EQUIPPING THE NORTHWEST AMAZON TUKANO

INDIGENOUS TO MINISTER CROSS-CULTURALLY

THROUGH REDEMPTIVE BIBLE STORYING

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Alex Bowles

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APPROVAL SHEET

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For the glory of God

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PREFACE

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude to my advisors, mentors, and colleagues whose support and guidance have been instrumental in shaping the direction of this project. Their invaluable insights, constructive critiques, and unwavering encouragement have been a constant source of motivation and improvement.

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Alex Bowles

São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas, Brasil

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands Christ-followers to make disciples among the nations. Jesus calls his followers to *disciple* the nations, not merely to *evangelize*. In *The Mission of God*, Christopher J. H. Wright contends that simply obeying a scriptural imperative without considering its context is a poor hermeneutic that leads to faulty understanding and application. Wright argues that we should "set those great imperatives within the context of their foundational indicatives, namely, all that the Bible affirms about God, creation, human life in its paradox of dignity and depravity, redemption in all its comprehensive glory, and the new creation in which God will dwell with his people."[1] Most often, evangelizing is a one-time event; conversely, discipleship is a lifetime process.

According to the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ἔθνος is "a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions."[2] With this understanding of ἔθνος, Jesus's command found in Matthew 28:19 is for all believers to be actively discipling and evangelizing "a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions." A perspective of missions that limits evangelism and discipleship to only a certain location or destination is a limited perspective; Christ's Great Commission applies to our day-to-day lives. We are called to bring the gospel to all of the peoples on the earth. We are then called to disciple those who respond to the gospel and believe.

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[1] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 61.

[2] Frederick W. Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. "ἔθνος."

Though we are not kin and do not share culture or common traditions, we are united in Christ.[3] In the context of the indigenous groups of the NW Amazon, we are called to participate in God's eternal plan for the redemption of man, making disciples who will go and make more disciples for his glory.

Context

This ministry project took place in the context of the Amazon indigenous living in the northwest region of Brazil's Amazon River basin.[4] The Amazon basin spans three countries and houses over four hundred people groups spread across hundreds of indigenous villages.[5] The northwest region of the Amazon basin is home to over 46,000 people in approximately 32 groups spread across 225 villages, each of which has its own language or dialect, unique customs, rituals, and even diet. They live primarily along three main river systems that connect Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. Only one of the 32 people groups is considered "reached." To be considered "reached," more than 2 percent of a people group's population must have the gospel and be following Christ.[6]

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[3] In Colossians 3:11, Paul states, "There is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Chris is all, and in all." Despite national or ethnic differences, religious heritages, or economic status, Paul argues that all Christ followers are united in and through Christ. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

[4] The Amazon basin is defined as the area covered predominantly by dense moist tropical forest, with relatively small inclusions of several other types of vegetation such as savannas, floodplain forests, grasslands, swamps, bamboos, and palm forests. The basin encompasses 2.5 million m^2 and is shared by eight countries (Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, and Suriname).

[5] People groups are defined by their common identity, language, geographical location, cultural practices, and social structure. The Tukano people group is believed to have a population of 13,200, however there are many sub-set peoples of the Tukano peoples. Within the Tukano language family are multiple other peoples, some having only a population of 125. See International Mission Board, "People Groups," last modified December 14, 2023, https://peoplegroups.org.

[6] Joshua Project, "Definitions," accessed September 1, 2021, https://joshuaproject.net/help/defi nitions. To be considered an unreached people group, a people group must have less than or equal to 2 percent evangelical Christian and less than or equal to 5 percent professing Christians.

The first evangelical missionary to the Amazon arrived in 1944,[7] and as of January 2023, there are a less than 10 evangelical indigenous who are part of a Great Commission Christian (GCC) gospel-carrying team to the Tukano people group. I serve as a missionary with the International Mission Board (IMB), and I have worked among the Amazon indigenous, specifically the Tukano indigenous, since 2015. My motivation for developing this project was a desire to mobilize indigenous believers to reach other Tukano indigenous for Christ.

The transient nature of Amazon indigenous and the size of the regions they inhabit make it difficult to gauge the region's engagement with the gospel.[8] People groups can have large populations overall but be scattered all over the Amazon, reaching beyond Brazil to parts of Venezuela and Colombia. The NW Amazon people groups are considered micro-people groups, that is, communities consisting of less than one hundred members.[9] For example, the village of Colina is home to approximately 70 indigenous members of the Tukano people group. Colina is one of approximately 32 Tukano indigenous villages located on the Tique River. At the time of this writing, we know of only one Christ-follower in the Colina village. One believer in seventy indigenous means that Colina is near the 2 percent "reached" threshold, yet the next Tukano village upriver

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[7] The term "evangelical" describes any missionary who proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. In contrast, missionaries of the Catholic Church taught rituals and customs of the Catholic Church and not the trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

In 1944, Sophie Muller with New Tribes Mission became the first evangelical missionary to the Amazon. Muller arrived in the northwest Amazon region in 1944 and began her evangelical ministry to the Baniwa and Kuripaco people groups. Her work was focused on the River Içana and Black River. See Sophie Muller, *His Voice Shakes the Wilderness* (Sanford, FL: New Tribes Mission, 1994).

[8] The term indigenous describes the original inhabitants or native peoples of a particular region or area. The Amazon indigenous also refer to themselves as Indians. It is not considered a derogatory or offensive term.

[9] The numerous micro-people groups of the Amazon and the basin's geography and challenging terrain have historically made frequent reporting on these groups difficult and time-consuming. Therefore, sub-cluster numbers are not included in these numbers. As the Americas affinity was transitioning to a new reporting system in 2022, much of what was being reported on a monthly or quarterly basis was only collected at the end of the calendar year and has yet to be compiled and released. The new reporting software released at the beginning of 2023 will allow each missionary in the Americas affinity to collect data for entry, evangelism, discipleship, and church formation in real time. For clarity, much of what was being done has not been properly reported.

has no active engagement and no known believers. The same can be said about all villages on the Tique River. Therefore, rather than measuring engagement with the gospel based on the total population of the people group, the focus is on each village's engagement.

Understanding the history and cultural development of the Amazon basin is the first step toward crafting any strategy to reach and mobilize the Amazon indigenous. Prior to the 1700s, there was little recorded history of the Amazon basin; however, the arrival of the Jesuits and the Portuguese in the mid-1740s brought better documentation of the residents' life and culture. The Amazon indigenous lived in rather large communities and had little to no contact with the outside world. It was typical for 600 habitants to live in a single community.[10] Their way of life was deeply communal, which impacted all aspects of life: how they communicated, ate together, planted and harvested, and related to one another.

As the Portuguese made their way deeper into the Amazon basin, they brought with them new challenges to the indigenous way of life, including a different culture, new diseases, new religious beliefs, and slavery.[11] Other nations and forces attempted—and often succeeded—to oppress the indigenous, leading to attempts by the indigenous to regain their freedom and culture. These revolts were generally met with more force from foreign entities, political figures, and even missionaries from the Roman Catholic Church.[12] What began as an attempt to regain freedom often led to an increase in

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[10] According to Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), up to fifteen families would share living space in a large communal home called a longhouse. A typical longhouse measured 100 feet by 60 feet with a thatched roof ridge reaching up to 30 feet from the ground. These longhouses were always built with the front entrance facing the river and the back entrance facing the planting grounds. Inside, each family was given a small section to live along the outside wall, with the village chief given the front corner with privacy walls. One corner was dedicated as a kitchen, and the middle of the longhouse was reserved for ritual dances and meetings. (https://www.socioambiental.org/en/onde-atuamos#rio-negro)

[11] Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 421.

[12] Mann, *1491*, 424.

governmental control over the indigenous. Over the course of several decades, the Amazon indigenous went from living an uncontacted life to being fully controlled by the Brazilian government.[13] As news began to spread about uncontacted indigenous in the Amazon, many people and organizations began to arrive, creating a unique collection of worldviews and cultures. Europeans, Catholic Church missionaries, and Brazilian military and politicians gained control of parts of the Amazon. The resulting power and identity struggles continue today with the presence of multiple missionary agencies, anthropological groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approximately 14 percent of the world's population remains illiterate.[14] Regions lacking sufficient infrastructure have the lowest rates.[15] Literacy data for the Amazon indigenous is incredibly difficult to gather because of governmental restrictions and attitudes. Governmental agencies and international NGOs often want to imply that the Amazon indigenous need to remain untouched and primitive. However, my personal experience with the Amazon indigenous has proven the opposite. The Amazon indigenous know and understand their level of poverty and desire to have more access to quality education.

On the side of one Tukano home, they have spray painted, "Nós não somos brasileiros. Nós somos índios," translated, "We are not Brazilian. We are indigenous."[16] Sadly, much of their identity has either been stripped away or forced upon them by

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[13] Instituto Socioambiental, "Rio Negro," accessed September 1, 2021, https://www.socioambiental.org/en/onde-atuamos#rio-negro.

[14] United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "Literacy Rates Continue to Rise from One Generation to the Next," Fact Sheet 45, September 2017, https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs45-literacy-rates-continue-rise-generation-to-next-en-2017_0.pdf.

[15] Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, "Literacy," Our World in Data, last modified September 20, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/literacy. Although literacy rates are growing by 4 percent every five years, there are large populations with high illiteracy rates. Growth in literacy rates is highest among first-world populations.

[16] Translation provided by Alex Bowles.

outsiders. To some extent, they continue to search for their identity. This search provides an ideal opportunity for the Tukano to learn that one is redeemed by Christ alone and that one's identity is in Christ alone.

Rationale

To reach numerous people groups scattered over a large area requires a creative approach to engaging, mobilizing, and equipping indigenous to share the gospel and make disciples.[17] This allows for Redemptive Bible Storying (RBS) to capitalize on such questions and help them find their identity in Christ.[18] In RBS, each participant learns how the fall (Gen 1–3) affected their life and how they need to be redeemed. RBS focuses on the grand narrative of God's Word, unfolding from Genesis 3 to Revelation, and his plan to redeem his creation.

Instead of focusing on removed or forced identities, the key to Bible storying is a focus on God's Word, allowing Scripture to begin to shape identity. Rapid culture shifts increasingly revolve around people's ideological inclinations or social and political systems. Leaders, whether intentionally or thrust into influential positions by circumstance, have become focal points of disagreement within the spiritual, social, or political realms. This means that the actions of these leaders play a significant role in shaping and potentially dividing opinions. Consequently, as culture shifts, it influences changes in social, political, and spiritual thoughts. The apostle Paul addressed this in his day as well. In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul said, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am with Paul,' or 'I am with Apollos,' or 'I am with Cephas,' or

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[17] According to PeopleGroups.com, "A people group is considered unreached (UPG) when there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to engage this people group with church planting. Technically speaking, the percentage of evangelical Christians in this people group is less than 2 percent." See International Mission Board, "People Groups."

[18] Redemptive Bible Storying is the process of crafting and telling stories from God's Word to redeem people from their darkness and sins. Ephesians 1:7 states, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of grace." RBS uses storying as the means to teach about God's grace, his redemption, his son Jesus's death and resurrection, and how we can be redeemed.

'I am with Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor 1:12). Paul's use of εἰμί ("I am") is in the present active indicative, suggesting that those to whom he wrote belonged to someone through association or genetic affiliation.[19] The issues afflicting the Corinthians were more about allegiance to specific leaders than the Christ they proclaimed. Therefore, Paul poses this question: "Has Christ been divided?" The same circumstance exists today, in which people—even Christians—find their identity through an attachment to an individual rather than the person of Christ. There must be an anchor to which a culture can hold, a foundation of absolute truth. The anchor of this project is God's Word, the only lens through which Christians should understand and develop worldview, identity, and ideology. It is the only truth on which to build an effort that engages, mobilizes, and equips disciples to make disciples. A believer's identity is found only in Christ, so it is paramount that RBS begins with God's Word.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the Tukano indigenous to use Redemptive Bible Storying to engage Tukano indigenous for the purpose of evangelizing non-believers and discipling believers.

Goals

The following four goals were established to measure the completion of this project.

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practice of disciple-making among a select group of five to seven Tukano indigenous.

2. The second goal was to study a six-part Bible story series that equipped the group to

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[19] Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "εἰμί." R. C. H. Lenski argues that Paul's use of εἰμί linked with the genitive "of" indicates an attachment to someone. See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 42.

understand God's calling to be disciple-makers.

3. The third goal was to increase the group's knowledge of disciple-making by providing the necessary resources for this group to begin the process of disciple-making through Redemptive Bible Storying.

4. The fourth goal was for the participants to be able to effectively share the Bible stories and provide sound biblical feedback from the stories.

A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these four goals.[20] The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal are detailed in the following section.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these four goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practice of disciple-making among a select group of five to seven NW Tukano indigenous. This goal was accomplished by administering the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment (BBWA), designed to assess participant understanding of topics including creation, the fall, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.[21] This survey also gathered data on the participant's basic worldview and cultural beliefs. This goal was considered successfully met when at least five individuals completed the BBWA.

The second goal was to study a six-part Bible story series that equipped the group to understand God's calling to be disciple-makers. Even though some of the participants discontinued participating in the project, this goal was considered successfully met as the remaining members of the group studied the six-part Bible story series on God's calling to be disciple-makers.

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[20] All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

[21] See appendix 2.

The third goal was to increase the group's knowledge of disciple-making by providing the necessary resources for this group to begin the process of disciple-making through Redemptive Bible Storying.[22] Due to time constraints, I could not thoroughly teach Bible story crafting. However, stories that had already been crafted were provided to each participant to study and deliver. Each participant took the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment a second time. Since three of the participants failed to complete the course, I was unable to quantify an increase in knowledge based on a *t*-test analysis of the pre- and post-project assessment responses. However, this goal was considered successfully met when a comparison of the mean scores of the participants who completed the project revealed an increase in the knowledge of disciple-making.

The fourth goal was for the participants to be able to effectively share the Bible stories and provide sound biblical feedback from the stories. Using the skills they learned in Bible storying, the remaining project participants presented the stories to small groups in a church setting and to individuals. Each listener was asked about the topics studied, the clarity of delivery, and the story application. This goal was considered successfully met when the project participants delivered the story sets and listener feedback was recorded on the Redemptive Bible Storying skills assessment.[23]

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Discipleship. This project relies on the International Mission Board's definition of transformation discipleship: "Discipleship involves the intentional transformation of the heart, mind, affections, will, relationships, and purpose, without putting the importance of one against the other. Essential tools for discipling new

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[22] The overall purpose of this project is not to teach Bible story crafting but rather to use Bible storying as a method to reach other indigenous. The third goal was to provide already crafted stories. Within this goal, the participants were briefed on what it means to craft a story and the process of crafting.

[23] See appendix 3.

believers include the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God."[24] True discipleship requires one to follow, commit, serve, and obey Christ and his teachings as outlined in Scripture. Discipleship involves learning from God (1 Pet 1:15), Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:21), the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17), and others (Phil 4:9).

Disciple-making. To be an effective mobilizer, one must be appropriately trained and equipped to disciple others. Paul writes, "Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). Disciple-making is not reserved for those of a higher calling but rather applies to all believers. To effectively disciple, one must be conscious of his or her own sanctification and walk with Christ. Discipleship comes at a cost; it requires the denial of self (Matt 16:24), total commitment (Luke 14:33), and one's security in the world (Matt 8:19).

Storying. The storying process is straightforward yet complex, especially in a predominantly oral people group. People communicate by telling stories; *everyone* has a story to tell. Biblical storytelling is straightforward in that it enables one to instill the biblical narrative into the lives of the hearer, creating a new narrative or identity. It is complex in that it requires retelling God's story in narrative form without removing its truths. Biblical stories must be carefully selected and crafted in consideration of a specific people group's context and worldview.

Orality. This project relies on Ernst Wendland's definition of orality: "the modes of communication within a given society, all oral texts in a certain language, or the oral features manifested in written texts."[25] According to Charles Madinger, orality is "a complex of how oral cultures receive, remember and replicate (pass on) news,

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[24] International Mission Board, "IMB Annual Statistical Report Definitions," last modified May 6, 2022, 1, https://www.imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ASR-Definitions.v.2022.04.26.pdf.

[25] Ernst Wendland, "Studying, Translating, and Transmitting the 'Orality' (Oral-Aural Dimension) of Scripture, with Two Case Studies: Solomon's Song and John's Apocalypse," Academia, last modified 2010, 3, https://www.academia.edu/40049048/Studying_Translating_and_Transmitting_the_Orality_of_Scripture?email_work_card=view-paper.

important information, and truths. . . . It serves the need of any message to be received, remembered, and passed on to others."[26]

Illiteracy. Upon hearing the word "illiterate," one may quickly assume that this means an inability to read and write. However, illiterate means "having little to no education; showing or marked by a lack of acquaintance with the fundamentals of a particular field or knowledge."[27] Grant Lovejoy, IMB Director of Orality Strategies, states, "Though literacy certainly has a great value and should be encouraged, it is a mistake to take a one-dimensional and negative perspective on orality by simply equating it with illiteracy."[28] In this project, I contend that Bible storying is not only for illiterate people who are unable to read and write but also for those who lack the resources to learn.

Cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence is the ability to observe geographical and demographic differences worldwide and learn how people view life from different philosophical and political perspectives. David Livermore, author of *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success*, describes it as "the capability to function effectively in intercultural contexts."[29] In the context of this project, cultural intelligence will only be truly intelligent when Christ serves as the basis and the mission strategy is built upon him.

This project had two limitations. The first limitation of this project was the problem of illiteracy. Many indigenous have a low level of education and are categorized as primarily oral learners. To mitigate this limitation, when and where possible, I gave

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[26] Charles Madinger, "Coming to Terms with Orality: A Holistic Model," *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 204.

[27] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2019), s.v. "illiterate.

[28] Grant Lovejoy, "The Extent of Orality: 2012 Update," *Orality Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 13.

[29] David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success*, 2nd ed. (New York: AMACOM, 2015), ix.

assessments and delivered the training orally and in person. The second limitation was the geographical location of those we engaged. Many indigenous live hours or days upriver and have limited access to communication, posing great difficulty in executing this project. This project was highly dependent on face-to-face communication. There was little means to mitigate this limitation other than to condense the timeframe to periods when we could do the training in person.

Some delimitations also applied to this project. At least two participants were required to be evangelical, baptized Christ followers who were in the discipleship process. The second delimitation of this project was the project timeline, which was condensed to an 8-week period in order to capitalize on time when participants could be in person to be assessed, learn the story sets, study and deliver them to others, and be re-assessed.

