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PRESENTING GRACE TO PEOPLE LIVING IN THE 10/40 WINDOW

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Let us focus our attention, not heavenward but earthward, and specifically on the so-called 10/40 Window. Clearly the Bible delivers a message about grace. But what should we do with that message of grace? I suggest that we expose people living in the 10/40 Window to that marvelous grace.

Who are the people of the 10/40 Window? They are those who live in countries located 10 to 40 degrees north of the equator, a vast mass of territory extending from North Africa to the Middle East and Central Asia, including most of the Asian subcontinent. Fifty-nine countries are located in this area.

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| 1. Afghanistan | 13. Egypt | 25. Japan | 37. Morocco | 49. Syria |
| 2. Algeria | 14. Eritrea | 26. Jordan | 38. Myanmar (Burma) | 50. Taiwan |
| 3. Bahrain | 15. Ethiopia | 27. Korea, North | 39. Nepal | 51. Tajikistan |
| 4. Bangladesh | 16. Gambia | 28. Korea, South | 40. Niger | 52. Thailand |
| 5. Benin | 17. Gibraltar | 29. Kuwait | 41. Oman | 53. Tunisia |
| 6. Bhutan | 18. Greece | 30. Laos | 42. Pakistan | 54. Turkey |
| 7. Burkina Faso | 19. Guinea | 31. Lebanon | 43. Philippines | 55. Turkmenistan |
| 8. Cambodia | 20. Guinea-Bissau | 32. Libya | 44. Portugal | 56. United Arab
Emirates |
| 9. Chad | 21. India | 33. Macau | 45. Qatar | 57. Vietnam |
| 10. China | 22. Iran | 34. Mali | 46. Saudi Arabia | 58. Western Sahara |
| 11. Cyprus | 23. Iraq | 35. Malta | 47. Senegal | 59. Yemen |
| 12. Djibouti | 24. Israel | 36. Mauritania | 48. Sudan | |

Although I do not fully agree with the territory marked out by the 10/40 Window, since it does not include my country Indonesia, the biggest Muslim country in the world, I still believe that it is vitally important that we pay serious attention to it. Why do we need to focus on the 10/40 Window? Luis Bush, who

"The 10/40 Window: Getting to Core of the Core," available from <http://www.ad2000.org/1040coun.html>; Internet; accessed 19 August 2003.

coined the expression in his presentation at the Lausanne II Conference in Manila, July 1989, lists seven reasons:²

1. It has historical and biblical significance. The Bible begins with the account of Adam and Eve placed by God in what is now a part of the 10/40 Window.
2. It is home to the majority of unevangelized people, those who cannot hear the gospel because they are hindered by cultural and geographical barriers.
3. It is the heart of three major world religions, namely, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.
4. It is the place where the majority of the poorest of the poor live, surviving on less than five hundred US dollars per person per-year.
5. It contains the largest groupings of ethno-linguistic megapeoples (over one million per group).
6. It includes a majority of the unevangelized megacities (those with a population of more than one million).
7. It includes numerous strongholds of Satan.

We may add more reasons to this list as we recognize the need to focus our attention here. For me, another vitally important reason is that people inhabiting this region believe in their good works or merits, instead of God's grace, as the means of attaining salvation. For example, Muslims attempt to gain salvation through adherence to an endless system of laws and rituals while Hindus and Buddhists attempt the same through Dhamma. In Islam there is no assurance of eternal life while in Hinduism and Buddhism there is neither forgiveness nor supernatural aid. Permit me to illustrate this by reference to a Buddhist story that is similar to the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. According to the Buddhist version, the prodigal comes home and meets his father, but then has to work off the penalty for his past misdeeds by years of service to his father before he is fully accepted into sonship again. How different is this story from that in the gospel! In the gospel story the father never entertained the idea of making his son one of his servants. The loving father arranged a great feast to welcome him home.³

This fact forces us to question: "How do we present the biblical message of grace to people of the 10/40 Window who fervently believe in personal merits as the only way to attain salvation? I would like to present four suggestions that stem from the perspective of Christian mission and anthropology.

