

## Book Review

### W. Jay Moon and W. Bud Simon, *Effective Intercultural Evangelism: Good News in a Diverse World*

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Jay Moon and Bud Simon have done a remarkable study of effectively reaching people across cultural differences. Both authors were missionaries, in different countries from each other. They have drawn from their experience and carried out studious academic investigation in writing this book.

Evangelism is no one-size-fits-all approach. There is a misunderstanding that evangelism means to get people across a finish line. An individual could have 30 opportunities or occasions before s/he takes a final decision to trust in Jesus. In analysing intercultural evangelism, according to the authors it is important to remember that "Putting Christ at the centre of someone's worldview includes an invitation to place allegiance to Jesus Christ above allegiance to any other power, habit, or preference" (10).

#### Bounded-set Theory and Centered-set Theory

In bounded-set theory, a person is either inside or outside a fixed boundary line that marks who are in and not. In centered-set theory, a person is on the direction towards Christ. He may be far off, but on the right course. "In the centered-set approach, evangelism is a part of the discipleship process. Once people turn from sin and give their allegiance to Jesus, they are in the set. Discipleship is the process of keeping people Christ focused amid the temptations to turn their allegiance elsewhere" (15).

#### Four Worldviews

The authors present four overarching worldviews: 1) Guilt/Justice; 2) Shame/Honour; 3) Fear/Power; and 4) Indifference/Belonging with Purpose. Gospel presentation must be given according to the audience's worldview. When Adam and Eve sinned, they experienced guilt, shame, and fear. The aspiration to escape these consequences creates a paradigm, like operation systems (OS) in a computer. Cain is an example of those who have indifference as their worldview. In mission strategy, the worldview is not considered seriously enough. Paul Hiebert, who explained Westerners' "excluded middle," writes: 1) Examine worldviews; 2) Be exposed to other worldviews; 3) Create living rituals.

Most gospel presentations are relevant to the guilt/justice worldview and are thereby considered as authentic. The authors emphasize: "The error occurs, however, when we assume that this presentation of the gospel is the only one that is biblical" (53).

The table below gives an overall understanding of evangelism among worldviews:

Worldview	Guilt/Justice	Shame/Honour	Fear/Power	Indifference/Belonging with Purpose
Typical Location	West (North America/Europe)	East (Middle East, N. Africa, Asia)	South (Sub-Saharan Africa, tribal, Caribbean)	Postreligious

Sin's result	Guilt/separation	Shame	Fear/curse/bondage	Indifference
Solution in Jesus	Payment/substitute	Honour restored, cleansed	Deliverance	Belonging with purpose
Image of salvation	Courtroom/justice	Relationship/cleansing	Power/freedom	Coming home
Relationship with God	Judge who declares: Not guilty	Father who restores honour	Creator who protects and delivers	Family who welcomes you home

Table 2.2 Evangelism among four worldviews (37)

### **Guilt/Justice**

“Concepts of guilt, justice, punishment, judgement, and personal responsibility point toward a guilt/justice worldview” (43). Those outside the faith think the Church and Bible exist to condemn people. Relevant values for presenting the gospel to those who hold this worldview include: “First, the audience would hold a strong notion of individual responsibility and see the decision to follow Christ as a personal choice. Second, the audience would have a strong sense of justice that incorporates clear values of right and wrong” (45).

There are two images of salvation in this worldview. First, salvation is atonement of guilt: God’s declaration that humans are not guilty of sin because they are credited with the righteousness of Christ. Second, Salvation is a covenant relationship: humans are to have covenant relationship with God. However, a major problem worth noting is that a guilt/justice worldview is no longer relevant to younger generations. In essence, the goal of evangelism within a guilt/justice worldview is, “Wrong need to be righted, guilt needs to be atoned for, and individuals need to be held accountable” (52).

### **Shame/Honour**

The authors present a case study: Pedro came to church and sat by himself, drinking what was actually whiskey from his water bottle. He came because of his wife. “The shame of failing financially, failing to provide for his family, and failing to control an addiction pressed him down like a weight on his shoulders” (56-57). The pastor came and sat beside him. Pedro felt accepted as the pastor put his arms around him. The pastor brought coffee for him; he felt honoured. That day, Pedro gave his life to Christ.

“The tendency of the church is to place guilt in the driver’s seat with the assumption that it will control shame reactions” (57). Multiple worldviews are to be considered equally valid. “Christianity needs to be translated into a culture’s worldview rather than impose on a culture. In this case, important questions include, how is God at work in this culture? And where is the Holy Spirit touching people’s consciences in this culture?” (59).

Shame is an external control exerted by a group or community and needs an audience, while guilt refers to an internal code that includes awareness and self-criticism.

Simon gives another example from his mission experience: Children used to get involved in petty theft. They were told it was wrong and that they should not do that, but the children did not heed. They were then told, “We will tell the neighbours you are a thief”; or, “When the neighbourhood finds out, no one will trust you.” The children returned the stolen items. “Shame becomes a way to help understand cultural values and self-esteem in community” (61).

