

### ***Core Value No. 7***

***The Whole Gospel: The Gospel of Jesus Christ impacts all of life. The integrity of Christian witness depends on a seamless connection between words and deeds. We are committed to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and demonstrating it through compassionate service, sacrificial acts of mercy and justice and care for God's creation.***

#### **Jargon:**

Word and deed in seamless connection in practice is often referred to as **holistic ministry**. The term is less frequently used these days because some folks have confused the terminology with language used by New Age proponents.

The Evangelical Covenant Church is an odd bunch of people. We are rather midway between two opposing poles of American Protestantism. Our roots in some dimensions of historic Lutheranism have connected us with many of the concerns of “mainline” churches. Our roots in pietism have connected us with many of the concerns of American evangelicalism. Each of these poles experienced some rather marked reductionisms in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Jargon:**

By “reductionism” we mean focusing so strongly on one aspect of the Gospel in such a way as to leave out other important parts of it.

Darrel L. Guder wrote the following about these reductionisms in [The Continuing Conversion of the Church](#), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

On one hand, Guder probably had American evangelicalism in mind when he wrote, “The fundamental evangelistic question is assumed to be ‘Are you saved?’ (Note: this is a legitimate component of the Gospel) The process of evangelization and “discipling” has thus become the program of spiritual and religious exercises that deals with that salvation. The benefits of salvation are separated from the reason for which we receive God’s grace in Christ: to empower us as God’s people to become Christ’s witnesses. This fundamental dichotomy between the benefits of the gospel and the mission of the gospel

constitutes the most profound reductionism of the gospel. It is reflected in virtually all evangelistic preaching today..." page 120.

**A Main Point:**

One person put it this way, "We get what we are saved from, but we don't get what we are saved for!"

This limited understanding of the gospel can lead to an exclusively world-renouncing spirituality. Guder asks, "Do we not see in this rejection of the world a profound loss of the missional thrust of biblical faith? Is this not a significant reduction of the witness in and to the world intended as the outcome of the salvation experience of the saints? Was the total purpose of the salvation event of Christ to save Christians? Did John really mean, "For God so loved the *Christians* that he sent his only begotten Son?" page 122.

Meanwhile, the mainline churches experienced an equal but opposite reductionism. Guder continued, "If the one...moves to the extreme of other-worldliness and world-renunciation to define why Christians exist, the second...identifies Christian existence almost entirely with the world." Page 123.

Commenting on "the centrality of justice" (Note: This is also a legitimate component of the gospel) Guder wrote, "When God's justice, supremely revealed on the cross, is reduced to a humanly managed program of social change, it is inevitably diluted and rapidly becomes an ideology of human creation. When Christian morality is taken out of its context, reduced to an absolute in and of itself, and thus becomes the dominant principle, it loses its distinctiveness, its originality and its incomparability." Page 124. Guder supports his argument with a quote from Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, IV, 3/2, page 559, "A triumphalistic Christian moralism, which elevates itself to the status of a principle, has always resulted in a relativising and leveling down of the difference between Christian and non-Christian existence and the practical sterilization of the former, i.e., the loss of its offensive and defensive power." Page 124. On the same page, Guder included an important footnote. It reads, "This loss of 'offensive and defensive power' is evidenced by the tendency of many Christian organizations to promote programs of social justice divorced from the focus upon the righteousness of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ. This is happening whenever "evangelism" and "justice" are regarded as separate or contending definitions of the church's mission." Page 124. Continuing in the body of the text Guder wrote, "One illustration of this loss of distinctiveness lies in those components of the missionary movement which, toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, began to focus only on educational, medical, and agricultural ministries and no longer linked them with the proclamation of the gospel. In the Western world, the recasting of the gospel as a program of social justice, without the lordship of Christ and the future tense of the Kingdom, would be a further example." Page 124.

Let's "reduce the reductionisms" to a couple of graphs by way of comparison. Both graphs represent extremes, not the mature and nuanced positions of either kind of church. The graphs are meant to describe what happens when folks take positions to extremes by leaving out other important factors.

