

I. Week 8, Intercultural Communication and World Religions

A. Historical snapshot, Hudson Taylor

[The text in italics has been taken, in whole or in part, from John Piper's historical snapshot, found at this link: (<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-ministry-of-hudson-taylor-as-life-in-christ>).]

He was born May 21, 1832, in Barnsley, England into a devout Methodist home. At the age of 17, he was dramatically converted through the prayers of his mother.

Brought up in a godly home, he, as a young man, tried to imitate the lives of his parents, and failing in his own strength to make himself better, he swung to the other extreme, and began to entertain skeptical notions. One day, when his mother was from home, a great yearning after her boy possessed her, and she went up to her room to plead with God that "even now" he would save him.

At length her faith triumphed, and she rose quite certain that all was well, and that "even now" her son was saved. What was he doing at that time? Having half an hour to spare, he wandered into his father's library, and aimlessly took down one book after another to find some short and interesting passage to divert his mind. He could not find what he wanted in any of the books; so, seeing a narrative tract, he took it up with the intention of reading the story, and putting it down when the sermon part of it began. As he read, he came to the words "the finished work of Christ", and almost at the very moment in which his mother, who was miles away, claimed his soul of God, light came into his heart. He saw that it was by the finished work of Christ that he was to be saved; and kneeling in his father's library, he sought and found the life of God.

He entered rudimentary medical studies as an apprentice to Robert Hardey, and sailed for China with the Chinese Evangelistic Society September 19, 1853 at the age of 21 and with no formal training in theology or missions. He landed in Shanghai March 1, the next year—five and a half months in route.

He learned the language quickly and in his first two years in China engaged in ten extended evangelistic journeys up country. After four years Taylor resigned from the Chinese Evangelistic Society because he had a deep conviction that borrowing money to sustain Christ's work was wrong. "To borrow money implied, to my mind, a contradiction of Scripture — a confession that GOD had withheld some good thing, and a determination to get for ourselves what He had not given. . . To satisfy my conscience I was therefore compelled to resign connection with the Society which had hitherto supplied my salary."³ That was the beginning of lifetime of never being in financial debt and never explicitly asking anyone for money⁴ — following the lead of his hero George Mueller.

On January 20, 1858, when he had been in China almost five years, he married another missionary Maria Dyer. They were married for twelve years. When Maria

died at age 33, she had given birth to eight children. Three died at birth, two in childhood and the four that lived to adulthood all became missionaries with the mission their father had founded, the China Inland Mission.

In July of 1860, Hudson and Maria sailed for England. He was seriously ill with hepatitis, and what seemed like a setback would soon give rise to one of the two most decisive events of his life.⁵ His burden for China grew for the next four years in England. He could not shake the idea that a new mission agency was needed. But he did not know if he could lead it. But in the same period, it took the Americans to fight the Civil War, God birthed in Hudson Taylor a vision that would change the history of the largest nation on earth. The moment came on Lord's day in June 1865 on the Brighton beach in, England, which he describes like this.

On Sunday, June 25th, 1865, unable to bear the sight of a congregation of a thousand or more Christian people rejoicing in their own security, while millions were perishing for lack of knowledge, I wandered out on the sands alone, in great spiritual agony; and there the LORD conquered my unbelief, and I surrendered myself to GOD for this service. I told Him that all the responsibility as to issues and consequences must rest with Him; that as His servant, it was mine to obey and to follow Him — His, to direct, to care for, and to guide me and those who might labor with me. Need I say that peace at once flowed into my burdened heart? There and then I asked Him for twenty-four fellow-workers, two for each of eleven inland provinces which were without a missionary, and two for Mongolia; and writing the petition on the margin of the Bible I had with me, I returned home with a heart enjoying rest such as it had been a stranger to for months.

