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Presenting the Gospel Message in Alignment with the Asian Learning Mode and Style in the Context of Interpersonal Relationships

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INTRODUCTION

About two thousand years ago, Jesus gave His mandate to the first group of followers that they should spread the message of the good news or gospel of the Kingdom to all the peoples of the earth. The mandate, commonly called the Great Commission, is recorded in the four Gospels and the book of Acts. Christ's mandate did not prescribe a detailed procedure or process for spreading the gospel message. Instead, He gave His followers a broad directive: "While you are going in your everyday life, make learners, baptizing and teaching them what I have directed you..." (Matthew 29:19-20). Luke described Jesus' mandate in Acts 1:8, "Be witnesses unto me." The core of the mandate is to make students or learners. The verb form $\mu\alpha\nu\theta\alpha\nu\omega$ (manthano), meaning to learn, stems from the same ancient Proto-Indi-European root that gave us words like "mentor."¹ The focus of Christ's commission is to establish learners who continue studying, following, and discipling in the ways of Christ. In other words, people become learners through the acts of Christians being a witness, baptizing, and teaching. Christians are called to make learners or communities of learners, commonly called followers or disciples of Christ. Upon faith or belief, the learners—Christ's followers or disciples—are consequently brought into a relationship with Jesus Christ and His earthly communities comprising Christ's other learners—followers or disciples. Making learners is the "what" of the mandate of Christ.

In Christ's three years of mentoring the 12 disciples (Apostles), He broadly modeled what a mentor should look like in making learners. He provided them with

general guidance. He directed his mentoring efforts on forming the character qualities of a mentor who would be making learners—or followers of Christ—look like.

With the "what" of the mandate being indisputably clear, the "how" of the mandate is not prescribed but left to the appraisal and imagination of Christ's learners/followers or disciples. In other words, He

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1. Abarim Publications' Online Biblical Greek Dictionary, " $\mu\alpha\nu\theta\alpha\nu\omega$ (manthano)," accessed April 10, 2023, <https://www.abarim-publications.com/DictionaryG/m/m-a-n-th-a-n-om.html>

wanted them to figure out and determine the process, style, and approach suitable for making learners or communities of learners of Christ suited for their circumstances and contexts.

The "how" of making learners—or followers—of Christ for the twelve disciples was initially centered in Jerusalem, and the context of the eastern Mediterranean reflected the Jewish culture and learning. Peter's original audience or learning community was Jewish and Jewish diasporic peoples who gathered at the Day of Pentecost to hear His sermon² and also who gathered to listen to His gospel message at the event of the lame beggar's healing.³ He utilized the narrative style and approach to His gospel presentation, asking the audience to observe and reflect on the concrete experience and relationship between Christ and the founding of the Jewish people and nation through Abraham and David.

Both Peter and Stephen engaged their Jewish audience in alignment with the learning style of the Jewish people and culture—narratively observing, reflecting, and acknowledging the concrete, relational experience and connection between the forefathers and the previous knowledge and authorities of the Jewish people and nation.

In spreading the newfound faith and making learners—followers of Christ—out of the Jewish people, Stephen made use of the same narrative approach, observing and reflecting on the concrete connections among the ancestors of the Jewish nation, such as Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David.⁴ Both Peter and Stephen engaged their Jewish audience in alignment with the learning style of the Jewish people and culture—narratively observing, reflecting, and acknowledging the concrete, relational experience and connection between the forefathers and the previous knowledge and authorities of the Jewish people and nation.

The Apostle Paul's gospel presentation took an opposite approach and style of learning to Peter and Stephen. His audience was primarily the Hellenistic gentiles, taking a concise and logical approach and style to learning, preferring ideas and concepts more important than people. Additionally, Paul's audience learned through problem-solving, applying concepts to new experiences, and being less concerned with

2. Acts 2:14-41 (ESV)

3. Acts 3:1-10 (ESV) 4 Acts 7:1-51 (EVS)

4. Acts 7:1-51 (EVS)

interpersonal relationships and activities. Much of Paul's approaches to the gospel propagation and writings reflected the (Western) Hellenistic peoples and cultures of Asia Minor and Rome characterized as Western, individualistic, self-authorizing, and abstract conceptualization.

