

LIVING LIFE TOGETHER – TRIBAL EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP IN CANADA

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It was nearly dark as I walked the dirt track down to Elder Sam's home near the waterfront. He had invited me to come for a visit. Sam and his wife were part of the tribal village of Kitimat near the upper end of a long coastal inlet in northern British Columbia, Canada. My wife and I were part of a team of 6 that were living in the village for about 7 weeks.

Remembering that his wife would be away for the evening, I wondered what we would talk about. As I walked along, I reviewed the things I had been taught about visiting Native men (or First Nations, as they were more often called now). Younger men listened when in the presence of Elders. The Elders among these Tribal people often talked only a little, especially to younger men. Being only 26, I was definitely young compared to his 65 plus years. Not talking a lot when in the presence of an Elder was a sign of respect.

In my home in the USA there usually was a lot of talking and silence in a conversation was a sign that the conversation was not going well. I wondered if I would, without thinking, try to keep the conversation comfortable for me rather than for my new friend. Silently, I asked the Lord to help me keep my mouth shut even if I felt uncomfortable.

Hearing the water lapping against the boat dock as I walked was a friendly sound. As I neared the house, I suddenly remembered that this village had a protocol for announcing your presence at someone's door. After knocking, you were expected to open the door and step in. Just thinking about doing that felt strange but I was glad I remembered.

Opening the gate and walking up to the door, I prayed again and knocked. Stepping through the door after opening it, Sam was sitting across the room. I greeted him with the Tribal language greeting (the only word I knew). He smiled, greeted me, and asked if I would like a coffee and pointed to the cup and canned milk sitting next to the coffee pot. Helping myself. I sat down in the empty chair nearby.

We chatted about a few things and then the silence started. I was uncomfortable very quickly but waited for Sam to open further conversation. Occasionally I would ask about something like the fishing or if the family owned one of the fishing boats moored out his front window. But there was a lot of silence. I stayed for about an hour and a half and then took my leave wondering if this "visit" had been worth it. I had felt very uncomfortable throughout the evening. However, noticing that Sam seemed at ease with our "visit" I gradually became more comfortable as well.

The next day I heard from his daughter that he had had the best visit with me and that I was welcome back anytime. A week later my wife and I received an

invitation to come visit him and his wife. Much to our surprise and pleasure, they brought out several old ceremonial masks that were stored in their home and insisted we examine them.

Thus began over 50 years of ministry among tribal people in North America. This was one of the first experiences of many that God used to teach me that life as a follower of Christ provides all kinds of opportunities to care about others, to personally be uncomfortable so others are comfortable and to enjoy life the way others do, and to do life together. By focusing on loving God, ministry became life and life became ministry.

WOW!! Over 50 years of ministry among the Tribal people in North America. Where has the time gone? My tribal friends and fellow followers of Jesus stretch from the Navajo in SW USA to the Cree, Inuit and Dene' in northern Canada as well as many other tribes in between and beyond. Through them God has taught me much about life and ministry.

Having grown up in a Christian home, gone to a Christian college and a good seminary I started ministry among these people, like many of us do, I suppose, thinking I was ready and OK. I thought of my life as being what I did when home with my wife and children or with family in Oregon where I grew up. When I was in the villages or homes of Native or First Nations people, the Tribal People, that was ministry. My culture, both church and background, were pretty much unexamined. I had the idea that ministry and life were two separate things. I felt guilty if there wasn't a Bible study or some religious program to be involved with. Just visiting people or doing things with my family and other friends didn't seem as important as Bible studies and church programs. Looking around me at many other pastors and missionaries that was what I observed them doing. So, I guess I just fell into the pattern I saw.

There were, however, some people that did not fit that pattern. Their lives and ministry seemed to be all mixed up together and they often seemed to have the most effective relationships with all people whether friends, family or tribal people. Life and ministry were not two separate parts of their life, but all of their ministry was life and their life was ministry. About this time, God began to challenge me from His Word that my life and ministry needed to be measured by His perspective, not mine or someone else's practices. Maybe life is ministry and ministry is life.

One of the passages that God used to challenge me was Matthew 22:34-39. Jesus is asked "What is the great commandment in the Law?" From this passage I began to understand that life and ministry are not

two separate parts of life. Instead, Life is ministry and ministry is life. In fact, I came to understand that my ministry for God must happen out of a specific application of this passage of Scripture. Ministry to Tribal people or any other person will not and cannot happen outside of the application of this passage to our lives. I start this paper here because what I believe God wants me to say later in the paper cannot happen unless we first understand and apply this passage to our lives.

