

checkpoint.

SUMMER 2018/19

CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY MAGAZINE

*All things to
all people*

From the Editor



A challenge for every CMS missionary is to learn to be a good student of culture. This does not come naturally to anyone over the age of seven. But understanding culture, our own included, is essential to being able to read and share the Bible in other places. So in this Checkpoint we look at Paul's instruction to be 'all things to all people' with an excellent lead article from John Bales, and follow it up with a range of contributions from CMS missionaries on some of the cultural practices they are grappling with in order to share the truth of the gospel in a meaningful way.

Because CMS strives to be Bible-based in its mission, we turn to the New Testament to uncover examples and principles that may be of help. Sometimes God's Spirit will guide us to change; sometimes quite the contrary. So in Galatians, Paul uses strong language to oppose at all costs the requirement of circumcision for Gentile Christians. Yet in Acts 16 we learn how Paul organises for the circumcision of Timothy, a believer with a Greek father, for the sake of the Jews that they will be evangelising.

The inspiration for Paul's adaptable behaviour was not weak inconsistency, but Jesus himself. Paul imitated Jesus, and expected others to "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Cor 11:1)—including adapting in order to serve others. Jesus' servant-hearted attitude meant that in his mission he sometimes broke social boundaries (the woman at the well in John 4), sometimes reinforced boundaries (paying the temple tax in Matthew 22), and at other times made quite a deliberate point of ignoring human boundaries (healings on the Sabbath, mixing with sinners and tax collectors). He did this so that the world would hear his gospel, the good news of the kingdom of God.

How will we, in turn, behave as we seek a world that knows Jesus? No legalistic rule will help CMS missionaries know how to learn culture, or how to use their freedom to serve the gospel needs of others. Rather we have the example of Christ. We hope that as you read in this Checkpoint of CMS missionaries learning their culture that you will be inspired to pray for deep wisdom for them, and even for yourself as you consider what it means to be 'all things to all people'.

Gordon Cheng

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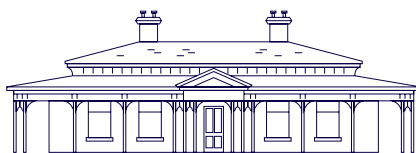
Editor: Gordon Cheng; Editorial assistance: Amanda Jeavons; Communications Coordinator: David Carpenter; International Director: Peter Rodgers.

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

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Being an effective missionary requires a long-term investment in understanding the lives and cultures of the people being served.

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In Christ's service,

Peter Rodgers

International Director, CMS Australia

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For the sake of the gospel



Former CMS missionary **John Bales**, now training people to work with M's as part of the CMS MENTAC program, is convinced by Paul's example of the need to be all things to all people.

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 is a key passage in which Paul speaks of his willingness to adapt in order to see people come to Christ. Paul's foremost desire is to win more people—to see them saved. He is willing to become “all things to all people” to achieve this and so he exercises his freedom by deciding to become a slave to everyone.

The position of a slave in the first century was a position of service and weakness. A slave had no rights. Paul, as a ‘slave of Christ’¹, willingly gave up his freedom for the sake of the gospel. In doing this he was following the example of Christ, who was not enslaved by anyone, but freely chose the path of service and sacrifice for the salvation of all people (Philippians 2:7). Paul made a deliberate decision to put himself in that same position of weakness and vulnerability.

In the same way, anyone intending to work with other cultures and serve cross-culturally must not come from a superior position of power, but be driven instead by humility and love.

Becoming all things to all people

The need to train potential missionaries to divest themselves of power and privilege affects every aspect of the way CMS trains people at St Andrew's Hall and those in cross-cultural

ministry programs such as Mentac (Mentoring Across Cultures). In mission, this will mean things like language, culture, expression of the gospel and service of the needy. Above all, it will mean a deliberate decision to become weak and vulnerable.

CMS is committed to equipping Christians, especially potential missionaries, to be all things to all people. I am involved in the CMS Mentac program, providing apprenticeships for people in Australia wishing to learn cross-cultural ministry, especially in M and occasionally Buddhist contexts. One of the advantages of placing people into Mentac apprenticeships in a M area is that it usually puts them well outside their comfort zone. Not knowing the languages around them or the meaning of how people are communicating is great preparation for a life of mission. As well as needing to adapt externally—clothes, food, gestures and the like—we need to adapt in the way we relate to others and how we share our faith.

At a deeper level, and very challenging for most of us, is the realisation that the way we have understood our faith—the way we read the Bible, our discipleship and worship—is massively influenced by our culture. Much that we think is ‘Christian’ is in fact our culturally proscribed way of being Christian. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul says “I became like a Jew... like one under the law... like one not having the law...” For Paul, this means consciously and deliberately putting off his Jewish identity in order to identify with others. In Philippians 3:8, he even describes his heritage as “garbage”!

Learning to re-present the gospel

Adapting to people of other cultures means learning to express the gospel in ways that are relevant to their mindset. If we fail to do this, we are explaining a gospel understood by us, but incomprehensible or confusing to our friend.

To give an example: one important tool we learn together in Mentac is to move from a formal, propositional presentation of the gospel to a more fluid, storytelling and long-term relational explanation of the faith. This is accompanied by allowing our friends to see into our lives over a long period. It is more a journey to Christ than a call for instant decision. The cultures we work in are communal in nature rather than individual. This means that people want to not only understand ‘truth’, but see it worked out in a loving, supportive community.