### WHEN EVANGELICALISM SHRINKS

<b>Heart</b>	<b>is reduced to</b>	<b>Interior religion</b>
<b>Personal</b>	“	<b>Individual</b>
<b>Belief</b>	“	<b>Intellectual assent</b>
<b>Witness</b>	“	<b>Words</b>
<b>Saved</b>	“	<b>Saved from...</b>
<b>Kingdom of God</b>	“	<b>The future</b>

### WHEN MAINLINE SHRINKS

<b>World</b>	<b>is reduced to</b>	<b>The social order</b>
<b>Conversion</b>	“	<b>Changing structures</b>
<b>Liberation</b>	“	<b>Political change</b>
<b>Proclamation</b>	“	<b>Denunciation</b>
<b>Spiritual power</b>	“	<b>Social activism</b>
<b>Witness</b>	“	<b>Deeds</b>

We would love to be able to write that the Evangelical Covenant church and its missionaries have managed to live and work in a fine balance between these two extremes as is affirmed in our Core Values. While we can say that this is true, in a general sense, it has not been that simple. Down through the years, various individual missionaries have been "tugged at" and even identified rather strongly with one extreme or the other, often following the convictions of the particular congregations from which they came.

Sometimes, however, the difficulty in maintaining the balance is produced by other sources. Following is,

### A Case in Point

Both private and governmental funding sources in the West have very strict ways of dealing pragmatically with their ideology of the separation of Church and State. They want to keep things secular and insure that there is no mixing of grants of money for aid or development projects with religion. So let's

say that a missionary is serving in a place where people desperately need a reliable – but very expensive to build – source of drinkable water. Church resources prove insufficient, even with sources like Covenant World Relief. The missionary finds a willing partner with a governmental source or secular foundation. The crunch comes when these sources issue a severe warning against any “proselytizing in the context of this project.” They explain, “No one officially working on this project can talk about Jesus on the job.” The problem deepens because the missionary’s only human resources for actually building the water project are people in the churches in his or her area of service. People are dying of thirst, so the missionary sets up a non-profit foundation that can hire church folk for the project and tells them, “...but you can’t mention Jesus” – a prohibition that they do not remotely understand.

A few years later, things get even more complicated. The churches are still desperately poor and their pastors live in very marginal conditions. Church leaders present a complaint to the missionary that reads, “We are dismayed that missionary X has hired the best of our pastors to work in the Water Foundation. He/she offers far more than a local congregation can provide as income for the pastor. They cannot compete. Please take the responsibility to resolve this problem that you created.”

This is the kind of case that we have used as a resource in the training of missionaries. It has been interesting to note the orientation of the responses of different folk to it. We sometimes have called them, “the Ezra orientation” and “the Nehemiah orientation.” As you may recall, both Ezra and Nehemiah were involved in journeys from Babylon back to Jerusalem. As they addressed the question of resources, they acted out of different perspectives about “government aid”.

**Ezra: “*There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, “the gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.”* Ezra 8: 21-22.**

**Nehemiah: “*I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?”* And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests... The king...also sent army officers and cavalry with me.”** Nehemiah 2: 7-9.

So, some folks argued that the missionary did the right thing, in spite of the problems, by making use of secular resources. Others argued against it. What do you think?

Among Covenant missionaries, just as in Covenant congregations, there are a variety of points of view that coexist in tension with each other. We think that this is healthy (as long as they are actually talking with each other) since a single viewpoint can lead to an extreme in which something really important can be overlooked.

There is another unexpected source of protection against reductionisms. It comes from our partners in mission, mostly in the Southern Hemisphere. By and large, these folks are not constrained by the limitations of Western ways of thinking. They tend to see things whole rather than broken up into isolated parts. They can't imagine meeting someone's physical or material needs and not introducing them to Jesus. They can't imagine proclaiming the Good News and not attending to the physical or material needs of their hearers as those needs become evident. Unlike us Westerners, they don't think first about "programs" to do things. Their community dynamic operates differently from ours. They simply begin to respond with whatever resources they can find. They make adjustments and refinements as needed "along the road". And, they are quite transparent about their limitations. They cry out to God as a first, rather than a last, resort. Indeed, they are leading us in an integrated spirituality. That integration is, for us, a much-needed corrective for our tendency to compartmentalize and reserve things like prayer, for example, for exclusively non-material realities. (As one person put it, "When was the last time that you prayed for rain?" I am humbled to admit that I never ask God to change weather patterns, even when, recently, good friends in the Caribbean were threatened by hurricanes.)

**Stories and such:**

Once upon a time, I taught a class session at North Park Theological Seminary with my friend, Dr Jorge Maldonado – who is from Ecuador. Someone asked, "What is the Latin American Church doing about the poor?" Jorge replied, "We ARE the poor!" He went on to explain how mutuality and solidarity helped produce integrity of response to common need.