My wife wrote in red at this point, **“This is essential. Don’t miss this point!”**

Let’s take a look at these verses.

Matthew 22: 34 - 39

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.

³⁵One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him,

³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

³⁷And He said to him, “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’

³⁸“This is the great and foremost commandment.

³⁹“The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’¹

In Matthew 22 Jesus is asked by a Pharisee, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” By “law” the Pharisee was referring to the Mosaic Law, probably the whole Pentateuch. Apparently, one of the ongoing discussions among the Jewish religious leaders and Priests was ‘what are the basic laws of all the commands? What are the smallest number of all the commands that must be known and obeyed? At that time the list of laws on the priestly books besides the Laws given to Moses in the Torah numbered somewhere over 600. Trying to know them all, let alone obey them was nearly impossible. The EBC makes the following statement: The Jews quite commonly drew distinctions among the laws of the Scripture—great and small, light and heavy.² So, to ask this question would not have appeared abnormal. However, we know from the Matthew text that this question was a testing question. The Jewish Religious leaders were expecting or hoping the question might trip Jesus up so He would give a wrong or even heretical answer. They were trying to find a way to get Jesus off the street and out of circulation. If they could find a reason to have him executed, so much the better.

Jesus responded to the question, declaring

1. New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Mt 22:34–39.

2. D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 464.

³⁷ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’

³⁸ “This is the great and foremost commandment.

³⁹ “The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

To love God first tells us something about what was built into us at creation. God built into the DNA of mankind the freedom and desire to Love God forever. We were created for one primary purpose, to love God with all our heart, mind and soul. Ministry is life and Life is ministry. Jesus’ statement indicates that true life happens only in a proper relationship with God based on Love and obedience. Life is living to please God in every way all the time. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it:

Man’s chief end is to glorify God, (1 Cor. 10:31, Rom. 11:36) and to enjoy him forever. (Ps. 73:25–28)³

Since God created us with that one primary purpose everything about our lives will work correctly only when we are in perfect union with our Creator. Ministry is Life! Life is Ministry!

At creation we were ‘hardwired’, as it were, to love God with all our heart, all our mind and all our soul until . . . Adam and Eve broke the connection. Inherent in “loving Him” is the willingness to obey him. Adam and Eve’s rebellion (and ours with them) messed that up. But God already had a plan to send Jesus to Earth at the exact and appropriate time to die on the cross paying eternally for our rebelliousness. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the penalty required for our rebellious nature (our sin) was paid and we could then be washed clean by His sacrificial blood. God Himself paid the price. As the Holy Spirit moves in those He chooses, they are invited to humbly and brokenly lay themselves at the foot of the cross for Him to remake in His image. (Romans 12:2) When that commitment is made, a new covenant goes into effect and our lives are changed forever. We are in a renewed relationship with God, our Creator, a relationship that He instituted and has pledged to maintain. The first command, the command that Jesus declared to be the first and most important of all commands, the command that began at creation now becomes the first and most important command for each new believer, each follower of Jesus. Loving Him is our first and most important task.

Becoming part of this new covenant (Loving God with all our heart, mind and soul under Jesus’) is a one-time event that cannot be changed. Yet, the working out of that event is a learning process. Living this new life means learning to love God completely and fully every day, every week, every month, etc. God created us with built-in needs that can only be met in a close growing relationship with our Creator. Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening enjoying

3. The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs, 3rd edition. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

a friendship that most of us can't imagine. The only place we humans can find joy, peace, forgiveness, and contentment on this earth is in and through this new, loving relationship with Jesus. It takes time and commitment.

We who are followers of the Jesus' way and called to minister to Tribal People (or people anywhere) need to grapple with these words of Jesus. When He declared Loving God to be the greatest and first commandment to obey, He gave us our marching orders for all of life. I still remember the first time I told God I loved Him. I had been convicted by this passage in particular and the whole of Scripture, for that matter, that told me over and over that I needed to tell God that I loved Him. Even though I did love Him, I had a hard time getting the words out. That day became a watershed day for me spiritually as I finally got the words out. With a feeling of hesitation, I just began to talk. "I know I love you God. Please help me to make these words mean even more and easier to say because I do love you". At the time it seemed anti-climactic but those words and that day changed me and has never left my memory. Understanding and giving ourselves wholly to the truth of Jesus' answer in Matthew 22 keeps us focused on the right things. Our priorities are clear when we make our Loving God the most important thing we can be doing. We are keeping the main thing the main thing.