Another aspect of our training, especially for evangelism to M s, is learning how to present the gospel in what missionaries call ‘honour-shame’ terms, rather than ‘guilt-innocence’ terms. M s tend to see people as weak and ignorant rather than deeply flawed because of their sinful natures. For them, sin is seen as a mistake rather than a violation of God’s moral demands—and mistakes (as M s understand them) can be easily forgiven by God.

M s understand the solution to our problems as education into the requirements God has given us (i.e. the law/Shariah). So they don’t see the need for someone to pay the

Anyone intending to work with other cultures and serve cross-culturally must not come from a superior position of power, but be driven instead by humility and love.

price for their guilt. However shame is deeply embedded in their lives. So we present the gospel in a way that recognises how shame affects the whole of humanity from Adam onwards, and causes defilement which can only be cleansed by shedding blood. The shame of Adam and Eve in the garden is extended to all people, so we are all defiled before God and are unable to come into his presence without a mediator.

Serving many

As Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 9 of becoming a slave to everyone in order to win as many as possible, he distinguishes different groups. There are three or four groups mentioned in the passage: (i) Jews, (ii) those under the law (possibly the same as the Jews, or perhaps a strict party among the Jews, or Jewish-Christian legalists), (iii) those not under the law (Gentiles or non-Jews) and (iv) the weak (see 8:7–10 referring to new believers who are not strong in their faith).

In our Mentac training in south-west Sydney, we have to think differently for men and women, educated and uneducated, Arab from Egypt and Arab from Syria or Iraq, Bangladeshi, Iranian, Pakistani or Indonesian. How we share with Islamist-fundamentalists, nominals or traditional M s will vary enormously. Some M s refuse to read the Bible, thinking it is corrupt, so instead we use passages from the Qur’an to give a prophetic overview leading to Christ. However, some Christian friends find using the Qur’an a complete compromise and some M -background believers also don’t want anything to do with Islamic teaching.

Mission in most places today will be in a multi-cultural



context with several different groups, or, as in Melbourne and Sydney today, many different groups. Eating food from one group may offend some others, dress codes will be different and learning multiple languages only possible for a few. What is needed is people to commit to each different group, learning their culture and ways to share Christ with them, but also working together and supporting one another.

Keeping the core message

Learning new ways to express the gospel is a great joy. However on the other side is the danger of adapting too much, so that the core message of the gospel is explained away. Paul's concern about not being under the law and, conversely, being under Christ's law points to this danger. We must really understand what the gospel is, but we also need the checks of Scripture, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the wise counsel of God's people.

Paul adds a couple of caveats to his adaptation. In verse 20, he says that he becomes like those under the law but is not himself under the law, and in verse 21, he affirms that he is not free from God's law but under Christ's law. This is not so much about the contextualisation of the gospel message (adapting the way we share the gospel), but about moral and community behaviour. When we adapt, we need to be clear about such boundaries. For us in ministry and training, many issues here are practical: eating only halal food, dressing appropriately (for both men and women), not setting up our meetings with men and women sitting together, and at times having separate meetings according to gender. At times, there is criticism that we are denying our freedom in Christ. But that is precisely what Paul was willing to give up for the gospel.

Becoming a slave means becoming vulnerable—vulnerable to others' misunderstandings, criticism and ridicule. For many of the Mentac trainees, the early months are very difficult. They come to live in Lakemba, in the midst of many strange languages, sounds, smells, foods and festivals. But more confronting are the lifestyle differences of people who relate to each other and to us in ways we don't comprehend.

There are also enormous human needs: poverty, refugee status, domestic violence, social maladjustment, and the deep sadness of missing family and community from the home country is the context in which we learn. A slave's job is to serve others, so ministries such as food pantries, English classes and taking people to Centrelink or the immigration tribunal are all part and parcel of becoming one with those we serve.

For Paul, the great privilege and joy was that as he became all things to all people, he himself shared in the gospel (verse 23) and the blessings of seeing lives transformed by Christ. There is no greater joy than seeing someone from a different background to ourselves come to a vibrant, excited faith in Christ, able to teach us new truths of God we never saw before.

Image: An invitation to a market day at St Andrew's Lakemba

Preparing for mission at St Andrews Hall

David Williams, Director of Training and Development

Learning to cross cultures is really about relating to people who are culturally different to yourself. You can't do this in a vacuum. You have to be involved in real-life cross-cultural relationships. So while trainees are at St Andrew's Hall, we ask them to get involved in a variety of cross-cultural experiences.

Trainees attend a church in a language other than English for the first month of their time in Melbourne, although many stay for the whole semester. It is humbling to sit through a service where you understand almost nothing and yet receive a welcome from brothers and sisters in Christ.

We also ask our trainees to get to know someone from a different culture and religion, ideally a person from the country where they hope to serve. They meet up with this person to learn how they see the world. It has been exciting to see deep relationships grow. Some of our trainees have had the privilege of getting to know someone from the exact cultural context where they will be serving in the future. However, the main purpose is to learn how to understand another person's worldview. We use a structured worldview questionnaire as a tool for this task. As with all tools, the more you use it, the more familiar it becomes and the more skilled you get at using it—great preparation for future mission.

cms.org.au/worldview-questionnaire

Check out this questionnaire used by missionaries-in-training to better understand the cultures of the people they will be meeting, as well as their own.