That was the birthplace of the China Inland Mission. Taylor was 33 years old. The missionaries would have no guaranteed salaries, they were not to appeal for funds, and they were to adopt Chinese dress and press the gospel to the interior. On May 26, the following year (1866) Hudson and Maria and their children sailed with the largest group of missionaries that had ever sailed to China — sixteen besides themselves. Taylor was to be the leader and settle all disputes. Not everyone appreciated his leadership and the demands he made on himself and everyone else. One missionary in that early group accused him of tyranny and had to be dismissed.

Three years later... Hudson Taylor experienced a crisis.

[The need for your prayer] has never been greater than at present. Envied by some, despised by many, hated by others, often blamed for things I never heard of or had nothing to do with, an innovator on what have become established rules of missionary practice, an opponent of mighty systems of heathen error and superstition, working without precedent in many respects and with few experienced helpers, often sick in body as well as perplexed in mind and embarrassed by circumstances—had not the Lord been specially gracious to me, had not my mind been sustained by the conviction that the work is His and that

He is with me, . . . I must have fainted or broken down. But the battle is the Lord's, and He will conquer.

We may fail — do fail continually — but He never fails. I have continually to mourn that I follow at such a distance and learn so slowly to imitate my precious Master. I cannot tell you how I am buffeted sometimes by temptation. I never knew how bad a heart I have. Yet I do know that I love God and love His work, and desire to serve Him only and in all things. And I value above all else that precious Savior in whom alone I can be accepted. Often, I am tempted to think that one so full of sin cannot be a child of God at all. May God help me to love Him more and serve Him better.

1869 – after a period of struggling with sin and temptation, Hudson Taylor experienced blessing of knowing Christ more fully and richly than he known him before. His soul was satisfied and overflowing with joy.

On September 4, 1869, when he was 37 years old, Taylor found a letter waiting for him at Zhenjiang from John McCarthy, a fellow missionary. God used the letter to revolutionize Taylor's life. "When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed to me the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before."¹⁶

"To let my loving Saviour work in me His will, my sanctification, is what I would live for by His grace. Abiding, not striving nor struggling; looking off unto Him; trusting Him for present power; resting in the love of an almighty Saviour."²²

Abiding in Christ became a greater reality to him than ever before.

His Most Difficult Days

And just in time too. Because the next year, 1870, was the most difficult of his life. His son Samuel died in January. Then in July, Maria gave birth to a son, Noel, who died two weeks later. And to crown Hudson's sorrows on July 23, Maria died of cholera. She was 33 years old; Hudson was 38. They had four living children. It's as though God gave Taylor this extraordinary experience not as icing on the cake of conversion, but as a way of surviving and thriving in the worst of his sorrows.

A year later, Taylor sailed for England, and while he was there married, in 1871, the woman with whom he would spend the rest of his life, Jennie Faulding, on November 28. They were married for 33 years before she died in 1904, the year before he did. They had a son and daughter besides the four children from Maria.

In his lifetime, Hudson Taylor made ten voyages to China, which means, as I calculate it that he spent between four and five years on the water in transit — a good reminder, I suppose, that he was pilgrim here. Over time, his ministry became increasingly global as the ambassador for China and for the China Inland Mission. He

was the General Director from 1865 to 1902, when he handed over the role to Dixon Hoste.

He lived to see the horrible Boxer rebellion which raged against all Christians and foreigners in China in 1900. The China Inland Mission (and Taylor was leading it at the time) lost more members than any other agency: 58 adults and 21 children were killed. But the next year, when the allied nations were demanding compensation from the Chinese government, Taylor refused to accept payment for loss of property or life. His aim was always to win the Chinese, not to demand justice for himself or his mission.

His Death and Legacy

In February of 1905, Hudson Taylor sailed for China for the last time. After a tour of some of the mission stations he died June 3 at Changsha, Hunan, at the age of 73. He was buried at Zhenjiang by the side of his first wife and his four children who had died in China. Jennie had died in Switzerland the year before. The cemetery was destroyed as part of the Cultural Revolution and today industrial buildings stand over the site.