Peter/Stephen and Paul differ in "how" they engaged their audience and contexts. Their styles and approaches in presenting the gospel message to make learners or followers of Christ reflected the circumstances and contexts in which their audience learned and processed the new ideas/concepts or concrete experiences of God and Christ. In these two examples, the "how" of Christ's mandate of the Great Commission was developed individually to respond to the learning style of the contexts of the mentors of the gospel—Peter/Stephen and Paul—to make "learners" of those to whom they were ministering.

Nevertheless, although their gospel message presentation to make learners or followers of Christ differs in the learning style suited uniquely to their context, they also found commonality relative to their context in how Christ's learners or followers were made. That commonality was interpersonal relationships, referred to as the *oikos* relationships.

Christians ought to give weight to the learning mode or style of the new knowledge of their audience. How do the people, community, or context process and integrate new information and concepts into their learning and growth? Understanding their learning mode or style and how they process and integrate new knowledge and ideas in their learning and growing process will inform Christians how to propagate the gospel effectively to them and make learners—followers—of Christ and how to grow them in Christ's learning and believing communities as Christ's learners or followers.

The presenter/author believes Asians predominately receive or learn the gospel message through their reflective observation and concrete experience in the context of interpersonal relationships. Because Asia's current practices of missionary gospel message presentation predominately pattern after abstract conceptualization that stresses the importance of understanding and accepting the gospel concepts over relationships and people, Asian missions and churches are experiencing a low outcome regarding Christian conversion. How should they shape their approach to evangelism in Asia contexts to be more effective in making learners or followers of Christ? How should they adapt their style of presenting the gospel that would align with the learning styles of Asian learners so that they will effectively achieve the mission or objective of making Asians Christ's learners or followers?

Dominant Evangelistic Approach in Asia

The current evangelistic approaches to making learners or followers of Christ being utilized by Asian missions and churches in Asian contexts

predominately focus on transferring an idea or concept of the gospel that the Asian hearers and learners are required to process through deductive rationalization. These approaches assume that Christian conversion has been achieved once a person conceptualizes the content of the gospel message. These gospel messengers theorize and put forth the proposition that if Asian nationals admit the notion of their sin and accept/believe Christ's death and resurrection for their sin, they are counted as learners or followers of Christ. Based upon how they became learners or followers of Christ—that is, concept/truth proposition or abstract conceptualization, they presume that is how Asians learn about Christ and engage the knowledge of Christ in the same way they have had.

Asian Audience's Responses to Asian Mission of Making Christ's Learners/Followers

While the small parts of Asia, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan, learn and accept information/new idea, especially the gospel message, through a logical thinking process (abstract conceptualization); the overwhelming majority of Asia still learn and process information, learn new ideas, and engagement through concrete experiences. When these Asians are presented with the gospel message to accept/believe as a concept, they are just observing and reflecting on which they have been proposed. They, in all probability, will not respond in favor of acceptance of the gospel message and become learners or followers of Christ because the gospel proposition will not align with how they learn, process, and engage in new information or ideas.

The current evangelistic approaches used in Asia, heavily focused on changing individualistic minds, are not suitable for Asian contexts, who are mostly collectivistic. An Associate Professor of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, Jenny H. Pak, elaborated on the process of religious conversion for Asians who live under the collectivist mentality:

In many Asian communities, coming to faith is not simply the individualistic decision so common in the Western world. In more collectivistic communities, we often see families converting to Christianity as a unit rather than simply as individuals. Chinese folk religions and Daoism incorporate ancestral worship and the concept of passing on the family torch. Thus, when a person converts to Christianity, they may be extinguishing this family torch. Hence, in deeply relational cultures, one can be disowned for betraying the family by taking on new beliefs and practices as a Christian.⁵

The gospel message introduced to the Korean context exemplifies this approach. A well-known Asian missiologist Julie Ma, Professor of Mission

and Intercultural Studies at Oral Roberts University, described:

The Christianity that was introduced in Korea was a western and individualistic form of faith. Thus, the conservative and evangelical tendency among Korean Christians accentuated the individual dimension of faith. Such ran against the socio-cultural fabrics of Korean society, where communal interests precede personal concerns.⁶

The majority of Asians successfully responded to the gospel message from the presentation of the gospel in terms of concrete experiences relative to power dynamics. The gospel messengers stress the power of God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit overcoming sufferings, sicknesses, disasters, and misfortunes and bringing prosperity has provided the concrete experiences to engage, learn, and be transformed. The Pentecostal/Charismatic evangelistic efforts account for the vast majority of Christian conversion throughout Asia due to the emphasis on the concrete experience of the power dynamics of the gospel, responding to the felt needs of everyday life. Julie Ma elaborated on this point:

It is within this social context that Pentecostal faith quickly spread among the socially marginalized [in Asia]. Pentecostal's lively worship, anticipation of God's immediate interference, theology of empowerment by the Spirit, and outward signs (e.g., speaking in tongues, healing) have stimulated the swiftest rising in Asia. Emphasis on an experiential dimension of religious life and the affecting aspect of human life has brought a powerful emotional and social release and introduced 'religious experience.'⁷

Much of the current evangelistic approaches practiced in Asia are embedded with Western thoughts and approaches that collide with Asian religious views and cultures and the way Asian learn and accept the gospel. These practices inherited from major Protestant traditions, such as the Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Baptists, heavily stress the conceptualized or creedal aspect of the Christian faith, faced tough challenges and rejection by Asian learners due to its approach to the presentation of the gospel message abstractly, rationalistically, dualistically, linearly, and in either/or terms. Those features of elements of the evangelistic practices, presenting the gospel message experientially, concretely, holistically, non-dualistically, and in circular or both/and terms, found alignments with Asia's religious and cultural societies and achieved sizeable adherents. Protestant's Pentecostals/Charismatics align more closely with this approach.

Asians have three core values that guide their behavior and conduct of religious change or conversion: harmony, relationality, and circularity.

5. Jenny H. Pak et al, "Selfies, Upward Mobility, Conversion, and the Gospel of Western Individualism," Fuller Studio, December 14, 2022, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/selfies-upwardmobilityconversion-and-the-gospel-of-western-individualism/>

6. Julie Ma, "Influence of Pentecostal Spirituality to Asian Christianity," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 23, no. 2 (August 2020): 118.

7. Julie Ma, 110.

The gospel presentation of the current evangelistic approach in the Asian contexts also encourages confrontation and conflict with the social values of most Asians whom the gospel messengers attempt to make learners or followers of Christ.⁸ Man Yee Ho, an Asian sociologist at the City University of Hong Kong, revealed this reality:

It is also evident that interpersonal harmony has been prominent in traditional East Asian cultural values. From the perspective of collectivistic cultures that emphasize group harmony and saving others' faces, forgiveness functions as a strategy for the maintenance of social relationships.⁹

Together with their collective mindset, social values play an essential role in developing their norms and thus become standards to guide how they learn and accept the gospel message being presented to them. As long as the presentation of the gospel message is aligned with the Asian core values and the learning style of the Asian receivers, they will be open to reflecting on the gospel as individuals and as a group.

Asians set core values as a condition and instrument for maintaining the group's coherence. They define the limits of the group's interpersonal relationships. A prominent British social psychologist, Michael A. Hogg, agrees: "Groups also provide the parameters for what we do on a day-to-day basis and with whom we are likely to spend time. The group, in turn, provides the context for developing interpersonal relationships."¹⁰ Hogg stressed the importance of norms to keep people in their groups or (ingroups) aligned and conformed to the goals and cohesion of the groups. Through the concept of normative influence, Hogg maintained that groups could direct the behavior of their members:

Groups can also influence members indirectly through the power of social norms that describe and

8. Chansamone Saiyasak, "The Development of Asian Christian Spirituality," (paper presentation, Asian Society of Missiology Forum 2022, Zoom Online Forum, November 24-26, 2022), 7.