Conclusion

God's Word provides every believer with sufficient resources to disciple through Redemptive Bible Storying. The following chapters show how these resources contribute to the disciple's confidence and competency to disciple others. Chapter 2 focuses on the biblical and theological foundations for discipleship. Chapter 3 focuses on the historical and practical issues of implementing this project in the NW Amazon indigenous context. Chapter 4 describes the project implementation, including the assessment of the participants, the development and delivery of the story sets, and the re-assessment of the participants at the conclusion of the project. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on the completion of the specific goals.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE
PROJECT

This chapter will demonstrate that God's Word provides sufficient biblical resources to equip Christians for redemptive work. Paul writes in Colossians 1:13, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Therefore, because Christ has redeemed us, we are also called to share the message of hope for the redemption of others. To substantiate this position, I will first describe what it means to develop a missiological biblical worldview and then investigate scriptural themes regarding the Christian's role in God's mission of redemption. This investigation includes (1) an exegesis of Genesis 12:1–3, demonstrating that the Christian participates in God's eternal plan for the redemption of humanity; (2) a word study of the verbs *go* and *nations* in Matthew 28:18–20; (3) a word study of the imperative *make disciples* in Matthew 28:19, showing that the church's primary task in the world today is to make disciple-making disciples for God's glory; (4) a brief exegesis of Acts 1:8; and (5) a brief exegesis of Revelation 7:9–12, demonstrating God's future hope and fulfillment for the nations.

Developing a Biblical Missiology

Before Jesus's ascension (Acts 1), he met with his disciples a final time to empower and encourage them with the ongoing mission: πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε ("to go and make disciples") and πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ("of all the nations"). This is Jesus's call for believers to join God in his mission of redemption, a mission that is essential to define especially for the new disciple of Christ. This mission begins in the Old Testament, continues through the New Testament, and will be fulfilled in the future as God

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completes his redemptive plan.

In *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Grand Narrative*, Christopher Wright states, "The Old Testament tells its story, as the story or, rather, as a part of the ultimate and universal story that will ultimately embrace the whole of creation, time, and humanity within its scope."[1] The stories that unfold in the Old Testament engage the reader in answering four fundamental worldview questions: (1) where are we? (2) who are we? (3) what has gone wrong? and (4) what is the solution?[2]

Patristic scholar Stephen Presley contends, "There is a systematic way of viewing Scripture, and there is a narrative way of viewing Scripture. Both views have their advantages. In a narrative view, [we] walk through the Bible as a narrative and demonstrate how God's mission unfolds in that biblical narrative."[3] Presley argues that a narrative view can be like a movie in which the opening scene serves a foreshadowing purpose. In the same sense, Revelation foreshadows future events and can function as a preview for the narrative spanning Genesis 1 to Revelation.

There is a tendency for Christians, especially new Christians, to focus only on the Gospels and the person of Christ. However, that is an incomplete missiological understanding of Scripture. A missiological reading of Scripture challenges us to look beyond what Jesus mandates in Matthew 28:19, the Great Commission, and to discover God's plan for redemption throughout *all* of Scripture. The entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation testifies to God's overarching mission of redemption.

For the believer to have a complete understanding of the person of Christ, he or she must have a complete understanding of the mission of Christ. Wright argues, "It

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[1] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 55.

[2] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 55.

[3] Stephen Presley, "Old Testament Missions," video recording of Basic Old Testament II (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall 2014). Used with permission.

would probably be fair to say that Christians have been good at their messianic reading of the Old Testament but inadequate (and sometimes utterly blind) at their missiological reading of it."[4] The purpose is not to remove or replace Jesus as the focal point of missions but rather to take a step back and widen the missiological lens.

Already, Not Yet

Theologian Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949) is credited for proposing the "already, not yet" theological concept known as Kingdom Theology, or Inaugurated Eschatology.[5] Jesus's life, death, and resurrection inaugurated the fulfillment of God's kingdom, however there are still aspects that await future fulfillment. In simple terms, this theology helps explain the tension between spiritual warfare and spiritual victory. David Briones argues that the already, not yet reality of the Kingdom of God creates a constant "theological tension." Briones goes on to say, "By faith in Christ, all of these spiritual blessings are *already* ours, but the full enjoyment of these blessings is *not yet* ours. This is the life of faith: 'the assurance of things hoped for' in the future, and 'the conviction of things not seen' in the present (Hebrews 11:1). This is life between the times."[6] The apostle John quotes the prophet Isaiah: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (Rev 4:8). Ian Boxall comments, "Perhaps we are meant to think of God as holy in creation (who was), holy in his being (who is), and holy in his eschatological judgements (who is coming)."[7] Inaugurated Eschatology, as a theological framework, highlights how the "already, not yet" mindset

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[4] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 30.

[5] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (1948; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000.

[6] David Briones, "Already, Not Yet: How to Live in the Last Days," Desiring God (blog), August 4, 2020, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/already-not-yet.

[7] Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2006), part 1, "The Preparation of the Church and the Opening of the Lamb's Scroll: 1:9–11:18)," chap. 2, "Throne Vision and Seven Seals (4:1–8:1), sec. 1 "Vision of the Heavenly Throne (4:1–11)." Logos.

can help us understand mankind's current depravity and God's plan for redemption. This mindset helps us to foresee every nation, tribe, and tongue before the throne by equipping us to read the Scriptures through a missiological lens. The "already, not yet" creates an identity tension as believers are called to be Jesus's witness among the nations.

Theological Issues

The purpose of this section is to provide support for using both the Old *and* New Testaments to form a comprehensive and biblical missiological worldview. Some modern-day teachers want to "unhitch" the Old Testament from the New Testament, including prominent speaker and pastor Andy Stanley, who in 2018 provided a modern-day illustration of Marcionism, suggesting that Christians should "unhitch" from the Old Testament. The second-century heretic Marcion is best known for denying that the God of the Old Testament is the same God in the New Testament.[8] Marcion argued that Christianity should be separated from Old Testament teachings. Albert Mohler writes, "The Old Testament, Marcion taught, reveals a vindictive law-giving creation deity who bears no resemblance to the merciful redeeming God revealed in Christ Jesus."[9] In response to Stanley's claim, Mohler said Stanley "actually appears to *aim* for the heresy of Marcionism, and his hearers are certainly aimed in that direction. He clearly says that God is the same God in both testaments, but says that he reveals himself in two completely different ways."[10]

Understanding the Old Testament is vital to understanding the New Testament, and vice-versa, and Redemptive Bible Storying bridges the two to create a

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[8] Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), pt. 2, "The Age of Catholic Christianity, 70–132," chap. 6, "The Rule of the Books: The Formation of the Bible," sec. "A List of Christian Books," Kindle.

[9] R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Getting 'Unhitched' from the Old Testament? Andy Stanley Aims at Heresy," last modified August 10, 2018, https://albertmohler.com/2018/08/10/getting-unhitched-old-testament-andy-stanley-aims-heresy.

[10] Mohler, "Getting 'Unhitched' from the Old Testament? Andy Stanley Aims at Heresy."

comprehensive, coherent story.

In *Speaking the Truth in Love*, James Brownson aims to create a proper and biblical missional hermeneutic. He argues for a *hermeneutic of coherence*, stating, "Once we have affirmed plurality, however, we need also grapple with how the Bible may provide a center, an orienting point in the midst of such diversity."[11] This plurality is not in the sense of pluralism theology but rather the plurality of interpretative stances regarding missions. Bosch writes,

> There is, for the Christian church and Christian theology, no New Testament divorced from the Old. However, on the issue of mission, we run into difficulties here, particularly if we adhere to the traditional understanding of missions as the sending of preachers to distant lands. There is, in the Old Testament, no indication of believers of the old covenant being sent by God to cross geographical, religious, and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh. . . . Even so, the Old Testament is fundamental to the understanding of mission in the New Testament.[12]

Building a missiological worldview based solely on the Old Testament is not a sufficient biblical missiological worldview. It is imperative that believers consider the whole of Scripture when building a missiological worldview. While Horst Rzepkowski contends, "The decisive difference between the Old and New Testament is mission. The New Testament is essentially a book about mission,"[13] Bosch balances with the reminder, "Even so, the Old Testament is fundamental to the understanding of mission in the New."[14] In his commentary on Genesis, Kenneth Mathews writes,

> This Book of Beginnings gives at the start what we come to know and see confirmed through the complete collection of Holy Writ. What is said about God, human nature, the world, and salvation-history in the succeeding library of biblical books is already in microcosm in the Book of Creation and Blessing. Those books clarify, specify, and explicate; but there is "nothing new under the sun" of the precursory light of Genesis. Can we possibly understand Law and Gospel without their Genesis? Do we have Matthew and Luke's historical Gospel without the

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[11] James V. Brownson, *Speaking the Truth in Love: New Testament Resources for a Missional Hermeneutic*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1998), 228–59.

[12] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16–17.

[13] Horst Rzepkowski, "The Theology of Mission," *Praktische Theologie Heute* 24 (1974): 80.

[14] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 17.

Genesis genealogies? Does not Paul's Galatians and Romans rely on Adam and Abraham? And can we still see the future Eden in John's Apocalypse without the imagery of Genesis's idyllic past? It is not too much to say that as there is no community without its first parents, there is no Christian world and worldview without its "Genesis."[15]

A New Testament rendering of missiology fails to answer the first two questions that Wright proposes: (1) who are we? and (2) what went wrong? An Old Testament rendering of missiology fails to answer his last two questions: (3) where are we? and (4) what is the solution?[16] Creating a biblical and missiological worldview is impossible when considering *only* the Old Testament or *only* the New Testament. It is vital that one understand how the two testaments work together to highlight God's mission of redemption.

Genesis 12:1–3: The Christian Participates in God's Redemption Plan

There are four major plot movements in the grand narrative of Scripture: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. The narrative begins with God's creation of the earth (Gen 1:1–25) and his creation of man and woman (Gen 1:27). When God saw all that he had made, "Behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). In the fall, the harmony between God and humanity is broken when sin enters the world (Gen 3) through Adam and Eve: "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen 3:7). However, God also provides hope, as Genesis 3:15 presents what is known as the *protoevangelium*, or the first gospel: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." Here, God foreshadows his plan to send a messiah, a redeemer born of the woman to fulfill his redemption plan. James Hamilton argues that "it is true that the term 'bruise' is not used to designate the defeat of the evil seed other

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[15] Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, New American Commentary 1A (Nashville: B&H, 2005), "Introduction," Logos.

[16] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 12.

than in Genesis 3:15, but the use of several terms for crushing/shattering/breaking seems to indicate that the biblical authors understood the damage in view to be a smashing of the serpent's skull."[17] Hamilton argues that Genesis 3:15 is a "messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain a messianic hope."[18]

The fall narrative continues through Genesis 3–11, telling the story of humanity's self-destruction. What God created in the earth was good; however, its inhabitants were utterly depraved, finding themselves surrounded with jealousy and murder (Gen 4, the story of Cain and Abel), violence and corruption (Gen 6), drunkenness (Gen 9:21, the story of Noah), and sexual disorder and arrogance (Gen 11, the story of the Tower of Babel).

Genesis 11

In *Theology and Practice of Mission*, Bruce Ashford and David Nelson highlight that between Genesis 3–11, mankind's "relationship is broken with God, with others, with himself, and with the created order."[19] The authors continue, "Although the image of God in man was not completely eradicated, his basic orientation toward God, his fellow man, and the world around him changed.[20] The Tower of Babel shows the desperate effort of mankind to redeem themselves by making themselves the focus of the narrative. Mathews notes the "motif inclusiveness" found in the narrative of the Tower of Babel, highlighting the Hebrew structure of "now the whole earth" (Gen 11:1).[21] Mathews notes that this "motif inclusiveness" will be reversed by the end of the Babel

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[17] James Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 34.

[18] Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman," 43.

[19] Bruce Riley Ashford, ed., *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 10–11.

[20] Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission*, 40.

[21] Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, part 5, "The Nations and The Tower of Babel (10:1–11:19)."

narrative. Their intention was rather simple: to make a name for themselves and keep from being scattered abroad. In Genesis 6, "The Lord saw the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that he had made man on earth, and He was grieved in His heart." By the time of Genesis 11, God "scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city." Not only was all of God's creation marred by the fall, but the pinnacle of God's creation, mankind, had become sinful, full of pride, and separated from its Creator.

Genesis 12:1–3

The narrative now takes an abrupt turn and introduces Abraham. Genesis 11:26 records that "Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran." This simple birth account sets the stage for all of mankind's redemption, and Genesis 12 reveals God's mission.[22] Man had attempted to gather, make a name for themselves, and avoid being scattered (Gen 11:4). They rejected rather than embraced God's authority and benevolence, so he scattered them, and they lost the identity that they sought to define for themselves. In Hebrew tradition, identity was found in one's land, relatives, and father's house. God responded to humanity's corruption and the efforts of humanity to define their identity by calling Abram to "go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land which I will show you" (Gen 12:1). Mathews comments, "Abram cut the strongest family bond by leaving his father's domain. He trusted the veracity of God's promised generosity."[23] As Wright states, "Blessing for the nations is the bottom line, textually and theologically, of God's

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[22] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 200.

[23] Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, part 5, "The Nations and The Tower of Babel (10:1–11:9)."

promise to Abraham."[24] The story of redemption began as God gave Abram a new

identity. Abram responded and "went forth as the Lord had spoken to him" (12:4).

Matthew 28:19: "Go" and "Nations"

Careful consideration of the Greek syntactic makeup of Matthew 28:19 is

beneficial to a proper understanding of the Great Commission. The verb Πορεύομαι

("go"), an aorist passive participle, is perhaps the most debated of Jesus's final words.

Most commentaries agree that the participle relationship "go" functions as an imperative,

the mood that expresses command, intention, or request. In Greek, participles are the

"-ing" words and function as verbal adjectives. Aorist participles are also unique because

they do not have a mood but often function as an imperative, as in the case of Matthew

28:19.[25] Furthermore, passive voice signifies that the subject is being acted upon. Often,

too much is made of this passage by emphasizing "go," as in, the believer must *go* to

another geographic location to make disciples. Craig Blomberg states that the emphasis

on go "is in countless appeals for missionary candidates, so that foreign missions are

elevated to a higher status of Christian service than other forms of spiritual activity."[26]

While this is the model we see throughout the New Testament, to "go" is not Jesus's

primary message. Its most straightforward meaning is "as you are going." According to

Daniel Wallace, Πορεύομαι ("go") carries a contemporaneous participle syntactic force,

meaning that it expresses an action happening within the same relative time frame as the

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[24] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 194. Genesis 11–17 refers to Abram and his wife Sarai. When circumcision was added as the seal of the covenant relationship in Genesis 17:9–14, their names were changed to Abraham and Sarah.

[25] David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of Matthew 17–28*, Exegetical Summaries (Dallas: SIL International, 2015), s.v. "28:18–19," Logos.

[26] Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary 22 (Nashville: B&H, 1992), part 3, "The Climax of Jesus's Ministry (16:21–28:20," sec. 3, "The Great Commission (28:16–20)."

main action.[27] In other words, it emphasizes that "go" is an action concurrent with another action.

Matthew 28:19: "Make Disciples"

Due to the unique structure of Matthew 28:19–20, Greek scholar David Hutchison argues that the verb πορευθέντες ("go") is a piggy-back verb, meaning that the main verb phrase is "make disciples."[28] This implies that the primary focus of the passage lies in the main verb "make disciples."
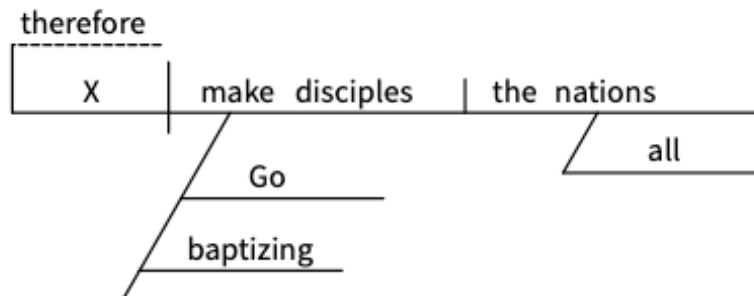
Figure 1. Construct of "make disciples"

In this understanding, "make disciples" is emphasized, and "go," "baptize," and "instruct" are modifiers. Often, the verse can be read that *as one is going*, they are to *make disciples*, *baptize*, and *teach*. However, as Hutchison argues, perhaps a better way to read Matthew 28:19 would be that we are to *make disciples* by *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching*. To support this, emphasis must be placed on the only imperative, μαθητεύσατε ("make disciples"), in Jesus's words. μαθητεύσατε is an aorist, active imperative. Wallace argues that the syntactic force found in πορευθέντες ("go") is a

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[27] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 612.

[28] David Hutchison, "Greek Syntax," unpublished class notes, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012.

contemporaneous participle.[29] This type of participle expresses that the action is happening within the same relative time frame as the main action, μαθητεύσατε ("make disciples").[30] Blomberg continues by stating, "The truly subordinate participles in verse 19 explain what making disciples involves: baptizing and teaching. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into the Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task."[31]

As the believer is going, he or she is commanded to baptize and teach; this is the lifelong task of making disciples. Jesus's comprehensive vision was to see converts *discipled.* Paul writes, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor 5:17). To be converted is to become a new creation in Christ; then the process of being conformed to the image of Christ begins. Consider the words of Paul in Romans 8:29: "For those whom he foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of his son." To be conformed is to be discipled, to go grow in maturity, and to be shaped by the Word of God.

Returning to the example of Abraham in Genesis 12, God's ultimate plan for the redemption of humanity is to create a new identity in each person. Just as God promised to be with Jacob and bless his descendants, "Behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you," so he also promises to conform his people to the image of his Son.

At the foundation of Redemptive Bible Storying is a conviction that true discipleship begins with one's identity in Christ. To disciple someone is contingent upon

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[29] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 612.

[30] Blomberg, *Matthew*, part 3, sec. 3, "The Great Commission (28:16–20)."

[31] Blomberg, *Matthew*, part 3, sec. 3, "The Great Commission (28:16–20)."

them being a new creation in Christ; the old identity has been put away, and all things have become new in Christ.

Acts 1:8

Prior to his ascension into heaven, Jesus spoke these words to his disciples: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). When God called Abraham in Genesis 12, he did so through a direct voice. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus also speaks directly to the disciples and tells them to go, make disciples, baptize, and instruct through the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout Scripture, we find this progression of God's ultimate plan for redemption: God specifically and individually calls; God sends his son Jesus; Jesus calls people unto himself; and Jesus instructs the believers to act as agents of mission through the power of the Holy Spirit.

At the center of God calling the nations to himself is the theme of identity. To be used as an agent in God's redemptive mission requires one to have a new identity in Christ. Paul writes, "And He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf" (2 Cor 5:15). Paul goes on to say that those who are in Christ are "a new creation." It would have remained impossible for Abraham to continue his identity and carry out God's mission.

Identity

The story of Abraham's calling demonstrated a break from his old cultural identity and a definition of his new identity in God. David Garland argues that Christ's death and resurrection "marks a radical eschatological break between the old and the

new."[32] Paul's use of κτίσις ("creature") is unique because it is not referring to the individual being a new creation but rather speaks to the "eschatological act of recreating humans and nature in Christ."[33] One's cultural identity is redefined once one is in Christ. The tension of living with this new identity in Christ and living in the world is still present, which Paul writes about often in the New Testament.