At the time of Hudson Taylor's death, the China Inland Mission was an international body with 825 missionaries living in all eighteen provinces of China with more than 300 mission stations, more than 500 local Chinese helpers, and 25,000 Christian converts. Among the better known luminaries who served China with CIM are the Cambridge Seven, William Borden, James Fraser, John and Betty Stam. Today about 1,600 missionaries work for what is now known as OMF international.¹⁴ It international headquarters is in Singapore and the mission is led by Patrick Fung who is Chinese. The Mission Statement is: "To Glorify God by the urgent evangelization of East Asia's Millions." And the Vision Statement is: "Through God's grace, we aim to see an indigenous, biblical church movement in each people group of East Asia, evangelizing their own people and reaching out in mission to other peoples." I think Hudson Taylor would be pleased.

150+ years later...

In 1900, there were 100,000 Christians in China, and today there are probably around 150,000,000.¹⁵ This is God's work, one plants another waters, but God gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:6). Nevertheless it is the fruit of faithful labor. And in Hudson Taylor labored longer and harder than most, and that labor was sustained by union with Christ. And so we should look at what this meant for Hudson Taylor.

Lessons to Learn...

- 1. Pray for your children.*
- 2. Prioritize prayer in your own life.*
- 3. Abide with Christ. Vine and branches.*
- 4. Understand that suffering is the pruning of the branches.*

It is in the path of obedience and self-denying service that God reveals Himself most intimately to His children. When it costs most we find the greatest joy. We find the darkest hours the brightest, and the greatest loss the highest gain. While the sorrow

is short lived, and will soon pass away, the joy is far more exceeding, and it is eternal. Would that I could give you an idea of the way in which God has revealed Himself to me in China, and to others whom I have known. In the presence of bereavement, in the deepest sorrows of life, He has so drawn near to me that I have said to myself, Is it possible that the precious one who is in His presence can have more of the presence of God than I have?³⁴

- i. ³²Taylor, Dr. and Mrs. Howard (2013-05-25). Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret (p. 145). Kindle Edition. One of the most moving scenes from his closing months is given by his Son in describing how Taylor found time for prayer and the word every day, no matter how busy: "To him, the secret of overcoming lay in daily, hourly fellowship with God; and this, he found, could only be maintained by secret prayer and feeding upon the Word through which He reveals Himself to the waiting soul. It was not easy for Mr Taylor, in his changeful life, to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Well do the writers remember travelling with him month after month in northern China, by cart and wheelbarrow, with the poorest of inns at night. Often with only one large room for coolies and travellers alike, they would screen off a corner for their father and another for themselves, with curtains of some sort; and then, after sleep at last had brought a measure of quiet, they would hear a match struck and see the flicker of candlelight which told that Mr. Taylor, however weary, was poring over the little Bible in two volumes always at hand. From two to four A.M. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time when he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God. That flicker of candlelight has meant more to them than all they have read or heard on secret prayer; it meant reality, not preaching but practice. The hardest part of a missionary career, Mr. Taylor found, is to maintain regular, prayerful Bible study. **'Satan will always find you something to do,' he would say, 'when you ought to be occupied about that, if it is only arranging a window blind.'**" Taylor, Dr. and Mrs. Howard (2013-05-25). Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret (p. 223). Kindle Edition.

B. Why does Intercultural Communication matter?

- i. Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Isaiah 11:9
- ii. All peoples, tribes, and languages are worshipping around the throne. Rev. 7
- iii. Either all peoples will conform to a single culture... (ours of course!)
- iv. Or the gospel will cross cultures and find expression in different cultures.
- v. Review Last Week – Acts 15 / I Cor. 9 / Incarnation
- vi. If you don't fit in, and they reject the messenger, then often people reject the message too. They reject the gospel without hearing the gospel.