When the rich Christians try to help the poor some common problems tend to emerge. We hear about attitudes of superiority on the part of the rich and unexpected resentments on the part of the poor recipients of their largesse. Issues of dependency and paternalism come into the discussion. Stories abound about inappropriate "help" that produced negative effects. Should rich Christians stop trying to help the poor? God forbid! But the rich can learn how to do it better by understanding how the poor and marginalized help each other. And, they can

learn important things about their common humanity along the way. One example can be seen in the fact that the rich generally do not perceive of themselves as rich and the poor very often do not think of themselves as poor. We define ourselves by name and family, tribe and society. Christians define themselves as Children of God. Our relative economic status is a very limited way of understanding each other and hardly the most significant.

Martin Marty gave some lectures at North Park University in Chicago in September of 2007. The titles were intriguing. They were,

Why Mercy Looks Easy,  
Why Justice is Hard.

Ministries of mercy and justice get complicated really fast! Life at a local level is amazingly complex and decidedly messy. As one missionary said in a moment of frustration, "Ministry would be so much easier if it didn't involve people." We find that the image of a journey is more helpful than that of a project because, as J.R.R. Tolkien put it, "The winding road goes on and on." Covenant World Mission's journey in ministries of mercy and justice is woven into its total historical pathway. Here is a partial list of some of the ministries in which Covenant world mission is involved.

*Evangelism, discipling, planting churches, leadership training, theological education, health promotion, hygiene education, hospitals, clinics, medical services, agricultural development, experimental farms, fish, poultry, livestock, fruits and vegetable farming, reforestation, wells and potable water projects, hydroelectric projects, latrines, AIDS ministries, drug rehabilitation, rescue of prostitutes, prison ministries, job skills training, community banks to empower small businesses, programs for the parents of children with Downs Syndrome, couples' retreats and family enrichment, ministries with dump dwellers and street kids, construction projects and a whole lot more. In addition, individual missionaries and families engage in all kinds of personal ministries of compassion that do not "fit" into any "official" program of mission.*

In all cases, missionaries are committed to word and deed in seamless connection, not "either/or" ministries. And the winding road goes on and on... Missionaries originally generated many of the ministries listed above, but, increasingly, believers and churches in countries where missionaries serve are creating them. Missionaries become involved as partners in programs that are "owned" by others. The Good News is simultaneously demonstrated and "lived into" by actions of compassion, mercy and justice in the varied, complex and quite local situations of the world.

There are many ways to describe the whole Gospel, but here is what Jesus said, "**The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to**

**proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** Luke 4: 18-19 Later, when John the Baptist, in prison, sent his disciples to ask Jesus, **"Are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else?"** Jesus replied, **"Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."** Matthew 11: 2-5

The evidence that Jesus offered to John was "what you see and hear," a clear pattern of the seamless connection between words and deeds – one that defines how God's mission to the world should be carried out. But Jesus' call to us moves in a still more radical direction.

**"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."** Luke 9: 23

To say and do the whole gospel puts us on a collision course with deadly powers and even with our own instincts for self-preservation. Jesus' story describes the one who did not resist the evil that came against him even though he had the power to do so. In the greatest irony of history, it was Jesus' death on the cross that proved triumphant over the powers.

**Key verse:**

**"When you were dead in your sins...God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."** Colossians 2: 13-15

It has been suggested that Western protestant folk tend to move that triumphant bit away from the cross over to the resurrection of Jesus. It is easy for that to happen because "triumph" does not flow naturally from "suffer and die" in human logic. It would be the equivalent of saying; "They lost the game and thus emerged victorious over the opposing team." It does not make sense from a human point of view, but it is central in the gospel. Even when we begin to grasp how Jesus' death was a victory on our behalf, we are still slow to understand that to follow Jesus is an invitation to die. As Orlando Costas once thundered in a powerful sermon on this theme, "The cross is not just in your past, it is your vocation!"

**Jargon:**

It is interesting to note what can get lost in translation. The Greek word in the New Testament for "witness" (the noun) is *martyr*. What would happen if we renamed church classes and seminars on "witnessing" as "instructions on martyrdom"?

It is extremely important to be well grounded in a theology of the cross as vocation as we approach the most difficult areas of engagement in God's mission, that having to do with,

### **“Sacrificial Acts of Mercy and Justice”**

Mercy may look easy, but everything changes when corruption, oppression and injustice are the direct causal factors in human suffering. Following is a story that describes the nature of one of the challenges facing missionaries today.

#### **Mission in the Context of Child Prostitution and Sex Tourism**

Covenant missionaries serve in two countries that are world leaders in sex tourism and the sexual exploitation of children. They are Thailand and the Dominican Republic.