Plausibility Structure

Sociologist Peter Berger studied what is known as the "plausibility structure," the belief-forming apparatus that acts as a gatekeeper letting in evidence that is matched against what we already consider to be possible. The plausibility structure plays an important role in the development of any worldview, including a biblical worldview. Plausibility structures filter out claims that we believe cannot be reasonable or potentially true.[34] Of these structures, John Carter writes, "They don't necessarily tell us if a claim *is* true, only that the truth of the claim appears plausible enough for us to accept and that we are not wholly unwarranted in thinking it *could* be true."[35] Whether we are gullible or skeptical, the beliefs we accept and build upon are those that have been filtered through plausibility structures at the individual and cultural levels. These beliefs eventually form our worldview, filtering out beliefs we will not even consider reasonable or possibly true.

The Tukano view and understanding of spirits and the creation of the world is not plausible within a biblical worldview. Likewise, it is not plausible for the Tukano to

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[32] David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, New American Commentary 29 (Nashville: B&H, 1999), part 2, "The Painful Visit and the Tearful Letter: Paul's Defense of His Exceptional Candor (1:8–7:16)," sec. 6, "Persuading Others to Be Reconciled (5:11–21)," Logos.

[33] Garland, *2 Corinthians*, part 2, sec. 6.

[34] Joe Carter, "Apologetics and the Role of Plausibility Structures," The Gospel Coalition (blog), July 18, 2014, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/apologetics-and-the-role-of-plausibility-structures/.

[35] Carter, "Apologetics and the Role of Plausibility Structures."

accept that God created the world and has power over spirits. The Tukano have developed

a worldview that has become the broad strainer that filters out beliefs that they will not

even consider to be possibly true, preventing them from forming beliefs that are

inconsistent with their personal experience and evidence. Hence, the interaction with the

Tukano people continues to be a challenge, as introducing a biblical worldview through

Bible storying prompts them to confront the validity of their existing worldview.

   The plausibility structure plays an important role in the development of a

biblical worldview. After Jesus's commissioning (Acts 1:8), the disciples are in the time

between Jesus's ascension and the kingdom that is to come. The disciples who lived and

walked with Jesus day to day are now at a plausibility structure junction; what they have

seen and experienced through Jesus is now being pressed into them and passed on by

them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not abandon them; rather, he

promised that his absence would benefit the believer.[36] The idea of having Jesus with the

disciples at all times and wherever they would go was a difficult concept to understand.

When Jesus promised a παράκλητος ("helper") in John 16, the disciples struggled to

grasp what Jesus was saying. Andreas Köstenberger argues, "There were two things that

puzzled them. First, if Jesus was going to found His messianic kingdom, then why go

away? Second, if not, why return?"[37] While Jesus was on earth, he was only *with* the

disciples. Yet, after his life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, he would send the

Spirit to be *in* the disciples (John 7:39).[38]

   The disciples' minds were on Jesus "restoring the kingdom to Israel" (Acts

1:6), to which Jesus responded, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the

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[36] Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John*, Helps for Translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), s.v. "John 16:1–4a," Logos.

[37] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 280.

[38] Philip W. Comfort and Wendell C. Hawley, *Opening the Gospel of John* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002), part 3, "The Water Ceremony and the Attempted Arrest (7:37–52)," Logos.

Father has fixed by his own authority" (1:7). Yet, Jesus then teaches not only the disciples but every believer that the task of "restoring the kingdom to Israel" is now the responsibility of every one of his followers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus affirms to his disciples that they "will receive power" when the Holy Spirit has "come upon" them. The Greek syntax of λαμβάνω ("receive") is a future middle indicative verb, meaning that the subject πνεύματος ("Spirit") is acting upon itself. The term ἐπελθόντος ("come upon") is an aorist active participle, genitive case.[39] The genitive case restricts a noun by means of a specific characterization and generally marks a noun as the source or possessor of something. In this particular Greek structure, the Spirit acts as the subject that causes the main verbal action. In his work, *The Message*, Eugene Peterson paraphrases Acts 1:8 as "What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses."[40]

Despite Jesus's commands and his direct commissioning, the idea that the disciples could be the agents to carry out the Great Commission still seemed foreign to them. Ronald Trail illustrates the passages in John in which Jesus said his departure would enable him to prepare a place for them (14:2); he would enable them to do greater works than himself (14:12); he would give them greater knowledge (14:20); and would be closer to them in the Spirit (14:28).[41]

Witness

In its most literal sense, to witness is to hear and see something firsthand. The Greek sounding of μάρτυς in English is *martys*; BDAG defined μάρτυς ("witness") as

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[39] Albert L. Lukaszewski, Mark Dubis, and J. Ted Blakley, *The Lexham Syntactic Greek New Testament*, exp. ed. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2011), s.v. "John 5:34."

[40] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), s.v. "Acts 1:8."

[41] Ronald L. Trail, *An Exegetical Summary of John 10–21* (Dallas: SIL International, 2018), 235.

"one who testifies in legal matters. One who affirms or attests."[42] Each time in the New Testament, μάρτυς refers to bearing a testimony, testifying, or bearing witness. John Polhill contends that the use of μάρτυς ("witness") has a rather loose connection with martyrdom, suggesting that carrying out the mission God has called us to is a call to martyrdom.[43] One must be careful when applying this meaning (martyr) to the word witness in Acts 1:8. In *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*, James Swanson notes that the Greek leans towards to μάρτυς ("witness") meaning martyr, referencing both Acts 22 and Hebrews 12, "Since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us."[44] To be a witness is a selfless act that defends another's actions. Jesus understood this challenge and thus informed his disciples that they would be witnesses with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Following Jesus's commands in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8 does not amount to a call to death. However, a death to self must take place to effectively carry out the mission that God has given every believer. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). If what Jesus offers is death, is his calling worth it? Is it worth a man being willing to "deny himself" to "follow" him? For certain, there are times and circumstances in which being Christ's witness results in martyrdom. However, this project will focus on denying oneself to carry out what God has called the Christ-follower to do.

Returning to Genesis 12, we consider Abraham's call to "go to a land which I will show you" (12:1). Likewise, Jesus provides precise geographical locations to which

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[42] Frederick W. Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. "μάρτυς." See also Köstenberger, *John*, 280.

[43] Some scholars argue that the Greek use of witness as martyr is more closely connected with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 22. See John B. Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary 26 (Nashville: B&H, 1992), part 8, "Paul Witness before Gentiles, Kings, and the People of Israel (21:17–26:32)," sec. 4 "Paul's Speech before the Temple Mob (22:1–21)."

[44] James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. "μάρτυς."

he is commissioning the disciples to be his witnesses. In the following illustration, we find that God always has and will continue to call people to himself.[45] This is the central theme of Redemptive Bible Storying, a *process* that aims to help the hearer understand mankind's self-destruction and sin and the fact that God is continually redeeming people.

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[45] I created and developed the content for this illustration based on the Scripture used in my project. The graph flow is based on a layout found in Wright, *The Mission of God*, 376, and the substance is based on Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, New American Commentary 1B (Nashville: B&H, 2005), part 7, "Father Abraham (11:27–25:11)," sec. 2, "The Promissory Call and Abraham's Obedience (12:1–9)," Logos.

→ God's Creation (Gen 1–3)

    → Fall of Mankind

        → Tower of Babel

            → God comes down

            ← *Redemption begins. God calls Abraham.*

        ← Mankind Follows God

    ← The Promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph

    → Egyptian Captivity

        → Moses

            → *Redemption Continues. Mt. Sinai. Receiving the Law.*

            ← Wandering in the Wilderness

        ← Judges, Divided Kingdom, Prophets, Captivity

    → Inter-Testamental Period

        → God's Silence

            → *Redemption Continues. God sends Jesus.*

                → Jesus's Life, Death, and Resurrection

                ← Matthew 28:19

            ← Acts 1:8

        ← Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit

    ← *Redemption Continues through Believers*

← Revelation 7: Perfect and Complete Redemption of Mankind

Figure 2. Redemptive Bible Storying process

As believers, we find ourselves in the "already, not yet" section, looking back on what God has accomplished throughout his Word and the personhood of Jesus and yet looking forward to his perfect and complete redemption of mankind. Humanity has been in a perilous state since the fall in Genesis 3 and will remain in this fallen state until (1) man enters eternity with God in heaven or (2) spends eternity separated from God in hell. Heaven and hell represent two opposite realities for humanity; one represents being part of God's plan of redemption, and the other represents the rejection of God's offer and eternal separation from the presence of God. This is vividly illustrated in Luke 16 in Jesus's story of Lazarus and the rich man. When the rich man died having no relationship with Christ, he called on the name of Abraham, saying, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me." His call to Abraham suggests that the rich man understood the covenant God made with Abraham. The one extreme he desired was to spend eternity in heaven with God through the covenant of Abraham. Yet his present status was that of lostness apart from Christ—he was in hell. He begged Abraham to "send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool off my tongue."[46] Robert Stein writes that "the merciless" was now at mercy of the beggar, and "he was aware of his continual misery and need of the beggar lying at his gate."[47]

As outlined, this reality is in constant motion, and we find ourselves in the "already, not yet" stage. God has already sent his Son Jesus, Jesus has already commissioned his disciples, and now his spirit dwells in the life of every believer. At the final stage, the story of God's redemption centers on the throne with "a great multitude from every nation" worshipping the king. All of human history is headed in this direction.

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[46] Stein comments further on the dipping of his finger in water: "Should this be understood as an actual or symbolic description of the torments of hell (cf. 2 Esdr 8:59; 1 Enoch 22:9)? Since this description is found in a parable, it would not be wise to assume that this is a literal portrayal of hell. Nevertheless, the reality of hell's horror is so terrible that in the picture even licking water from a fingertip would bring some welcome relief." Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary 24 (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 412.

[47] Stein, *Luke*, 425.

Acts 1:8 sets in motion God's plan for redemption *by* his people *through* the power of the Holy Spirit. The foundational words of Jesus prior to his ascension into heaven in Acts 1 set in motion God's plan of redemption through the church and ultimately his plan of redeeming a people from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation.

Revelation 7:9–12: The Fulfillment of God's Plan for the Nations

> After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." (Rev 7:9–12)

What takes place between Genesis 12 and Revelation 22 is God's response to sin and the destruction of mankind found in Genesis 1–11. It is here in the middle that each Christ-follower finds him or herself: between man's depravity, the already not yet, God's plan for redemption, and the future hope for every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne. Ian Boxall says that "Revelation plainly requires different interpretive skills than a Gospel or a Pauline letter" as it "promises privileged access to a supernatural world, in which the true source of authority is unveiled in the heavenly room."[48] The following sections emphasize what is meant by "every nation" and "salvation" in this passage.

Every Nation

To better understand "nation" in light of Revelation 7 requires returning to the Old Testament to examine the word's meaning. When God called Abraham, he said, "I will make you a great nation. . . . And in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed"

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[48] Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John*, "Introduction."

(Gen 12:2–3). Genesis does not make a clear distinction between Abraham's descendants and the nations. The book of Genesis provides the genealogy of Abraham and his family, also known as the patriarchs, an appellation given to Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob.[49] The term descendant(s) is found fifty-nine times in the book, each time referring to the covenant and the blessings to the nations. Descendants literally means "offspring," yet we note that Abraham's offspring will include more than those who were his biological kin.

Walter Elwell and Barry Beitzel state that "Israel evolved from various ethnic groups, and several of the nations traced their origins to prominent figures in the Israelite community."[50] When God established the covenant of circumcision with Abraham (Gen 17:9–14), he commanded that those who were "bought with money shall surely be circumcised" (v. 13). They were to be included in the covenant even though some were ethnic non-Israelites, demonstrating that Abraham's descendants included not only biological descendants but also servants and those who were purchased and then circumcised. In this covenant, God shows Abraham how he will multiply him exceedingly and how he will be "the father of a multitude of nations." As if to emphasize the scale of God's blessing, the word "nation(s)" is used nine times in Genesis 17. God even says that he will bless the nations through the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac.[51]

Exodus describes how Abraham's descendants began to increase, detailing what happened to the Israelites from the birth of Moses, God's call for Moses to deliver

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[49] The term *patriarchs* should not be limited to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ishmael, Esau, Jacob's twelve sons (Acts 7:8–9) have also been referred to as the Patriarchs. See also Exodus 3:15–16, Deuteronomy 1:8, and Psalm 105:9–10.

[50] Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, eds., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 1:1055.

[51] In Genesis 17:19, God mentions Isaac, saying that He will "establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him." In Genesis 17:20, God mentions Ishmael, saying that He will "bless him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation." In each of these cases, the broader understanding of nations and descendants is coming into focus. The covenant includes more than descendants from Abraham alone.

the Israelites, and then his leading the Israelites out of Egypt. After the plagues had devastated the land, and the Passover had taken the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, Pharaoh finally freed the Israelites. Exodus 12:38 states that "a mixed multitude also went up with them." There is no clear indication of who comprised the mixed multitude, but it seems evident that other ethnic groups identified with the Israelites. Douglas Stuart comments, "This verse would be best translated as: a huge ethnically diverse group also went up with them, and very many cattle, both flocks and herds."[52] In *Moses: The Private Man behind the Public Leader*, J. Daniel Hays argues that this "mixed multitude" was made up primarily of Cushites simply because they had a relatively warm relationship with the Israelites and Moses went on to marry a Cushite.[53] Put simply, many multitudes of people who were not direct descendants of Abraham or Israel joined the Israelites as they fled Egypt.

God gave the Israelites a purpose and a mission in his redemption plan: to be a blessed nation that pointed to God's redemption, thereby becoming a blessing to other nations (Gen 12:1–3). The New Testament emphasizes the deliberate expansion of this mission to the non-Jews—the Gentiles, the "people that do not belong to Israel."[54] Although Jesus primarily focused his ministry on the Jews (Matt 10:6; Matt 15:24; Mark 7:27), he also ministered among the Gentiles (Matt 8:5–13; Mark 7:24–30). Chad Chambers argues that it was Jesus who "expanded the mission to include all nations."[55]

Although the Jewish nation had been living distinct from the Gentile nations, Jesus's life, ministry, death, and resurrection emphasized that *all* nations—Jew and Gentile—are part of God's redemption plan. In Galatians 3:13–14, Paul wrote that

[52] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary 2 (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 302.

[53] J. Daniel Hays, "Moses: The Private Man behind the Public Leader," *Bible Review* 16, no. 4 (August 2000): 60–63.

[54] John D. Barry, ed., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Bible Press, 2016), s.v. "Gentiles."

[55] Barry, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Jews in the New Testament."

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Shortly after Jesus's command in Matthew 28, the first recorded Gentile convert is seen in Acts 10: Cornelius the centurion. God's plan of redemption that began in Genesis 3 with the protoevangelium and continued in Genesis 12 with God's call to Abraham to bless the nations is now being fulfilled through Christ Jesus's disciples to *all* the nations.

Salvation

The purpose of this project is to evangelize non-believers and disciple believers using Redemptive Bible Storying to share God's redemption plan—his salvation—for humanity. As previously noted, before one can be conformed to the image of Christ, one must be converted, or saved, and become a follower of Christ. The *Lexham Bible Dictionary* defines salvation as "deliverance from danger."[56] Most commentaries and biblical dictionaries link salvation with redemption. According to the *Baker Encyclopedia*, redemption means "to loose; the freeing of chains, slavery, or prison; the ransom or price was paid for freedom."[57] In God's plan of redemption, Jesus Christ was the sin offering and gave his life for our redemption. *Baker* continues, "Jesus Christ is the one who in himself, fulfilled the redemption concept of Scripture and by his sacrifice provided for the redemption of sinners."[58] λύω ("redeem") means "to undo something that used to be tie up or constrain something."[59] According to BDAG, σωτηρία ("salvation") carries the sense of "salvation with focus on transcendent aspects," meaning that this type of salvation will be fully disclosed in the future, as stated in Revelation 7:9–

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[56] Barry, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "salvation."

[57] Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "redemption" (p. 1827).

[58] Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "redemption" (p. 1827).

[59] Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "redeem."

12.[60]

The future hope of Revelation is the fulfillment of what God promised Abraham in Genesis 12, and this provides encouragement and comfort for the church today. International Mission Board (IMB) President Paul Chitwood states, "God has given His vision to the church. That vision, expressed so clearly in Revelation 7:9 of a multitude of every language, people and tribe and nation, is His vision."[61] As a mission-sending organization, the vision is futuristic.

Conclusion

Redemptive Bible Storying begins with helping the hearer understand humanity's depravity and the need for redemption. Each follower of Christ must find his or her identity in Christ and be continually conformed to his image. This happens through continual and intentional discipleship. Scripture provides ample evidence that this discipleship is a prerequisite for becoming an effective agent in God's grand narrative, his plan for reaching the nations.

Christian discipleship occurs during the waiting time, the "already, not yet" period as we wait for Christ to call us home. During that waiting time, a program like Redemptive Bible Storying attempts to show people that what is important is how that time is used. In Redemptive Bible Storying, the goal is to keep engaging, keep discipling, and keep storying until we are all called home as promised in Revelation 7:9–12.

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[60] Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "salvation."

[61] See Paul Chitwood's quote on the IMB Vision page. "The International Mission Board Vision," International Mission Board, "About," accessed December 2, 2022, https://www.imb.org/about/. The International Mission Board has a total of 3,543 missionary field personnel where "Job One" is evangelization.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES
RELATED TO THE PROJECT

This chapter will examine some of the historical and practical issues

surrounding Christian missionary work among the NW Amazon Tukano indigenous. I

will first briefly describe the approach of various missionary agencies towards mission

work in non-Western contexts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I will then

provide an overview of early missionary engagement with the Amazon indigenous

(dating back to the eighteenth century) and specifically with the Tukano people group.

This historical background informs the next section, which describes the efforts of the

International Mission Board to share the gospel with the Tukano and the common

challenges encountered in ministry to the indigenous. Finally, I will explain how this

project will use tools that increase one's cultural awareness and ability to contextualize in

other cultures without compromising biblical truth. A more comprehensive understanding

of the history of the NW Amazon indigenous and the practical issues facing missionaries

in this context will help the reader understand how Redemptive Bible Storying is an

effective method for helping the Tukano indigenous establish their identity not in their

culture but in Christ alone.