The second command is closely tied to the first ("The second is like it," Jesus said.) As we love God, He begins to make us to be like Jesus. Jesus volunteered to go through the suffering, misunderstanding and death on the Cross because our atonement was more important than His comfort and position in the heavenly Trinity.

³⁹"The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'⁴

He loves us so much that He was willing to die for us. As we learn to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind we are changed to be more like Jesus who humbly obeyed God the Father even unto death. Our ability to minister to Tribal People with Jesus love flows from loving God more and more. Caring for others more than ourselves cannot and will not happen unless we follow our Creator's perfect plan to Love Him first. So, the second commandment derives from the first. Being obedient and loving others as much as we love ourselves becomes, then, the normal life for the believer, the new normal.

There are some concepts and illustrations that may help develop these thoughts more fully. I will start with "life". Life is what God gave all humans at creation in the Garden of Eden. Then, for you and I personally, at birth He gives us the opportunity

to eventually join His Kingdom and put into our existence the reality of developing and expressing our love for Him. Jesus in declaring the "first and greatest" commandment reveals that loving God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind is the essential essence of who we are and what we are to do with this earthly life. There is nothing greater or better or more basic to our existence than loving God. When speaking of "ministry" the second command defines the resulting focus or purpose of who we become. Loving God has to be the only reason we have for wanting to exist. Then, loving God will make possible and result in loving others as we love ourselves. The second command emanates or is the natural result of the first command becoming true for your life and my life. You and I cannot humbly, unselfishly love others within our own culture and certainly even less, those from another culture without God's love being built into the very fabric of our being.

A godly life is characterized by generosity, selflessness and kindness. A life focused on others happens because of placing God first. Ministering among Tribal people effectively must begin with understanding and practicing life and ministry the way God created us.

What we do and who we are influences people, often when we have no idea that anything is happening. In one of the Native villages, where we ministered, some of the people would tell us that our family's presence in the village changed the whole attitude there. They would say that there was more caring for one another and that people were visiting one another more than they had been. Some said they could tell that we were praying for them. A life focused on pleasing and showing our love for God impacts people around us.

A godly life is characterized by generosity, selflessness and kindness. A life focused on others happens because of placing God first. Ministering among Tribal people effectively must begin with understanding and practicing life and ministry the way God created us.

In my pilgrimage in this life, I have come to call this or refer to this love and obedience for God and others humans as Life is Ministry and Ministry is Life or Doing life Together. Ministry and Life are one and the same. The normal life God planned for me had to begin with and continue with improving in my ability to love Him with all of my heart, soul and mind. Ministry is life that cares for others and is the natural result or consequence of Loving God with all of my heart soul and mind. Life and ministry are

⁴ New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Mt 22:39.

not two separate things. They are one and the same. I cannot retire from one or the other. Ministry is not just something I do when I am preaching, teaching or counseling. Ministry is what God put into me at creation and renewed at my salvation. It is who I am. Whether I am talking to my grandchildren, writing, fishing or enjoying a table game with friends, my life is intended by God to always demonstrate His presence, power and love.

Jesus' answer to the question about the greatest commandment shows us the foundation of our existence and what to do first. Our first priority to accomplish as a human and follower of Jesus is to Love God. There is nothing more important nor anything that comes before loving God.

Jesus did not stop there, however. He said that there is a second command that is "like unto" or, in my words, comes from the first. The implication of Jesus' words along with a study of His training methods point out that the second command, to love others as ourselves, is the natural result of first loving God. While we are learning how to Love God with all our heart, soul and mind He is changing us to be able to love other humans the way He loves us.

That is amazing! God wants us to love Him first and foremost but, when we do that, He makes us more like Himself giving us the ability to love others with the same unselfish love Jesus showed while on earth. I am sitting here shaking my head as I try to comprehend what I just wrote. I am only able to love other people in my ministry by focusing on loving God more and more and then He makes me able to love others with His love through me.

But, how do we make this happen? What does it look like?