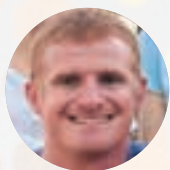
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cms.org.au/get-involved/cms-mentac

Are you someone who could serve cross-culturally with M's or Buddhists long-term? Prepare for mission by doing an apprenticeship with Mentac!

DIFFERENT NEEDS, SAME GOSPEL



CMS missionary Chris Webb (serving with Karen in North Australia) encounters spiritual crises amongst Aboriginal people of Broome that reflect striking differences in cultural expectations, on both sides. Does the gospel address those differences? Read Chris' account and be encouraged to be specific in your prayer for Christ's power to prevail.

It was 11:30pm when my phone rang, jerking me out of deep sleep. It was a young Aboriginal lady who'd just walked to the hospital because she needed help and she figured they had my number. She explained to me that her mum was acting out of character and wouldn't go to sleep. The family were worried that she was under demonic attack and wanted me there to pray.

Many Aboriginal people in the Kimberley are much more in tune to the spiritual forces at work in our world than people from my cultural background. People often tell us of their encounters with evil spirits or point to sorcery as a probable cause for bad things

that happen. Although I had read about these things in my missionary training, I had next to no personal experience in helping people who were frightened by supernatural happenings. And now in the middle of the night, I

was being called on as an 'expert' who could help in such matters! I felt well out of my depth, but I couldn't think of a good reason to say no to the young lady, so I pulled on a jumper and hopped in the car, madly praying that God would make me brave and help me know what to do.

When I arrived at the house, I was introduced to Lucy* who was sitting on the couch. She was agitated and talking strangely. I had a complete mind blank as to what Bible passages might be helpful to Lucy and her family, and a whole bunch of unanswered questions. How did I know if Lucy's problem was demon possession, mental illness or the effects of alcohol? What should I be asking God to do in this

situation? I prayed multiple times for Lucy. There was no apparent effect and I went home feeling like a failure.

Two days later I got another call. It was Jim* who wanted help for his cousin, a young, healthy-looking Aboriginal man who was fearing for his life because he believed he had been cursed by a sorcerer. Again, I felt out of my depth. I gathered some Christian brothers and we prayed. Nothing dramatic seemed to happen and his symptoms continued. Some weeks later, I heard that he had sought help from a traditional healer who removed the curse and everything was back to normal again.

The gospel I used to teach to university students in Newcastle is the same gospel that Aboriginal people in the Kimberley need to hear.

The gospel I used to teach to university students in Newcastle is the same gospel that Aboriginal people in the Kimberley need to hear. But Aboriginal people in the Kimberley are quite different to students in Newcastle. Their needs

are different. Their fears are different. Their experiences are different. What they value is different. So how do I explain the message about Jesus in such a way that it sounds like genuine good news for the family who fear that their mum is under spiritual attack?

Karen and I are thankful for our Aboriginal Christian friends who patiently answer our cultural questions. We also read the Bible with slightly different eyes now, more alert to how God might address the needs, hopes and fears of our Kimberley friends. We hope to get better at sharing God's truth in ways that connect with the real issues that our friends face, such as spiritual forces in their lives, so that they can see that the message of Jesus really is good news in all circumstances!

*Names changed to protect privacy.



pray



Pray for Regional Mission Directors and for CMS International Director Peter Rodgers as they conduct pastoral visits to all CMS missionaries around the world. Peter gives an insight into one of these visits at cms.org.au/peter-rodgers-pastoral-visit

EVERY NATION, AND LA



CMS worker 'I' teaches missionaries-in-training at St Andrew's Hall to think carefully about cross-cultural communication. Here she introduces some stories from a number of missionaries that show what this looks like in practise.

As cross-cultural gospel workers, we face the challenge of communicating Christian concepts in contexts that are very different to our western individualistic culture. The Christian faith is the only major religion where the language of the founder (Aramaic) is not the language of its scriptures (Hebrew and Greek). This gives us the freedom to choose from English Bibles translated in different times and styles. And it also means that translatability is core to proclaiming Jesus.

If the early disciples walked into a western church today, they might not recognise it as church. People's language, seating, clothes, music and furniture would all be strange. Even the

structure of a three-point sermon building to a climax near the end differs from the patterns of oratory and argument of New Testament writers.

The message of the Bible is written and spoken into different cultural contexts. This article shows people choosing local cultural terms and ideas to communicate Christian concepts. The word of God took on clothes, culture and language in the particular history and geography of a restless Roman province. This frees and also compels us to bring the news of God's redemption in the words and meanings of the "nations, tribes, peoples and languages" to which God sends us.



God

K, Middle East

Sometimes the gospel uses language that doesn't always seem to make sense when translated into another culture. However, I have been encouraged by realising that the Bible itself is addressed to contexts where people don't know the biblical God, in expectation that the stories and ideas will be understood. For God has contextualised himself and his mission through his word, the gospel.

To take just one example, the Japanese word for god (*kami*) never means that there is only one god, for there are millions of *kami*. But the idea that there are many gods was also not unusual at all in the ancient world, when the gospel was first proclaimed. Consider, for example, Paul's sermons in Acts 14:8–18 and Acts 17:16–34. To hearers that believed in many gods, Paul introduces the incredible thought—using their own language—that in reality there is only one true God.