9. Man Yee Ho, "Forgiving in East Asian Cultures: Theory and Empirical Research," in *Handbook of Forgiveness*, eds. Everett L. Worthington, Jr., and Nathaniel G. Wade, 234-41 (New York: Rout-

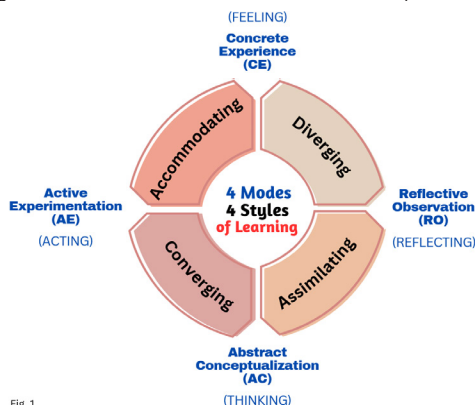


Fig. 1
Kolb Experiential Learning

ledge, 2020), 235.

10. Michael A. Hogg, "Social Identify and the Sovereignty of the Group," in *Individual Self, Relational Self, and Collective Self*, eds. Constantine Sedikides, Marilynn B. Brewer (New York: Routledge, 2016), chap. 8, kindle.

prescribe appropriate behavior for group members in that context. In the absence of direct social pressure, people conform to group norms.

Experiential Learning and Making Christ's Learners/Followers

One of the most relevant explanations for the little or non-response of Asians to the gospel propagation as it is currently being practiced may have to do with the concept of experiential learning by David Kolb, a premier educational scientist. Kolb's experiential learning proposes that people receive and learn new experiences or ideas, such as the gospel, through a learning cycle that consists of four learning modes (Fig. 1): the Concrete Experience/CE mode (feeling), the abstract conceptualization/AC mode (thinking), the reflective observation/RO mode (reflecting), and the active experimentation/AE (acting). This cycle is so natural and organic that people unconsciously engage in it.

In learning and growing, people are apt to apply two learning modes: one mode from the AC vs. CE dimension and the other from the AE vs. RO dimension. The combination of two learning modes—one from the AC vs. CE learning dimension and the other from the AE vs. RO dimension—results in four basic learning styles (Fig. 1): diverging, comprising the CE and RO modes; the converging, the AC and AE modes; assimilating, the AC and RO modes; and accommodating, the CE and AE modes. Four learning styles were conceived to be the way or channel people across all cultures receive new experiences or concepts, such as the gospel. Although people may possess a varying degree of all four learning styles, their preferred dominant style takes charge in processing information, concept, or experience being introduced to them—this includes the gospel message being communicated or presented to them by the gospel messenger.

In the CE (feeling), the Asian receiver is presented or encountered with the gospel in concrete forms or experiences or a reinterpretation of an existing experience in the light of new concepts. In the RO (reflecting), the Asian receiver reflects on the new concrete experience in the light of their existing knowledge. Any inconsistencies in the new experience will face early rejection. In the AC (thinking), the reflection will give rise to a new idea or concept or an adaptation/modification of an existing abstract conception or notion. In the AE (acting), the newly created or modified concepts involve experimentation so the receiver/learner can experience its outcome.

Yoshitaka Yamazaki of Bunkyo University, Japan; Michiko Toyama of Bunkyo University, Japan; and Thitiwat Attrapreyangkul of the Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Thailand, through their recent research, describe the characteristics of the four learning styles:

People who have a diverging learning style tend to use

*feeling and reflecting, which are also good at forming good relationships with people, respecting others and their values, viewing issues from various perspectives, and being patient. In contrast, those with a converging learning style develop the ability to make quick decisions, evaluate pros and cons, devise practical solutions, and argue logically and pragmatically. Those with an assimilating learning style are able to make ideal plans, organize information, analyze issues logically and conceptually, and integrate information and ideas into a model. Finally, those with an accommodating learning style have strength in taking action and initiative, leading people, creating team spirit, and getting things done.*¹¹

Japanese and Thai adult learners were categorized as having a diverging learning style that uses the CE mode (feeling) more than the AC mode (thinking) and the RO mode (reflecting) more than the AE mode (acting). In contrast, the US learners were classified as having an assimilating style with a strong preference for the AC mode over the CE mode and a preference for the RO mode over the AE mode. The study results also found that the US adult learners at 71% either assimilating or converging, and the Japanese adult learners at least 80% either accommodating or diverging, followed by Thai behind the Japanese.