Is it finding all the rules God put together and spending our lives trying to obey them? Adding new rules to the old rules to make certain we "do it right". The Israelites did that until they had hundreds more rules than God gave. Jesus made it quite clear that those rules were a hindrance to living life, not a help. More rules will not be a help when it comes to understanding cultural differences and how to help other people come to Love God and love others.

Is it doing whatever we want believing that God will somehow get us to the right place and overlook or forgive our failures along the way? How do we know what doing life together with tribal people will look like? If nothing changes in our lives than how are people of other cultures see the quality-of-life changes that draw others to our Saviour.

The best answer that I know to what this looks like is found in Philippians 2, verses 5-8. These verses have been my most studied and most thought about verses in the Bible. From this passage I have begun to understand what God said he would be doing in my life if I make Him my priority.

⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also

in Christ Jesus,

⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁵

Years ago, I took a course in language acquisition taught by Tom and Betty Sue Brewster*. (Actually, I took parts of the course 2 times before signing up for the full course. Maybe I am a slow learner.) The course name at that time was LAMP or Language Acquisition Made Practical. There were three words Tom and Betty Sue used to describe an effective cross-cultural ministry. The first time I heard those three words I never forgot them. Those words simply but clearly describe Jesus' disciple training while outlining the most effective approach to building relationships as ministry.

When one enters into a new culture and language the first word, LEARNER, will determine how quickly and easily a person will become a part of that community or just an observer. To be a learner, one has to observe, ask appropriate questions at the appropriate time and be willing to make mistakes.

I call the overall ministry "Living or Doing Life Together". If *Ministry is life and Life is Ministry then we Live Life Together* to get to know God better. The three parts or words that outline *Living Life Together* are *Learner, Servant* and *Storyteller*. We saw earlier that God created us to love Him and in loving Him to make it possible for Him to love others through us. These three words, Learner, Servant and Storyteller, describe, I believe, how to *Live Life Together* as *ministry* and they also provide a way to evaluate how we are doing at Living life together.

When one enters into a new culture and language the first word, LEARNER, will determine how quickly and easily a person will become a part of that community or just an observer. To be a learner, one has to observe, ask appropriate questions at the appropriate time and be willing to make mistakes. I have learned most of my life lessons by mistakes and failures. Anyone who learns a new language knows failure intimately. Words, meanings, connotations . . .

⁵. New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Php 2:5-8.

these are tricky and not easily mastered. Willingness to make mistakes tells those around us that we are human just like them. We are not the one who knows it all. Nothing removes tension like an "Oops! I was wrong about that. Sorry." Or, "Hey Bobby, I saw you do. . .(whatever). I don't know how to do that. Would you show me how?"

Most Tribal people teach one another by doing, not telling. Children learn by watching parents, grandparents or uncles and then are given to opportunity to do it themselves. When we ask to be shown how to do something in another culture, we are submitting ourselves to be learners in the way they learn. We open ourselves to do things their way not ours. To learn in another culture also means that we need to put aside our own cultural ways and expectations about learning including our pride.

One other characteristic of a Learner is that they expect to observe ways that the Holy Spirit is at work convicting and changing lives. Ministry is not about what we are doing but about what God started before we arrived and what He continues to do even after we have moved away.

My wife and I were learning some of the Cree Language as we moved into a new culture and village. The word for grandmother and the word for pig were somewhat similar. My wife greeted one of the elderly ladies where we were visiting and suddenly everyone was laughing. Embarrassed and confused, my wife looked around puzzled and was even more embarrassed as one of our new friends explained that she had just called the older lady a pig. "What is the right word," she asked? "Kokum" they replied. She repeated it several times and, turning, greeted the lady appropriately creating another friendly laugh around the room. Some people still remember that story and Nancy never forgot to use the right word after that. She also told that story on herself which helped build a strong relationship with many people.

Someone may think I am unfair to tell the above story on my wife. You should know that Nancy was so well loved and respected in that community that when she passed into Glory several years later, the people asked for her to be buried there. Apparently, she is the only non-native buried in that cemetery.

Nancy's 'kokum' story points out two more characteristics of a learner, that of openness and respect. A Learner is someone who is open to being wrong and one who respects the people and culture enough to ask for help. A learner also practices listening more than talking. The Apostle Paul showed

some of these characteristics in Athens as he observed all the idols and some of the worship practices in that city. When asked to speak, he used that information plus his knowledge of some of the Greek poets to relate the Gospel to the people at the Athenian Areopagus in a way that helped some of them chose to become Jesus followers.

