

checkpoint.

SPRING 2020 CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY MAGAZINE



How can they hear?

EVANGELISM ACROSS CULTURES



From the Editor



In the late 1700s an older minister told a young William Carey (who was agitating for mission) “Young man, sit down! You are an enthusiast. “When God pleases to convert the [nations], he’ll do it without consulting you or me.”

Thank God that Carey’s enthusiasm wasn’t dampened, nor that of those later involved in the foundation of CMS—men like Charles Simeon, John Venn, John Newton and William Wilberforce.

This *Checkpoint* brings us back-to-basics. Why are we committed to cross-cultural evangelism? David Williams’ lead article is particularly useful in answering this. When CMS missionaries take the gospel to another culture, what does that look like? This year, a pandemic has reminded us that the mission context we take for granted one year may look completely different the next. So questions like ‘why’ and ‘how’ really matter.

In asking ‘why’, we remember that the Lord Jesus himself shows what it means to cross a culture, even a chasm. God the Creator came to his own rebellious creation. That glorious and gracious move towards us is why we, in turn, are passionate

to bring his gospel message to others. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9, ESV) Jesus came as a friend, even a lover, to people who hated him: “...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” (Romans 5:10)

There are some wonderful articles in this *Checkpoint* about what it looks like to cross a culture with the gospel, including some beautiful stories of people finding new life in Christ. These stories represent the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the experience and actions of our CMS missionaries, and so we hope that you will be inspired to pray, care, and give to this gospel work—and even in some cases to go yourself. By his Spirit, may our gracious God fire us with a passion to bring about a world that knows Jesus.

Gordon Cheng

Contents

Crossing cultures with the gospel	4-6
Challenges that bring change	7
Acting out the gospel	8-9
The aroma of life	10-11
Slowly bearing fruit	12-13
Going home with the gospel	14-15
Foolish at first	16-17
Equipped by grace	18-19
The importance of time & SAH update	20-21
Giving thanks & Prayer Diary updates	22
Book review	23

checkpoint.

© 2020 Church Missionary Society – Australia Ltd. Permission to reproduce material may be obtained from the Editor. *Checkpoint* is published four times a year by CMS Australia. CMS is a member of Missions Interlink. For information and feedback, please email us at: checkpoint@cms.org.au. Please send CHANGES OF ADDRESS to your CMS branch office (see back cover). Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotations are from the New International Version® Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ CMS Australia contracts an independent professional to receive complaints – 1800 070 511 | helpline@safercommunities.net.au

Editor: Gordon Cheng; Editorial Coordinator: Naomi Jones; Editorial Assistants: Evangeline Hester, Sarah Barnett; Communications Coordinator: David Carpenter; Design: Meghan Kelly; International Director: Peter Rodgers.

CMS is a fellowship of Christian people and churches committed to global mission. We work together to set apart long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our vision is for a world that knows Jesus. We aim to do this by:

- Reaching gospel-poor peoples for Christ
- Equipping Christian leaders for church and society
- Engaging churches in cross-cultural mission

More articles at:

checkpoint.cms.org.au



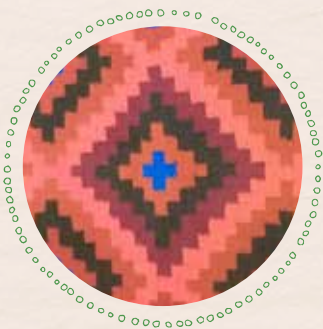
Summer Conferences

CMS Summer Conferences are an important part of our vision for a world that knows Jesus.

COVID-19 has changed many aspects of life and mission this year. So our Summer Conferences in 2021 will look different.

They will still help you grow in passion for mission and shape your mission plans for the year through Bible teaching and opportunities to hear from missionaries.

CMS branches are starting to make preparations now. Keep informed by signing up for regular communications from your local CMS branch. See back page for details.



INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER - Mark

Mark is the director of one of our partner organisations in the middle east- he has lived and worked there with his family for 16 years. A renewables engineer by background, for most of that time he worked in and helped set up grassroots community development projects in rural villages - basic stuff like helping people get safe water and build latrines, grow more food, make a living from their skills, teach each other to read, make decisions as a community. For the last 5 years he and his wife have been more based in the big cities, leading the organisation and supporting mental health projects, essential innovation in a fragile and sensitive part of the world.

Keep up to date on summer conferences
cms.org.au/summer-conferences

**"LET US HOLD UNSWERVINGLY TO THE HOPE WE
PROFESS, FOR HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL."**



Crossing cultures WITH THE GOSPEL



How do we share the gospel in a culture where the people believe, think, act and feel in ways that are completely unexpected or different? CMS Director of Training and Development David Williams believes that the answer is both simple and complex.