As Japanese hear the gospel and discover that there is a living, personal, creator God who interacts with his creation, they too can be challenged. There are not millions of *kami*; there is only one God. So their understanding of the word *kami* is radically transformed. In Acts 17:24–25, Paul says, "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands." Such a claim, as shocking then as it is now, nonetheless speaks with great power and clarity across time and culture.



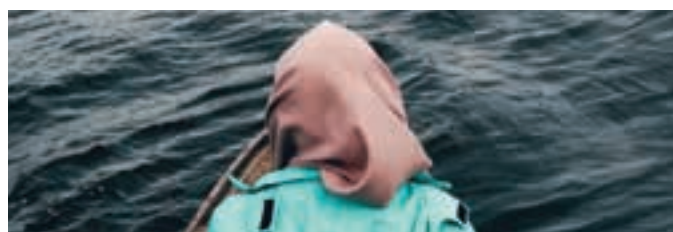
Sin

J, Middle East

I was sitting in the women's marquee at my friend's funeral listening to the religious teacher explain the mathematics of which prayers or fasts on certain days will remove your sin. Sometimes it seems like the religion here is designed to minimise the seriousness of sin. If it's not a reassuring calculation, there will be a reassuring quote from the prophet on people's lips. Sin is often referred to with the same word that can mean a little mistake. One of the biggest challenges in evangelism here is conveying the depth of our sin.

A couple of hours later, chatting with a Saudi relative of my friend, she said, "Our religions are basically the same. We both love Jesus." And I said, "Actually the reason they're not the same is because the Bible says very different things about the problem Jesus came to fix." I talked about the messiness in our families caused by not being able to hold our tongue, or by only looking out for ourselves. And that this is a disease in our hearts that we can't fix. The law doesn't fix it. And God says Jesus is the only one who has the power to fix it.

As I seek illustrations of sin that resonate with people, I pray that the Spirit would ready them to hear God's answer.



TRIBE, PEOPLE LANGUAGE



Gaining blessing

Andrew Buchanan, Indonesia

The local church where I work is currently being confronted by the increasing popularity of annual family tomb-visiting and cleaning ceremonies. In the tribal religion that preceded the coming of Christianity only a hundred years ago, ancestors were important sources of supernatural power; these ceremonies aimed to ensure that that power was for good, not ill. These days, the offerings to the ancestors that formed part of the traditional ceremony have been replaced by Christian liturgies, including a sermon. But what needs to be proclaimed in this service?

If, as many worry, the ancestors are still functioning as alternative sources of blessing for some participants, whether consciously or unconsciously, then ministers need to preach a gospel of blessing. Blessing is power for life, sufficient food, health and descendants to sustain the ongoing existence of the community. Spiritual blessing is power for spiritual life, that is, the eternal life that begins now by the Spirit (Galatians 3:14), the same Spirit that gives physical life (Psalm 104:28–30). Like the ancestors, Jesus knows our earthly struggles from the inside (Hebrews 4:15–16), but he has also opened up the path to eternal life by his own great sacrifice (10:14). Thus the gospel is more than sufficient to undercut competing local claims to spiritual power.

cms.org.au/making-cross-cultural-decisions

CMS missionary Andrew Buchanan has given some striking examples of making decisions about particular cross-cultural issues from his experience in Indonesia. Read his article for a deeper insight into wise responses to challenging situations.



Death and grace

D, East Asia

Every year around Easter, there is a local festival where people go to the graveyards to pay respect to their ancestors. They often burn paper money and offer fruit so their ancestors can receive it in the afterlife. It is a great connecting point for the gospel because it always occurs within a week of Easter. Both events are about remembering people who have died and commemorating their life. But the key point of difference is that while one represents a full tomb and an empty hope, the other represents an empty tomb and a living hope!

Another way to talk about gospel ideas is around obligation and grace. In the culture where we serve, relationships have an element of obligation attached. If you do something for someone they will feel obligated to return the favour. So in class, I get the students to discuss the story of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20), but I speak instead of university students working in a restaurant. Some start work at 4pm, others at 6pm, 8pm or 10pm. But at the end of the evening the boss pays them all the same! I use the story to highlight the unexpected grace that the owner shows.

care



One significant struggle for CMS missionaries is working out how to speak the unchanging gospel in their new context. Consider writing to ask your link missionary what some of the challenges are, so that you can pray more specifically and encourage them in their struggles.

To get ahead in the world, or take a stand for Christ?



CMS missionary Keith Birchley (serving with Marion in Papua New Guinea) speaks here of their experience in a country where 97 per cent of the population claim to be Christian. To be all things to all people can sometimes mean resisting culture.

We've been (mostly) enjoying the ride of ministry in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Almost three and a half years now. And what a ride it continues to be! Never a dull moment! How do Christians hold out the word of life in a country that thinks itself Christian (97 per cent in the last census) and yet is world-famous for its nepotism and corruption? Where the extended family networks (*wantoks*) provide the solace of social security, but also a tourniquet on independence of thought and movement? The short answer to the question is: with long-suffering and sacrifice. Not particularly glamorous. Definitely not triumphalistic. But powerfully present in poignant and usually hidden works of service.