##### **Stories and such:**

We are not singling out these countries because they are worse than others in every way. Certainly God's image and the beauty of common grace can be seen in both countries, as in all others. Sin and its results are also evident in other ways in every country, including our own. But sin is not merely a philosophical principle. It is a “hard” reality exhibited by concrete and observable behaviors and their consequences. The particular reality that we will discuss came to widespread public attention by way of what was probably the most controversial article ever published by the National Geographic Society, “21<sup>st</sup> Century Slaves”, by Andrew Cockburn, September, 2003. In his online Field Notes Andrew Cockburn wrote, “I met some very young kids and listened to them talk about their horrible trafficking experience in the sex industry (the American sex tourism of San Jose, Costa Rica's Gringo Gulch was described.) I heard hundreds of stories like this during my assignment, and just when I thought I heard the worst one, it wasn't long before someone topped it. Sometimes I just wanted to throw up.”

Even cursory research reveals shocking dimensions of scale; hundreds of thousands of prostitutes, many between the ages of 12 and 15 and tens of thousands of European, American and Asian sex tourists – many who engage

repeatedly in the practice. The resulting human suffering is staggering with horrifying reports of abuse, exploitation, disease and death. It is certain that the emergence of the Internet has made things far worse. Two clicks with the mouse took me to pages and pages of “testimonials” that provided precise details about locations, prices and explicit descriptions of “sex services” that could be found, country-by-country, around the world.

**Stories and such:**

Even as this was being written, we were being made aware of important ministries of deliverance for Christians – including pastors and missionaries – that have fallen prey to addiction to Internet pornography. Yet there is a direct financial link between the slavery to visual pornography and the actual physical bondage and exploitation of many of the people in the photographs on hundreds of websites. The integrity of mission must lead not only to deliverance from personal moral and spiritual bondage but also to the deliverance of people from physical bondage by abusive human oppressors and the systems that support them.

**Going Deeper:**

Dr Julia O’Connel Davidson and Jaqueline Sanchez Taylor published a series of research papers for ECPAT. The acronym stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes. ECPAT has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Their website is [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net). The series of papers was published as background documents for the World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in August of 1996.

You can download any of their seven papers in *pdf* format. We began with *ecpat\_sex\_tourism\_dominican\_republic* and *ecpat\_sex\_tourism\_Thailand*. It is hard and uncomfortable reading, but some things should cause discomfort.

Christians are, quite appropriately, drawn to human suffering like a magnet. In this, they reflect and are motivated by the Spirit of Jesus who was consistently moved by compassion. They show genuine mercy to women and children with AIDS and other STDS. They offer understanding, care and a way out. Along the way, however, they discover that solutions for the causes of suffering are not simple or easy. It turns out that we are better at showing mercy

than working for justice. We aren't sure how to proceed against official corruption and well-organized oppression. There are lots of principalities and powers involved in the multi-million dollar, worldwide industries of exploitation. It is true that the principalities and powers were disarmed by the triumph of the cross, but the Kingdom has not yet come its fullness. As the writer of Hebrews put it, "Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him." Hebrews 2: 8 There is still a great deal of damage being done.

There is universal acknowledgement that the sex trade of Thailand got an enormous boost from US military personnel during the Viet Nam war. Yet military involvement in it continues today. In his book, Blowback, the Costs and Consequences of American Empire, published by Henry Holt and Company, 2000, Chalmers Johnson wrote,

*"Each year approximately ten thousand American troops descend on Thailand for a joint military exercise called Cobra Gold. The military part of these visits is largely make-work for the American and Thai staffs, but the troops love Cobra Gold because of the sex. According to the newspaper Pacific Stars and Stripes, some three thousand prostitutes wait for the sailors and marines at the South Pattaya waterfront, close to the Utapao air base. An equal number of young Thai girls from the countryside, many of whom have been raped and then impressed into the "sex industry," are available downtown in Bangkok's Patpang district. They are virtually all infected with AIDs..."* Page 193

The gateway to ministries of mercy by Christians in this kind of setting is usually through compassionate response to people that they encounter who suffer from AIDs, other STDs, oppressive poverty and violence. But here is a story about how things can go. Let's say that some missionaries are caring for a child prostitute with AIDs. The child shows up one day, severely beaten by a local bar owner for failing to generate enough income to service the child's "debt". The missionaries decide to try to complain to local authorities, only to discover that the bar owner has "an arrangement" with both the police and the local authorities. A local politician threatens the missionaries with deportation for attempting, as foreigners, "to intervene in local politics." When questioned, the Embassy confirms and supports the point of view of the local authorities and warns the missionaries to "stay out of local politics".

In one more layer of complication, the missionaries learn that this bar is frequented by GIs during the annual Cobra Gold exercises and a steady stream of aging Viet Nam veterans and single, male Europeans during the "off season." Complaints to military authorities seem to fall on deaf ears. They show the missionaries the official Cobra Gold public relations pictures of servicemen engaged in "community service" – building schools and the like – and other "good will programs". As for the sex, they say, "We can't do anything about that, it's just their culture. But we certainly do warn our people about unprotected sex."