When I was serving in Kenya, a group of friends from the Proclamation Trust, UK, taught some preaching classes at Carlile College in Nairobi, Kenya. The first four days, held on the College's main campus, went well. The students were engaged, and my British friends were encouraged. On the fifth day, we ran a special one day intensive in Kibera slum. It had rained the night before, so the open sewer was overflowing across the path. As we slipped and struggled through the sewage to the College's Centre for Urban Mission, one of my friends stopped. In the middle of the path he held out his arms and said, somewhat despairingly, "What on earth does it mean to preach the gospel here?"

Clearly this was a crisis of confidence. But a crisis of confidence in what? He might have lost confidence in the gospel itself, thinking that Kibera slum needs a different gospel. He might have retained confidence in the gospel message but lost confidence in gospel methodology—losing confidence in preaching as God's means of spreading the good news. Or he might have retained confidence in both gospel message and gospel methodology, but lost confidence in his ability to communicate the gospel in Kibera slum.

It was this third area of lost confidence that was stressing my friend. His mind was in his notes, in his opening story. He had planned to begin the first class by saying "When you had breakfast with your family this morning..." But looking around Kibera, it was painfully obvious that he could not assume the luxury of breakfast. Every story, illustration, assumption and application needed re-thinking.

In this edition of *Checkpoint* we are thinking about cross-cultural evangelism—of the Lord Jesus' great commission to make disciples of all nations. My opening story helps us to understand both the simplicity and the complexity of the task of cross-cultural evangelism.

The simplicity of cross-cultural evangelism

Cross-cultural evangelism is simple because the Bible is clear that all human beings face one identical problem, regardless of our culture. We are objects of God's wrath because we are sinners who have rebelled against him.

This truth lies at the heart of our understanding of the gospel. The gospel is an authoritative message about God's kingly rule. The heart of this message is God's saving work, fulfilled through the person and work of Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection. The Bible's narrative clarifies what it is that we need to be saved from. We need to be saved from God's wrath and judgement.

Simplicity seen in Passover and the cross

The need for salvation from wrath and judgement is clear in the story of the Exodus. The central moment of rescue in the Exodus is the Passover. In the ninth plague, darkness covers the land. In the final plague, God's angel of death visits every home. In every house there is a death—either of a substitutionary lamb or of the first-born son. Immediately after the Passover, the children of Israel begin their journey out of Egypt. There is a further moment of rescue at the crossing of the Red Sea. But for generations onwards, it was the Passover—the sacrifice—that was remembered and celebrated.

The Passover story supplies the context that enables us to understand the cross of Christ. As Jesus hangs on the cross, the ninth plague is repeated as darkness covers the land. Then the substitutionary lamb of God, who is also the first-born son, dies to propitiate God's wrath and judgement.

The heartbeat of the CMS conviction is that the message of the gospel is powerful and true, and must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

The gospel message

The gospel is the message of the cross of Christ, set in the context of salvation history. We are used to talking about the gospel as good news. However, this message is only good news if we receive it by faith. For those who repent and believe, the gospel is marvellously good news. We are forgiven, justified, filled with God's Holy Spirit, adopted as heirs, raised with Christ, friends of God. But for those who reject the message, it is not good news at all. Those who do not obey the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction.

God sends the gospel message into the world on the lips of heralds—men and women who speak out the good news that has been entrusted to them. Only those who have accepted the good news can be heralds—those who have been forgiven, justified, and filled with God's Spirit. Their lives must embody the message that they proclaim. Their distinctive godliness is salt and light to a watching world.

As the gospel word is spread around the world, God gathers his people into communities that confess his name. These communities are distinctively different to the world they are placed in, characterised by radical love for God and neighbour. Their good deeds will cause people to glorify our Father in Heaven.

The heartbeat of the CMS conviction is that the message of the gospel is powerful and true, and must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. If we believe this message, we must proclaim it. It's as simple as that.

The complexity of cross-cultural evangelism

There is also a complexity to cross-cultural evangelism, a complexity that we can trace right back to our New Testaments. Put simply, cross-cultural evangelism is complex because the gospel is translatable.

The New Testament is proof that the gospel can be translated

Our New Testaments stand as evidence of the translatability of the gospel. The Lord Jesus almost certainly conducted his day-to-day teaching ministry in Aramaic. The gospels are written in Greek. The gospels are therefore translated documents. The apostles believed that they could faithfully and accurately translate the words of Jesus from Aramaic into Greek while retaining their meaning, purpose and power.

The same truth is evident on the Day of Pentecost. A great miracle took place. The apostles are given the wonderful gift of speaking the gospel in many different languages. Those who heard the message in their own tongue were able to believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. The gospel was translated and retained its meaning and power.

This may seem an obvious and straight-forward thing to us. But compared to other world religions it is startlingly unusual. In Islam, for example, God speaks Arabic and the Qur'an cannot be translated.