Early Western Mission Efforts and Activity

In 1932, the Laymen's Foreign Mission Enquiry published a report titled *Re-*

Thinking Missions, a report which David Bosch notes, "had little doubt every nation was

en route to one world culture and that this culture would be essentially Western, but also

that this was a development all should applaud."[1] It was expected, Bosch writes, "that the Western feelings of religious superiority would spawn beliefs about cultural superiority."[2] In 1816, missionary Samuel Worcester described the objectives of his sending agency, the American Board, with respect to American Indians: "To make the whole tribe English in their language, civilized in their habits, and Christian in their religion."[3] During the Tambaram Conference in 1938, the International Mission Committee stated "an enterprise, calling for expensive buildings, western-trained leadership and a duplication of much of the equipment, paraphernalia and supplementary activities that characterize the church in the West is beyond the supporting power of the average Asiatic community."[4] Lesslie Newbigin notes that following the first World War, "one of the most popular missionary texts of the period was Jesus' words, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10), and 'abundant life' was interpreted as the abundance of the good things that modern education, healing, and agriculture would provide for the deprived peoples of the world."[5]

In other words, it appears that there was a total absence of considering the culture of others regarding missionary engagement. Bosch notes that some seventeenth and eighteenth-century missiologists and historians believed that the gospel had made the Western nations strong and great and believed it would do the same for other nations and

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[1] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 299.

[2] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 326.

[3] William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Missionary Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 65.

[4] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 296.

[5] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 103.

cultures.[6] They failed to understand the challenges of engaging different cultures without imposing their own culture.

Early Engagement with the Amazon Indigenous

Chapter 1 briefly described early engagement between the NW Amazon indigenous and outside nations and forces, who attempted—and often succeeded—to control and take advantage of them. The first reliable accounts of outsiders, or "brancos," having contact with the indigenous people of the NW Amazon were written in the 1740s. This decade saw intense and effective slavery operations established by the Portuguese and Spanish. Many of the displaced indigenous were taken to work on plantations and in the rubber industry.[7] Thousands more indigenous were wiped out by smallpox and other Western diseases.[8] Toward the end of the 1740s, more than 20,000 indigenous were forcibly "rescued" by Jesuit missionaries, who mandated that they leave their homes and villages to move hundreds of miles downriver. A trade language, Nhgatu, was even created so that these displaced people, who all spoke different languages, could communicate in one trade language. The Jesuits went village to village forcing people to convert to Catholicism and be baptized. One Jesuit priest, Szentmartonyi, reportedly baptized over 6,000 Indians.[9]

Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, the Catholic church regarded indigenous life as "barbaric" and mandated increased control. Villages were forced to remain very small and could only be established near the river, where they

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[6] Bosch makes several references to John Eliot (1604–1690), Cotton Mather (1663–1728), Samuel Worcester (1798–1859), and Julius Richter (1862–1940). See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 290–93.

[7] Robin M. Wright, *História Indígena e Do Indigenismo No Alto Rio Negro* (Campinas, Brazil: Mercado de Letras, 2005), 50–51.

[8] Wright, *História Indígena e Do Indigenismo No Alto Rio Negro*, 50–51.

[9] Wright, *História Indígena e Do Indigenismo No Alto Rio Negro*, 50–51.

could be easily contacted and controlled.[10]

In 1914, the first mission headquarters was built by the Catholic Salesian congregation of priests and nuns in the region of Rio Negro.[11] Tukano village children over the age of six were sent to a Catholic boarding school where they could be raised apart from their families and their "barbaric" heritage. They were forced to cut their hair and wear Western-style clothing, and they were forbidden from speaking their language.

Figure 3. Tukano indigenous children in the
village of Taracúa[12]

Because the Catholic church deemed all things indigenous as "heresy and devilish," children were forced to perform military-style exercises to "form character."[13] The Salesians prohibited the celebration of community festivals and likened one of the heroes of the various ethnic groups to the devil. One Tukano indigenous resident of São

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[10] Wright, *História Indígena e Do Indigenismo No Alto Rio Negro*, 50–51.

[11] Wright, *História Indígena e Do Indigenismo No Alto Rio Negro*, 50–51.

[12] Natalia Viana, "Sao Gabriel e Seus Demônios," *Agência Pública*, May 15, 2015, https://apublica.org/2015/05/sao-gabriel-e-seus-demonios/.

[13] Viana, "Sao Gabriel e Seus Demônios."

Gabriel da Cachoeira, who is originally from the interior, remembers children at the school wearing signs that read "I am the devil."[14] To this day, many indigenous peoples argue that the Catholic Church brought the devil into the NW Amazon. There was an almost complete removal of their way of life, culture and customs. Yes, despite all this, today the vast majority of these Tukano indigenous would label themselves Catholic.

Figure 4. Tukano indigenous children in the custody of Catholic boarding school[15]

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[14] Viana, "Sao Gabriel e Seus Demônios."

[15] Viana, "Sao Gabriel e Seus Demônios."

Figure 5. Tukano children perform exercises
to "form character"

The effects of what began during the late 1700s are still felt today—a culture of people who are still unsure about and often ashamed of their identity.[16] Clearly, what happened to the NW Amazon indigenous and their culture has had deep and lasting effects. The indigenous have been deeply affected by different cultures and even had their own culture stripped away. As the Amazon indigenous went from living an uncontacted life to being fully controlled by the Brazilian government, they fought to reclaim their indigenous identity and culture, and many indigenous continue to insist, "Nós não somos brasileiros. Nós somos índios," or, "We are not Brazilian, but are indigenous."[17]

**The Allocentric Culture of
the Amazon Indigenous**

Perhaps in response to centuries of oppression by outside nations and groups,

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[16] Natalia Viana, a reporter for the independent Brazilian journalism agency Agência Pública, went to the upper Rio Negro region in the Northwest Amazon to investigate why São Gabriel da Cachoeira, the county seat and the city with the highest indigenous concentration in Brazil, has the highest suicide rate in all of Brazil: 51.2 suicides per 100,000 residents, a rate ten times the national average. See Viana, "Sao Gabriel e Seus Demônios."

[17] Translation provided by Alex Bowles.

the Amazon indigenous hold tightly to their communal culture. In *Individualism and Collectivism*, Harry Triandis posits that a culture will fall into one of two categories: idiocentrism (individualism) or allocentrism (collectivism).[18] The idiocentric culture promotes freedom and responsibility but can naturally lead to self-centeredness. On the other hand, an allocentric culture centers the interest and attention of the individual on other persons and the community. Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner note, "The individualist culture sees the individual as 'the end' and improvements to communal arrangements as the means to achieve it. The communitarian culture sees the group as its end and improvements to individual capacities as a means to that end."[19]

Northwest Amazon indigenous peoples are a predominantly allocentric people who value group decision-making over independent decision-making. John Smith describes an allocentric people as "a group of human beings carrying out a task as if the group, itself, were a coherent, intelligent organism working with one mind, rather than a collection of independent agents."[20] This, in essence, is how most of the Amazon indigenous operate, both for personal and corporate decisions. Psychologist Irving Janis calls this "groupthink," meaning that a census among a group is found because the group wants to maintain harmony and coherence, whether or not the outcome is positive or negative.[21] Groupthink can be harmful and lead to irrational decisions. Yet, it can also be leveraged and used constructively if the right questions are asked and the conversation is

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[18] Harry C. Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism*, New Directions in Social Psychology (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 151.

[19] Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2012), 135. In 1980, Geert Hofstede's research indicates that 80 percent of the United States population have an idiocentric, or individualistic worldview, while less than 20 percent of the population have an allocentric, or collectivistic, worldview. See Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (Los Angeles: Sage, 1984).

[20] John B. Smith, *Collective Intelligence in Computer-Based Collaboration* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 1.

[21] Irving L. Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, November 1971.

guided. When working in this type of context, Janis says it is critical that "every member expresses as vividly as he can all his residual doubts, and rethinks the entire issue before making a definitive choice."[22]

Groupthink presents a significant challenge to sharing the gospel with the indigenous, as receiving the gospel and the invitation to believe in Christ is a deeply individual decision; no one can make it for another. Because the idea of following Christ and having a *personal* relationship with him is a foreign concept to the Tukano, our experience has shown that indigenous rarely decide to follow Christ *individually*. Instead, it may take months or even years for an individual to decide, and when they do, we have found that typically the family will follow as well. It takes time for the gospel message to be fully understood and processed because it must be discussed as a group.

The allocentric culture, groupthink mentality, and other cultural challenges such as language and location are just some of the challenges that missionaries to the indigenous encounter and illustrate the need for contextualization and cross-cultural awareness. However, they also drive home the reality that SBC and IMB mission work in the Amazon basin is a slow and steady work and requires a long-term view and investment.

IMB Engagement in the Americas Affinity and the Amazon Cluster

The Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845 "to engage cooperatively the task of the Great Commission around a common confession of faith."[23] SBC historian W. Madison Grace states, "In the International Mission Board . . . we find that its story is merely a chapter in the larger narrative of Baptist missionary efforts and

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[22] Janis, "Groupthink," 89.

[23] John D. Massey, Mike Morris, and W. Madison Grace II, eds., *Make Disciples of All Nations: A History of Southern Baptist International Missions* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 15. This book is a collection of essays on the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and International Mission Board.

the greater missionary enterprise."[24] In September 1845, the IMB commissioned its first missionary, S. C. Clopton. The original SBC Constitution stated that "missionaries appointed by any of the Boards of this Convention must, previous to their appointment, furnish evidence of genuine but fervent zeal in their Master's cause, and talents which fit them for the service for which they offer themselves."[25] What began as one appointed missionary in 1845 has now grown to 3,506 total field personnel,[26] demonstrating the priority of the SBC to pursue a missiological worldview focused on the Great Commission.

Since the IMB's inception, faithful and accurate reporting of the missionary task has proven to be complicated given the number of possible contexts and the variables in each context, such as prior gospel engagement.[27] The IMB publishes the *Annual Statistical Report* each year, providing overall numbers for the eight affinities served by IMB field personnel: the Americas, Asian Pacific Rim, Central Asian, Deaf, European, Northern African and Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Sub-Saharan African. Each affinity is divided into clusters, which are often further divided into sub-clusters. For example, the Americas affinity (AMP) includes the indigenous cluster (IC), which is divided into four sub-clusters. These clusters and sub-clusters are divided based on geography and the people groups being engaged by IMB personnel.

In 2021, the IMB reported a worldwide total of 22,744 new churches, 176,795 new believers, and 107,701 baptisms. Table 1 provides a numeric breakdown by affinity. Note the vast difference between the numbers of new churches, new believers, and

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[24] Massey, Morris, and Grace, *Make Disciples of All Nations*, 53.

[25] Baptist Studies Online, "Original Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention," accessed April 10, 2023, http://baptiststudiesonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/constitution-of-the-sbc.pdf. See article 10.

[26] IMB, "Fast Facts," accessed June 15, 2023, https://www.imb.org/fast-facts/.

[27] The IMB has remained faithful to provide the tools and resources necessary to help IMB missionaries record data in all areas of evangelism, discipleship, church planting, leadership development, and social conversations.

baptisms in the Asian affinities and the same data from the Americas affinity.

Table 1. IMB reporting on all affinities (2021)

Affinity	New Churches	New Believers	Baptisms
South Asian	21,047	114,871	93,938
Asian Pacific Rim	1,442	12,356	7,638
North African & Middle Eastern	102	4,116	271
Central Asian	45	2,142	668
European	40	1,710	808
Sub-Saharan African	34	19,288	3,199
Deaf	18	139	107
Americas	16	22,173	1,072

Table 2 shows that within the Americas affinity, there were 22,173 new believers, 1,072 baptisms, and 16 new churches.[28] Of the sixteen new churches that were formed, fourteen were first-generation churches, and two were second-generation churches.[29] As of 2021, there were 111 total churches in the Americas affinity, 108 of which were first generation and three of which were second generation.

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[28] The data for this section and tables is provided by the IMB, *The Annual Statistical Report*, 12–13.

[29] A first-generation church is a new church plant that was birthed from a small group study, home church, and/or new group of belivers. A second-generation church is a church that was planted from an existing church. To be considered a church, it must be intentional about being a church in the sense that it has members, identifies membership through baptism, conducts the Lord's Supper, has leadership, and is self-funcntioning and self-financed. For a complete understanding of what constitutes a healthy church, see International Mission Board, "Key Terms," accessed June 15, 2023, https://www.imb.org/key-terms/#Church.

Table 2. Americas affinity, cluster, and sub-cluster reporting
for new churches, new believers, and baptisms

	New Churches	New Believers	Baptisms
Americas Affinity	16	22,173	1,072
Indigenous Cluster	8	98	52
Amazon Sub-Cluster	1	11	10

Table 3 below demonstrates the percentage of new churches, new believers, and baptisms

in the Americas affinity when compared to the totals for all IMB affinities.

Table 3. Americas affinity, cluster, and sub-cluster percentages
compared to all IMB affinities[30]

Cluster or Affinity	New Churches	New Believers	Baptisms
Americas Affinity	.070	12.500	.990
Indigenous Cluster	.030	.005	.048
Amazon Sub-Cluster	.004	.006	.009

These tables illustrate that working among the indigenous cannot be compared

side-by-side with other clusters, sub-clusters, or affinities. The Americas affinity has a

population of 954,191,955, representing 1,047 people groups, 338 of which are

unreached people groups (UPGs), having limited access to the gospel, and 199 of which

are groups that are totally unengaged and unreached (UUPGs).[31] The NW Amazon people

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[30] It must be noted that the sole purpose of this is to illustrate that work among the indigenous is new engagement and is slow.

[31] IMB, *The Annual Statistical Report*, IMB Global Research, last modified May 2022, 12, https://www.imb.org/research/annual-statistical-report/.

groups are considered micro-people groups, that is, communities consisting of less than one hundred members.[32]

This data demonstrates that missions work in the Americas affinity is a slow and steady process, and missionaries must have a long-term view in mind. Beyond the geographical and landscape difficulties, there are language barriers and different cultures within every micro-people group. There is a significant shortage of missionary workers in the Amazon. At the time of this writing, there are thirteen IMB field personnel working in the Amazon sub-cluster. and missionaries who serve in the Amazon are challenged to think out of the box regarding how they can most effectively engage in missionary work among the indigenous.

Field Personnel

IMB missionary Mitchel Heinz has worked among indigenous in other parts of Brazil.[33] He has been actively engaging four tribes since 2010. During a recent interview with Heinz, he concluded that each phase of the missionary task takes longer and longer, meaning that entry can often take two years, evangelism three to four years, and church planting upwards of ten years.[34] According to Heinz, the reason for this decade-long process is primarily due to issues of "access and credibility."[35] By access, he means the legalities in working within indigenous tribes; by trust, he means the time is takes to build

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[32] The numerous micro-people groups of the Amazon and the basin's geography and challenging terrain have historically made frequent reporting on these groups difficult and time-consuming. Therefore, sub-cluster numbers are not included in these numbers. As the Americas affinity was transitioning to a new reporting system in 2022, much of what was being reported on a monthly or quarterly basis was only collected at the end of the calendar year and has yet to be compiled and released. The new reporting software released at the beginning of 2023 will allow each missionary in the Americas affinity to collect data for entry, evangelism, discipleship, and church formation in real time. For clarity, much of what was being done has not been properly reported.

[33] This name is pseudonym for an IMB missionary working in a secure location in Brazil.

[34] The missionary task, according to the IMB, is Entry, Evangelism, Discipleship, Healthy Church Formation, Leadership Development, and Exit.

[35] Mitchel Heinz (church planter in Brazil), in discussion with the author, March 2023. All quotes and data in this section were provided during this discussion.

credibility with the tribe and its leaders.[36] In Heinz's personal experience, he estimates that it takes approximately 3.5 years on average for an individual to accept Christ after the missionary initiates the evangelism phase. Furthermore, Heinz notes the large gap between the total number of believers and baptisms. This is not a disobedience issue, Heinz argues. Rather, when an individual becomes a believer, baptism is "a line in the sand that will bring persecution."

Of the thirteen IMB field personnel currently working in the Amazon sub-cluster, the average length of service is 7.8 years, and the average number of years at their current location is 4.4 years. The average number of church plants per field personnel is 0.4; the average number of new believers is 1.5; and the average number of baptisms is 1.4. In the capital city of Manaus, there is a history of over one hundred years of Baptist engagement. However, deeper interior locations have an average of seventeen years of engagement. These statistics reinforce the understanding that IMB missionary efforts among the Amazon indigenous is still "new" relative to many other people groups. Examining one of these statistics—church planting—more closely reveals a greater understanding of the need for missionaries to the Amazon indigenous to develop greater cultural and contextualization awareness.

Church Planting

The 2021 IMB report noted that 22,744 new churches were planted by IMB missionaries worldwide.[37] Considering the total number of IMB missionaries and allowing for each people group to be engaged by three missionaries or church planters, statistician Jimmy Hamon calculated it would theoretically only take 9.5 years to reach

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[36] National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI) was created in 1967 as a response to protect the indigenous peoples of Brazil. Missionary work within the protected indigenous lands is prohibited according to FUNAI law.

[37] IMB, *The Annual Statistical Report*, IMB Global Research, last modified May 2022, https://www.imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ASRDY2021-2022.05.09-Public.pdf.

the 3,175 unengaged and unreached people groups worldwide.[38] However, IMB

missionaries know that theory and reality often do not align because church planting is a

far more complex endeavor with variables that cannot be reliably forecasted. Below, I

will identify four acute challenges to church planting efforts among the NW Amazon

indigenous people groups. IMB work within the NW Amazon provides one such example

of the challenges of sustaining a church plant.

The NW Amazon is home to approximately 33,000 inhabitations, 82 percent of

whom live in extreme poverty. The only city in the NW Amazon, Sao Gabriel da

Cachoeira, has 1,547 businesses, 92 percent of which are considered small businesses

(consisting of only a few employees). Furthermore, 49.7 percent of the NW Amazon

population lives outside of the city in indigenous villages.[39] This means that a large

number of people live in a small city with little to no access to work that provides reliable

and sufficient income, and the 49.7 percent who live in indigenous villages have even

less access to work and steady income. The Brazilian government established a welfare

system as a means for rural indigenous families to have money. Each month, these rural

indigenous travel to the city to collect their welfare payments, ranging from USD $250 to

$400, depending on family size.[40] This has ultimately created a deep dependency on the

Brazilian government.

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[38] Jimmy Hamon (mathematician and statistician), in discussion with the author, May 9, 2022. This area of mathematics is called forecasting. Forecasting makes future predictions based on historical data and trends. In terms of global missionary church planting, historical data will differ location to location, thus making the predictions speculative. Predictions must consider the active number of years there has been an evangelical presence in the area, local legalities, and any present believers, etc. Hamon considered that 5,000 church plants succeed each year. With an average of 3,900 IMB personnel, assuming each church plant requires the support of 3 missionaries, this equates to a maximum of 1,300 church plants per year. If approximately 25 percent of those plants are likely to succeed, only 325 of the 1,300 plants would be successful. It would take a minimum of 9.5 years (3,105 people groups / 325) to plan successful churches in each people group.

[39] Sebrae, "São Gabriel Da Cachoeira Em Números," accessed June 5, 2023, https://datasebrae.com.br/municipios/am/Sao-Gabriel-da-Cachoeira.pdf.