One other characteristic of a Learner is that they expect to observe ways that the Holy Spirit is at work convicting and changing lives. Ministry is not about what we are doing but about what God started before we arrived and what He continues to do even after we have moved away. Observing the things God is doing and pointing them out is a powerful way to make God the center of attention. If God is a part of your every day conversation some people will begin, by the Holy Spirit's nudging, to look for the ways God is at work and wonder if God cares about them too.

The second word of this triad is Servant. When a believer is a learner and a servant people around take notice rather quickly. The sin nature of man moves us away from caring about or being a slave to others. As Believers God moves us toward doing things that are out of our way and often uncomfortable in order to help someone else.

There are two, key Greek words for servant used most often in the New Testament. One, 'doulos', is often translated 'slave' and frequently translated bond-servant. It carries the usual concept of a person owned by and submissive to their owner; one who serves their master. A slave is not their own boss. They must obey. The New Testament usage adds to this concept of 'ownership' the characteristic of 'trust. As slaves of the God of Creation we develop to be slaves that can be trusted to carry out the wishes of the Master.

The second word, 'diakonos' has a wider usage and is usually translated 'servant' or 'minister'. You can deduce from these two translations that this word carries with it more responsibility and concern for the job and the people. A servant is often someone who is in charge or has other slaves they are responsible for. Sometimes the context would tell us that this person is more of a hired helper than a slave. They minister to the needs of others. They care about the welfare of others, often to the detriment of their own personal needs. The word 'deacon' comes from this Greek word.

The Biblical uses of these two words, become apparent that a servant is humble and the other focused. Making others comfortable and cared for at the Servant's own expense is an essential character quality of a servant. The will of our God and the needs of the people to whom we are called to minister take precedence over our own immediate needs. A servant's heart when ministering cross-culturally or even among your own people will open many doors, especially when combined with a humble within learner's attitude.

For many years I supervised teams of college students who lived in tribal communities for the summer. The

purpose of these teams was to build relationships with the young people and all the people they could in that community. The team members were Believers and often didn't know each other before being assigned together. Most teams got along very well with each other and with the people in the community. One summer we had a team of two guys in a smaller community that had often been more difficult to get to know people. This summer one of the team members (Let's call him Abe.) had been in this community and in this area before. His teammate (Let's call him Bob.) was getting along quite well and building good friendships both in the Community office and among the teens. However, Abe, who had been in the community before, was complaining of losing things and having things stolen. As I looked into the matter, I discovered that Abe had a serious problem with pride and was sure he knew the answer to everything. Bob, on the other hand was humble and approachable enjoying the people and doing the things the community young people were doing. The young people in that community caught on quickly that Abe didn't really want to be there and didn't want to become friends. While Abe looked like he was doing things right, his bad attitude was clearly visible to the young people in that village. So, they treated him as an outsider. In their culture outsiders were fair game for abuse including stealing from. Bob never lost a thing all summer and was given gifts when he left. Abe's attitude made him, literally, a loser. We tried to talk to Abe but he left at the end of the summer still thinking that everyone else was wrong and he was right.

Throughout the Scripture God declares that pride, self-centeredness, a haughty spirit, et cetera will lead to destruction, separation from one another and ultimately separation from God. Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus thought that His life and home with the Father and Holy Spirit was less important than the human need for redemption and salvation. He chose suffering and death so that we who follow Him might have life forever with God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Earlier, when He washed the disciples' feet, he told them that he was setting an example for them to follow. Many of these men ended up in cultures far different than their own. Jesus demonstrated how to be humble servants to others. Suffering, persecution and even death are life and ministry. Life is ministry and Ministry is life.

Several years ago, my wife and I had the privilege to volunteer at the Haggai Institute in Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. We were there for all together about one and a half years. Christian leaders from all over the world come there for training in evangelism. The people and the training are top notch. As volunteers, our job was to keep the facilities in tip top 5-star rating shape. We cleaned toilets, swept and mopped floors, painted what needed painting, built or repaired when that was needed and anything else that needed doing. The volunteers were mostly from Canada, USA, and

Australia. Several times while we were there the students would come to us, sometimes with tears in their eyes, as they declared that, before watching the volunteers, they had never understood what Jesus washing the disciples' feet meant. They had never imagined that Caucasians and others from North America would willingly and joyfully serve them in the way we were serving.