We can go further still. Not only is the gospel linguistically translatable; it is also culturally translatable. Again, we see the cultural translation of the gospel taking place in the New Testament. When Gentiles begin to come to faith in the Lord Jesus, the early church must decide how much Jewish culture should be replicated in predominantly Gentile churches. The answer is very little. As the New Testament unfolds, it is clear that Jewish and Gentile churches, while deeply united, are culturally different.

Mission history is proof that the gospel can be translated

The history of Christian mission also testifies to the translatability of the gospel. Across sub-Saharan Africa, missionaries translated the gospel. When they did so, they needed to translate words like 'God.' Over and over again they chose to use a local word for 'God' instead of importing a foreign word. Usually they used the traditional name given to the high god of the local culture. The message was clear: the God we proclaim speaks your language. For example, in Kenya, you can be Kikuyu and Christian.

The complexity of cross-cultural evangelism lies in the linguistic and cultural translation of the gospel. Translation is much more complicated than the simple transposition of words. Languages are structured differently. The grammatical structure of a language may be completely different to Hebrew or Greek—there is no 'find and replace' method of translation. And in many cultures, words used in the Bible do not exist at all.

Cultural translation is as complex as linguistic translation. The early church had to call a council in Jerusalem to think through the implications.

CMS understands the complexity of the linguistic and cultural translatability of the gospel. It is why we pay such careful attention to training, to in-depth language learning and to long-term ministries.

A question for each of us

My friend had not lost confidence in either the gospel message or the gospel method. He knew that people in Kibera needed the same gospel as the rest of us. Despite teaching in English, he had suddenly been confronted by the translatability of the gospel. Perhaps it is a question we should all be asking: "What does it mean to preach the gospel here?"



David Williams writes regularly for Checkpoint Online. See the first in his current series on 'Pleasure and pain' here:
cms.org.au/williams-pleasure-pain



The cross-cultural mission of CMS requires training and ongoing support, first at St Andrew's Hall and then through regular pastoral visits and other means. Will you give generously to CMS so that this training and support can continue to help missionaries proclaim the gospel to the nations? Go to give.cms.org.au

CHALLENGES THAT BRING *change*



CMS worker Kirsten has recently returned from South Asia. Here she speaks about how hard times can lead to new opportunities for gospel witness.

In the nine years I served on location, there were many changes to laws and circumstances for Christians. For a few years Christians enjoyed a lot of relative freedom after a long time of restriction. Christmas became a public holiday, and there was no persecution or prosecution of Christians for their faith. In this time of freedom many churches would often run evangelistic campaigns to different parts of the country, hand out gospel tracts, and preach openly. God grew his church in this time and there was a sense of unity among believers.

Despite the freedoms, I remember feeling uncomfortable with the very free use of social media—posting about baptisms, posting about gospel sharing opportunities including photos of those they had shared with. At times I tried to raise questions about use of social media, but with little response—it was so new to many people, and they were loving using it.

Some people asked me about using social media for evangelism. I was always very cautious and warned against it, but this was not what people wanted to hear. I also knew this was not my country and my instincts may not be right, so I didn't push it too hard. The church had seen rapid growth in the last couple of decades, and this was mostly because of local people evangelising. I did not want to squash that.

Harder times for the gospel

A few years ago, the atmosphere towards Christians began to change. The media began posting negative stories of evangelism by both citizens and foreigners. The national growth in Christianity was being noticed, and not in a positive way. It seemed inevitable the laws would change again even though they had always forbidden any type of 'coercive' evangelising. And indeed, the government passed laws criminalising evangelism and a few Christians began to be charged.

Slowly my friends began to see the danger of social media and the need for more caution. The church I was attending had been growing, although not too obviously, and continued to have annual baptisms. About the time that the laws were changing, visas were also becoming harder to get—particularly for Christian organisations—and I moved away from this area to another town for work and visa reasons.

Unexpected growth

A couple of years later I caught up with one of my old church friends. I was encouraged to hear that the church had really grown in the last year or so. I was surprised, and asked how has it grown? My friend said, "We stopped all our evangelistic activities and larger programs, and we stopped giving out tracts.

But we spent more time with our neighbours and friends, and many have been able to bring friends and family along to church with them."

Praise the Lord that he keeps working in different ways in different seasons. Although laws and circumstances change, God is more powerful and knows the needs of his people. God will use his people when they are willing and open to serving him.

...we spent more time with our neighbours and friends, and many have been able to bring friends and family along to church with them.



pray



Thank God that as one way of evangelism closes, others can open; and pray that those ways will be found in places where public sharing of the gospel is difficult.

ACTING OUT THE GOSPEL

The Mark Drama has a simple premise—to take the Gospel of Mark and turn it into theatre with evangelistic intent. *Checkpoint* approached CMS missionaries from Europe, East Asia and South America and asked them to talk about their experiences in ‘acting out the gospel’.