Due to their diverging style of learning, Japanese and Thai adult learners "like to listen with reflective observation and prefer to form interpersonal relationships."¹² They like to have things explained to them and their group members by authority figures with whom respect and have interpersonal relationships. They then integrate all group members' views into a conclusive decision. Whereas the US learners, characterized by their assimilating style, focus not on interpersonal connections but on logical and explicit arguments, each coming to their own final decision. The Japanese/Thai learners emphasize and celebrate unity and conformity, while the US learners, diversity and uniqueness.

A similar finding was found in the study of Japanese and American managers as indicated by Yamazaki in another study: "Japanese managers are more concrete and reflective, whereas American managers are more abstract and active. Their study shows that Japanese managers are linked with the diverging learning style and American managers lie in the converging learning style."¹³ According to a recent study on Thai learners, over 80% of learners are characterized by a diverging/accommodating style combination. The diverging/accommodation style combination (CE mode) stresses

people orientation, while the accommodating/converging combination (AC mode) emphasizes concept or idea orientation.¹⁴ While English-speaking nationals of Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan tend to function in AC mode (converging/assimilating styles), however, the majority of the population of these countries are oriented to CE learning mode, where interpersonal relationships serve as the context for learning.

The Connection Between Asians' Learning Modes/Styles and The Making of Learners or Followers of Christ

Concerning the Christian ideas or concepts of God, His Son Jesus, and the concepts of sins and salvation, or the gospel, which Christian missions have attempted to communicate to Asian learners in Asia for centuries, the gospel messengers almost always displayed the Christian message to Asian learners or recipients in the abstract conceptualization (AC) mode, either in the converging style or assimilating style, because that was how they learned or received the gospel and became Christ's learners or followers. The Christian faith was the compelling option after evaluating the pros and cons and making the arguments logically and pragmatically (converging learning style). After analyzing it logically and conceptually, Christ was the plausible choice (assimilating learning style).

The Asian learners or recipients, who functioned in the abstract conceptualization (AC) mode with either converging or assimilating as their dominant learning style, engaged the new gospel idea and concept, integrated it into their lives, and became believers.

The Asian learners or recipients, who functioned in the abstract conceptualization (AC) mode with either converging or assimilating as their dominant learning style, engaged the new gospel idea and concept, integrated it into their lives, and became believers. Others tried the concept of God for a while and abandoned it afterward. The rest changed their religious affiliation to Christianity for external reasons. Through them, the gospel is communicated to other Asians as an abstract concept to be grasped. However, the results are that the bulk of Asia remains far from Christ's learners or followers. Most Asians receive process or learn new information, including the gospel message, through a concrete experience

11. Yoshitaka Yamazaki et al, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Learning Style and Learning Skills: A Comparison of Japan, Thailand, and the USA," in *Handbook of Research on Cross-Cultural Business Education*, eds. Chandan Maheshkar and Vinod Sharma, 160-182 (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2018), 165, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-3776-2.ch008>.

12. Yoshitaka Yamazaki et al, 170.

13. Yoshitaka Yamazaki, "Learning Styles and Typologies of Cultural Differences: A Theoretical and Empirical Comparison," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, no. 5 (2005): 535, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.006>.

14. Khajornsak Buaraphan, "Grades 1-12 Thai Students' Learning Styles according to Kolb's Model," *Asian Social Science* 11, no. 10 (2015): 191.

