

Catalyst

Are You Aligned to the Cornerstone ?

It is impossible to underestimate the importance of foundations. They are unseen but can take 30-40% of the time required in a construction project. As Jesus highlighted in his parable, if the foundation is faulty, there will come a time when the true nature of the foundation will be revealed. In China recently, an entire 13-storey building was blown over by strong winds because the contractor paid no attention to ensuring a solid and true foundation!

Revisiting our Foundations

While in Canada, God spoke to us about the need for His people to revisit and address those foundational issues that are not right, as they continue to influence what is built in successive generations.

Compounding Defects

God is building a kingdom that cannot be shaken but He is also shaking those things that need to be removed. If faulty or cracked foundations are ignored and left unaddressed, the critical issues that follow as a result will not correct themselves, but will only get worse. In the construction industry, these are known as ‘compounding defects’. You can carry on building but the end result will still be skewed. There are no short-cuts. You have to return to the root of the problem to put things right.

Aligning Ourselves with the Cornerstone

The first and most important stone set in a foundation is the cornerstone. All other stones will be set in reference to this stone, determining the position of the entire structure. Jesus is described as the *chief cornerstone* of the Church, a spiritual house made up of precious and living stones—us! In revisiting our foundations we must return to our cornerstone and honestly assess whether our lives as followers of Jesus are in alignment to Him, His life, teachings and example.

Courage to Revisit and Act

In this issue we touch on two foundational issues, which often give rise to compounding defects, one leading on to another. The critical question we have to ask ourselves is: **do we have the courage to not only *revisit* these foundational issues, but to *act* on what God reveals to us?**

Stuart & Michelle



“You are...fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:20)

Mission As We Know It...

Is It Aligned to God's purposes?

When we move away from our Cornerstone, things become misaligned with God's purposes. In looking back at the history of the Church's engagement in mission around the world, we can see many wonderful things that have been accomplished, but also how the message has been corrupted due to a faulty foundation.

If our thinking is misaligned with God's purposes, our actions, however well intentioned, will also be off-track. For example, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, the Church adopted the idea and practices of *'Manifest Destiny'*, the belief that the land was theirs to take by divine right. This led to the acquisition of the land and the imposition of the Christian faith by force. The consequences are still evident today in the pain and confusion among those who were on the receiving end of these actions, not to mention barriers to sharing the gospel for those who now wish to do so in a spirit of humility.

The way we have 'done church' in the West, developed and reinforced over many centuries, has also impacted what we've exported to other peoples and cultures. We tend to assume that 'Church as we know it' is how it has always been since the birth of the Church in the book of Acts. However, when we revisit why, for the most part, Church operates the way it does, it can be shocking to discover that many of our church practices and traditions *do not* actually align with the Cornerstone, but to certain events throughout church history. Sadly, we must recognise that sometimes our actions and methods have been shaped by cultural ideas and 'the spirit of this world,' rather than by the Scriptures.

Given that the Church has been operating this way for so long, why does this matter? At its birth, the early church was an explosive, viral movement that spread rapidly like wildfire! However, this was killed by Christendom in the fourth century and has never recovered since. The closest thing in modern times has been the viral Jesus movement experienced in China, which has been free from the trappings that have institutionalized the Church in the West. By re-aligning with our Cornerstone, can we recover what God has always wanted?

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Given the history of so many generations past, it can seem overwhelming to even contemplate how things could be any different. However, we want to be faithful in sharing what God has spoken and in seeking to return to our true foundations, we must lay the axe to the roots of what has gone before and address all that defiled and tarnished what was intended to be the good news, but for so many resulted in a legacy of blood, pain, injustice, and destruction. We need to ensure that our thinking is in line with God's thinking and with His Kingdom purposes, not using human effort or seeking to build our own mini—kingdoms or spreading our particular 'brand' of Christianity (typically a package of *our* theology, *our* worship songs, and how *we* 'do church'). As we do so, it has the potential to not only release the full blessing of the Lord but also unlock the hearts of the nations towards the Lord. CATALYST

"Those from among you shall build up the waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In." (Isaiah 58:12)

Chinese Church Discover Extraneous Trappings!

What would you do if you were arrested, sent to prison and had no more church to lead? Imagine there were no cell phones, computers or other ways to stay in touch with believers.

This question was presented to a group of Chinese urban church leaders. They glanced around the room, at the ceiling, at each other, and answered that they would return to their "home village." Translated, this means that they would return to their spiritual roots - to the rural house church and its methods. They would pray and wait, like their country brothers and sisters, for the Holy Spirit to tell them what to do.