Naomi Brunacci, Italy

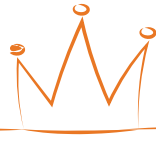
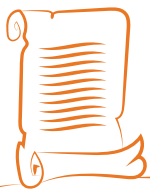
CMS missionary Naomi Brunacci has worked alongside students from the GBU (Gruppi Biblici Universitari, an Italian university Christian group) as they presented *The Mark Drama*.

The Mark Drama was performed in May 2018, in my first year serving in Padova. We had a team of 15 student actors from across several regions, and almost 200 visitors over two nights. Non-believing friends and colleagues came along. They asked questions and took home free copies of the Gospel of Mark.

Over the past few years, *The Mark Drama* staff team in Italy has been expanding. Many students have participated multiple times and are growing a passion for telling the gospel through this drama project.

I’ve had the privilege of seeing one of these former students, Pedro* grow in his ability to share the gospel with others eloquently. He now understands the intricacies of the Gospel of Mark and has learned to explain to the actors how to convey the meaning of the text while acting it out. *The Mark Drama* is a great training tool for encouraging students to love Jesus, love the gospel and grow in their confidence of telling it. The opportunity to immerse 15 students in a Gospel for two days of rehearsals is so valuable, it would be worth it even if they never got to perform!

“As a staff worker I think one of the main benefits of The Mark Drama is having students memorise the whole structure of Mark’s Gospel, then spend an intense weekend in rehearsals...one of the challenges is that we don’t have many great follow-up stories: students are still in touch with their friends, and every now and then someone comes to Bible study or another outreach event.” — Gillian Law, CMS missionary and GBU Italy staff worker





Peter & Terry Blowes, Argentina

CMS missionary Peter Blowes, serving with Terry in Argentina, shares their experience presenting *The Mark Drama* with university students from ABUA (Asociación Bíblica Universitaria Argentina, an Argentinian university Christian movement).

The cast only met as a group on the Friday night just before the production later that weekend—half of them meeting for the first time. It was great seeing them form a team that became like a family, learning and growing together as they walked in the shoes of Jesus, the disciples, the Pharisees, and the many people to whom Jesus ministered.

The two venues for the production—a small Anglican church and a large Pentecostal church—were full. Lots of visitors attended and were impacted by the performance. At the end of the first production there wasn't a dry eye in the building.

"In The Mark Drama I experienced mercy, forgiveness, and the love of God towards humanity despite our lack of understanding, fears, and sin. I saw a source of love and grace that gives us a new start ..." — Leonardo, ABUA Argentina

"As I made mistakes and felt it was great to see Jesus's love demonstrating God's reality despite my failures. It was so good also to be able to share the gospel with my non-Christian friends so intimately." — Leandro, ABUA Argentina (who played the role of the Apostle Peter)

"The opportunity to immerse 15 students in a Gospel...is so valuable, it would be worth it even if they never got to perform!"

You can learn more about *The Mark Drama* at themarkdrama.com

go



The Mark Drama is just one way that university students, and others, can learn and share the gospel. If you have a passion for evangelism in universities, find out more at cms.org.au/get-involved/opportunities/



SLOWLY *bearing fruit*

Sometimes CMS workers speak of Jesus in situations where neither government nor the local community encourage such witness. Here CMS workers J, C and M thank God that nonetheless, gospel opportunities continue—as their stories reveal.



J, in South East Asia

Here, in the South East Asian country where I have worked with CMS for many years, teaching English, it is against the law to mention the gospel in the classroom. Doing so would likely result in me being expelled from the country.

Yet God has called me and my colleagues to share the gospel, and he is choosing to use us in furthering his kingdom purposes. The steps are modest, but at least there are steps! Primarily, these gospel steps have come out of genuine friendships arising from relationships with a few students.

Common threads

There are some common threads in these students' stories.

First, they have become interested in the gospel because they have been attracted by the humility and genuine care of the gospel workers they have been getting to know.

Second, it usually hasn't been just one gospel worker who has been involved in this journey, but several workers, whose lives of consistent humility and compassion have impacted the student expressing interest.

Third, answered prayer has often been a key element, be it prayer over a sick family member or over some other major challenge. God's answer to those prayers has been taken as a sign of his involvement.

Finally, this process has often taken months to develop out of the first spark of interest, if not longer. Gradually the interested student has become aware of the deeper truths involved, and the implications of the gospel message have become clear. Sometimes this has happened through the student privately reading the Bible in their heart language, as the student has tried to work out what these truths could mean in their local context.

Why do local believers persist? The response of the believers themselves is clear. They say they can find freedom from fear nowhere else.

A long process producing deep-rooted belief

This longer process has resulted over time in a small number of students with a mature, deeper-rooted belief. That is accompanied by a desire to reach out to others with the good news. Their approach to others is often, "Well I don't know much about this as I've only newly discovered this message, but here's what I've found to be true."