Tired out from all of these dead ends, the missionaries return to their home where they are accosted by some local “enforcers” who threaten them with injury or even death if they do not “mind their own business.”

That evening, some other missionaries drop by to offer a word of advice. They advise them to stick to acts of mercy and stay out of “that other stuff.” The missionaries in our story wonder if that would be like a 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian willing to bind up the wounds of mistreated slaves while remaining silent about the institution of slavery, itself.

Deep down, they feel discouraged and wonder whether they can make any difference at all.

(Note: while the story we are telling is fictional, it is based on events that have really happened to missionaries and national Christians in a number of similar settings.)

### **FACING OPPOSITION, DEFINING SUCCESS**

When the missionaries in our story looked to the Bible for guidance, some unexpected texts came to light.

Jesus said, **“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”** John 15: 18-20

Then someone said, “but we have faith, can’t we count on God’s power and protection? So they turned to the “faith chapter,” Hebrews 11. At first they were greatly encouraged when they read, **“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again.”** Hebrews 11: 32-35a

That sounded great! But then they continued to read. **“There were others who were tortured...some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawn in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.”** Hebrews 11: 35b-38

So, mercy looks easy and justice is hard, but that is where the word “sacrificial” in CORE VALUE NO. 7 comes in. To follow Jesus into God’s mission will produce the same results for us as for him. Many will indeed follow him in response to our ministry. Lives will be changed and churches will be born. But opposition to the rule of God can be sudden, violent and even fatal. Those who engage in God’s mission will be blessed beyond their imagining, but they do need to read the fine print. The essential guarantee is not safety in this life. If that were the case, then to “present one’s body as a living sacrifice” would not make sense. The essential guarantee from Jesus is, “I will be with you.” As Annie Dillard wrote in Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Harper and Row, 1974, *“Do you think you will keep your life, or anything else you love? But no. Your needs are all met. But not as the world giveth. You see the needs of your own spirit met whenever you have asked, and you have learned that the outrageous guarantee holds. You see the creatures die, and you know you will die. And one day it occurs to you that you must not need life. Obviously.”* Page 70

Our missionaries in the story face a sobering reality. God’s mission takes place in the face of sometimes fierce opposition. They face the reality that, sooner or later, they will die, perhaps quite unpredictably. But they understand that the trick is to be fully alive whenever it happens. So alive in fact, that the resurrection will come as no surprise.

Having said all this, we need to make something clear. We are not advocating some kind of intentional death wish! We have evacuated entire mission teams when wars and violence have broken out in their area. We pay close attention to risk assessments and evaluations of security done by governmental sources, the private sector and missionary liaison committees. We have withdrawn missionary families from high crime areas in which they or their children are at unacceptable risk. We are very well aware that, as foreigners, missionaries may be highly visible targets for kidnapping and extortion – and we weigh these risks carefully as we consider placement issues. We do not want anyone to suffer as the result of imprudence. But we would not be telling the whole truth about engagement in God’s mission if we failed to say that the Gospel, itself, provokes opposition from some even as others joyfully welcome it. We do want to do everything that we can to ensure that our only offence is the offence of the Cross of Christ, never imprudence, ignorance or inappropriate behavior on our part.

In a similar way, we are careful about how we define “success” on the missionary journey. Certainly missionaries are accountable for their “job performance” just like anyone else in any other profession. Missionaries are just as concerned as anyone about the evasion of hard work through laziness or incompetence. And, if something does not appear to be fruitful, missionaries are as competent as anyone at changing direction or strategy. But there is a marked difference in the nature of evaluations. We are far more concerned with faithfulness than we are with outward signs of success. As our texts described,

**KEY VERSE:**

That the DWM must continually change in order to “keep up” with the rest of the church should come as no surprise. In the entire history of the people of God, energetic obedience, innovation and movement have most often originated from the periphery rather than from the center. This spiritual principle is well stated in 1 Corinthians 1: 26-29, **“Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”** So, the DWM leads Covenant World Mission by following the voice of God that can often be best heard “from the edge”.

the weakness of some was turned to strength while others wandered in deserts – with no visible signs of success, as the world would measure it. We hasten to clarify this point because we believe that the criteria of the world has invaded some parts of the Western church where success is measured by numbers, popularity, dollars and real estate. This kind of perspective misses entirely Jesus’ words, in which he said,

**“Blessed are those who are persecuted  
because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”** Matthew 5: 10-12.