



INTERNATIONAL TRAINING & EQUIPPING MINISTRIES

Transforming Churches...One Pastor at a Time.

Malawi, Burundi, and Rwanda

By Dr. Daniel Packer

As I write this, I am reflecting back on the trip I made to Africa in April. After each trip, I ask the question, “Was it worth it?” In asking that question, I am evaluating whether the risks and the deprivation I endured were worth the blessings God bestowed not only on my life, but on the lives of those I impact. And when I speak of impacting lives, I understand that it is not just those pastors I directly train, but each member of their congregation who in turn are taught the Word of God, and any other pastors they might mentor. The answer I come up with is always a resounding, YES! Let me tell you about my trip.

Malawi:

The first stop was Chiringa, Malawi. As I’ve told you before, of all the many countries I have ever been in, Malawi is by far the one in deepest distress. Previously, I have mentioned the destruction caused by the direct hit of Cyclone Freddy. Now in the aftermath of that devastating storm, this impoverished country is facing severe famine. Not only are they starving for the Word of God, they are literally starving for their necessary daily bread.

Because of their physical hunger, our church, the Deckerville Bible Church, sent money to buy food for our pastors to distribute to their people. The plan was to provide bags of rice, a staple across the globe, to help feed them. Because rice is expensive and corn is cheaper in Malawi, they convinced us to provide corn meal instead. And, as they say, If a man eats rice for breakfast, he will be hungry by noon; but if he eats corn at 5:00 am, he can work until 5:00 pm without hunger. It was an easy decision to purchase corn. Thank you to all who donated toward the purchase of this lifesaving staple.

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Along with feeding their bellies, I fed them from the Word of God. The conference I taught to an audience of pastors and their wives was, The Biblical Family. In Africa, they often accuse us of trying to change their culture by making them like the west. This is especially true when we talk about the family. But I always assure them that , Yes, I am trying to change their culture, but No, I am not trying to make them western. Our Western Culture isn't anything I want them to emulate. Rather, I am trying to make their families Biblical.

Each time I teach this conference, the feedback is overwhelming. Here are some of the comments that were made from both Malawi and Rwanda where the conference was repeated. For most of the participants, they have never heard these Biblical truths before. One after another arose to tell of going home and repenting over sin in their lives. Many mentioned how this teaching would bring drastic change to their homes. A number of pastors were eager to go back to their churches and teach the material. One wife confessed she went home and asked here husband if the verses I was quoting were actually the Bible. Plus, there was the never-ending stream of people begging me to return again and again. They warned me they would be praying and asking God to make it happen.

Burundi:

My second stop was Bujumbura, Burundi. When I arrived, it was in the midst of torrential rainstorm and heavy flooding. We had to find our way carefully to the hotel.

On Sunday, I had the opportunity to preach in the new building of the Well of Salvation Church pastored by our country coordinator, Boniface Okala. This was the church our congregation helped build through the donation of funds for materials. What a privilege it was to see how God used a little money and the hard work of the congregation to erect something so useful to the Kingdom of God. They have built a beautiful building that now meets and exceeds all the government's stringent requirements. Thank you, Deckerville Bible Church.

In Burundi, I taught the first module of ITEM's new curriculum. The module is entitled, Biblical Intake, Making Sense of the Bible, and Calling. In many ways, it covers the same familiar material we have been teaching for years, but it adds hands-on, practical experience to the lectures.

Our Impact, Their Words.



This was accomplished by breaking the larger group up into smaller units, assigning a passage of Scripture to them, and requiring them to exam and discuss the passage to determine its meaning and application.

I was concerned how this would work in the African setting, but I was greatly pleased at how well the pastors did. They applied all I had taught them about hermeneutics and came up with great sermon notes. Learning the methods of Biblical interpretation will greatly enhance their sermons when they return to their churches. Plus, each participant had to agree to take the materials and mentor three to five other pastors in their home area. If they do, their ministry will be multiplied greatly, all to God's glory.

Rwanda:

The final stop on the trip was Rwanda. Here I taught two conferences. In the capital of Kigali, I again taught the pastors the first module of ITEM's curriculum. Then I traveled into the rural areas of eastern Rwanda, to the village of Mbare, where I repeated the conference, The Biblical Family.

It was to Rwanda that I brought a second suitcase filled with donated clothes to be distributed to people living in the rural areas. Clothing is difficult to come by in the bush, and it can be too expensive for people living at the subsistence level. They greatly appreciate getting the clothes.

Summary:

The impact that ITEM's training is having on the African Church is immense. One only needs to listen to the testimonies to be truly humbled by what God is doing in Africa. As the African pastor is trained, his ministry is transformed. And as his ministry is transformed, the church is strengthened. Wherever we go, we hear the pleading from the pastors to please come to their area and bring this training to their people. If only we could meet every request, but there always seems to be more to do than there is time or resources to accomplish. The task is great. As Jesus instructed us in Matthew 9 : 36-38:

“But when He [Jesus] saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”



A Word from Chris

What does a trained pastor look like? This is the question we have been seriously asking and debating for the past several years at ITEM. To answer this burning question, we adopted the E-4 strategy. E-4 is derived from Ephesians 4 where we developed three essentials of a trained pastor: to be a faithful equipper of God's people, a faithful expositor of God's Word, and a faithful example to God's people.