Many of these leaders visited well-known churches in South Korea, Singapore and throughout the West. Excited by the newness and large scale of meetings there, the leaders brought back new ideas and tried to copy them, e.g. the 'A-B-C' approach to building churches, emphasizing Attendance, Buildings, & Cash. Some also imported the overemphasis on hierarchical organisational structure and 'best practices' for their churches. But they made a discovery. Generally speaking, these 'new' and 'improved' ideas were extraneous trappings, at times being more imperative for the leaders to maintain than the actual church herself.¹

Adopting White Ways

In our missionary experience we've witnessed this issue many times. Rather than the ideas being imported *from* the West, however, they have often been *exported* by the West and *imposed* on native indigenous peoples around the world. They were told by western Christians and missionaries that their language and culture were evil, were forced to abandon it, and compelled to adopt the language and ways of the 'white man' to become civilised and 'Christian'.

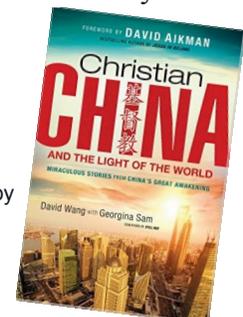
God's Colourful Kingdom

Sadly, today, such practices still continue albeit in less overt ways. Some Western missionaries and Christian leaders continue to plant their 'brand' of Christianity in other countries. They 'hard sell' a denominational package of theology, worship songs, and how to 'do church'. Instead of recognising and appreciating the diversity and uniqueness of the peoples God has created, and the colourful breadth of His Kingdom, they engage in a form of cloning and mini-kingdom building.



Such 'gospel branding' needs to stop. It is typically packaged in many cultural wrappings and, as recognised by churches in China, is not culturally appropriate or healthy for the particular indigenous context. And we must ask the question: Is it even healthy for the West? CATALYST

¹ Christian China and the Light of the World: Miraculous Stories from China's Great Awakening by David Wang with Georgina Sam



Beating the Drum for Jesus!

When European missionaries brought the gospel to the Native Americans, they brought another message with it. They told them that everything about their culture was evil. To be Christians, they must cut their hair, speak English, wear western clothing, and give up all their dances and instruments. Some Natives who became Christians believed this and even today, there are many Native and non-Native Christians in churches who will not play or allow to be played a native rattle (a musical instrument like a shaker), or a Native drum, believing them all to be possessed by spirits. It is incredible to find that thinking so prevalent in God's church. A Yamaha drum can be used to worship Satan just as much as a Native drum can be used to worship God!



A drum is *a-spiritual*. Like a computer, it has no 'spirituality' of its own. It is what you do with it that matters. If you watch pornography on a computer, it doesn't make the computer evil! It means the person needs help. If you call spirits into a drum and use it to worship spirits other than God, it doesn't make all drums evil. It means the person playing it needs the Lord! There is nothing evil about a wooden circle with a skin stretched over it.

God spoke to us about this some 4 years ago and told us to be a part of bringing understanding and restoring this aspect of Native American culture and their worship of God. 'It is time', He said.

Right now, we are consultants on the organisation team of the Pathways Mission Course which begins in January with an Indian bible college. As organisers of the contextualised worship evening together, it was our heart to see the Native drum restored to its rightful place of worship. But how would that idea go down after years of anti-drum sentiment? Would Native missionaries be sent from there with the message of Jesus, only to repeat what the Europeans did, forbidding people to worship God with the instruments in their culture? Would they export not just the gospel, but cultural 'genocide' and a 'west is best' attitude? Would they be allowed to recreate the same damage that was done to the Native people?

We are delighted that permission has been granted for us to arrange contextualised worship with the bible college students and other Natives that will include their drums! Christian students from a variety of tribes have been asked to bring tribal instruments to worship and glorify the Lord, and we are praying that three people from the Hopi tribe will also be involved.

So, some Christians get to play a drum. What's the big deal? It's big in God's eyes, and it's a breakthrough in our eyes, and for the students. It is a huge answer to prayer for those who care about the Native people, and don't want them to repeat the same mistakes we made. After centuries of oppression and being forbidden to be who God made them to be, after years of prayer and faithful work of some missionaries seeking change in this area, the tide is turning. The religious spirit is being vanquished. God is turning people's hearts. Native believers are beginning to rediscover the beauty and power in who God has made them to be. At last, those who have been bound are beginning to be set free to pick up their drums and beat them for Jesus! CATALYST