Working and witnessing in a closed country like mine depends heavily on establishing long-term relationships.

The integrity of gospel workers' lives, observed over long periods of time, has so often been the seed for students becoming interested in the gospel. The worker needs to be there for the long haul, ready and trained to weather the challenges of cross-cultural living, as well as communicating across cultural barriers.

Official and unofficial opposition means that the cost of believing the gospel can be extremely high. Why do local believers persist? The response of the believers themselves is clear. They say they can find freedom from fear nowhere else. They can find amazing sacrificial love—as seen in the cross—nowhere else. They want to walk with and serve the Lord Jesus, no matter what the cost. They are grateful to God for sending gospel workers to their country, so that they can learn this good news.



C and M in the Middle East.

Here are three pictures of our dear friend Sara*, a woman who is searching but has not yet found peace.

A promising picture

After a long day in language class, I boarded a bus with Sara. As we sat together, she quickly launched into conversation. “Did I tell you that I have started reading the Bible?” As she shared her favourite verses with me, she declared “I have found that peace from striving.”

A picture of confusion

As the sun sets over sandy dunes and mountainous terrain, a group of young professionals have gathered in the desert to attend a course on self-enlightenment. Sara is one of them. One morning during a session on ‘Finding your voice,’ she finds herself singing aloud. Her voice had always been ‘haram’ (meaning forbidden under Islamic law). Soon her singing turns to screaming and eventually all the participants are gathered around her, coaxing her to express herself. Later, as she relays the story to us, she comments, “I want to be conscious and now I know what it is.”

A picture of heavy family expectation

Adjusting her headscarf, Sara asks us if we have a prayer mat. “Do you know which way is Mecca? I need to pray.” This dutiful daughter carries high family expectations. If they knew her heart, and the questions she has been asking, the ramifications would be catastrophic, and her family would be shamed for generations to come.



Where to now?

To her mother, Sara has been raised to be an obedient Muslim daughter.

To her ‘enlightened friends’, she is on a new spiritual journey.

To us, she is a friend with a fun and quirky personality, a seeker in a culture where it is forbidden to change your religion. On many occasions we have sat in cafés and talked with her for hours about her spiritual questions and heart desires.

Most recently, Sara has expressed a desire to follow the teachings of Eckhart Tolle (a well-known New Age guru). In all our discussions with her, we have noticed that we keep circling around the theme of suffering. Sara is quick to dismiss the reality of suffering in the world—even that which she has experienced first-hand. Her desire is to pursue a state of higher consciousness and expel all weakness from her thinking and day to day life. Both her Muslim faith and her new spiritual ideas reject the notion of weakness as shameful.

As M and I have shared our testimonies with Sara, we’ve revealed that in times of deep heartache, we have been completely weak and dependent on God’s grace. But we are not ashamed to call ourselves weak, because our strength and honour come from Jesus. Not only that, but he suffered and made himself weak in his death on the cross. Weakness is at the heart of the gospel and we rejoice in this! We pray that Sara, too, will find that peace for herself along with many others.

When a Buddhist friend wants to speak about Jesus, what will you say? Wim Prins shares some ideas:

cms.org.au/chatting-to-buddhists



Thank God for the peace that is found in Jesus, and pray that Sara and others in secure locations will discover his perfect peace for themselves.

*Name changed for privacy reasons.

Equipped by grace



CMS missionaries Mike & Katie Taylor work at Munguishi Bible College, in Tanzania, where they help explain God's grace and equip ministry workers to teach the gospel. Here Mike shares how this work helps front-line evangelism in Tanzania.

One of the most stunning things I've seen in all our time in Tanzania was watching two of our students preach the gospel together to a small group. Meshaki one of our students, preached in Maasai and Musa translated into Swahili—except when Meshaki switched into Swahili—at which point Musa seamlessly switched to Maasai.

More challenges than just language

But Meshaki and Musa face many greater challenges in evangelism than language. They tell me of physical persecution and issues of shame, because becoming a Christian can mean losing one's place in community—particularly for men. Perhaps the weightiest challenge is what Meshaki told me the other day: that it's only at our Bible college that he has heard about grace.

In addition, our students at Munguishi Bible College love evangelism, but some know very little about Jesus.

Here's one example. A new class arrived ready to learn. My wife Katie had prepared herself to try and teach *The Mark Drama* as a tool for evangelism. *The Mark Drama* does what the name suggests—present the Gospel of Mark in dramatic form¹. She opened by asking what the students could remember about Jesus. Collectively the class came up with just two stories: that he opened the eyes of a blind man using mud, and that he hit a rock and water came out. Since this infamous rock-hitter was in fact Moses, Katie quickly realised that *The Mark Drama* might not be achievable this semester!