[40] Janary Júnior, "Projeto amplia benefício extraordinário do Auxílio Brasil para famílias indígenas-Notícias," accessed June 5, 2023, https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/934867-projeto-amplia-beneficio-extraordinario-do-auxilio-brasil-para-familias-indigenas.

First, indigenous church plants are dependent on outside missionaries and pastors for almost all support. Because the indigenous rely solely on the government for money, they have no money to see that church plants survive. An indigenous pastor is unable to be fully committed to the church because he too must find a way to survive and provide for his family. The church cannot faithfully do evangelism and missions because access to other villages or people groups is expensive. They do not have access to boats, food, or other items necessary to fund mission work.

Second, outside missionaries are expected to provide all the pertinent resources needed to expand the missionary work into new locations. We know and understand that resources provided by the SBC and IMB allow the gospel to be advanced deep into the Amazon jungles. However, we must also be careful not to create another dependency. The way we have chosen to navigate this challenge is to provide the necessary resources for these trips to take place—the boat, fuel, and other needed resources. In turn, we ask and expect our indigenous partners to make some type of contribution to the trip, such as providing food or some money for fuel. However, we are unable to keep providing resources to church plants on an indefinite basis. There must come a time when the local church plant and its leadership take responsibility for sustaining the operations of the church. Decisions must be made on how much funding we provide as outside missionaries, being careful not to create long-term dependency.

Ultimately, engagement in the Amazon requires long-term vision and planning. It requires an understanding of their allocentric culture and their tendency to think and decide as a community. It requires thinking out of the box to develop resources that require little to no outside funding and yet communicate the gospel faithfully and accurately. And it requires missionaries who are willing to invest time in understanding and appreciating the indigenous culture so that we can help them find their identity in Christ and encourage them to evangelize and disciple their indigenous neighbors.

Increasing Cultural Awareness

Contextualization, essential for theological and cultural engagement, is the nuanced process of adapting and embedding the gospel within the unique framework of a given cultural context. Effective contextualization demands a nuanced approached, meaning the skillful navigation of culture and social layers. Zane Pratt, the IMB Director of Global Theological Education, defines contextualization as "the word we use for the process of making the gospel and the church as much at home as possible in a given cultural context. . . . Every believer alive contextualizes the gospel and the church to their own culture. . . . The question facing every believer and church, therefore, is whether or not they will contextualize well."[41]

Pratt offers 1 Corinthians 9 as the exemplar for faithful contextualization. The apostle Paul was "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless" (Phil 3:5–6). Yet to the Corinthians, he writes, "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some" (1 Cor 9:22). C. K. Barrett writes that "Paul remained in many respects not merely a Jew but a Pharisee and a Rabbi: yet he differed from all non-Christian Pharisees in that he was ready to cease to be a Jew."[42] For the sake of the gospel, Pratt writes, "Paul identified with the people he was trying to reach, and adapted to their lifestyle as much as he could without compromising the law of Christ."[43] Missionaries engaged in cross-cultural ministry must refrain from imposing their own cultural framework as a reference point for understanding other cultures.

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[41] Zane Pratt, "Four Biblical Foundations for Contextualization," 9Marks (blog), July 18, 2016, https://www.9marks.org/article/four-biblical-foundations-for-contextualization/.

[42] C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (1968; repr., Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2009), s.v. "20. 9:1–27. Even an Apostle Will Renounce His Rights for the Sake of the Gospel."

[43] Pratt, "Four Biblical Foundations for Contextualization."

This section aims to better understand how to more effectively engage the Tukano people using Erin Meyer's Country Mapping Tool (CMT) and David Livermore's Cultural Intelligence (CQ) model. Each of these tools can enable missionaries to effectively engage across cultures and teach others to do so as well. When examining each tool, I will begin with why I chose that particular tool and conclude with how it will be used in this project's context.

The Country Mapping Tool

In 2014, Erin Meyer published *The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*, a comprehensive description of how people can better engage with and respond to different cultures. In her research, Meyer discovered that a "vast majority of managers who conduct business internationally have little understanding about how culture is impacting their work."[44] She claims that now more than ever, people are inundated with different cultures and worldviews. The question is how to best respond. For example, how can a local church ministry leader or a foreign missionary respond to an ever-changing culture and worldview and effectively teach the fixed truth of God's Word? Meyer's research led her to develop the Country Mapping Tool (CMT), an online tool that allows the user to select a home country and the country in which the user will engage to compare how the two cultures relate.[45] Perhaps more importantly, the tool allows the user to compare how two cultures collide. Currently, the tool has mapped sixty-seven countries, offering the ability to compare multiple countries at once so that users have the advantage of comparing multiple cultures.

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[44] Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014), 10.

[45] Erin Meyer, "What Is the Country Mapping Tool?," accessed March 1, 2023, https://erinmeyer.com/tools/culture-map-premium/.

**Applying the Country Mapping Tool in
the Amazon Indigenous Context**

The CMT identifies eight cultural values for a country: communicating, evaluating, leading, deciding, trusting, disagreeing, scheduling, and persuading. This allows for a more precise and more practical understanding of the cultures. Figure 6 compares the eight cultural values of Brazil and the United States.
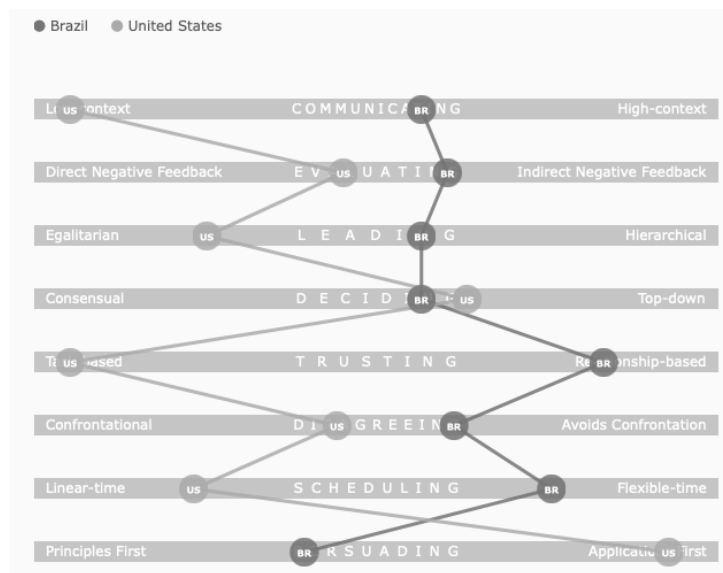
Figure 6. Mapping the cultural values of
Brazil and the United States

Considering the "scheduling" value, one can see that Americans favor "linear time," while Brazilians favor "flexible time." Punctuality is not a priority in Brazilian culture. It is common for a Brazilian to be en route to a scheduled meeting and along the way see a friend and stop to have coffee. I have heard indigenous say, "Gringos have all the wristwatches but no time." When doing ministry among the indigenous, rather than feeling frustrated that an activity is starting late, it is important for me to remember that being flexible on timing may come with the benefit of building a relationship and being more sensitive to how the Lord is working in the situation.

Another cultural value considered in the CMT is "trusting," which features

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"task-based" trusting on one end of the spectrum and "relationship-based" trusting on the other end. Figure 4 illustrates a significant difference between Brazilians, whose trust is based on relationships, and Americans, whose trust is based on completing tasks that build trust. In some cultures, such as Western individualistic societies, trust tends to be more individual-oriented. People rely on their own judgment of others and determine that one is worthy of trust when one fulfills their end of the bargain. Trust is also built through personal relationships, but even with relative strangers or newcomers, trust can be established relatively quickly as the newcomers show their reliability and trustworthiness.

In contrast, in allocentric cultures, trust is often rooted in institutions and social structures, which are critical to the operation of all indigenous villages. People trust those who are part of the same community, group, or system, and there is a greater emphasis on loyalty to the group. For example, I am often reminded that I am not part of the village we are engaging (the Tukano indigenous). The people of this community were all born and raised there, so there is tight-knit loyalty and trust between them. No matter how deep my personal relationships grow with the members of the Tukano community, I will never fully understand what it means to be a part of their community and their trust in one another. For example, during our first years on the mission field in our present location, we began to engage a newly established local church plant made up mainly of Baniwa Indians. This was their first experience working with a missionary or anyone outside of indigenous culture. It took our team close to three years to build enough trust for them to begin accepting our vision for gospel advancement and our suggestion that they have a role to play in that advancement. When we announced to the church that we would be returning to the United States for a six-month furlough, even informing them of our departure and return dates, they received this information with great skepticism. It was not until our return that they began to place a deeper trust in us because we proved to them over the course of three years that we were staying and intent on working with them. Understanding the cultural differences between how Americans and indigenous

establish trust is essential to building long-term relationships with the indigenous.

My goal in using the CMT in this project is not to change the indigenous group's cultural values but rather to enable me as their teacher to better understand how to address issues and topics in a way that is sensitive to our cultural differences. While Meyer's mapping tool is not a comprehensive or perfect method for engaging culture, it does show areas in which I can anticipate and therefore mitigate potential misunderstanding, difficulties in communication, and differences in expectations.

The Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Model

The *Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence* defines Cultural Intelligence (CQ) as "an individual's capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity."[46] Knowing how cultural values between countries compare is useless if one does not know how to properly apply them to ministry engagement. The ability to grasp concepts and solve problems in academic settings is less valuable in a context like the Amazon, where "real world intelligence" goes beyond the classroom and focuses on "social intelligence, emotional intelligence and practical intelligence."[47]

In *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, David Livermore took the leading studies[48] on CQ and boiled them down to practical application. Livermore developed the "four steps to achieve maximum culture intelligence: drive, knowledge, strategy, and

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[46] Soon Ang, Kok Yee Ng, and Thomas Rockstuhl, "Cultural Intelligence," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence*, ed. Robert J. Sternberg, 2nd ed., Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 820. The term "Cultural Intelligence" was first introduced by P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang in *Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions across Cultures* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[47] Ang, Ng, and Rockstuhl, "Cultural Intelligence," 820.

[48] Studies on Cultural Intelligence include Soon Ang, Linn Van Dyne, and Christine Koh, "Personality Correlates of the Four-Factor Model of Cultural Intelligence," *Group and Organization Management* 31, no. 1 (February 2006): 100–123; Robert J. Sternberg, "A Framework for Understanding Conceptions of Intelligence," in *What Is Intelligence? Contemporary Viewpoints on Its Nature and Definition*, ed. Robert J. Sternberg and Douglas K. Detterman (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1986), 315.

action."[49] He noted that leaders with a "high CQ Drive are motivated to learn and adapt to new and diverse cultural settings. Their confidence in their adaptive abilities will influence the way they perform in multicultural situations." Leaders high in CQ Knowledge "have a rich, well-organized understanding of culture and how it affects the way people think and behave." Leaders with high CQ Strategy "develop ways to use their cultural understanding to develop plans for new intercultural situations."[50] Finally, leaders with high CQ Action "can draw on the other three steps of CQ to translate their enhanced motivation, understanding, and planning into action."[51]

Livermore notes that too much adaptation can generate suspicion and distrust; yet inflexible behavior is a sure death for most twenty-first-century leaders and organizations.[52] He suggests that leaders consider two key questions regarding cultural adaptation. First, is the culture tight or loose, meaning, how strong are the social norms, and are there prescribed expectations on how people should behave? Secondly, will adapting to other customs compromise the leader or organization, and are there a set of convictions that are not willing to be compromised just for the sake of adapting?[53]

He warns against "[assuming] that all Norwegians are direct or that all Koreans prefer hierarchical leaders." He goes on to say, "It's never appropriate to describe an entire culture group with negative, judgmental descriptions such as '_____ people are lazy and corrupt.'"[54]

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[49] David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success*, 2nd ed. (New York: AMACOM, 2015), 4.

[50] Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, 155.

[51] Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, 155.

[52] Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, 178.

[53] David Livermore, "Why You Shouldn't Adapt to Other Cultures," last modified November 6, 2013, https://davidlivermore.com/2013/11/06/why-you-shouldnt-adapt-to-other-cultures/.

[54] Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, 114.

Applying Cultural Intelligence in the
Amazon Indigenous Context

The purpose of studying Cultural Intelligence in this project is to learn how to more effectively and actively engage the indigenous culture by studying my culture in relation to the indigenous culture I am engaging.

Specifically, I am motivated to learn the historical background of the indigenous people so I avoid repeating cultural errors that are easily prevented. Most often, cultural errors occur because of ignorance, which can only be corrected by learning the culture. Learning the historical background does not always explain the cultural difference, but it does allow for an appreciation of the way indigenous live and operate. With respect to storytelling, for example, the Tukano often tell stories beginning with the climax of the story. This defies Western conventions, in which most movies, television shows, and stories build the story around a climax. Recently, a young man in the village killed a jaguar that attacked him. This was his opening line: "Today, I killed a jaguar." Then, he proceeded to tell the story from the moment he woke up, including his trip into the jungle, some of the things he hunted, and, finally, his encounter with the jaguar. A Westerner would likely begin the story with "You will never believe what happened today!" and then proceed to tell the story. This cultural practice informs how we tell Bible stories to the indigenous: we must begin with the climax—Jesus's life, death, and resurrection—as the central theme of each story. And we begin and end our story sessions with John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly."

I will use Meyer's Country Mapping Tool to develop a "rich, well-organized understanding of [indigenous] culture and how it affects the way people think and behave" by comparing the cultural values between the United States (my home culture) and Brazilian/Amazon indigenous culture. I plan to strategize and develop "ways to use [my] culture understanding to develop plans for new intercultural situations." This may include the way that we begin engagement in a village, the way that we build and deliver

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our Bible story sets, or the ways that we eat with the indigenous. For example, in the village our team is currently engaging, it is customary for the village to gather each afternoon for Quimpeira, a pepper fish soup. Each family makes their pot and sets it in the center of the room. First, the men eat, each using his hands to get the fish and leave the bones and other remnants on the table. Then, the women are allowed to eat what is left over. Finally, the kids will snack on whatever remains. While it is difficult for us to dine this way, we know that if we question or refuse this tradition, it will deeply offend the village.

Finally, I anticipate drawing on the other three steps of CQ to act upon what we have learned to build more effective Bible story sets, teach them, and train others to be effective in their cross-cultural ministry. Learning and understanding these types of Tukano traditions only comes through experience and time. Building our gospel engagement strategy from an understanding of these subtle and not-so-subtle nuances can greatly affect the effectiveness of our ministry.

Conclusion

For over two hundred years, the NW Amazon indigenous have sought to realize and reclaim their identity as their culture has endured the influence of nations and groups who have sought to redefine the indigenous in their own image. However, Christ-followers know that when identity is only found in one's culture, it is subject to shift as society and customs change. As IMB missionaries to the indigenous work to advance the gospel, we must develop a better understanding of how, as Pratt says, to "identify with those we are trying to reach and adapt to their culture, no matter what discomfort it causes us. . . . Our goal is to make sure that we do not put any obstacles in the way of the gospel ourselves."[55]

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[55] Pratt, "Four Biblical Foundations for Contextualization."

Redemptive Bible Storying is a particularly effective method of engaging, mobilizing, and equipping indigenous to share the gospel and make disciples. It is also a method that requires minimal financial resources and is less likely to create additional dependencies for the indigenous. As I build Bible story sets with the team and teach them how to share the story sets and train others to share, it is vital that I continue to be sensitive to our cultural differences. Yet, ultimately, I want the indigenous to know that their identity is found not in their culture but in Christ alone. It is crucial for the NW Amazon indigenous to recognize and embrace the profound truth that they are created in Christ (Ephs 2:10). This divine creation brings with it a unique and intrinsic value, reflecting the love and intentionality of the Creator. By understanding that their identity is found in Christ alone (Eph 1:7), the indigenous people can rise above societal labels, prejudices, and limitations that have been imposed upon them. Furthermore, it is empowering for the indigenous to realize that Christ has called them and will equip them to be gospel witnesses and disciple-makers (Matt 28:19). This divine calling extends far beyond the boundaries of culture, ethnicity, or historical background. It is a universal commission to share the redemptive power of the gospel and to make disciples to the ends of the earth.

Finally, may the Tukano indigenous be made aware of their profound worth and love in the eyes of God and their call to be ambassadors of his love and grace. As they walk in the truth of their identity in Christ, they have the potential to bring about profound change, both within their villages and throughout other villages in the NW Amazon. May they embrace their role as gospel witnesses, disciple-makers, and agents of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17–18), partnering with Christ in the beautiful work of redemption and transformation.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The need for this project became apparent during my eight years serving the NW Amazon indigenous peoples, primarily the Tukano indigenous. The overall purpose of this project was to equip the Tukano indigenous to use Redemptive Bible Storying (RBS) to engage other indigenous to evangelize non-believers and disciple new believers. This chapter addresses the steps taken to prepare for and implement the project, including pre-project implementation activities, project implementation, and post-project data analysis.

Project Pre-implementation Activities

On May 9, 2023, my faculty supervisor, Paul Akin, and the SBTS Ethics Committee approved this project. Shortly after approval, I met with the International Mission Board's team, Team NW Amazon, to determine the logistics for implementing the project. The remainder of the pre-implementation activities included reviewing the project goals, organizing participants, survey development, and story set preparation.

Restructuring Project Goals

As pre-project implementation activities progressed, some of the initial project goals were adjusted to better reflect the "zero-to-one" context of the Tukano indigenous. Zero-to-one terminology, made popular by Peter Thiel in his work *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*, is the idea of taking nothing to something.[1] A zero-

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[1] Peter Thiel with Blake Masters, *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future* (New York: Currency, 2014).

to-one mindset requires innovative thinking, unique solutions, expecting failure, and making bold changes to the process.

The mission activity in our engagement area is a true zero-to-one engagement. Despite much research and project planning, things did not go as initially planned. Ministry engagement in this context is complex, with a number of variables impacting the project and the work. The project initially included the following five goals: (1) to assess the knowledge and practice of disciple-making among a group of six to ten Tukano indigenous believers; (2) to develop a Redemptive Bible Storying curriculum that equips this group in the process of disciple-making; (3) to facilitate the team's development of ten story sets, from Creation to Christ, that could be used in evangelism and discipleship; (4) to be able to effectively share the Bible story sets, craft new stories, and provide sound biblical feedback from the stories; and (5) to evaluate the project participant's ability to develop a strategy to evangelize unreached and unengaged people groups. However, while preparing to implement the project, these goals were restructured to better reflect more attainable objectives.

Initially, I wanted the project to be taught in a curriculum-based, classroom context where participants would learn skills. However, as my cultural intelligence research enabled me to better understand the culture, I desired that the participants not only develop the skills necessary to engage in cross-cultural missions through Redemptive Bible Storying but also have a firm understanding of God's calling in their lives. Therefore, the project became more relationship and discipleship focused, and I changed goal 2 to better address the importance of understanding and obeying God's calling in one's life. In the indigenous context, the calling into pastoral or missionary service often comes from man, not God, which can have detrimental results. The new second goal now aimed "to study a six-part Bible story series that equipped the group to understand God's calling to be disciple-makers." In this goal, participants would walk through a series of stories about how God called individuals into service, noting that the

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call originates from and is issued by God himself.

