make sure the testimony can still be heard."
  - c. "If possible, make sure that camera audio recording level is set to 'loud' or on high enough audio levels."
- 3) "Testimony has 3 parts:"
  - a. "Life before Christ"
  - b. "How I met Christ"
  - c. "Life since I met Christ (No 'life is great now, no worries, lots of money...' Share how you now have Jesus to help you through your difficult times)."

**Tips for recording audio** from Mobile Ministry Made Easy (2012:29):

- 1) "Final audio should be 2 to 5 minutes in length."
- 2) "Audio file format: For quality it is best to record in WAV and then convert to MP3. Set your recorder for 44k, 24bit WAV."
- 3) "Mic Technique"
  - a. "If using a phone/recorder with built-in mics, set it down in front of the subject - don't hold it."
  - b. "Consider and correct your environment"
    - i. "Turn off fans and air conditioning units. Listen for and correct, if possible, wind noise, machine hums, etc."
    - ii. "Fluorescent lights: buzz"

- iii. "Room size and construction: 'the cave' sound from hard walls/floors/ceilings"
- c. "Isolate for better sound"
  - i. "Create a small space, particularly if using built-in mics."
  - ii. "Use soft surfaces to help absorb sound reflections. This can be done with hanging blankets or towels around the room or recording area."

## Appendix 9

Two short worldview thematic sets (Hill and Hill 2008:150):

### SACRIFICE THEME:

1. Creation	8. Birth of Jesus
2. Fall	9. "Baptism of Jesus (Behold the Lamb of God)"
3. Cain & Abel	10. Two or three stories of ministry of Jesus, his teaching, and conflict with religious leaders
4. Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac	11. Crucifixion
5. Passover	12. Resurrection
6. Day of Atonement (Lev 16)	13. Paul in Corinth & Ephesus (and letter, including 1Co 5:7)
7. Suffering Servant (Is 52-53)	14. A Better Sacrifice (Heb 9:6-14)

### JESUS AS VICTOR OVER SATAN THEME:

1. Creation of Man (Genesis 2)	7. Healing of Demon Possessed Boy (Mark 9; or some other relevant story of Jesus casting out of a demon)
2. Fall (Genesis 3)	8. Parable of the Strong Man (Luke 11:14-22,37-40,53-54)
3. Elijah and the Prophets of Baal (or Balaam) (1Kings 18:16-46)	9. Betrayal (Luke 19:47-48, John 12:27-31, Luke 22:2-6, Matthew 26:15, Luke 22:39,47,52-54,71, Mat 27:1-7)
4. Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1, 2:10-11, 3:1-9; 11:4-13)	10. Crucifixion (Luke 23:1-3,13-24; Matthew 27:27-31; Luke 23:32-53)
5. Birth (Matthew 1:18-25)	11. Resurrection & Ascension (Luke 24:1-12,36-49; Acts 1:8-11, Mark 16:19, Ephesians 1:20-21, Colossians 1:13, Heb 2:14-15)
6. Parable of Wheat & Tares (Mat. 13: 24-30)	12. Simon the Sorcerer (Act 8:4-25; or some other relevant story of spirit world interaction in Acts, e.g. Jewish Sorcerer Act 13:4-12; Slave-girl fortune-teller Acts 16; Sons of Sceva Act 19:8-20)