When not to change

Our dear friend Lesley* refused to sign a cheque in the government department for which she worked. Something was obviously wrong with the money involved. After imposing significant pressure on her, the two older (male) signatories engineered her sacking. She was out of work for

five months, during which her family really struggled for money. While still unemployed, Lesley valiantly took on the care and later adoption from her husband's family of an out-of-wedlock child. (It is a lovely feature of life in PNG that families usually shoulder the responsibility for the failings of their members.) Praise God that after taking on their new little daughter, Lesley's work office renewed her contact.

They realised that they needed people of integrity and honesty on whom they could rely. Lesley was reinstated (though of course not remunerated for those missing five months). These sorts of stories abound for sincere believers in PNG. Christ is attested in such situations not by changing behaviour, but by refusing to change and so living in

Christ is attested in such situations not by changing behaviour, but by refusing to change and so living in long-suffering and sacrifice. Being 'all things to all people' can never mean departing from Christlike integrity and truthfulness.

long-suffering and sacrifice. Being all things to all people can never mean departing from Christ-like integrity and truthfulness.

Sacrifice for the gospel

Chris* is a young man of the future. Very able, tertiary educated, perceptive and articulate. He is already a significant leader amongst his Christian peers. The problem for Chris is that he is the focal point of all those *wantoks* who see him as their ticket to prosperity and security. Mum is from a patrilineal tribe: Dad (now deceased) was from a matrilineal tribe. "It is complex!" he tells me. The competing ambitions of the various relatives are being fought out over the future of this young man. His life is far from being his own. One





set of uncles wants him to go into business with them. The opposing set wants him in politics, which (as everyone in PNG knows) means money and lots of it. What will Chris do? He has already ruled out a third option of accepting a very generous package from an aid NGO. The problem there is that, because of its United Nations connections, he would not be able to speak freely about ethical issues which, as a Christian, he feels he must speak on. To remain true to Christ will probably mean (as it does for many pastors) remaining poor. And very unpopular with his *wantoks*. It is no wonder that many of Chris's colleagues put off going back home to their family areas for as long as possible. Again, Christ is being attested by long-suffering and sacrifice.

Dealing faithfully with discouragement

Rob's* situation is different from Chris's, while at the same time strangely familiar. *Wantok* is the issue for him as well. But this time it is the *wantoks* of other people, not his own. We found him wandering disconsolately around the waterfront area of Port Moresby a few weeks back, deeply discouraged at his inability to gain even a first interview for a job. (80–90 per cent of last year's graduates remain unemployed.) What's the problem? People are employing

on connection rather than merit. This is why some grads have four or five options for their futures and others have none. A Melanesian version of the old adage about it not being what you know but who you know. Some are from tribes and families that are powerful and well connected. Others aren't. And that difference will follow them all the days of their lives.

In a country such as this, the call is not necessarily for Christians to speak the gospel differently. Rather, it is to construct a biblical theology from scripture in which commitment to Christ can be located and thus understood. To live out that commitment in ways which cut across traditional behaviours, and to do so for the sake of Christ, is what will show Christ with clarity.

It is simply awe-inspiring to watch our young brothers and sisters face challenges that most of us in the developed world could barely grasp. To get ahead in the world, or to take a stand for Christ? This is the temptation to which so many of their situations ultimately boil down. Will I go for what this world offers, aggressively, ruthlessly, cleverly, using all the resources at my disposal, whether they be *wantoks*, education, dishonesty or just plain human opportunism? Or will I take a stand for Christ? A zealous and consistent Christian life inevitably means being far less prosperous in the developing world rat-race. Often it is a guarantee of relative poverty. May they resist the temptation to lay up treasure for themselves and not be rich toward God (Luke 12:21).

*Names changed to protect privacy.



pray



Pray that God would grant perseverance in faithfulness and Christ-likeness to the Birchleys and the people mentioned in this article. Ask that God would change the hearts of Papua New Guineans to keep living the faith they profess.

Careful conversation



CMS missionary J has served in support of local believers in a range of locations, each of which illustrate barriers to clear gospel communication, but also the joy of persisting with wisdom and (sometimes) caution.

Different contexts produce different challenges to the principle of all things to all people. Here are two stories, the first from Asia, the second from Africa, that may help you see how changed contexts will reveal completely varying responses.

When not to adapt

While working in a C Asian country where sharing the good news was banned, and indeed people who embraced becoming believers risked their lives, a missionary friend shared an experience that happened to her in the market one day. In this country, informal money changers would sit at little tables outside shops. On this day, my friend had bought a telephone card at one of these tables when the seller asked her where a copy of the Bible could be obtained. Now this man was not well-known to her—they barely knew each other—so it was an unusual request. Thinking quickly, my friend answered that she didn't know where such a book could be obtained.

The point of the story is that the original request for the Bible was a trap. We were in the process of burning copies of compromising local-language literature that we might have in our homes at that time, as raids had been made in the recent past on offices. In this case, being all things to all people required you to keep your wits about you because of the security situation, and remain guarded. For the gospel to make progress, great care was required.

When to adapt

This African story is quite different. It comes as a neat surprise when one of the believing African locals whom you've been supporting from time to time has an opportunity to share with someone outside the kingdom. This happened with my friend, K. To move around his African town, you could jump on the back of someone's motor bike, having established the destination and the price. Getting into conversation, K discovered that his motorbike driver was named Isa (a common name, Arabic for 'Jesus'), so he told the driver that this was the name of the Christian prophet. As the driver was M, a brief

conversation ensued about faith matters and the driver agreed to meet for further conversation, telling K where he lived.