Accordingly, goal 3 changed from facilitating the team's development of ten story sets that could be used in evangelism and discipleship to increasing the group's "knowledge of disciple-making by providing the necessary resources for this group to begin the process of disciple-making through Redemptive Bible Storying." Goal 4 did not change, but goal 5 was removed due to the new focus on God's calling and disciple-making, as these must precede a participant's ability to develop a strategy to evangelize unreached and unengaged people groups.

The revised project goals for the project were as follows:

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practice of disciple-making among a select group of five to seven Tukano indigenous.

2. The second goal was to study a six-part Bible story series that equipped the group to understand God's calling to be disciple-makers.

3. The third goal was to increase the group's knowledge of disciple-making by providing the necessary resources for this group to begin the process of disciple-making through Redemptive Bible Storying.

4. The fourth goal was for the participants to be able to effectively share the Bible stories and provide sound biblical feedback from the stories.

In conclusion, the project underwent a significant transformation, shifting its focus towards relationships and discipleship. The revisions included a more nuanced approach in goal 2, highlighting the importance of understanding and obeying God's calling in the context of pastoral or missionary service. Additionally, goal 3 transitioned from developing story sets to enhancing the group's knowledge of disciple-making through Redemptive Bible Storying. The removal of goal 5 reflected the project's renewed focus on God's calling and disciple-making as foundational steps preceding the development of strategies for evangelizing unreached and unengaged people groups, namely the Tukano.

Survey Development

As the first goal was to assess the knowledge and practice of disciple-making among a select group of five to seven Tukano indigenous, I developed the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment, which contained qualitative and quantitative questions on topics including creation, the fall, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.[2] This survey also gathered data on the participant's basic worldview and cultural beliefs. I wrote questions that spoke directly to their indigenous worldview to engage them in processing a biblical worldview.

Organizing Project Participation

In preparing for the project, I selected five individuals involved with our missionary team. Each individual filled out the personal commitment form.[3] These individuals, all indigenous, range from young, new believers to seasoned ordained pastors. There were clear expectations that the purpose was not for me to call them to missions but for them to discover how God has called people to engage in his mission through his Word. Due to confusion in the past, it is essential to clearly state to these believers that any calling to ministry or mission service is from the Lord. My only expectation for each participant was to faithfully evaluate their personal life and how God may or may not be specifically calling them to serve him in vocational ministry. Secondly, if God is not calling them to vocational ministry, then how might God be equipping each participant for Great Commission work? All of God's people, regardless of location or vocation, have a role and part to play in the Great Commission. My hope was for each participant to see how they fit into God's grand narrative, whether in full-time ministry or support roles. Either way, there are clear expectations in Scripture calling every believer to be involved in disciple-making.

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[2] See appendix 2.

[3] See appendix 1.

Story Set Development

The second goal was to study a six-session Bible story series that equipped the group to understand God's calling to be disciple-makers. After examining the initial BBWA, I prepared the six-session story set for the participants.

These story sets were crafted by the International Mission Board's American Peoples Indigenous Cluster (IC). The IC produced three complete story sets called *The Way*, *The Truth*, and *The Life*. *The Way* is an evangelistic story set to be used for new engagement and gospel conversations. This story set is comprised of twenty-five stories aimed at gospel conversations. *The Truth* story set is based on the book of Acts and is focused on new believers and church planting. *The Life* is a set of twenty-five stories for church leaders, consisting of stories from the Old and New Testaments. These story sets from the IC were used because they have been crafted and tested with indigenous peoples in different locations across South America. To craft a Bible story means to adapt or retell a narrative from the Bible in a way that effectively communicates its message to a particular audience. The crafting process involves simplifying and contextualizing the text while remaining faithful to biblical truth. Testing a story involves telling the crafted story to believers and non-believers to discover if specific phrases or words do not communicate well. Once a story is thoroughly tested, edits are made to contextualize the story.

For this project, I selected six stories from The Life story-set to be completed individually with each participant, considering the varied geographical locations. For the final story, my goal was to have all participants gathered together to discuss the stories and God's calling to be disciple-makers. Each storying session began with John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Before introducing the story, I explained our identity in Christ. We are redeemed and forgiven (Eph 1:7), alive in Christ and saved by grace (Eph 2:5), called children of God (1 John 3:1), created in Christ (Eph 2:10), and called to be disciple-

makers (Matt 28:19). The following paragraphs outline the substance and theme of each story.

Story 1: "God Calls Abraham" (Gen 12:1–7). In Genesis 12, God calls Abraham (previously known as Abram) to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's household and go to a land that God would show him. God promises to make Abraham into a great nation, bless him, and make his name great. Furthermore, God promises to bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse him, and through Abraham, all the families of the earth will be blessed. Abraham obeys God's call and departs from his homeland, taking his wife Sarah (previously known as Sarai) and his nephew Lot, along with all their possessions. They journey towards the land of Canaan as directed by God.

The call of Abraham marks the beginning of God's covenant with him, through which God chooses Abraham and his descendants to be a special people and promises to give them the land of Canaan as an inheritance. Abraham's response to God's call demonstrates his faith and obedience, as he willingly leaves behind his familiar surroundings to embark on a journey into the unknown. Abraham becomes known as the father of many nations and is a pivotal figure in the history of Israel and the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. We discussed various aspects of what it means to be a cross-cultural missionary in the NW Amazon. Often, this means for the participants to travel to an unfamiliar location and engage a culture that is unlike theirs. The key theme of this story is obedience even when the destination is unknown or unwanted. When God is calling us to be his messengers in a difficult or unwanted location, we must remain obedient to his calling.

Story 2: "God Calls Moses" (Exod 3:1–15). In this Bible story, emphasis was placed on Moses's response to God's calling and his delayed obedience. Moses's initial response to God's calling was "Here I am." Now, while this was in response to Moses seeing the burning bush, it was indeed a response to God calling out to him. Emphasis

was placed here because responding to God's calling is easy; it is the follow-through that is rather difficult. As God conversed with Moses and asked him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses was hesitant to accept the mission. Ultimately, "God's anger burned against Moses," and God asked Aaron, Moses's brother, to be the mouthpiece.

I discussed with the participants that, unlike God's calling of Abraham, God provided many details of what he wanted Moses to accomplish. This contrast was pointed out because despite how God calls us, with all the details or with few details, he expects obedience from us. Also noted in the story is God's holiness through the burning bush, the removal of his sandals, and God's "I AM WHO I AM" statement.[4] This story emphasizes that the Almighty Creator and Holy God of the Universe is extending an invitation to Moses to participate in his mission of redemption. The significance lies not only in the call but also in the one calling Moses. The key theme of this story is that delayed obedience is disobedience.

Story 3: "God Calls Joshua" (Josh 1:1–9). In Joshua 1:1–9, the story begins after the death of Moses, when God calls Joshua to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. God speaks to Joshua, assuring him of his presence and guidance. God addresses Joshua, reminding Joshua of his promise to give the Israelites the land that he swore to their ancestors. He instructs Joshua to arise and lead the people across the Jordan River into the land of Canaan. He commands Joshua to be strong and courageous, emphasizing that he should not fear or be dismayed, for the Lord will be with him wherever he goes (Josh 1:9). God encourages Joshua to study and meditate on the Book of the Law day and night, observing and obeying all that is written in it. God reiterates his command to be strong and courageous, urging Joshua not to be discouraged or afraid. He reassures him

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[4] The burning bush was not consumed by the fire, but kept burning, showing God's holiness. God often showed himself in the form of fire (Fire Theophany). Removing one's sandals was often done when entering the home or presences of a superior person. Where God met Moses was Holy and warranted Moses removing his sandals.

that the Lord his God will be with him, providing support and guidance. Joshua receives this divine commission and prepares to lead the Israelites, relaying God's words to the people. The Israelites respond obediently and pledge to follow Joshua as they had followed Moses.

In summary, this passage recounts God's call to Joshua, commissioning him to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. God encourages Joshua to be strong and courageous, promising his presence and guidance. Joshua accepts the challenge and prepares to fulfill his role as the new leader of the Israelites. The theme of this story is obedience despite our fears and insecurities.

Story 4: "God Calls Samuel" (1 Sam 3:1–20). The story of God calling Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:1–20 recounts an important moment in the life of the young boy Samuel. At this time, Samuel was serving under the high priest Eli in the temple of the Lord. One night, as Samuel was lying down in the temple, he heard a voice calling his name. Assuming it was Eli, Samuel hurried to him and asked what he wanted. However, Eli had not called Samuel, so he instructed the boy to go back to sleep. This happened three times, with Samuel mistaking God's voice for Eli's each time. Realizing that it was the Lord who was calling Samuel, Eli instructed him to respond, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Samuel returned to his place and awaited further instruction from God. The Lord then came and stood before Samuel, again calling his name. Samuel responded as Eli had advised, and God revealed his plans.

God informed Samuel that he would judge Eli's household because of the sins of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas. This prophecy was significant as it marked the transfer of God's favor from the house of Eli to Samuel. The next morning, Samuel hesitated to share the message with Eli, but at Eli's insistence, he recounted everything that had been revealed to him. Eli accepted God's judgment, acknowledging his authority and wisdom. From that day forward, Samuel became recognized as a prophet of the Lord

throughout all of Israel, and God continued to speak to him and reveal his will.

The story of God calling Samuel highlights the importance of listening attentively to God's voice and responding obediently. Samuel's faithfulness and willingness to listen led to his role as a prophet and his influential position in Israelite history. The theme of this story is to be attentive to God's instruction.

Story 5: "Jesus Calls Matthew" (Matt 9). In Matthew 9, Jesus encounters Matthew, also known as Levi, a tax collector. Jesus sees Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth, collecting taxes from the people. Tax collectors were generally despised by society as collaborators with the Roman authorities and were often associated with corruption.

Jesus approaches Matthew and simply says, "Follow me." In response to this unexpected calling, Matthew immediately gets up and follows Jesus. Matthew leaves behind his position as a tax collector and embraces the opportunity to become one of Jesus's disciples. Following this encounter, Matthew throws a large party at his house and invites Jesus and his other disciples, as well as many tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees, who were religious leaders, question Jesus's decision to eat with tax collectors and sinners, seeing it as inappropriate for a religious teacher to associate with such individuals. Jesus responds by saying, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:13). Jesus emphasizes that his mission is to bring salvation and forgiveness to those who recognize their need for it.

The calling of Matthew showcases Jesus's ability to see beyond societal judgments and to extend his grace to those considered outcasts. It demonstrates his willingness to call individuals from different backgrounds, inviting them to follow him and become part of his mission. The theme of this story is to highlight the importance of extending mercy and love to all people, regardless of their past or social status.

Story 6: "Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet" (John 13). In John 13, during the Last Supper, Jesus performs a profound act of humility by washing the feet of his disciples. Jesus, knowing that his hour had come and that he would soon depart from this world, demonstrates a powerful lesson about love and service. As the meal begins, Jesus rises from the table, removes his outer clothing, and wraps a towel around his waist. He pours water into a basin and proceeds to wash the feet of his disciples, drying them with the towel. After washing their feet, Jesus puts his outer garment back on and returns to the table, explaining that he has set an example for them to follow. He tells them that just as he, their Lord and Teacher, has washed their feet, they should also wash one another's feet. Jesus encourages them to love and serve one another as he has loved and served them.

In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus teaches the importance of humility, love, and selfless service. He demonstrates that no task is beneath him and that his followers should likewise serve others with humility and love. The theme of this story is the powerful reminder for Christians to practice servant leadership and to prioritize acts of kindness and compassion towards others.

Project Implementation

The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practice of disciple-making among a select group of five to seven Tukano indigenous. I initially gave each participant a project packet with each assessment and the stories. For those unable to read and/or write, I sat down one-on-one with them and completed the assessment. After collecting the initial assessments, we then had our first official time together to discuss the specifics of the project and how they were to play a role in it. After the initial five participants completed the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment, I spent one week examining their results and conversing with the participants concerning their answers.

In the assessment, I included questions that spoke directly to their indigenous

worldview in order to engage them and challenge them to evaluate their worldview against a biblical worldview. I initially found that the participants, albeit new believers, have not considered what it means to have a biblical worldview or how to deal with concerning aspects of their culture, such as the role of the Shaman (witch doctor) or even the practice of infant baptism. In their understanding, the witch doctor is someone in the village with access to special powers to heal others with an illness or bad spirit. Infant baptism is something that the Catholic priest does every few years as he travels the rivers. Although many indigenous are baptized as infants, they possess no biblical understanding of what baptism really means. Because the indigenous are concrete thinkers, it is helpful to relate the Bible to the large sifter they use while making their traditional food staple, farinha.[5] They sift the farinha to remove the unwanted portions and then throw it out. In this illustration, they understood that the Bible is the sifter and that what is good passes through. Likewise, other problematic aspects of the culture that are unbiblical need to be carefully analyzed and then thrown away.

Some of the questions on the survey were abstract and required quick answers. For example, one question refers to one's view of Romans 3:23. There was no way to build an answer without having a complete understanding of the gospel or a general understanding of Romans. This question aimed to gain a deeper understanding of their level of the gospel and their ability to think critically about the text. The Brazilian education system operates under an authoritarian or rigid structure that does not foster critical thinking or intellectual curiosity. Though it can be relatively simple to recite Romans 3:23 from memory, to have the ability to explain it requires critical thinking. For the most part, most participants could not critically explain Romans 3:23. The only participant able to provide a biblical understanding was the ordained, seminary-trained

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[5] Farinha is one of the byproducts of cassava. The cassava is harvested, peeled, and ground into a wet sawdust-like product, and then sifted. The sifted cassava is then cooked on a large open pan. Farinha is the main staple food for the NW Amazon indigenous peoples. They mix it with water, juice, soup, fish, etc.

pastor. The purpose of these abstract questions was not to defeat or discourage the participants but to encourage them in their intellectual curiosity and promote thinking critically through biblical texts. Overall, this was a positive question on the survey.

Table 4. Select responses to general questions

#	Survey Question	Results
1	How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?	2.8 years
2	How many years have you been a member in a Bible-believing church?	2.8 years
4	How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions?	2 participants: 2.3 hrs weekly 3 participants: no study
5	Is memorizing Scripture a present practice of yours?	4 yes; 1 no

Table 4 provides the summary of answers to a selection of questions on the assessment. When asked to elaborate on question 4, their time spent with the Lord, the participants responded by saying they struggled with not knowing how [to do personal study/devotions], followed by not knowing where to begin, and not having enough time.

Other questions on the survey addressed cultural practices, such as how participants personally viewed the witch doctor and spirits. The answers differed for each participant. When asked specifically about the role of spirits or the witch doctor, four out of five participants elected not to answer because of the shame of answering such questions. Seeing a witch doctor is deeply indigenous and unique, so the indigenous will typically not discuss it with anyone, even within their group. Visiting a witch doctor is considered a private matter. The only time we have seen these discussions come to light is during Bible story sessions and only once trust has been forged. Often, the Holy

Spirit's work allows an indigenous to begin addressing topics such as the witch doctor. During the assessment, one participant stated, "Just as you saw a doctor for your back surgery, we see the witch doctor to fix us." In their eyes, seeing a physician is on the same level as witch doctors. However, this same participant also said, "Physicians fix physical issues with the body, and only the Holy Spirit can fix spiritual issues." Over time, this participant understood that the witch doctor does not have special powers to fix any spiritual or physical ailments. It was and is through the work of the Holy Spirit that he has come to understand this.

Under "Biblical Questions," each participant was asked, "What is your view of baptism?" This question is often a key indicator as to where a believer stands among indigenous believers. When evangelical missionaries first brought the gospel to the Amazon during the 1940s and 1950s, much of what they communicated had a legalistic tone and perspective. As a result, many indigenous today view baptism as a sign of salvation and a means to purify one's life. It was important to ask this question as part of the assessment because participants need to understand what salvation is, what baptism is, and the difference between the two. Much of what our team encounters is a mixture of animistic beliefs with a Catholic façade. As outlined in chapter 3, baptism is the only exposure many indigenous have to any form of religion. Therefore, they only see baptism as the entry into the church, religion, and salvation.

Participants were also asked, "What is your view of Satan?" Animism teaches that all things are spiritual and anything that can harm you is from the enemy. Because of this, animistic indigenous live in a state of fear. I included this question in the assessment because I want our participants to understand and be able to answer biblically who Satan is, who Jesus is, and their relationship.

Table 5 provides the answers of the initial five participants to a series of questions intended to assess the participants' biblical worldview before and after the project. These questions were scored using a 5-point Likert Scale, where SD = Strongly

Agree, D = Disagree, U = Unsure, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree. Each participant provided a mark for each question.

Table 5. Basic biblical worldview assessment pre-project responses

#	Question	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I am uncomfortable talking to unbelievers about Christianity.	0	0	1	3	1
2	I am comfortable talking to individuals of other faiths about Christianity.	1	1	3	0	0
3	I am uncomfortable talking to atheists/agnostics about Christianity.	0	0	2	0	3
4	I can demonstrate to critics that the Bible is reliable.	0	1	3	1	0
5	I can demonstrate from a historical perspective that Jesus died on a cross.	1	3	1	0	0
6	I can demonstrate from the Old Testament that Jesus's death and resurrection were predicted hundreds of years in advance.	1	3	1	0	0
7	I can explain what Jesus accomplished on the cross.	0	0	0	4	1
8	I understand what it means to be called by God.	3	1	1	0	0
9	I understand the difference between salvation and baptism.	0	0	2	2	1
10	I understand that I have been called to make disciples.	1	3	1	0	0

Delivery of Story Sets on God's Calling

After analyzing the assessments completed by the five participants, I began the six-part series on June 1, 2023, and concluded on June 20, 2023. Each participant was given a printed version of the stories. For those not fully literate, the stories were given in oral form. I met with each person individually and then we came together as a group and interacted with each other about the stories. A set of questions and key themes

accompanied each story. These questions included what the story teaches about God and man and how the participant fits into God's redemptive story.

Project Participation Changes

During project implementation, three of the participants were no longer able to participate. The first of these three participants decided it was time to travel back to his village, which took him approximately five days by canoe. For the purpose of the project, we needed to be able to communicate with all participants, but limited access to communication made this challenging, and we had no plan to travel to meet with him. Therefore, this participant was no longer able to participate in the project. The second participant felt he did not want to participate in the project, citing that he did not feel adequate or qualified. I discussed with him the project's purpose; however, he still declined. Although he continues to be part of our ongoing Bible stories and engages in conversation, he no longer participates in the project. The third participant, our most essential and influential participant, fell back into alcoholism. This participant is a seminary graduate and ordained indigenous pastor who has been part of our mission efforts in the Amazon since 2017. His fall back into a sinful lifestyle and alcoholism forced him out of leadership. Regarding participation in the project, he stated, "I need to distance myself from the church right now. Not from God, but from the church." As these three participants left mid-implementation, during goal 2, I could not gather any data about their time or progress.