The challenge we face is being able to effectively quantify whether these three essentials are being demonstrated in the ministries of the pastors we train. To that end, I am excited to share with you a significant development. We have entered a partnership with Re-forma, which is a group from South Africa consisting of academics and practitioners with many years of experience training leaders. Re-forma has developed a list of thirty-seven outcomes each trained pastor should be able to demonstrate upon the completion of his training.

These thirty-seven outcomes will play a significant role in helping us to objectively quantify the effectiveness of our training. Moreover, each student who completes the training and can successfully demonstrate the outcomes will not only receive a certificate from ITEM, but also the World Evangelical Alliance, which is the world's largest evangelical body.

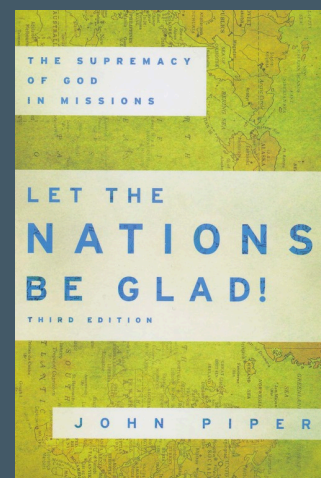
By adopting these outcomes, we are not abandoning the E-4 strategy. Rather we now have an objective criterion by which to evaluate our training. By improving the quality of our training, we will improve the quality of leaders we are producing, which will inevitably lead to more fruitful churches and greater gospel impact.

In the meantime, invitations continue to pour in for ITEM training from across Africa and the world. In addition to our current sites, we will open a new site in India this fall (our second), and I have been in initial conversations with a pastor from Northern Africa/Middle East to open a site there in 2025. This is only possible because of your faithful and generous support. I'm reminded of Paul's words to the Philippian church, "I thank God upon my every remembrance of you." Together, we are equipping and empowering native leaders to fulfill the Great Commission!

"We must be global Christians with a global vision because of God is a global God."

JOHN SCOTT

MISSIONS RESOURCE OF THE MONTH



Testimony from Training

"I want to take this opportunity to thank God for the marriage seminar held in Malawi. It was so powerful. We saw couples coming together in agreement that things were not well in their marriages. As pastors and pastors wives, we thought we are done with the word of God reading and using the same word, but in the seminar things were totally different. God gave us new insight and new revelation.

Our marriage are completely changed. We are now building according to God's pattern of marriage. And to be frank with you, we are enjoying ourselves. We are receiving many testimonies from the pastors and wives that husband, wives and children are now doing things according to word of God. Their families are now transformed."

NextGen Ministry Update

Dear Friends of ITEM Next Gen Ministry,

I returned from my most recent trip on Monday, May 6. I was in Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria. In all three places I continued building the ITEM Next Gen Ministry.

KENYA: April 19-20

During my brief time in Nairobi, I had a good meeting with one ITEM team member, Pastor Steven Mzungu. He has a ministry on the east coast of Kenya where there is a strong Muslim population among the Christians there. We talked about conducting an apologetics event in that region of Kenya, soon.

UGANDA: April 21-27

I met with a team from Apologetics Uganda (AU) and went through my talks on "Using Questions to Answer Questions," and "Making Evangelism Slightly Less Difficult," based on a book by the same title.

From Wednesday to Friday, I was meeting with three groups that our missionary, Jim Glasscock, and a leader from the Kampala area set up. I spoke to pastors and church leaders on Wednesday, university students on Wednesday evening, and general church members on Friday. I covered a wide range of topics including, Why the Church Should Be Engaged in Apologetics, The Bible's Authority in Apologetics, Reasons to Believe Christianity is true, and more.

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Another Thursday highlight was being interviewed on TV by one of the AU guys. During the interview, I was asked the following questions:

1. What distinguishes the Christian worldview from other belief systems?
2. How does the Christian worldview address the question of human purpose and significance?
3. Can you explain the Christian perspective on forgiveness and redemption?
4. How does the concept of love manifest within the Christian worldview?
5. In what ways does the Christian worldview influence personal morality and societal values?

NIGERIA: April 30-May 4

The highlight of my week in Nigeria was participating in an Apologetics Seminar. My assigned topic was what is usually referred to as “the problem of evil,” or “if God exists, and if He is all powerful and loving, why does He allow so much evil to happen?” There are two issues here. The fact that evil exists proves that God exists. Because without a supreme being defining what is good and what is evil, it all becomes an opinion. The second issue goes back to Genesis 3 when Adam sinned, and that one act opened the door to every imaginable evil that continues and will continue until Jesus returns to put a stop to it all.

Apologetics On Mission is a new apologetics organization based down the road from me in Oregon City, Oregon. Their leaders are seminary trained apologists and their mission is to raise up Christian defenders (apologists) around the world. They are meeting with university leadership in various places in the world with a view to starting apologetics degree and diploma programs. So, where does ITEM’s Next Gen Ministry fit?

They have asked me to be their resource for training Christian-defenders in the “how to-s” of having apologetics conversations or how to use questions to answer the questions that skeptics, doubters, atheists, and unbelievers ask. This will involve on-the-ground training, like I just did in April, and online training using Zoom or similar applications. I will be having one such meeting Saturday morning, May 18 with a group from Rwanda.

By His grace,

Steve Van Horn
ITEM Next Gen Ministry
Speaker/Apologetist



A NEW PARTNERSHIP
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