K said to me that he was due to meet the driver in a few days. So I asked if he had any spare copies of the Bible in the appropriate local language and on hearing that he didn't, passed across some funds (only around \$10) so that one could be bought in preparation. A few hours before the meeting was due, Isa sent a text to K along the lines of "May God's Spirit move in this meeting and may Isa be surrounded by his love".

Well, K met Isa, who was somewhat surprised that someone who didn't know him had sent a text about him, and even more surprised that she had made a copy of the word available for him.

Around three weeks later on catching up with Isa, K was delighted when Isa picked up his copy of the Bible and, knocking it with the knuckle of his other hand, said, "This is the truth! The M leaders never tell us about this and I want to know more!" Isa became a believer and became so established that he was, in turn, able to help others who became Christians.

Truly our heavenly Father is good!

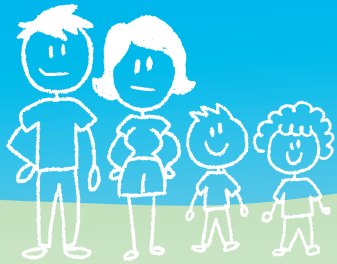
cms.org.au/kellie-nicholas-contextualisation

CMS missionary Kellie Nicholas, on study leave from Japan, has written some stimulating thoughts about the how and why of cultural adaptation.

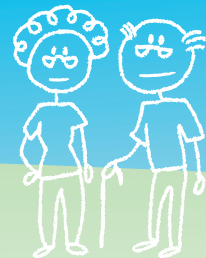
give



Giving to CMS missionaries like J and others in secure locations can mean invaluable support for local believers. Visit give.cms.org.au, where you can give to support gospel ministry through CMS.



The cost of change



Serving in cross-cultural mission can come at a cost. Here former CMS worker H (who served with A in the Middle East) considers the cost to family.

“Every Aussie kid should be able to ride a bike,” said my Australian friend, newly arrived in the Middle East. Easy for you to say, I thought as I wondered where on earth kids were meant to ride a bike safely in a large and busy city, with no footpaths and parks.

Families moving overseas face many issues as they seek to point people to Jesus not just through their official ministries, but in daily life. Do we give up our family traditions because they are different to the culture we are going to? What do we hold onto and what do we change?

When we moved to the Middle East, we had two very small children. We didn’t want to give up our bedtime routines, including that our children slept in their own beds and not with us. This was culturally very different to our Middle Eastern friends. However, in talking with some of our local friends, they thought it a good thing that A and I had time without the children each evening. We did make some compromises such as taking the kids to Arabic church. That meant one late night a week for them, but we thought it was important to do this.

Sacrificing time away from family was also significant. Christmas was always a strange time. I missed my family in Australia and some of our traditions. Christmas in our location was celebrated on the 7th January, however many expats in our location would want to hold to the 25th December. We tried to save our main celebration until the 7th January, even though we were thought of as weird! Local Christians would spend the day with their families, so we would usually invite some other friends around for a meal on the 7th. We had family traditions of having Advent readings each evening, a Christmas tree, special food and gifts, but it still wasn’t the same.

Each year CMS would generously send us a pastoral visitor. They didn’t just ask us questions about our work and ministry, but also how we were going as a family. Talking through some of the issues mentioned here was both welcome and helpful.

Coming back to Australia we said goodbye to many dear friends and ministries. However we also gave up parts of our identity. I was no longer a teacher and leader in the school. We were no longer CMS missionaries and we didn’t know who we were anymore. I was challenged by a talk where the speaker said we shouldn’t be defined by what we do, but who we are in Christ. This has meant that I have become more content with my new life and tried to focus on being Christ-like in my situation.

From our children’s perspective, they have given up far more coming to live back in Australia, than when they lived in the Middle East. They have given up dear friends, a small and loving school community, an (English) church where they had a role to play, as well as continuous sunshine and warmth! Those things are taking a long time to replace in Melbourne. To this day, only one of them can ride a bike!

Care



Helen has some excellent thoughts on how churches and individuals can help children of missionaries settle in Australia. See them at cms.org.au/helping-MKs-feel-welcome.

MISSIONARY SPOTLIGHT

Checkpoint asked: “What is an unexpected way you have found yourself serving on location?”



Japanese culture places a high value on submission to authority and maintaining harmony within a group. In order to ‘fit in’, we work hard to speak less and listen more, and do far more consulting before acting. It sometimes feels inefficient and restrictive to us, but we submit to these cultural norms to maintain harmony. Then our voice is heard when we do want to challenge the status quo.

Brad & Michelle Jackson serving in Japan

cms.org.au/jacksonbm

GIVING THANKS TO GOD



Phyllis Mercer

We praise God for the life and ministry of Phyllis Mercer, who died at home in North Tamborine on 30 June, aged 85. Phyllis and her husband, John, served the Lord with CMS in North Australia from 1953–63. (John had been in Numbulwar since 1951.) Phyllis established a school for Aboriginal children under the shade of a tree until a school house could be constructed. She and John also ran a daily medical clinic and shared the gospel with Aboriginal peoples through word and deed, music and song. They worked fruitfully among the Nunggubuyu people of Numbulwar, then moved to Groote Eylandt, where they devoted themselves to serving the Anindilyakwa people. Phyllis wrote the biography of Yulki Nunggumajbarr and 10 monographs on the Christian faith and life, explaining how to best serve the Lord in family life and other ways. We pray for God's comfort for John and their family.



