



Chapter 5: Strengths and Weaknesses of African Missionary

This chapter explains some of the strengths and weakness of African missionaries we trained over the years. While a source of this chapter is rather limited to the regional setting of Africa, you may still find it helpful to see some similarity which coexists in most of Third World missionary candidates. Depending on where you are and who you are, your strengths and weaknesses should vary. Be sure to ask God to help you discover yourself in these two areas. Knowing yourself deep enough helps build your missionary journey on much firmer and solid foundation.

STRENGTHS OF AFRICAN MISSIONARY

1. Multilingual to learn different languages
2. Exposure to the other cultures
3. Physical strength
4. Musical instinct
5. Sensitive spirituality
6. Quick adaptation to lifestyle and perspectives of other Third World countries



Most of the unreached peoples and mission fields are situated in the Third World today. Fitting into the social standards of the mission field surely creates the essentially required 'oneness' between 'foreign' missionary family and local people. This can be a huge advantage for the missionary's ministry.

WEAKNESSES OF AFRICAN MISSIONARY

1. Lack of accountability

Although it is true to all Christian leaders, especially missionaries called and raised from the Third World background MUST guard themselves from any sort of greed, small or big scale. They should be carefully guided in this area while under training at home. If one is not absolutely certain about this area, he/she is not ready to be sent out yet. Also, it is crucial for missionaries to have a financial safeguard system arranged for them while on the field. (e.g.

receipts, bookkeeping, audit, etc.) It is not to control them and but to protect them!

2. Lack of faithfulness

A lack of faithfulness might be another factor to consider in our observation as we prepare workers from diverse cultural backgrounds. If a candidate fails to prove faithful in ministry at home, he/she might as well lack faithfulness on the mission field.

GIFTS OF AFRICAN MISSIONARY TO THE WORLD

African missionaries (as well as Third World missionaries) can truly contribute to the understanding of our faith issues and help the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ understand better some of the mysteries and characters of God.

1. Orientation to the supernatural

All Africans believe that there is a Creator God who controls the universe. They will never need to be convinced of that. It is part of their very beings, part of their religious heritage.

2. Beliefs concerning the spirit world

Africans were accustomed to the idea of spiritual forces in the world long before the Scriptural revelation (e.g. spirits, demons, etc.)

3. Gifts of relationship

The question asked of a visitor in the West, "Good morning. What can I do for you?" is a demeaning one to the Africans. Africans would welcome visitors almost anytime and talk with them while a mechanistic worldview delights in comfort and privacy. A fact of the matter is that most of the world especially where the gospel has not been heard live in this kind of relationship-oriented society. Westernized work-oriented concept just does not apply to them.

4. Concept of the extended family

A traditional African view of the family includes the unborn, the living, and the 'living dead.' There is no feeling that biological death ends human existence. In many African tribal languages the word for 'death' means 'to say good-bye to the world.' It is therefore a perfectly familiar idea to say that in Christ, after death we go to God.

5. African's care for the elderly

The extended family conception enables Africans to care for the elderly. Elders are respected and listened to for their wisdom in every community. They are not put in nursing homes but looked after by their children at home. Titus 2:4-5 talks about old women training young women but this can hardly happen if all the older women are in nursing homes.

6. The African concept of hospitality

In traditional Africa, people were hospitable to all strangers. All could share with those who came to the door. Even in urban areas, this instinct for hospitality remains still the same in the hearts of many Africans. They would not have much problem with anyone showing up at their doorstep without an appointment and asking for some help.

7. Event orientation vs. time orientation

African culture is based on the event orientation not time orientation. Africans do not believe that to think everything in life in terms of time is always helpful to understand the truth. We should be masters not slaves of time to accomplish our callings.