(CE mode) in the diverging or accommodating learning style through interpersonal relationships. They must be able to feel or experience the gospel in the context of or in connection to those in their interpersonal relationship network—such as family, community, clan, etc. In other words, they learn and transform with those in their oikos. For Asian learners or recipients whose dominant learning mode is the CE (concrete experience) and whose learning style is either diverging or accommodating, the knowledge of God/Jesus, or the gospel, can only be related through concrete experiences, such as (1) God's healing from a sickness, (2) delivering from misfortune, disaster, evil spirits, poverty, hunger, suffering, death, etc., (3) miracles in one's life, (4) dreams and visions, (5) prosperity, (6) overwhelming presence of God that brings comfort and security, (7) a changed life by God of someone in close interpersonal relationships, and (8) the like. The gospel cannot be passed on logically or conceptually through knowledge transfer. The Asian learners or recipients must be guided (by people in their interpersonal relationships or the oikos) to experience salvation as Christ's learners or followers.

The Essentiality of Interpersonal Relationships or Oikos or The Asian Learners

As collectivist and socializing-minded Asian learners or followers of Christ, interpersonal relationships (oikos) are essential to learning and receiving the gospel experience or salvation experience. The interpersonal relationships or oikos are necessary context throughout their lifetime, including the period before the exploratory experience with the gospel and after embracing the gospel as Christ's learners or followers. Yamazaki underscored the importance of interpersonal relationships:

Interpersonal relationships are crucial in high-context culture [which is most of Asia]. This trait is also congruent with the concrete experience [CE –mode of learning] ...

*People orientation is an attribute of the concrete experience mode whose persons tend to prefer interpersonal and social issues to task issues.*¹⁵

Hazel Rose Markus, a well-renown social psychologist at Stanford University, USA, and Shinobu Kitayama, a respected social psychologist at Kyoto University, Japan, described the interdependence and interpersonal relationships of Asian learners as follows:

Experiencing interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent, organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship... Within such a construal, the self becomes most meaningful and complete when it is cast in the appropriate

social relationship.... This view of the self and the relationship between the self and others features the person not as separate from the social context but as more connected and less differentiated from others. People are motivated to find a way to fit in with relevant others, to fulfill and create an obligation, and in general to become part of various interpersonal relationships.

Asians belong to social or interpersonal relationships (oikos) in which the gospel and the concept of God, Jesus Christ, and salvation can concretely be experienced through active experimentation and reflection. The oikos as an instrumentality for spreading the Christian faith during the ministry of Jesus and the early church was a typical pattern. The oikos type of "biblical pattern of evangelism which flowed so freely, fearlessly and forcefully through the early church across the Mediterranean world."¹⁶ Woft argued further:

*The apostolic church used the interlocking social systems of common kinship/community/interest as the backbone for communicating the gospel. The basic thrust of New Testament evangelism was not individual evangelism, it was not mass evangelism, and it was definitely not child evangelism. The normative pattern of evangelism in the early church was OIKOS EVANGELISM.*¹⁷

Peter B. Hammond, Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University, and David G. Mandelbaum, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, pointed out basic social relationship units—the family/kinship, the local community, and the clan/common interest groups—upon which all other social relationships are based.¹⁸ These relationship units form the oikos of Asian learners of the concrete experience (CE) learning mode operating in either a diverging or accommodating learning style.

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Dane W. Fowlkes, Assistant Professor of Religion at East Texas Baptist University, USA, and P. Verster, Professor of Missiology at University of Free State, South Africa, found that utilizing oikos evangelism

¹⁶ Tom Woft, "Oikos Evangelism -- Biblical Pattern," Apostolic Information Service, accessed 10 April 2023, updated 8 February 2008, <https://www.apostolic.edu/oikos-evangelism-the-biblical-pattern/>

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁵ Yoshitaka Yamazaki, "Learning Styles and Typologies," 8.

prevents "removing believers from their familial systems and reducing their potential for spiritual influence." Holding to the position that the oikos is the natural New Testament means of propagating the gospel and making converts, Fowlkes and Verster concluded with these statements regarding the propagation of the gospel among the Asian Indians:

We see that Indians prefer to make decisions as a group or family, rendering the Western individualistic approach to "deciding for Christ" ineffective and counterproductive. As a result, the authors propose that the best way to facilitate a church planting movement among Hindus is to refrain from planting churches. In other words, the contextually appropriate approach to evangelizing forward caste Hindus is to allow converts to remain as vital parts of their familial systems and make disciples according to accepted Hindu patterns of spiritual guidance. In time, converts will influence other family members toward Christ and, together, become a 'house church' in the truest sense of the term. This non church planting method of facilitating a church planting movement among Hindu people groups may sound contradictory, but will actually liberate from the ineffective and counterproductive traditional missionary methods of the past in India and usher in the first church planting movements among forward caste Hindus in India.¹⁹

Michael Green, a British theologian, Anglican priest, and Christian apologist, stressed the centrality of the household in the propagation of the Christian faith. He elaborated:

The household proved the crucial medium for evangelism within natural groupings, whatever member of the family was first won to the faith. It was preferable, of course, if the father was converted first, for then he would bring over the whole family with him. This is what happened in the case of Cornelius, when he contemplated a change of superstitio. He gathered together his blood relatives, his slaves and his friends, and together they heard the preaching of Peter. When Cornelius professed faith his whole familia ... was baptized with him. Thyatira operating for the time being in Philippi. Her whole household... was baptized. So was that of the Philippian jailer when he professed faith. It was the natural thing.²⁰

The idea of household (*oikos*) evangelism was found throughout the Scriptures; however, it was the premier missiologist, Donald McGavran, who advanced the concept of "web movements" (*oikos*) from his initial missiological research. He articulated:

Some cultures know little or nothing of individualized decision-making processes, so common in the West. Important decisions are made only in groups.

19. D.W. Fowlkes and P. Vester, "Family (*oikos*) Evangelism for Reaching Forward Caste Hindu in India," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27, no. 1 (January 2006): 335.

20. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Guilford, Surrey: Eagle, 1995), 254.

However, even those who are called to evangelize more individualistic societies or traditionally Christian, but nominal, areas should pay close attention to people movement theory in general and to what I will later refer to as web movements in particular...understanding the dynamics of the web movement is a distinct advantage in leading a church to growth.²¹

Through interpersonal relationships in the context of Asia's natural groupings—the family/kinship, the local community, and the clan/common interest groups—the natural process of experiencing, learning, and integrating concepts of God, Jesus Christ, and the salvation into the worldview and everyday life of the Asian learners.

CONCLUSION

The social distancing policy and the mandatory isolation enforced in every country on the global level during the recent COVID-19 pandemic have revealed the necessity of personal contacts and social relationships. Human beings are created to reflect the image of the relational triune God to relate socially to other human beings through interpersonal relationships. More importantly, in light of the following bases and precedents, Asian missions should consider modifying their approach to the propagation of the gospel to Asians that could improve their outcome in fulfilling the Great Commission mandate of making Christ's learners, followers, or disciples of Asia's collectivist societies and communities:

- 1) Jesus' mandate to His followers is for them to make learners, who are followers or disciples of Him and His way — Matthew 28:19-20,
- 2) Jesus gave the "what" of the mandate but provided guidance for the "how" of the mandate to His followers and left them with the flexibility and adaptability to engage their contexts,
- 3) The New Testament and the early church present the gospel propagation patterns of engaging the learners and their contexts—through the *oikos* interpersonal relationships,
- 4) Missiological grounds for gospel propagation in the context of interpersonal relationships, and,
- 5) The anthropological, sociological, educational, and behavioral foundations for optimal engagement of the contexts—the learning modes and styles (CE mode, converging/ accommodating learning styles that would allow the gospel and the concepts of God, Jesus Christ, and salvation to be received, experienced, learned, and integrated into Asia's families/ kinship, local communities, and clan/interest groups.

21. Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 220-21.

The author calls upon the Asian missions community to approach the gospel propagation and reach out to Asian oikos and make them learners/followers/disciples of Christ through their learning mode (concrete experience) in alignment with their dominant learning style (diverging or accommodating) in the context of their interpersonal relationships (oikos) to fulfill the Great Commission mandate of Christ effectively. Christ commanded, "While you are going in your everyday life, make learners of me..." (Matthew 28:19).

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