George Townend

We praise God for the life and ministry of George Townend, who died in Adelaide on 7 August, aged 92. George grew up in Sydney and was ordained in 1957. He married Joyce Haire (d. 2002), who had already served the Lord with CMS in Malaya (Malaysia) from 1954–57. After serving in two parishes, they applied to CMS together and were deployed to Kuantan in Malaya, where

they served from 1959–61. Returning to Australia, they served in Mona Vale until 1964, when George became a chaplain with the RAAF until 1980. He was the first Australian chaplain in the Vietnam War and his theme, then and in Remembrance gatherings was, "Our soldiers stood, and fought, and died only for love, for the love for all of us to be free." Later, George was minister at Loch in Gippsland from 1980–81. He and Joyce retired to Adelaide, where they ministered to the infirm for the next 20 years. We give thanks for his life and pray for God's comfort for his daughter, Janet, son-in-law, Gleb, son, David, daughter-in-law, Louise, and grandson, Timothy.



John Dowe

We praise God for the life and ministry of John Dowe, who died in Sydney on 8 August, aged 86. John and his wife, Clare, served the Lord with CMS in the Solomon Islands from 1990–97. John taught Greek, Hebrew and New Testament Theology to students at Bishop Patteson Theological Centre, while Clare taught the fourth-year students' wives and helped run a crèche for the children at the college. John also spent time as the college's chaplain and acting deputy principal during his service, and took a particular interest in improving the range of books at the college library. In retirement, John kept up his servant-hearted ministry to the end, including regular visits to Solomon Islander patients at Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital. We pray for God's comfort for Clare, their daughter and the extended family.



Maude Drewery

We praise God for the life and ministry of Maude Drewery, who died in Brisbane on 31 August. Maude studied at St Andrew's Hall in 1972 and served the Lord with CMS in the Northern Territory from 1973–75. Maude's role was a cook and clerk, first at Gunbalanya and then at Numbulwar. Ivory Shield remembers that "Maude was a trained cook and I learned some good tips from her. She was a faithful teacher of Religious Education and of the Sunday school children." We praise God for Maude's life and pray for all those who learned to know Christ through her ministry in North Australia and in her later life.



Peter Barnes

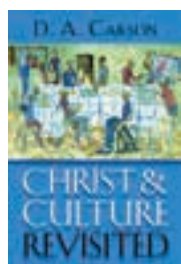
We praise God for the life and ministry of Peter Barnes, who died in Katoomba on 19 September, aged 76. Peter and his wife, Margaret, served the Lord with CMS in Tanzania from 1969–82. Peter was a teacher at Kigoma Secondary School and Msalato Girls' School, both founded by CMS. He spoke in the Sunday services in the school chapels, taught Religious Education and encouraged the UKWATA group, the Tanzanian equivalent of ISCF. Through his service, he gave hundreds of Tanzanians a good education and his Christian testimony. We thank God for Peter's life and ask him to comfort Margaret, their children, Philip, Robyn and Andrew, and all in the extended family.

BOOK REVIEW

Review by Matthew Payne, PhD
Candidate (University of Sydney) &
theological educator.

CARSON, D.A. *CHRIST AND CULTURE REVISITED*. LEICESTER: APOLLOS, 2008.

Christians have an uneasy relationship to non-Christian culture. We know that the only truly Christian culture awaits us in Jesus' kingdom, but what stance ought we to take toward the culture of the world whilst we wait? Carson's book is a critical engagement with Richard Niebuhr's influential *Christ and Culture* (1951). Niebuhr offered a taxonomy of



ways of relating to culture: Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ transforming culture. Like the author of *Ecclesiastes*, Carson shows how each of these stances toward culture has its proper time and place, and that this must be wisely discerned. Carson critiques and modifies Niebuhr's paradigm from a biblical theological perspective, before discussing postmodernism, secularisation, democracy, and church and state. This is not a simple book, but Carson's discussion is rich and worthy of serious reflection. Given the increasing cultural pressure felt in modern western countries today, it is becoming increasingly important for Christian leaders of all sorts to reflect carefully on these things whilst we wait for the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus.

More book reviews can be found at cms.org.au/reviews



JANUARY 2019



B serves in the Middle East, where she continues to learn Arabic and invest in friendships with local people from the majority faith.

What keeps you persevering?
The situation here seems so far from the future hope we're given in Revelation 7 of a great multitude worshipping the lamb. And yet, it is an assured reality that awaits. I may not see much evidence in my time here, but God is at work and he is faithful. By his grace, we keep going.

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Kingsley & Veronica Box serve in Ljubljana, Slovenia with their children Zachary, Samuel, Timothy and Sophia. They are active members of the Reformed Evangelical Church, where Kingsley is assistant pastor.

What keeps you persevering?
The gospel of Christ keeps us persevering. Christ gave up his life for us—how can we not willingly keep preaching his message to those around us?

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MARCH 2019



Norm & Janelle Gorrie serve in Marsabit, Kenya, where they are involved in mission, discipleship training and literacy classes.

What keeps you persevering?
What a privilege it is to have prayer, encouragement, and support from supporters and partners in our link churches. This keeps us persevering in our Father's work, enabling us to have strong friendships and partnerships with local Christians.