We have learned that when students arrive at college, our first job is often to help them to know, understand and share who Jesus

is and what grace means. So instead of *The Mark Drama* Katie worked with the students on memorising and telling stories about Jesus from Mark's Gospel. This has been a huge help to these students. Just imagine — a group of Maasai gathered around a student, Aroni, who has been taught by Katie. He shows them the pictures of Jesus' life and narrates stories of what Jesus did. Bible colleges like ours play an important role in teaching and sending out leaders with the tools to preach more effectively in their home communities.

How gospel and culture interact

At Munguishi, as well as teaching the Bible, we seek to help our students think through how culture interacts with the gospel. Having been at Munguishi for 10 years, we are now starting to get a better feel for these cultural influences, and how to help our students understand them from a biblical perspective.

For instance, in our location many churches get the loudest speakers they can afford and then they preach and have their choirs sing at full volume. Our students count this as evangelism and it is important to them. So one wet Tuesday night I stood in a small storeroom-church and proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ, so that a large part of Arusha's inner city could be blasted with my own broken Swahili. I worry that this method of evangelism is intrusive and alienating, but my students rejoice that so many have been blessed by hearing God's word. At college, we can talk thoughtfully about what evangelistic methods might work well or better.

The gospel and traditional spirituality

At college we also consider how traditional spirituality affects our approach to the gospel. We discuss how concepts like sin, blessing, grace, and eternal life interact with African beliefs and practices. We have seen how grace is so absent from churches like Meshaki's. Grace plays very little part in traditional spirituality, where curse is averted, and blessing attained by doing right things and avoiding wrong things. As we think it through together, we see how the gospel is so radical but also so easily misunderstood. It helps not just to *know* that we are saved by grace, but to think through how we naturally find the concept alien and lean towards works. It explains the popularity of other teachings and people's hesitancy to commit wholeheartedly to Jesus.

Meshaki told me the other day that it's only at our Bible college that he has heard about grace.

Meet some of our students

Anna is one of our top students. She has learnt how to explain the gospel and wants to tell people about how God forgives sins. But as we talk she begins to wonder if people don't really want forgiveness. It doesn't seem that important to them. She is considering carefully what people are looking for, and how to meaningfully share the gospel message.

Rogers wrestles with the idea of a weak and shameful gospel. How can this be a message that brings power and blessing to people's lives? How can he show the real gospel has real power to change lives?

Emanueli underlines Galatians 3:10–14 in his Bible, ready to show these verses to his friends. For him they speak so clearly about how Jesus is good for those seeking blessing and fearful of curse.

The reality is that we spend a great deal of our time helping our students themselves understand the gospel. Bible colleges here provide a vital opportunity to really look at what the Bible says about that message and to help our students communicate it better within their own culture.

give



Your financial giving enables CMS to send Bible teachers who are helping to raise a future generation of leaders for church and society in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa. Go to give.cms.org.au to find out how to support the Taylors, and others doing similar work.



THE importance OF TIME



CMS missionaries Brad and Michelle Jackson recently returned to Australia after 13 years serving in Japan. Michelle shares how God was at work as she sought to build deep relationships with women in her community.

Challenging soil for the gospel

Japan is known as hard ground for the gospel, as family and cultural expectations block people from even considering Christ. In the 16th century the Shogun Tokugawa, reacting against Christianity, declared: “Japan is a nation of the Shinto gods and the Buddha.” This attitude prevails today. To embrace Jesus is seen as a rejection of Japanese identity, a turning away from family and a betrayal of ancestors. A woman I was reading the Bible with expressed this, saying: “If I wasn’t a wife, a mother and a daughter I’d become a Christian.”

Over the years I often heard friends share their hesitation in becoming a Christian because of their fear of telling their families. Mrs J expressed: “My parents are old and not in good health, they live in the countryside and won’t understand.” She held back telling them of her faith for fear it would send them to an early death.

Another barrier is the difference in approach to religious life. Japanese often don’t hold deep beliefs so much as deep habits. In Japanese religion what you do is more important than what you think. While we were walking in the mountains near our home, we observed friends offering prayers to a local god. When we asked who the god was, they were not ashamed to say that they didn’t know. We met many people who didn’t understand the reason behind their religious practices. In contrast, Christians tend to focus on belief and truth. Our natural emphasis is learning to *think* rightly, or ‘orthodoxy’. We needed to demonstrate that our loving actions were tied to our beliefs in a God who loved us in Christ.”

Building relationships

As we served in a culture so resistant to the gospel, I invested time in building friendships and earning trust. Practicing hospitality and activities such as walks, lunches, dinner parties and picnics—both privately and through the church—were very important. Yes, five-hour lunches in Japanese were exhausting. But over time God gave me wonderful opportunities to share my faith and invite non-Christian friends to join Bible studies.