- vii. There can never be a culture-free gospel.
- viii. Acts 14:8-18
 1. Proclamation of gospel, accompanied with healing
 2. Observe people's response
 - a. Whenever someone learns a new truth, that truth must displace their current beliefs and the theologians (formal or informal) of those beliefs.
 3. Paul/Barnabas response

C. Contextualization

- i. Goal #1 – minimize cultural barriers to the reception of the gospel. All other things being equal, people come to the Lord and worship the Lord in settings where they do not have to cross cultural barriers. If we present the gospel in such a way that others think that they have to change cultures in order to believe the gospel, then we have not communicated the gospel at all
- ii. Goal #2 – Goal is to proclaim the gospel in a way that addresses the heart issues of the hearer. Every culture has a religion. Every culture has questions that Christ answers. But, if we proclaim Christ in a way that answers the wrong questions, we have not proclaimed Christ clearly.
- iii. Goal is clarity.
- iv. Seeker-Sensitive?
 1. Yes, present gospel in a way that is sensitive to the hearer.
 2. No, not blur the distinction between Christianity and other religions.
 3. In every culture, the gospel requires life transformation. *But it does not require you to be an American.*
 4. If we do not contextualize, then we lead people to think they must leave their culture to become a Christian.
- ii. Cultural Form
 1. Examples of cultural forms
 - a. Dress, behavior, and lifestyle of missionary. In all the ways that are extra-biblical (not anti-biblical), you need to conform to the culture.
 - b. Types of development projects, which if inappropriate, might be interpreted as 'inducements' by the non-Christian community.
 - c. Language, including Scripture translation, used in evangelism and worship.
 - d. Thought patterns and communication styles as found in the new culture.

- e. Initial selection, sequence, and emphasis of certain aspects of the gospel relevant to any culture.
 - f. Worship posture and expression in prayer, music or formal discourse, allowing for various forms. We need to be careful, however, that we do not overlook the delicate relationship between form and meaning.
 - g. Discipleship and training methods, keeping in mind the past experiences and future needs of new converts.
2. Acts 16 – Paul circumcises Timothy
 3. Acts 21 – Paul takes a vow
- I.
4. Ukraine
 - a. Smiling a lot!
 - b. If people think you're weird, they may not listen to you.
 5. Culture Shock
 - a. Inevitable but rarely fatal
 - b. Occurs when two or more cultures collide.
 - c. Learned worldview cues no longer function
 6. Stages of culture shock
 - a. Culture Surprise (Tourist/Honeymoon); lasts from a few weeks to a few months
 - b. Rejection Stage; a deep, deep pit; divorces; doubt salvation; doubt call to ministry; cyclical, not linear; islands of the home culture; you are suffering!; you live in a little expatriate bubbles, watch Netflix, drive down to minister to the locals; attend the American club; find the doctor that speaks English; find the grocery store where you can find your comfort foods; this stage can last from a few months to a couple years. It depends on how quickly you bond with the culture and how quickly you learn the language and how well you can remember why you are there.
 - c. Recovery Stage
 - i. Option 1 – Assimilation/go native. Not healthy. God has given you your background. Like a rocket that shoots up and then falls back to the earth. South African example. Afrikaans.
 - ii. Option 2 – Cultural acceptance and adaptation. Bonding with the culture, humor, friends. Try one new dish per week. Initially, say "yes" to anything (food, invitations).

- iii. Option 3 – Culture tension/stress. Always on a slow burn. Nationals are never accepted as equals. Sometimes spouses are split, one adapts and the other lives in tension.

7. Reverse Culture Shock –

- a. People are not as interested in hearing about your stories as you think they are. The world back home has moved on.
- b. USA is parent's home, not the kids' home. Third-culture kids. Price, waste, options, wealth. Priorities and preferences. Not fatal either but forewarned is forearmed.
- c. You're ruined for a normal life.

iii. Gospel Presentation

1. What is the gospel? What are different pictures or phrases that are used in the Bible for the gospel?
2. Acts 13:13-51 – Paul preaches in Antioch of Pisidia
 - a. OT history, focuses on Christ as fulfillment of OT promises
 - b. Focuses on resurrection (vs. 30)
 - c. Freed from the law of Moses (39)
3. Acts 17:22-31 – Paul preaches in Athens
 - a. No OT history
 - b. Creation
 - c. Reference to idolatry
 - d. Repentance
 - e. Resurrection
4. Guilt / shame / fear
5. Initial presentation of the gospel should seek to answer the questions that the religion of the people is asking.