It is estimated that 70 to 80 percent of the global population holds a shame/honour dominant worldview. “In a shame/honour worldview coming to the Lord as a community is completely valid” (59). Evangelism is to invite to confer honour in a shame/honour worldview. In Genesis: God covered shame and restored honour. In the parable of Prodigal son: Christ accepts us and

restores our honour by including us in family of God. Restoring honour to the shamed is demonstration of compassion, love, and mercy.

“Not only was this worldview [shame/honour] prevalent around the globe, it was ascending in Western cultures, which had been dominated for centuries by the guilt/justice worldview” (67). One of the reasons is social media that gives a ready audience.

### **Fear/Power**

An African proverb: A human being hides in the feathers of chicken. Traditionally, chickens are commonly used in situations requiring sacrifice to the ancestors or earth shrines for problems. If there are chickens in the home, we can “hide inside the feathers of the chicken.” Moon in this conversation with a person from Africa understood the meaning of the verse that promises protection under God’s wings (Psalms 91:4).

Spiritual power and the fear/power worldview have been called the forgotten dimension of cross-cultural mission and ministry. Either good power will be at work or evil power will fill the empty space, with no voids. Irenaeus (AD 130-202) was the first to construct a theology of atonement as victory at the Cross over the power of darkness. Ignatius mentioned salvation as escape from evil spirits. Origen mentioned that learned sorcerers could not cast out demons as easily, decisively, and quickly as the simple and uneducated believers could in the name of Lord Jesus Christ.

The authors emphasize, “Evangelism does not change a person’s worldview (such as from fear/power to guilt/justice); rather it introduces Christ into the person’s worldview to transform it. When Christ comes to those person’s worldview, he replaces fear with love” (I John 4:18) (82). People having this worldview are in fear and then need power greater than themselves and outside themselves to bring freedom and healing.

Among people with a fear/power worldview, less than one percent reject a genuine offer to receive prayer. “Evangelism uses prayers of blessing or to break curses in these arenas of life, which is meaningful and impactful” (90). By not inviting the Holy Spirit into a person’s life, we push them to another power source.

### **Indifference/Belonging with Purpose**

Cain can be taken as a model under this category. Cain did not have signs of guilt, shame, or fear, but he complained about his punishment. In more recent history, secularization emerged with science, industrialization, the market economy, and the increasing dominance of technology. Post modernism suspects truth and challenges linear, scientific logic. “Paradoxically, this indifference to religion has led to a hunger for purpose and community” (95). Viktor Frankl termed this indifference as an “existential vacuum.” Postmoderns seek community, significance, and transcendence. Postmoderns eventually could come to Christ by: 1) experiencing compelling community, 2) making a difference through service or leadership, and 3) receiving mentoring (including pastoral care and accountability) or leadership development. They need a sense of belonging and purpose.

### **Holistic Evangelism**

The authors emphasize the importance and need for holistic evangelism. Moon gives the following example from his mission experience: “By digging a sanitary well in the village, it opened the hearts of the Kunkwa people to the gospel” (117). The Lord Jesus’s reading from Isaiah implies, first, that God desires to restore our relationship with him so we can experience his favour. Second, our relationship with others is restored by breaking chains. Third, our

relationship with creation is restored (Luke 4). “Evangelism in every worldview benefits when deeds are added to proclamation” (120). There are four stages of holistic mission: 1) Relief, 2) Recovery, 3) Development, and 4) Sustainability.

### **Local Learning Preferences**

The authors also bring to focus the different kinds of learning. They compare them with computer operating systems, specifically noting literate cultures and oral learning cultures. “A culture’s operating system is not visible at first, but it is always operating in the background” (137).

Characteristics of oral learners are described using the acronym CHIMES: 1) Communal, 2) Holistic, 3) Images, 4) Mnemonics, 5) Experiential, and 6) Sensory. “While print cultures tend to use philosophy as a dance partner to reason through and express systematic theology, oral cultures often prefer the witty application of local proverbs for contextual theology” (143). Stories, proverbs, songs, symbols, rituals, and drama are important for oral learners.

“Digital media has created a learning preference shift for many people away from print toward oral learning and has been labeled digital-oral learning” (149). The era of the printing press is called the “Gutenberg parenthesis” as oral learning stopped with the print era and has restarted again in the Internet era.

### **Present Trends and Influencers**

The authors discuss current trends in the last chapter. They also provide a list of characteristics for intercultural evangelists: 1) Higher emphasis on people, less on tasks; 2) Ability not to criticize the host people; 3) Tolerance of ambiguity; 4) Flexibility: open to culture learning; 5) Empathy; 6) Openness; 7) High cognitive complexity; 8) Good personal relationship skills; 9) Maintain a sense of personal control; 10) Innovativeness; 11) Proper self-esteem; 12) Perseverance; and, 13) Capacity to personalize one’s knowledge and perceptions.

### **Insightful Book**

This book is an insightful book for all Christians who love to be involved in evangelism. It is a helpful tool for those who interact with people of different nationalities, languages, and cultures. In today’s globalized and digitalized world, all Christians interact with people from different continents. The missional insights offered in *Effective Intercultural Evangelism: Good News in a Diverse World* will help each one to choose appropriate methods to share the gospel with others.