Reading the Bible together

We were surprised by just how many Japanese women were willing to regularly attend Bible studies, often over a period of years. At first, they were very clear in stating that they had absolutely no intention of becoming a Christian. They were just curious about the Bible from an intellectual standpoint. Yet gradually, God’s Spirit worked in their hearts, faith took root and buds of spiritual life formed. Three of these women developed genuine faith in Jesus. They grew to understand Christian faith as less of a religion and more about a relationship with God. All three were deeply concerned about telling their families they had become Christians. One was physically assaulted and rejected by her family members—before she even became a Christian. But the sapling kept growing and healthy buds were forming. Two of these dear friends will soon be baptised.

For others who attended Bible study for years, even though they said they believed the Bible’s teaching, they didn’t feel free to surrender their lives to Jesus because of the strongholds their families had over them. Eventually they had to stop attending and their faith withered.

Another friend, a young Christian, disappeared from church when her husband banned her and her young children from attending. Her parents-in-law had hired a private investigator who reported that our church was a dangerous cult. She hopes to be free to attend again when her sons have graduated high school.

Reflecting with thanks

What have I learned about mission in Japan? Building genuine friendships over the long term through living in the community is vital. I met women while watching our children at soccer clinic, through pre-school and school, through English classes at church and even in a local café. We got to know each other and eventually I would offer to read the Bible with them.

English ministry was also surprisingly effective, especially the two mothers’ classes that allowed women to bring their babies. Over the years several women moved from English

class to Bible study and some then onto faith. We talked, laughed, shared life and spoke English. They became genuine friends and their babies are now high school students.

All three were fearful of telling their families they had become Christians. One was physically assaulted and rejected by her family members..."

At Bible studies, remembering they knew nothing, we would try to explain the new words and ideas before we read the passage. We also used simple illustrations to explain the gospel and shared how it made a difference to our lives in practical ways.

I am thankful to have co-led with Mrs H, Mrs O, Mrs K and Mr U, and that all four groups are continuing. These co-workers are far more capable at communicating in Japanese than I could ever be. And what a joy it was to hand over some of my ministry responsibilities to the women who had recently become Christians.

pray



Michelle asks us to pray for the past and present participants of the Bible study groups she was involved in—that God would plant the seed of the gospel securely in their lives, enabling it to flourish, bringing a harvest of righteousness that will produce fruit for generations.

ST ANDREW'S HALL REDEVELOPMENT

The construction at SAH continues and is on track for the roof completion in August. Here is a comment from David Williams, Director of Training and Development at SAH:

"The team at St Andrew's Hall, both staff and trainees, have shown great resilience through 2020, adapting to many changes. We have learned new skills in online learning and have proven our adaptability. This year has been hard, but good. We look forward to taking all the lessons we've learned back to the wonderful new facilities in Parkville and continuing to grow the CMS training ministry."

Pray

Pray that God will grant patience and perseverance during a time of difficulty and transition, as those God has chosen prepare to speak his word in new and challenging times.



GIVING *thanks* TO GOD



SHIRLEY COLE

We praise God for the life of Shirley Cole, who died in Sydney on 21 May 2020, aged 98. Shirley and her late husband Alan, who died in 2003, first

served the Lord overseas with OMF 1952-60, then with CMS 1962-68 and finally in 1988-94, as 'Special Agreement' missionaries after Alan's formal retirement. They ministered together in church-planting, teaching and pastoral care with Chinese-speaking people in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaya, and with CMS at Trinity College, Singapore.

Shirley's loving pastoral care benefited generations of students and theologians in Singapore and Australia, and her musical gifts enlivened Christian worship throughout her life. With her gracious hospitality, Shirley and Alan's

home was a place of warm fellowship and encouragement, notably for many visitors when Alan was Federal Secretary of CMS 1979-88. Shirley was also one of the 'folding ladies' who mailed out CMS literature from the Sydney office, and assisted with MAG support.

With Shirley and Alan's 'post-retirement' return to Trinity College, Singapore, Shirley continued her ministries of teaching the Bible and music, and in pastoral care, for a further seven years.

In their subsequent 'retirement' to Sydney, Shirley continued to use her gifts of music and Bible knowledge in the parish of Mosman, and even in her final frailty she was still able to sing hymns and recall scripture from memory. We thank God for Shirley's life, and ask him to grant to all who loved her his grace and comfort.