II.

6. As believers grow and are discipled, the full biblical revelation will be taught.

D. World Religions

i. Islam

1. 6th/7th century Arabia

2. Muhammad, merchant, travels
 3. Distressed by idolatry, begins receiving revelation
 4. Had some exposure to Christianity but not much
 5. Medina then Mecca
 6. Some shared tradition but different beliefs
 7. Qur'an, Hadith
 8. Five Pillars
 - a. Confession
 - b. 5 Daily Prayers
 - c. Alms
 - d. Fasting
 - e. Pilgrimage (*hajj*)
 - f. Jihad (sometimes the 6th pillar)
 9. God is merciful but does not promise to show mercy to any
 10. Rejects Trinity, Incarnation, PSA
 11. Do not accept the "logic" of PSA
 12. Works-based salvation – final judgment, weight of good and bad
 13. We don't need to be afraid of Muslims
 14. Arab and Muslim are not the same thing
 15. Much diversity within Islam – ask a Muslim what he/she believes

 16. Contextualization Issue #1
 - a. Son of God Translation
 - b. Son of God is offensive to Muslims. Some translations remove this phrase in favor of an "equivalent" phrase – "beloved one"
 - c. Difference between choosing how to initially present the gospel and changing the Scriptural translation

 17. Contextualization Issue #2
 - a. C1-C6 Scale
 - b. Ralph Winter

 18. Shame Context
 - a. Titus – purity, cleansing language
 - b. Story for J.D. Greear (pg. 79 of *Breaking the Islam Code*)
 - c. Resurrection story
 - d. Matthew 9:18-26 – woman unclean
- ii. Hinduism
1. Much diversity within belief structure
 2. Caste system – 4 basic castes but many, many others
 3. Reincarnation – cycle of rebirth
 4. Vedas – Scriptures
 5. Polytheistic – over 300 millions gods
 6. Contextualization Issue #1
 - a. "Born again" language not helpful

- b. Eternal life with Christ better than *moksha* (release from cycle)
- 7. Contextualization Issue #2
 - a. Must stress the uniqueness of God.
 - b. They are more than willing to accept a new god, but a god that demands exclusive allegiance is new to them.

iii. Buddhism

- 1. Began from within Hinduism
- 2. No caste structure
- 3. Four truths
 - a. To live is to suffer
 - b. Suffering is caused by attachment to physical world
 - c. To eliminate suffering you must eliminate attachment
 - d. Attachment can be eliminated by following 8-fold Path
- 4. Eight-Fold Path
 - a. Correct View
 - b. Correct intention
 - c. Correct speech
 - d. Correct action
 - e. Correct vocation
 - f. Correct effort
 - g. Correct mindfulness
 - h. Correct concentration
- 5. Blended with Chinese / Japanese folk religion
- 6. Exported to West

iv. Animism

- 1. Excluded middle – spiritual beings that directly impact the events of life
- 2. Popular religion of the world
- 3. People spend their lives trying to keep the spirits happy
- 4. Witch doctor story
- 5. Folk islam, folk Hinduism, folk Christianity
- 6. Contextualization Issue – Power
 - a. Ephesians – far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, strengthened with power
 - b. Colossians – disarming rulers, triumph, power
 - c. Resurrection – Acts 13, Acts 17:31
 - d. Power over demons

v. Syncretism

E. Application

- i. Learn what people believe
- ii. Exegete the culture
- iii. The Gospel addresses the questions that they are asking.

- iv. Cross-cultural evangelists need to know what their listeners actually hear when the gospel is presented to them.
- v. They also need to understand what issues must be addressed in discipleship.
- vi. Goal is not to blur distinctions but to highlight them.

F. Questions