1. **Understand their worldview.** Charles Kraft, a Christian missionary anthropologist, says this about the purpose of communicating the gospel, "The intention of the communication of the gospel is to influence and change people at

²Luis Bush, "Opening the 10/40 Window," *Frontlines: Following Jesus the Unreached* 2(1995); available from http://net.heartofgod.com/editions/1995_Fall/opening_the_1040_window.htm; Internet; accessed 12 August 2003.

³Michael Green, "But Don't All Religions Lead to God?" *Navigating the Multi-Faith Maze* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2002), 16.

the worldview level.⁴ Worldview is defined as the basic assumptions underlying the beliefs, values, and behavior of a given culture.⁵ It provides people with the lens, so to speak, that enable them to see how reality is perceived and interpreted. In ones worldview, assumptions are not reasoned out, but assumed to be true and are taken without prior proof. These assumptions are taught to each generation so persuasively that they seem absolute and are seldom questioned. Now you may imagine the enormity of the challenge to present the message of grace to people in the 10/40 Window who believe in merits as the means of attaining salvation.

The good news is that ones worldview may be changed. Every worldview has internal conflicts, which if challenged, may lead to change. The truth of the matter is that in every culture, all questions are not satisfied by assumptions taken unchallenged from the worldview. Hence, if another and more adequate worldview is presented, people may reject the old and adopt the new. Experience testifies that this has occurred several times for Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists who have decided to become Christians when they found that Christianity offered better answers to their questions than their old religions.

2. Live According to the Message You Present. Incidentally, many people who live in the 10/40 Window share a common similarity with Christians in that they place high esteem on Jesus and His teachings. This is because His life was in accordance with His teaching. Therefore, He is the sinless prophet to Muslims; Hindus place Him among the Brahma; and Buddhists regard Him as one of the Buddhas. This brings us to the second suggestion in presenting the message of grace to people in the 10/40 Window, that is, live according to the message you present.

Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists all revere Jesus because He lived what He taught. In a similar way, they would like to see Jesus' followers live according to His teachings. They would like to see Christians who present the message of grace live according to the dictates and values of that message. This is especially challenging for those who have suffered the indecencies and victimizations of colonization and imperialism forcibly imposed by foreign powers. They demand that grace be demonstrated in our lives and it must be in accordance with the message about God's grace that we often speak about. In other words, we cannot merely give lip service to the idea of grace. Its effect and maturity must be transparent in our everyday lives. In short, the old adage is true, "Practice what you preach."

3. Concentrate on the Group Dynamic. Generally speaking, people in the 10/40 Window constitute wholistic-thinking societies. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter

⁴Charles H. Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 58.

⁵Lloyd Kwast, "Understanding Culture," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph Winter and Steven C. Hawthorn (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), C-3-6.

and Marvin Mayers define wholistic thinking as “that pattern of thinking in which particulars are not separated out from the context of the larger picture. A holistic thinker insists that the whole is greater than the parts and reasons on the basis of perceived relationship within the whole.”⁶ In wholistic-thinking societies, major decisions are made by the group and not the individual. It would be correct to say that the decision to change from a major religion to Christianity is precisely such a major decision and therefore the group dynamic comes into play. Hence, we must be careful that in appealing for a decision to accept the message of grace, we must not be influenced by the ideals of individualism. Be patient and wait for the group decision. It may involve a great deal of time but there is virtue in patience. Indeed, waiting to baptize the majority of the group is highly advisable in most cases. After all, we need to demonstrate that grace is patient in waiting for people to make the decision to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. As the Bible says, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but to come to repentance” (2 Pet 2:9).

4. Ask God for help. In wholistic-thinking societies, people want to see how supernatural beings are directly involved in ones personal life. In this way, the close relationship between supernatural beings and human beings may be demonstrated, even proven. Indeed, people seek help from supernatural beings who in turn, are willing to provide such help. This leads to the importance of prayer. The power of God should be demonstrated in our lives as Christians. Further, people want to see and experience how the grace we speak about is also functional in social, person-to-person relationships. So let us engage in fervent prayer, asking God to empower us through the presence of His Holy Spirit so that our lives will be dynamic and not static in our witness to these people. In short, when we pray, we will receive power from God and the people will be able to see this and experience it as we encounter them, even on social occasions.

I pray that we will all be ready and willing to implement these suggestions and work assiduously to present the Gospel of grace to the millions of people who now live in the 10/40 Window.

⁶Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An International Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 55.