A Learner notices what God is doing and tries to fit into the community in the lives of people in whom God is already working. A Servant demonstrates God's humble patience, kindness and personal concern for the people and community among whom they live.

The Bible is the Big Story of creation and God's interaction with the people of creation. In fact, the people of creation are the reason for creation to happen. We learn this through reading the Big Story, the Bible. The Big Story is made up of a multitude of smaller stories, each necessary for completing the Big Story. God Himself designed the Big Story, chose the authors, directed the authors and protected from error the telling of His Story, the Bible. He not only chose those who would tell the smaller parts of the Big Story but He chose those who would act out the events of those stories. Many times, the actors and the storytellers were the same individual. Since God is the originator of this Big Story, that makes Him the key teller of The Story. God is a storyteller telling His story.

When Jesus, God's Son came to earth, He made stories or parables as His key communication tool to teach the disciples and the multitudes that followed him. Jesus exposed truth through the stories he told. He also hid the truth from those who wouldn't understand through the type of stories He told. Jesus is a storyteller telling His story.

By now you have figured out that the third characteristic of an effective Tribal Ministry is being a storyteller. Telling stories is a natural, non-threatening way to communicate. Among the tribal people of North America stories were the normal way for Uncles, Fathers and Grandfathers to train children and to keep alive the rules and traditions among the tribe. Most of us learn well from stories, especially stories about other people and their situations.

Several years ago, I developed a series of stories about missionaries and early First Nations Believers in Canada. I told the stories of men and women whose lives demonstrated the spirit of Learners, Servants and Storytellers over and over again. Their life among the people was their ministry. Sadly, those Heroes of the Faith are mostly unknown today. The public media seems to purposely ignore what those Faithful one's accomplished. Even in Canadian history their names and contributions are rarely mentioned.

As this series progressed, I was often asked if I had a new story that week. Sometimes, in the telling of a particular person's story, spontaneous clapping would breakout as the hearers would appreciate and

connect with the heart of the person I was describing. The stories of real people, people of faith, had a greater emotional impact than my teaching. My wife often told me that I had started to lose my audience as I was teaching until I brought in a story to illustrate what God's Word was saying. Being a storyteller is an essential part of taking the Good News of Jesus to Tribal people.

Stories from history and other people's lives will also demonstrate or illustrate God at work. Stories about Heroes of Faith such as the Canadian missionaries as well as the First Nations Christian leaders and pastors are examples.

A Storyteller must tell stories that are true or reflect truth. The place to begin is telling stories from the Bible. The Bible is intended by the God who never lies, the ultimate teacher, to show us Himself. Through the Bible we see illustrations of how to love and obey Him. His story teaches us how to live lives that honor and glorify our Creator God.

Stories from history and other people's lives will also demonstrate or illustrate God at work. Stories about Heroes of Faith such as the Canadian missionaries as well as the First Nations Christian leaders and pastors are examples. As I mentioned earlier, recent stories about God moments, events or circumstances that show God at work help us all to remember that God is still at work today.

Ministering among tribal people is not complicated or hard when starting with Jesus' words in Matthew. Loving Him with everything in us and loving others with His love that flows out from us combined with the attitude of Jesus Paul's description in Philippians 2 is always a winner. Not everyone responds to the Gospel, but opportunities abound to demonstrate Jesus' love over and over. Live life among people while doing life together with them as a learner, servant and storyteller telling His story. Only God knows which time or what event will result in a new life dedicated to loving and glorifying God?

One of the most effective missionaries I have read about was a single young man who was inept at many things, especially things that the Tribal people he lived among could do. The children were much more capable than he was. Starting a fire, getting food from the land, making a bow with arrows, etc. were totally outside of his ability. He was willing to help others and willing to learn. He submitted to learning from those people in the ways they taught their children. He put aside his own cultural ways of learning. Books and lectures were not part of those people's lives. At

times he sat with the children learning with them. He easily laughed at his own clumsiness and mistakes but kept trying. In the evenings and at other appropriate times he began to tell stories from the Bible. Starting at the beginning of Genesis he gradually worked through the whole of the Bible. The people loved him and enjoyed listening to his stories. In fact, they began asking their own questions about his stories wanting to learn about this one called God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Eventually, many in the village turned to Jesus and began learning how to follow His ways.

Such is the way and result of living the Gospel in front of all the people whom God brings into your path. Life is ministry. Ministry is life. Loving God first makes doing life together possible and fulfilling.



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