Training to Equip in Disciple Making

The third goal was to increase the group's knowledge of disciple-making by providing the resources necessary for this group to begin disciple-making through Redemptive Bible Storying. Due to time constraints, I could not thoroughly teach Bible story crafting. However, stories that had already been crafted were provided to each participant to study and deliver. Each participant was given five weeks to study, process,

and deliver story sets that we had studied on God's calling.

Participant Bible Storying and Feedback

The fourth goal was to effectively share the Bible story set. Using the skills they learned in Bible storying, the remaining project participants presented the stories to small groups in a church setting and individually. During this time, I was present to help and answer any questions. After the five weeks, I conversed with several of the listeners to gain feedback. Each listener was asked about the topics studied, the clarity of delivery, and the story application. This feedback was recorded on the Redemptive Bible Storying skills assessment.[6] Each listener provided positive feedback that each story was concise. They stated that both participants delivered the stories based on Scripture and not their own opinions, which is a critical element of Bible storying.

Post-project Assessment of Participants

At the conclusion of the project, the two remaining participants retook the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment. The post-project assessment used the same questions to see how each participant's knowledge had changed, utilizing the different between the post-project score and the pre-project score. Based on the change in scores (see table 6), these participants experienced the most significant growth in publicly sharing their faith (question 2), moving from "undecided" on the Likert scale to between "agree" and "strongly agree" ($\Delta = +1.5$). They also experienced a decrease in their discomfort in talking to unbelievers about Christianity ($\Delta = -2.5$). See table 6 for these results and appendix 4 for the pre- and post-project assessment data.

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[6] See appendix 3.

Table 6. Post-project mean change with remaining two participants

	Survey Question	Pre-Series Mean	Post-Series Mean	Change
1	I am uncomfortable talking to unbelievers about Christianity	4.5	2.0	–2.5
2	I am comfortable talking to individuals of other faiths about Christianity.	3.0	4.5	+1.5
7	I can explain what Jesus accomplished on the cross.	4.0	5.0	+1.0
8	I understand what it means to be called by God.	0.6	5.0	+4.4
9	I understand the difference between salvation and baptism.	3.0	5.0	+2.0
10	I understand that I have been called to make disciples.	2.0	5.0	+3.0

The most significant growth was in the participants' understanding of God's calling, with a +4.4 change. It was encouraging to see this change given the adjustment in goal 2 to study stories on God's calling. Furthermore, the participants saw growth in their understanding between salvation and baptism (+2) and that Jesus has called every believer to make disciples (+3). I believe this growth happened because each participant saw how they fit into God's redemptive story. Previously, each story was just that—a story. Now, they read each story as a narrative and can find themselves in the story.

Wrap-Up/Team Meeting

After teaching through the six stories on God's Calling and the participants' five weeks of preparing and delivering stories, we met as a team to discuss what went well and what went wrong. Both participants credited the six Bible stories on God's calling to with better equipping them, citing, "It gave us a better understanding of how we fit into God's big story." They also understand their specific calling and how God has equipped each believer for is service. Although these two participants do not feel called at this time to full-time ministry service, they have a deeper theology and an understanding

of why missions is necessary. Furthermore, it allowed them to see that Bible storying is, in fact, a fruitful avenue of ministry engagement that can be practiced by both ordinary church members and seminary-trained pastors. They feel better equipped to engage in daily conversation with people, lead at church, teach a small group, and lead a more fruitful life. At this time, they do not believe their calling is to engage in full-time vocational ministry; rather, they feel called to be in support roles with our church and mission team. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, they see that they share a universal calling with all believers to engage in Great Commission work. Despite our initial group of five decreasing to two, these two participants showed incredible growth during the project's implementation. They are both invaluable assets to our gospel-carrying team.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to equip the Tukano indigenous with the resources necessary to be gospel carriers. The completion of each goal determined the project's overall success; however, adjustments were made during the project implementation due to unforeseen changes in group participation. My second goal was for each participant to understand God's calling to be cross-cultural gospel carriers. My ultimate goal was for the group participants to effectively share the Bible stories and provide sound biblical feedback from the stories. These goals were successfully met, as demonstrated in the lives and ministries of the remaining two participants. They both have a deeper understanding of their giftings and how God uses them in the Grand Narrative, and they are better equipped to be gospel carriers in a cross-cultural setting.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Paul writes in Colossians 3:16, "Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." This project has been a joy, from initial research to implementation. This project forced me to better understand the people and culture I engage daily, including how the Tukano gather and process information. Considering how the project enabled me and Team NW Amazon to widen our worldview lens and develop a deeper understanding of the indigenous culture, I consider the project a success. To be effective cross-cultural missionaries, the process must begin with discipleship. This chapter will assess the project by carefully addressing its purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. The chapter will also offer recommendations for future implementation and theological and personal reflections.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the Tukano indigenous believers to better evangelize and disciple through Redemptive Bible Storying. As outlined in chapter 4, the project implementation could be considered a failure, given that the initial participant group decreased by 60 percent during the project implementation. However, this project demonstrated the reality of working in a true zero-to-one context. The remaining project participants saw exponential growth in understanding God's calling and ability to engage in cross-culture ministry through Redemptive Bible Storying.

The principles from David Livermore's *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, as

outlined in chapter 3, proved to be highly beneficial during the project implementation.[1] Having a firm understanding of Livermore's cultural engagement forced us to ask difficult questions and look deeper into the culture. Livermore states that leaders with a high Cultural Intelligence (CQ) "develop ways to use their cultural understanding to develop plans for new intercultural situations."[2] As we gathered more information, we became better prepared to address crucial aspects and engage in meaningful conversation.

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Evaluation of the Project's Goals

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The project had a primary goal of preparing the Tukano indigenous to utilize Redemptive Bible Storying in engaging other Tukano indigenous for the purpose of evangelizing them and discipling fellow believers. Success in this project was gauged through the completion of four distinct goals. These objectives serviced as benchmarks, measuring the effectiveness of the project's overarching mission. The fulfillment of each goal contributed to the overall success and impact of the project.

Goal 1 Assessment

The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practice of disciple-making among a select group of five to seven Tukano indigenous believers. This goal aimed to gather data on how the indigenous view certain aspects of their own culture and how the gospel intersects with those cultural norms. Prior to the six-part series, a pre-training qualitative and quantitative survey evaluated the participants' knowledge of biblical topics, including creation, the fall, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and what it means to be called by God. The qualitative portion of the survey focused on the participant's view of Scripture, worldview, and indigenous customs and rituals. The quantitative portion contained ten questions assessed on a five-point Likert scale. While

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[1] David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success*, 2nd ed. (New York: AMACOM, 2015).

[2] Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, 155.

we began the project with five participants and ended the project with two participants, this goal was considered successfully met since five participants completed the initial Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment.[3]

Participant 1 underwent a significant spiritual transformation in 2020 following the heartbreaking loss of his 15-year-old son, who tragically drowned after an alcohol-related accident while canoeing. This heartbreaking event served as a catalyst for Participant 1's conversion to follow Christ, as he perceived it as a God calling him to Himself. Notably, Participant 1 was esteemed as a dear friend and committed member of our church plant, ultimately assuming an indispensable role in our mission endeavors within the village. Unfortunately, on August 22, 2023, his life tragically ended following a battle with alcoholism.

Participant 2, from the Colina Village, accepted Christ in May 2021. He struggled with alcoholism, which led him to stay with a family member, where he started his discipleship journey with Christ. He was a key part of our mission team because he knew how to navigate the river and had easy and open access to the village. But the city's alcohol scene was too much for him, so he moved back to the village in August 2023. Sadly, not long after, he took his own life.

Goal 2 Assessment

The second goal was to study a six-part Bible story series that equipped the group to understand God's calling to be disciple-makers. In the assessment completed in goal 1, I discovered that the participants viewed God's calling as accomplished through another pastor or believer. I have seen pastors or missionaries not fully engaged in the mission because they have not been called by God but rather by man. The six stories demonstrated a clear calling from God to engage in pastoral or mission service. However,

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[3] See appendix 1.

a clear distinction was made that *all* believers are called to engage in discipleship, yet those who serve in a pastoral or missionary role need to be called by God.

As noted, one of our participants, "Adam," fell back into alcoholism. Adam came to faith in 2017 and secured a spot at a Baptist seminary in the capital of Amazonas. This seminary was recommended by a local indigenous pastor who, perhaps, acted in the moment and felt that Adam should be in pastoral leadership. Adam comes from a life of alcoholism and lacked any real discipleship after his salvation and baptism experience. Adam went from an alcoholic lifestyle to seminary in just a few short months. During goal 2, Adam was asked about his calling experience and what it means to be called by God. To my surprise, Adam only mentioned the names of pastors who have helped him get in and through seminary, which is perhaps why he stated, "I will persevere." What Adam lacks is a proper understanding of what it means to be called by God. After graduating in 2020, he led a small church plant, which is no longer functioning. Previously, he had been trying to fulfill the calling of man, which often left him feeling inadequate. He had no true calling to sustain him in his ministry.

I considered the results of this goal to be the most fruitful of the project implementation. Perhaps the participant group decreased by 60 percent because those individuals felt they were not called. Our two remaining participants could see in Scripture how God called his people and the challenge for us to be gospel-carriers and disciple-makers. Furthermore, the study of these six stories allowed the participants to see how they fit into the grand story of redemption in the Bible, which gave them a heightened sense of the lostness and the need for discipleship. Even though some of the participants discontinued participating in the project, this goal was considered successfully met as the remaining members of the group studied the six-part Bible story series on God's calling to be disciple-makers.

The two remaining participants came to understand their calling to be disciple-makers. One of the participants sensed that God is calling him to vocational ministry.

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The other participant does not sense that God is calling him into ministry but understands that he has an important role to play in his personal life and in the life of the church.

Goal 3 Assessment

The third goal was to increase the group's knowledge of disciple-making by providing the necessary resources for this group to begin the process of disciple-making through Redemptive Bible Storying. Due to time constraints, I could not thoroughly teach Bible story crafting. However, stories that had already been crafted were provided to each participant to study and deliver. Each participant was given five weeks to study, process, and deliver story sets that they and we had studied on God's calling.

Each participant retook the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment. Since three of the participants failed to complete the course, I was unable to quantify an increase in knowledge based on a t-test analysis of the pre- and post-project assessment responses. However, this goal was considered successfully met when a comparison of the mean scores of the participants who completed the project revealed an increase in the knowledge of disciple-making.

Goal 4 Assessment

The fourth goal was for the participants to be able to effectively share the Bible stories and provide sound biblical feedback from the stories. Using the skills they learned in Bible storying, the remaining project participants presented the stories to small groups in a church setting and to individuals. Each listener was asked about the topics studied, the clarity of delivery, and the story application. This goal was considered successfully met when the project participants delivered the story sets and listener feedback was recorded on the Redemptive Bible Storying skills assessment.[4]

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[4] See appendix 3.

Evaluation of Project Strengths

One of the most prominent strengths of this project is that it was rooted in Scripture. By basing the research and implementation on scriptural principles, this project gained a solid and profound grounding in the wisdom of Scripture. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." Scripture remained at the forefront during the entire project. This was a strength because it removed the focus from me as the teacher and placed all focus on God and his Word.

The second strength of this project was its focus on one of the most significant weaknesses among Tukano indigenous believers: discipleship. Discipleship is often neglected, and this project allowed the participants to learn how to engage effectively in discipleship conversation through Bible storying. J. T. English writes in *Deep Discipleship* that "the local church has a discipleship disease. And without the proper diagnosis and treatment plan, we will do more harm than good."[5] Merely recognizing the issue does not resolve it; acknowledgment must be coupled with the appropriate treatment. As outlined in the section on definitions in chapter 1, true discipleship requires one to follow, commit, serve, and obey Christ and his teachings as outlined in Scripture. Discipleship involves learning from God (1 Pet 1:15), Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:21), the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17), and others (Phil 4:9).[6]

Evaluation of Project Weakness

The first significant weakness in this project was the limitation imposed by time constraints. Project implementation within a restricted timeframe posed significant challenges to the depth and comprehensiveness of the project execution. The time

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[5] J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 7.

[6] Notable resources on discipleship include *Deep Discipleship* by J. T. English and W. Jay Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, Encountering Mission (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

limitations affected my ability to explore specific aspects of the project implementation in more detail. For example, a common phrase from indigenous regarding Westerners is, "You Americans have all the watches but no time." As a result, some potentially valuable insights and alternative perspectives might have been overlooked or omitted due to the necessity of meeting deadlines. Seeing someone move to follow Christ can take years in a zero-to-one ministry context. While time constraints are inevitable in academic research and project implementation, it is crucial to acknowledge the impact of these constraints and be transparent about their limitations.

A second notable weakness encountered in this project was the challenge in fostering ownership among the participants regarding the proposed research project. Again, this has to do with the time constraints during the project implementation—there was not enough time for full buy-in. Participants' limited sense of ownership impacted their engagement and commitment to the study, affecting the implementation process's quality and depth. When participants do not feel a sense of ownership or investment in the research process, they might be less motivated to provide candid and detailed responses or they may even disengage from the study altogether, which I encountered during the project's implementation phase. To address this weakness, future project attempts could emphasize the importance of participants' active involvement in the research gathering process, seeking their input during the project's development, and ensuring that the study aligns with their interests and concerns. Fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration would enhance each participant's commitment to the project research, resulting in more meaningful and valuable contributions during the implementation phase.

What I Would Do Differently

One of the issues faced during project implementation was the transient nature of the participants involved in the project. It proved challenging to collect consistent and

reliable data throughout the research and implementation process. Since transient participants may be constantly moving, changing locations, falling back into addiction, or difficult to track over time, it was difficult to establish long-term connections and gather data over an extended period. I could have explored methods to increase participant retention or considered alternative strategies to ensure consistent participation of the individuals involved. Additionally, acknowledging and transparently reporting the limitations arising from transient participants at the beginning of the project would have enhanced the overall credibility and rigor of the research findings.

As noted, I made changes along the way during the research and implementation process. I found that during the early stages of implementation, studying how God calls would be beneficial, so I made that change to the goals. I was also met with the challenge of an unforeseen decrease in participation. I am not sure what other options I could have pursued to ensure better participation. Perhaps, to gather more complete data, I could have used participants who live in the city. Some of the participants live in the city and some in various villages. I selected our participants based on their relationships and involvement in our ministry.

In retrospect, I would devote more project time to Bible story crafting. Crafting is a whole project and cannot be faithfully taught as one goal but should be the project's overall aim. My changes to goal 2 took away from the time I wanted to spend on the crafting process. However, given my strong relationship with the participants, we plan on beginning a story-crafting workshop to build on what we have learned during this project. Lessons learned during this project will inevitably help me to continue pursuing many of the ministry objectives mentioned previously in this document.

Theological Reflections

Perhaps the most significant theological reflection I learned during this project is how often storying is found in Scripture to convey the gospel. When Paul was in

Athens, people thought he was a "proclaimer of strange deities." However, Paul was "preaching Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18). As outlined in chapter 4, each storying session began and ended with John 10:10, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Jesus often told stories, or parables, to convey his message, and they always pointed back to him so that those listening would "have life and have it abundantly."

Throughout the project, the emphasis on theological reflection grew in importance, driven by my aspiration for every story, response, or reflection to find its foundation solely in Scripture. The goal was for the NW Amazon Tukano people to depart from a story session with a better theological understanding, firmly rooted in the teachings of Scripture, rather than being shaped solely by the teacher's perspective. This approach aimed to cultivate a deep and independent connection to biblical principles within the indigenous community.

Another theological concern arises with syncretism, particularly in its connection to witch doctors. One of the key issues to addressing this problem is that openly speaking on this topic is taboo, even if addressed privately. As we disciple now believe, we meticulously walk through specific Bible stories that address such topics. We aim to navigate the conversation using Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to convict. For example, recently, a couple from the Colina Village shared privately with our team that they want to follow Christ. However, they lacked the courage to speak this to those in the village out of fear. During this time, the wife was also pregnant, and they decided to visit a witch doctor to practice a smoke ritual to protect her and the baby. After this happened, I asked why they didn't come to me, as a Christian pastor, to pray with them. This question forced them into a state of fear and embarrassment. The fact that they shared with us that they visited the witch doctor was evidence they trusted us. However, I should have been patient in addressing these issues and allowing the Holy Spirit to provoke these questions in them.

Personal Reflections

Though my goal was to equip and resource the Tukano indigenous with tools to evangelize and disciple, during the project, I was personally convicted of not using these tools enough. Though I have spent a great deal of my time training or teaching, I have often failed to evangelize or disciple daily. I was failing to use the very tools I was teaching through Redemptive Bible Storying. This project helpfully served as a reminder to me of what must be priority in my work and ministry.

Secondly, I gained a heightened understanding and appreciation for the NW Amazon Tukano people through my involvement in this project. The necessity of delving deeper into research and understanding their worldview helped me to comprehend them as a distinct people group. Consequently, I now have a clearer insight into their cultural nuances and the factors that shape their identity.

Conclusion

While the project implementation did not produce the results I initially desired, the overall project proved invaluable to me, my missionary team, and the indigenous team. Working in a true zero-to-one ministry context, the NW Amazon Tukano indigenous have a long way to go in reaching other indigenous for Christ. There are many obstacles to overcome, as outlined in the weaknesses section. However, we trust the Lord that this good work will continue. I hope and pray that Redemptive Bible Storying will be used to continue evangelizing and discipling.

APPENDIX 1

PERSONAL COMMITMENT FORM

This form was provided to the individuals selected to participate in the project. They were asked to consider participating in this endeavor to gather comprehensive data to help our team better evangelize and disciple the unengaged and unreached peoples of the Northwest Amazon.

<p style="text-align:center">Your Personal Commitment Form</p>

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the effectiveness of Redemptive Bible Storying among the Tukano indigenous. This research is being conducted by Alex Bowles for purposes of for the purpose of collecting quantitative and qualitative data for a ministry research project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and after the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this personal commitment form and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

[ ] I agree to participate
[ ] I do not agree to participate

<p style="text-align:center">My Commitment to Training</p>

As you ponder whether you can commit to this training, we would ask you to evaluate yourself carefully, prayerfully, and honestly. We would also encourage you to gain feedback from others who know you. If you are married, please have your spouse help you weigh the costs and benefits.

If, after carefully counting the cost, you decide that you want to be considered for this training, then the next steps in your process will be to:

1. Sign and date this Personal Commitment Form.

I have carefully read all the information. Having weighed the benefits and costs, I am willing to commit myself to fulfilling all my commitments. Therefore, I would ask you to prayerfully consider me for selection as a trainee.

