

Editorial: Tentmaking on the Frontiers

Although tentmaking is not a new concept, perhaps it is just now being realized as an important strategic development by which the unreached peoples of the world can be reached by the Word of God. The articles in this issue of the Journal cover the essence of tentmaking from the beginning when Paul earned his own support, through its historic development until today when businessmen and professionals are witnessing in the social and business worlds of the unreached peoples.

Controversies have come and gone over what a tentmaker is and whether or not the term is suitable for personnel who have the goal of sharing their faith in a different culture. The term tentmaker and its Biblical basis is discussed at length in this issue by tentmakers of the 20th century. Many of our forefathers, both clergy and lay have ventured into new areas of the world for the express purpose of spreading the Gospel. They normally took their own social mores with them and lived a different life style from the peoples of the indigenous society to whom they were called to witness. The question of what is a tentmaker and how do we distinguish them from any other type of missionary is fully addressed in the articles in this special issue on Tentmaking.

The full potential of tentmaking is just now being realized by the Christian community. Churches are beginning to support lay persons who are moving into the 10/40 Window to share their love for Christ and the message of the Gospel. Many of these lay persons are going with large families and the children also become effective agents for the Lord as they live their Christian witness in the ordinary scope of life. What greater testimony can there be? The importance of family and social relationships is discussed in this issue on the experiences of a tentmaking sending agency.

One of the most exciting areas is the

realization of how the business community can serve the Lord strategically. This is not something new, that has never occurred before—the Moravians practiced this principle years ago. However, it is only now that businesses are beginning to organize and assist one another in completion of the Great Commission.

The Business Mens Consultation at the recent GCOWE conference in Pretoria was truly a first in the growing movement of cooperation among businesses. A separate movement of partnerships are opening up new avenues for the Word to be shared as well. This movement along with the possible cooperation between Tentmakers International Exchange (TIE) and the Christian Business Mens Committee is converting the world marketplace as a beachhead into the unreached areas and peoples of the world. These marketplace opportunities are placing the Gospel in the markets and homes of the unreached in every corner of the globe. Here is the key, we believe, to effective communication of the Good News—reaching them where they live and work!

A new day in modern missions has dawned, a grass roots movement for reaching the unreached has been launched. The tentmaking movement needs to be seen for what it is—a mission development of the modern era, (the so called third era of missions focused on the unreached frontiers) that erases the unbiblical dichotomy between laity and clergy, between the religious and the secular, between ministry and business, and thus challenging every Christian to get involved in the task of highest priority. The tentmaking movement gives every believer the structure needed to use their skills and talents for the glory of God in reaching the nations of the earth. As never before Christians from all walks of life can get involved, using their skills as engineers, teachers, businessmen, becoming missionary tentmakers, sharing

the Gospel of salvation in Christ in their “natural” everyday lives with a waiting world that still has not heard. As never before, Christians from all walks of life can get involved in “making tents” on the Frontiers for the glory of the Lord, and for the planting of the Church of Jesus Christ in their midst.

In our generation, there is nothing more important than thousands upon thousands of Christians around the globe to 1) catch the vision of the ripe harvest fields of the unreached peoples of the world, and 2) giving their lives and using their skill to make Christ known to them, and 3) to plant His Church in every tribe, tongue and nation that still has not heard. Nothing is more important! This special edition on Tentmaking on the Frontiers, which explores for us the meaning, development, history, Biblical basis, strategy, training and the special role of mission agencies and churches regarding tentmaking points us in the right direction, giving us a vision for a lost world and providing us the needed structure to make it happen. It addresses the place of the local church, of the need for training for tentmakers, of the new role of mission agencies as related to tentmaking, and ends with a look at tentmaking developments in India.

Plans are in the making that in a future issue of the Journal, we will address the more practical dimensions of tentmaking, especially how Christian businessmen, teachers, engineers and entrepreneurs are and can be effective witnesses of the Gospel on the Frontiers.

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October 1997
El Paso, Texas*