FOR AS IN ADAM ALL DIE, SO IN CHRIST ALL WILL BE MADE ALIVE.
BUT EACH IN TURN: CHRIST, THE FIRSTFRUITS; THEN,
WHEN HE COMES, THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:22-23

PRAYER DIARY UPDATES

DAY 7 – CMS TRAINEES COURSE 2, 2020



K
(CMS QNSW)
Planning to serve in East Asia



J
(CMS NSW & ACT)
Planning to serve in Indonesia



JOSHUA & STEPHANIE MACKENZIE
with Ezekiel and Elanor
(CMS VIC)
Planning to serve in Northern Australia



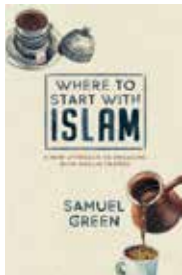
J & N
with O, E, L and G
(CMS NSW & ACT)
Planning to serve in Indonesia



BOOK REVIEW

Samuel Green, 2019, *Where to Start with Islam: A new approach to engaging with Muslim friends*. Matthias Media.

Review by **Gordon Cheng**
Editor at CMS Australia



Australian Christian and writer Samuel Green is a man well placed to write a book about sharing Jesus with Muslim friends. He has spent most of his ministry life engaging directly with Muslim believers and debaters about their understandings (and

misunderstandings) of the Bible's teaching. He does this as a convinced Christian who is himself involved in regular pastoral and teaching ministry, which means that his book is first and foremost pastoral rather than academic.

Green's starting point is to address Christians first, by asking what the Christian response to Islam is, and where to begin. The other questions he asks in his first chapter are good for us to hear: 'Do you love Muslims?' 'Do you love Christians?' and 'Do you believe the gospel?'

In this book you will certainly find some sections that are both complex and detailed—for one can't write off-handed generalisations about a religion that is 14 centuries old and counts nearly 2 billion people as its followers. Yet the real beauty of Green's book is that it will drive you back to the gospel itself for the most important answers and responses.

CMS workers Warwick and Caroline, based in the Middle East, have a simple and straightforward recommendation: "We used Samuel Green's material for training workers in our ME location and we found it invaluable."

This, together with Tony Payne's *Islam in our Backyard* (also from Matthias Media) make a brilliant starting point for anyone who wants to share Jesus with our many Muslim neighbours.

For an extended review, see
cms.org.au/green-on-islam

GET INVOLVED!

Go to cms.org.au/get-involved OR complete this form:



pray

☐ I will pray for the extension of God's kingdom and would like to receive prayer updates about CMS missionaries and their locations.

MISSIONARY NAME/S



care

☐ I will show practical care for CMS missionaries and the communities in which they serve.

Visit cms.org.au/get-involved/care to find out more OR fill in your contact details to receive information about caring for CMS missionaries.



give

☐ I will give money to CMS so the work of proclaiming Jesus can continue.

Visit give.cms.org.au OR fill in the form below:

I will give a: ☐ monthly gift ☐ one-off gift

Amount: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$200 other \$

I will pay by: ☐ direct debit (please mail the form) ☐ cheque/money order (pay to 'Church Missionary Society')

Credit card: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Expiry: /

Card no.

CVV:

NAME ON CARD

SIGNATURE

☐ Please send me information about making a bequest to CMS.



go

Visit cms.org.au/go OR talk to someone about serving as a missionary by contacting your local branch (see back page).

Title _____ First name/s _____

Surname _____

Street address _____

Suburb _____

State _____ Postcode _____

Phone (H) _____ (M) _____

Email _____

Name of church I attend _____

Best days/times to contact me _____

MAIL THIS TO YOUR CMS BRANCH
(SEE BACK PAGE FOR DETAILS)

Stay connected with your branch

Sign up for regular updates on mission,
upcoming events and prayer points

cms.org.au/branch-updates



CMS (Church Missionary Society) works with churches to set apart, equip and support long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CMS NSW & ACT

Level 5, 51 Druitt St SYDNEY NSW 2000
PO Box 21326 WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002
(02) 9267 3711 nswact@cms.org.au
cms.org.au/nswact

CMS QNSW

Level 1, 80 Petrie Terrace,
PETRIE TERRACE QLD 4000
PO Box 220 RED HILL QLD 4059
(07) 3171 3020 qld@cms.org.au
cms.org.au/qldnsw

CMS SANT

37 Angas Street ADELAIDE SA 5000
(08) 8212 4838 sa.nt@cms.org.au
cms.org.au/sant

CMS TAS

PO Box 501, SANDY BAY TAS 7006
0438 590 559 tas@cms.org.au
cms.org.au/tas

CMS VIC

Level 1, Building 1, 630 Mitcham Rd
MITCHAM VIC 3132
PO Box 2150 RANGEVIEW VIC 3132
(03) 9894 4722 vic@cms.org.au
cms.org.au/vic

CMS WA

31 Acheson Cr WOODVALE WA 6026
(08) 6209 9159 wa@cms.org.au
cms.org.au/wa

CMS Australia

Level 5, 51 Druitt St SYDNEY NSW 2000
PO Box 20095 WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002
(02) 9284 6777 cmsa@cms.org.au
cms.org.au

St Andrew's Hall

Temporary Address:
448 Burwood Road HAWTHORN VIC 3122
sah@cms.org.au

cms.org.au