_____   _____

(Signature)   (Date)

APPENDIX 2

BASIC BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW ASSESSMENT

The following instrument is the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment (BBWA). General questions were asked of the participants to assess their present level of biblical and theological understanding. The assessment was conducted orally by the author. The participants remaining at the end of the project were re-assessed using the same questions.

BASIC BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the effectiveness of Redemptive Bible Storying among the Tukano indigenous. This research is being conducted by Alex Bowles for the purpose of collecting quantitative and qualitative data for a ministry research project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and after the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this assessment and by checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

[ ] I agree to participate
[ ] I do not agree to participate

Date: _____

Name: _____

General Questions:
1. How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? _____

2. How many years have you been a member in a Bible-believing church? _____

3. Are you currently serving as a ministry leader, teacher, or discipler of other believers?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions?
   _____

5. Is memorizing Scripture a present practice of yours?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Do you have a daily discipline of praying with and for other people?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Biblical Questions:

1. What are your views of the Scriptures? (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:15–17)

2. What is your view of God?

3. What is your view of the Trinity?

4. How is someone saved?

5. What is your view of baptism? (Matt 3:13–17; Col 2:12)

6. What is your understanding of the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor 10)

7. What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?

8. How would you explain Acts 1:8?

9. How would you explain Romans 3:23?

10. What are the roles of the Holy Spirit?

11. What is your view of Satan?

Cultural Questions:

1. When someone in the community is born, how is this viewed and handled by the community?

2. When someone in your family or community dies, how is the viewed and handled by the community?

3. When someone in the community or your family is sick, how is this viewed? How do you handle it?

4. What is the role of spirits?

5. What is the role of the male figure in your family? In your community?

6. What is the role of the female figure in your family? In your community?

7. What are your views on the Shaman?

8. How are leaders selected in your community?

Using the following scale, please write the number that best corresponds to your beliefs in response to the following statements:

SD – Strongly Disagree
D – Disagree
U – Undecided
A – Agree
SA – Strongly Agree

#	Question	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I am uncomfortable talking to unbelievers about Christianity.					
2	I am comfortable talking to individuals of other faiths about Christianity.					
3	I am uncomfortable talking to atheists/agnostics about Christianity.					
4	I can demonstrate to critics that the Bible is reliable.					
5	I can demonstrate from a historical perspective that Jesus died on a cross.					
6	I can demonstrate from the Old Testament that Jesus's death and resurrection were predicted hundreds of years in advance.					
7	I can explain what Jesus accomplished on the cross.					
8	I understand what it means to be called by God.					
9	I understand the difference between salvation and baptism.					
10	I understand that I have been called to make disciples.					

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW ASSESSMENT RAW DATA

The following are the raw results from the Basic Biblical Worldview Assessment (BBWA). Many of these responses were recorded by the participant, and some responses were given orally. The Amazon Indigenous peoples naturally do not provide detailed responses. These responses faithfully represent the views of each participant.

Participant 1 (P1) – Age 24. Spent 18 years in the village. Then he spent two years in the Brazilian military. Now he lives in the city. Unmarried. Christ follower since 2022.

Participant 2 (P2) – Age 34. Grew up and lived in the village. Slowly, he moved to the city, where he now works and studies. Married with six children. Christ follower since 2020.

Participant 3 (P3) – Age 31. Grew up and lived in the village. He went to the capital city to study at a seminary. Unmarried. Christ follower since 2019. P3 fell back into an alcoholic lifestyle in July 2023.

Participant 4 (P4) – Age 18. Grew up and still lives in the remote village. Unmarried. Little data was collected because he traveled back to the village mid-project.

Participant 5 (P5) – Age 38. Grew up in the village. Has lived in the city for the last fifteen years. Married with two children (one deceased). Christ follower since 2020. P5 passed away on August 21, 2023.

Participant 6 (P6) – Age 28. Grew up and lives in the village. Unmarried. Christ follower since 2021. P6 passed away on July 18, 2023.

*No Data – signifies that the participant did not answer the question.

General Questions:
1. How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? _____
   - P1 – Since 2022
   - P2 – Since 2020
   - P3 – Since 2019
   - P4 – no data
   - P5 – Since 2020
   - P6 – Since 2021

2. How many years have you been a member in a Bible-believing church? _____
   - P1 – 4 years
   - P2 – About 4 years
   - P3 – 6 years
   - P4 – no data
   - P5 – 6 years
   - P6 – 3 years

3. Are you currently serving as a ministry leader, teacher, or discipler of other believers?
   c. Yes
   d. No

- P1 – Yes. I serve as a helper. Sometimes I teach on Sunday nights. I help with kids club each Wednesday.
- P2 – Yes, I teach on occasion. I am faithful in my church and helping the pastor. My family is also faithful.
- P3 – Yes. I went to seminary and now I am an ordained pastor. I will be leading the church plant in our community.
- P4 – No
- P5 – No, but I do help on the mission trips our church takes to the village. I am not a teacher.
- P6 – Yes. I help drive the boat on our mission trips.

4. How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions?

   _____

- P1 – I do not read enough. I may spend around 2 hours a week. I need to learn more about doing this.
- P2 – Yes, I practice reading the Scriptures every day with my family.
- P3 – Yes, but not enough. I read for 2.5 hours per week.
- P4 – No, not really.
- P5 – No data collected
- P6 – No data collected

5. Is memorizing Scripture a present practice of yours?
   c. Yes
   d. No

- P1 – Yes
- P2 – Yes
- P3 – Yes
- P4 – no data
- P5 – Yes
- P6 – No

6. Do you have a daily discipline of praying with and for other people?
   c. Yes
   d. No

- P1 – No
- P2 – Yes
- P3 – No
- P4 – No
- P5 – No
- P6 - No

Biblical Questions:

12. What are your views of the Scriptures? (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:15–17)
- P1 – I know that the Scriptures are true, but it is hard when I go back to my village and visit with my family. They do not believe. For them, it is animism or Catholicism. This is something that I am always between – what Scripture says and what my village says. I trust God's Word.
- P2 – They are Holy. My mom would always tell me Bible verses and I saw how Jesus changed her life and the life of my dad. It took me time to belive. But, once I did, I knew that Jesus had transformed my life. The Scriptures now have life and I enjoy reading with my family on a daily routine.
- P3 – I went to seminary.
- P4 – I enjoy reading the Scriptures. I am not sure if what it says is true, though. I don't know.
- P5 – Jesus is important to me. This world is hard and His word is the only thing that brings me hope. I like to read.
- P6 – Reading is hard for me. So, it is hard to know what it says. I like to listen. I like to hear Bible stories.

13. What is your view of God?
- P1 – He is good.
- P2 – He created everything. He is powerful.
- P3 – He is good.
- P4 – I don't know
- P5 – My life is a mess, but I know that God is good. I talk with him every day in my hammock and ask Him to help me. God was the creator everything.
- P6 – I think that God is good.

14. What is your view of the Trinity?
- P1 – I am not sure
- P2 – Yes. The Holy Spirit, the Son and God.
- P3 – God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. Yes, I know this.
- P4 – I do not know
- P5 – Does this have to do with the Holy Spirit. I am not sure I know much about this.
- P6 – I don't know

15. How is someone saved?
- P1 – Trust in Jesus. Follow Jesus. Remember the story of Matthew?
- P2 – I always remember the Bible verse in John that Jesus came to give us life. But, to have this life, we must believe in Him, confess our sins to him. Trust in him. It is not through baptism, but through faith in Him. That is all.
- P3 – Trusting Jesus.
- P4 – I do not know
- P5 – Every day, give your life to him. I trust Jesus every day. My life is not easy and I mess up, but I know I love Jesus. This is it.
- P5 - Stop sinning and follow Jesus. I think.

16. What is your view of baptism? (Matt 3:13–17; Col 2:12)
    - P1 – I don't know. I remember the Catholic Priest would travel to our village, once every year. Maybe every two years. And he would baptize all the children, even the little babies. We understood it to be we are now Christian, or catholic that is. It was never explained to us what it really meant but was something the priest must do. This is how it always was. The priest would come, teach something and leave. Sometimes he would drink with the men in the village. But, now that I am following Christ, I understand that baptism is a symbol of me following Christ. It was a way for me to show others that I am a Christian and not catholic. Even though I was baptized as a baby, I wanted to be baptized as an adult. Know, I know what it means to be baptized. Jesus was baptized and we should do the same.
    - P2 – I was baptized as a baby by the catholic preist. He would stop by each village every few years and baptize all the little kids. The babies had no idea what was going on, so how could it be real. I remember thinking this. But, this was all I knew. When I became a Christ follower several years ago, I was baptized on the same day my mom died. I remember thinking, my mom now has a new life in Heaven with Jesus. Now, I am showing others that I am a Christ follower.   A new life here. Being baptized does not make me saved, but it shows others my testimony. Here, this is big because of the catholic church tradition.
    - P3 – Baptism follows one's salvation. It does not save but is a public profession to others. Here, many think that salvation is baptism, but this isn't true. Being baptized only means you went into the river.
    - P4 – No answer
    - P5 – I remember being baptized as a child in the village. Now that I am a Christian, I had many in my family telling me that I was already a Christian and should not be baptized again. This was confusing to me. I am still learning. When I was baptized by the pastor here, a few years ago, he explained to me what it means and why it is necessary. I understand the difference.
    - P6 – It is about washing our sins away. That is all I really understand about it. Jesus was baptized, right?

17. What is your understanding of the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor 10)
    - P1 – I know this from the catholic church, but I do not really understand what it means.
    - P2 – Yes, the Lord's supper. We were taught this in the catholic church, but it was wrong. Now, I understand that it is to remember what the Lord has done for us through his body and blood. We do it once per month in the church.
    - P3 – To remember His body and blood.
    - P4 – I do not know
    - P5 – I think it is about his body and his blood. What Jesus did on the cross for our sins. We were taught all about this in the catholic church, but I can't remember certainly what it all is.
    - P6 – My brother-in-law was selected to be the catholic representative in our village and he teaches about this. We do it often in the village. I know that it is Jesus' blood and body and His death on the cross.

18. What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?
    - P1 – A follower of Jesus
    - P2 – A student of God's word and someone who faithfully follows Jesus.
    - P3 – Following Jesus every day
    - P4 – I do not know
    - P5 – To learn about Jesus. To learn His Word. To be obedient. To trust in Him.
    - P6 – I do not know

19. How would you explain Acts 1:8?
    - P1 – I do not know this verse
    - P2 – Is this the verse about being His testimony? I am not sure how to understand it, though.
    - P3 – We are sent to be His disciples in all the areas of the world.
    - P4 – I do not know
    - P5 – I do not know
    - P6 – I do not know

20. How would you explain Romans 3:23?
    - P1 – I cant remember this verse
    - P2 – Yes, we are all sinners. We all need a savior. Without Jesus, we are broken and separated from Him.
    - P3 –
    - P4 – I do not know this verse
    - P5 – I can't remember
    - P6 – I don't know

21. What are the roles of the Holy Spirit?
    - P1 – I don't know
    - P2 – The Holy Spirit convicts us. It teaches us and guides us. It is like a boat driver on the river. The river is full of rocks and the driver must know the canal. Without the Holy Spirit, I cannot naviage this life.
    - P3 – To comfort us and help us.
    - P4 – No data
    - P5 – I do not think I can explain this.
    - P6 – I do not know

22. What is your view of Satan?

Cultural Questions:

9. When someone in the community is born, how is this viewed and handled by the community?

- P1 – I never thought about this because I am a man. I left the village when I was 18. Now, the woman give birth in the hospital. In the village, I can't remember what it is like.
- P2 – no data
- P3 – no data
- P4 – no data
- P5 – no data
- P6 – often this is done alone in the jungle. In our village, kids as young as 13 or 14 are given birth. They will go out in the jungle alone and return once they have given birth. That is all. It happens so much we do not think about it. That is all.

10. When someone in your family or community dies, how is the viewed and handled by the community?
- P1 – it is very sad. We do not know what, well, they do not know what happens to people after they die. They like to think they go to heaven, so they celebrate with partying and drinking. Also, the witch doctor has to perform a ritual for safe passage. Also, there is always someone to blame for a death. Death is never death, someone is to blame. Now, I do not believe this anymore. But, my people think they someone who has died was cursed, or had an evil spirit. Something like that. Only this.
- P2 – We know death is coming, but we do not think about what is next. For me as a Christian, I know that my next life is with Jesus in Heaven.
- P3 – People go to heaven or hell. That is all.
- P4 – No data
- P5 – I do not know. Death is scary, but we do not think about the afterlife very much. We hope the spirits protect us. I know Jesus.
- P6 – I do not know. When people die in my village, we all cry and yell. Most times it is followed with drinking. The witch doctor does some type of ritual with smoke.

11. When someone in the community or your family is sick, how is this viewed? How do you handle it?
- P1 – My family calls the witch doctor. I go to the hospital. Or I buy medicine.
- P2 – My people say it is a curse, which I do not think is true. People get sick, right?
- P3 – It could be a spirit.
- P4 – I do know know.
- P5 – It must be an evil spirit, or a curse from someone. Sometimes I get sick from this, I think.
- P6 – A curse.

12. What is the role of spirits?
- P1 – my dad is the witch doctor, so I am torn about this. He says the spirits are real, but I am not sure. This is our culture. I trust in Jesus.

- P2 – I have struggled with this. Now that I am following Christ, I belive now that the spirit world is only demonic. It is from Satan. Satan does not have power, only Jesus does.

13. What is the role of the male figure in your family? In your community?
   - P1 – Only the men have been leaders in my village. They are the ones that hunt, fish and protect. The woman cook and carry back the goods after a harvest. The men will walk in front or in the back to project in case an animal attacks. But, I think the men are lazy. They fish at night mostly. They like to lay in their hammock and drink. Jesus is teaching me what man looks like. What a male leader looks like.
   - P2 – I walways followed with the village showed me. It was not good. I was a bad husband and father. I beat my wife and sometimes hit my kids. I drank a lot. When I because a Christ follower, everything changed. Now, I am a better father and husband.
   - P3 – I do not know
   - P4 – I do not know
   - P5 – I try to be a good leader, but sometimes I am not.
   - P6 – This is hard to say.

14. What is the role of the female figure in your family? In your community?
   - P1 – Like I said, the woman carry the harvest and cook. That is it.
   - P2 – I think in the village they have a role of cooking. But in my house now, we are a team. We both help with the kids, cooking, cleaning, and things like this.
   - P3 – Cooking. Sometimes they give advice when someone is doing bad.
   - P4 – No data
   - P5 – The woman's role is to cook and harvest in the field. When we work in the fields, the lady's job is to work and harvest. We will help sometimes, but it is their job.
   - P6 – I do not know. I always fish in the village. My mom cooks and works hard. My dad helps her, but mostly my mom cooks and does the work in the field. She is getting old, so I do not know what is next for her. She likes to drink.

15. What are your views on the Shaman?
   - P1 – I do not know how to respond to this. My dad is a witch doctor and we do nto talk about it.
   - P2 – I do not know
   - P3 – Could be good. But, I do not know.
   - P 4 – I do not know.
   - P5 – They talk to the spirits. And bless us sometimes. Do you think it is real?
   - P6 – I do not know.

16. How are leaders selected in your community?
   - P1 – In the past, we had chiefs that were selected by the village. These men were responsible for keeping peace, helping us, talking with the spirits, and things like

this. Today, the chief is more like a helper. The catholic church made us stop doing things like the old days.

- P2 – I am not sure anymore. I have not lived in a village for a while. In the past, it was voted on during a long village meeting. Everying had to say what they thought, they would fight and argue and sometimes agree. In the end, they agreed to have someone lead them.
- P3 – I do not know
- P4 – No data
- P5 – No data
- P6 – No data

APPENDIX 3

REDEMPTIVE BIBLE STORYING
SKILLS ASSESSMENT

The following assessment was administered by the author in conjunction with a GCC representative and another missionary to ensure that each project participant was able to communicate a biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable Bible story.

RBS SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Name of Evaluator: _____   Date: _____

General Questions

1. What is Bible storying?

2. Explain the process of crafting a Bible story.

3. Why is back-translation important when preparing to tell stories cross-culturally?

4. How do you test a story?

5. What are some important factors to consider when telling a Bible story?

Post-Story Questions

1. What were some challenges you faced during your crafting process?

2. What were some challenges during back-translation?

3. What are more effective ways, in your opinion, to better engage those listening?

4. How do you feel the story went?

Feedback from Storyteller's Listener(s)

1.   Was the storyteller clear in his or her communication?

2.   Did the storyteller have difficulty telling the story?

3.   What was the main point of the story?

4.   Can you recite the story?

5. How long did it take him or her to tell the story?

6. Were there any words that did not make sense?

Bible Story Assessment					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Crafting					
The content of the story sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
Pedagogy					
Each story was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each story provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Personal and cultural opinions were left out.					
Practicality					
Reflection questions were adequately used.					
At the end of the story, participants will be able to tell the story.					

APPENDIX 4

PRE- AND POST-PROJECT CHANGE
IN MEAN SCORES

	Survey Question	**Pre-Series Mean**	**Post-Series Mean**	**Change**
1	I am uncomfortable talking to unbelievers about Christianity	4.5	2.0	–2.5
2	I am comfortable talking to individuals of other faiths about Christianity.	3.0	4.5	+1.5
3	I am uncomfortable talking to atheists/agnostics about Christianity.	3.0	3.5	+0.5
4	I can demonstrate to critics that the Bible is reliable.	4.0	4.0	—
5	I can demonstrate from a historical perspective that Jesus died on the cross.	2.5	3.5	+1.0
6	I can demonstrate from the Old Testament that Jesus's death and resurrection were predicted hundreds of years in advance.	2.5	3.5	+1.0
7	I can explain what Jesus accomplished on the cross.	4.0	5.0	+1.0
8	I understand what it means to be called by God.	0.6	5.0	+4.4
9	I understand the difference between salvation and baptism.	3.0	5.0	+2.0
10	I understand that I have been called to make disciples.	2.0	5.0	+3.0

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING THE NORTHWEST AMAZON TUKANO
INDIGENOUS TO MINISTER CROSS-CULTURALLY
THROUGH REDEMPTIVE BIBLE STORYING

Alex Bowles, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Paul M. Akin

This project seeks to equip Tukano indigenous believers with the confidence and competency to minister cross-culturally with biblical knowledge, a theological framework, and the instruction necessary to develop and implement a disciple-making ministry. Chapter 1 presents the ministry context of the Northwest Amazon indigenous and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 exegetes three passages of Scripture to show that God's Word is sufficient to disciple men, women, boys, and girls, and to lead them to maturity as they follow Jesus Christ. Chapter 3 focuses on the historical and practical issues of implementing this project in the NW Amazon indigenous context. Chapter 4 describes the project implementation, including the assessment of the participants, the development and delivery of the story sets, and the re-assessment of the participants at the conclusion of the project. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on the completion of the specific project goals.

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