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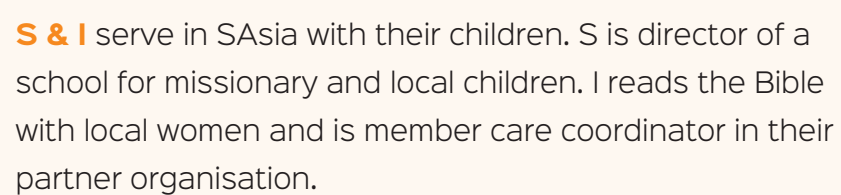


Matt & Jen Lim serve in Tokyo, Japan with their children, Obadiah and Theodore. They are learning Japanese language and culture in preparation for ministry to high school students.

What keeps you persevering?
In John 10:10, Jesus says, 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' We long to see Japanese high schoolers embrace the life and hope that is found only in Christ. We keep remembering this is why we're here.

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MAY 2019



We are children of God, but we are also his servants, called to follow our Lord. We are privileged to do his work, even when it is hard or we feel inadequate.

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JUNE 2019



Amy Stephens serves in Córdoba, Argentina, where she supports university students through the Asociación Bíblica Universitaria Argentina (ABUA). She meets with students to read the Bible and trains them to share their faith with others on campus.

What keeps you persevering?
It is easy to think that no one is interested in knowing Jesus in a secular environment. However, nothing could be further from the truth. I keep persevering in this work because I know God is faithful and is establishing his kingdom.

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JULY 2019



Joel & Tiffanie Atwood serve in Port Vila, Vanuatu with their children, Hosea and Timotheus. They work with students at the University of the South Pacific, train future leaders at a Bible college and mentor young women.

What keeps you persevering?
We have a choice to either be ashamed and settled into quiet complacency, or to join in suffering for the gospel with all God's power behind us.

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AUGUST 2019



Chris & Grace Adams serve in Dili, Timor-Leste with their son, Micah. They are involved in training church leaders, mentoring, school ministry, and producing and publishing Christian resources and literature in the Tetun language.

What keeps you persevering?
Again and again... we ask ourselves, 'Will we get through this?' But again and again, God displays the power of the gospel for us and the people we love and serve, and even more so in the low times. God keeps reminding us that power doesn't lie with us, but with him.

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SEPTEMBER 2019



T & E serve in SE Asia with their children. They teach, mentor and disciple university students, and equip others in holistic community development.

What keeps you persevering?
The ongoing support from people back home really helps us. The Psalms have also given us a perspective on the perseverance and trust that David has in God. Despite the turmoil and suffering around him, David knew that God was indeed sovereign and trustworthy.

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OCTOBER 2019

Malta



G & R serve in Malta with their children. They help pastor a local church and are also involved in student ministry.

What keeps you persevering?
We keep going in the hard times, when there is little fruit or growth, because the gospel shows he is worthy of our honour and service.

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NOVEMBER 2019

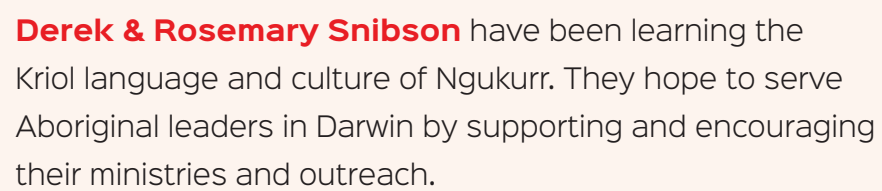


Shane & Naomi Rubie serve in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with their children, Thomas, Oliver, Lucy and Max. Shane is athletics director at Bingham Academy and Naomi is deputy principal of the elementary school.

What keeps you persevering?
We believe that our students are the future generation of missionaries and believers who can change the world for God's glory. We are sowing seeds into their hearts for a future of godly living, serving Jesus, and bringing about truth and justice in a world that is hurting.

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DECEMBER 2019



We keep on persevering, knowing that the Lord of the Harvest will continue to provide new workers for his field. He is faithful and will sustain the workers, even if they are few.

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CMS Summer Conferences

Every year, thousands of supporters gather at CMS Summer Conferences all around Australia to be challenged by faithful Bible teaching, refreshed by fellowship with others and inspired by gospel workers, as together we seek *a world that knows Jesus.*

“It’s a time where, as a family, we are refreshed spiritually, physically and emotionally. We are constantly encouraged and challenged by the Bible talks and reminded of the wonderful way God is at work around the world through the ministry of CMS and the part we might play in that.”

Stuart Maze, CMS NSW & ACT

There is still time to register!
cms.org.au/summer-conferences

CMS NSW & ACT
SUMMER SCHOOL
5-11 JANUARY 2019

ONLINE APPLICATIONS
CLOSE 3 DECEMBER

CMS QNSW
SUMMER SCHOOL
4-9 JANUARY 2019

ONLINE APPLICATIONS
CLOSE 7 DECEMBER

CMS SANT
SUMMER ENCOUNTER
17-19 JANUARY 2019

CMS TAS
SUMMERVIEW
10-13 JANUARY 2019

ONLINE APPLICATIONS
CLOSE 30 NOVEMBER

CMS VIC
SUTS
16-19 JANUARY 2019

EARLY BIRD TICKETS
CLOSE 14 DECEMBER

CMS WA
SUMMERFOCUS
2 MARCH 2019



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.

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