



IN HIS GRIP
Standing Firm in a Time of World Culture Transition
 An Inspirational Seminar for God's Leaders presented
 by Jon Lewis and Todd Ostlind

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Have you ever heard someone
 say. . .

This changes everything!



2

Historical events that changed everything



3

We live in such a time

The events of the past three years has changed the world as we know it.

Every single one of us has been affected.

True especially for church/ministry leaders.



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Reports from African leaders

- Lock-down of churches
- Economic hardship & reduced ministry funds
- Not permitted to minister to hurting members
- Increased influence of social media on the youth



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What does all this mean?

First: we must clearly understand our times

- 1 Chronicles 12:32 Men of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.

Second: We must rethink how we lead in order to remain relevant.



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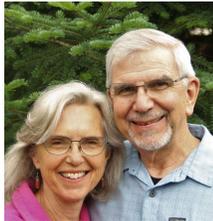
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Jon Lewis

- Born to missionary parents
- 44 years involved in missions
- Served as mission pilot, CEO, leadership trainer/consultant
- Director of Africa Steward Leader Initiative
- Wife Anita and three children




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Todd Ostlind

30+ years executive management in high tech industry

Founding board member of Private Classical Christian School

MA Theology from Talbot Seminary/Biola University

Member Torchbearers International Ministry 45 years

Wife, Lisa, and 7 Children, 19 Grandchildren




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Session 1

A Wake-up Call

PART 1: GLOBAL TRENDS – TODD OSTLIND

PART 2: MISSIONAL TRENDS – JON LEWIS



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A New Reality

- *Changes are happening all around us*
- *Impact to foundational principles thought immovable 20 years ago*
- *Direct effect on virtually all the world's cultures*
- *Result leading to insecurity, fading of truth and even yet more change*
- *All this happening at an accelerating rate*



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Transformation of culture.....

- Throughout history, there have always been many cultural transformations.
- Although not always evident at first, many result in good outcomes and improved wellbeing.
- Regardless of those outcomes, we must be reminded that God is in control.....
 - *The LORD himself goes before you....., he will never leave you nor forsake you. Deut 31:8*
 - *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. Prov 19:8*



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Nigeria's Culture—Unique!

- 98% of the population aligns with Christianity and Islam
- Identify strongly with family, kin, tribe, and region
- Christians and Muslims have largely learned to co-habitat
- Has the largest economy in Africa
- Has the fastest population growth pace worldwide



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Being Unique → Positive or Challenge?

- Presence of spirituality → established set of foundational principles
- Strong family identification → accountability and influence
- Wealth present → help prepare for the future
- And a potential flash point → expedites change
- Massive surge of population/youth coming → technologically savvy and influenced



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Impact on church & leaders today?

- Cultural transformations happening elsewhere may not be felt in Nigeria yet
- All indicators say influential changes forthcoming—quickly
- Acknowledging these cultural transformations = prepare and engage more effectively
 - *Does NOT necessarily mean approving/embracing!*
 - *Does mean being aware and responding with wisdom!*



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World Trends: 3 Key Changes

- Technology
 - A platform—how we communicate, work, share
 - All trends show continued increase in computer power
- Morality
 - Relentless embracing of Relativism...gaining increasing speed
 - Blurring of moral boundaries—right/wrong, good/bad, reality/fantasy
- Socio-Political
 - Huge global influence over normal life for everyone
 - Those with global influence becoming more powerful at grassroots level influencing how/where we live and how we are governed

Technology is not only the platform of change. It is a source of change in itself.



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Technology



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Technology Unleashed

1. Ever-increasing access, compute, capability, speed = worldwide exponential growth
2. Functional efficiency over human engagement
3. A Platform --- info becomes truth, facts become fluid, accuracy is relative
4. Deeply integrated ---- It is in, around, throughout life
5. Has been and will continue to be a disproportional game changer



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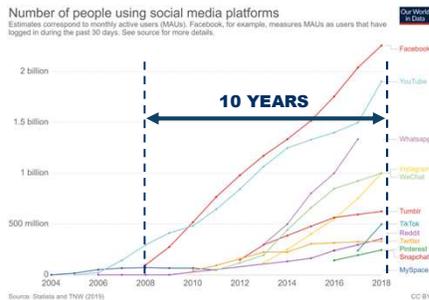
The three "horses" of Technology

- Moore's law
 - Power and capacity of computing doubles every 2 years
- Law of Accelerating and Escalated Return –
 - Technology drives Moore's law in industries
 - Technology so integrated in life, that it is changing us
- Law of Singularity (Kurzweil)
 - "By 2029, computers will have human-level intelligence,"
 - Singularity—that point in time when all advances in technology, particularly in artificial intelligence, will lead to machines smarter than human being



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Acceleration of cultural change



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Acceleration of cultural change

Nigerians are one of the heaviest users of social networks world-wide—information available is voluminous, expansive and not necessarily valid!

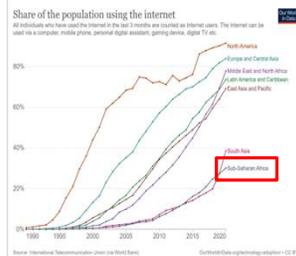


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Availability and Speed of Communication/Connection

% of population accessing the internet in the last 90 days:

- North America: 85%
- Europe and Central Asia: 80%
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 30%



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Summary

Technology will continue to increase in power and reach

There is no avoiding the impact of technology and the change it is enabling

The next generation will be informed from a global perspective and from new/different sources



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Morality



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Moral Relativism

Pressured to change -- Judeo/Christian/Islamic principles

- At one time fixed over multiple religions, cultures, over 100's of years
- Now to be a transient morality

Relative morality + technology = quick, global spread

- Continue to influence the global population, more quickly
- Some cases cultures little developed have access to tech



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Moral Relativism

1. Redefining language to impose a new truth

- Over 900 changes in the Merriam Webster Dictionary between 2020 and 2022
 - **boy** changed from "an immature male" to "a child whose gender identity is male"
 - **color-blind** went from the positive "not influenced by differences of race" to "often suggests a failure or refusal to acknowledge or address the many racial inequities that exist in society, or to acknowledge important aspects of racial identity."



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Moral Relativism

2. Laws contradictory to common sense

- Teachers, people in authority are bound by law not to share with parents of underage children what is being shared with them in confidence by the student

3. Science losing its fact-based position

- Gender neutrality – in the US in 2021 over 9500 gender change operations, an increase of over 2000 from 2020



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Moral Relativism

4. Educational institutions are a primary platform of change

- Parents, church has a reduced role in education process, which is undergoing systemic change in definition of content

5. Cultural mores are being changed

- In 2004, Massachusetts was the first state to legally allow same sex marriage; now allowed in 30 states



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Moral Relativism

6. God's Law is an ebbing influence in the world's eyes

Connection between belief in God and morality over time

It is not easy or as necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values

	2002	2019	Change
	%	%	
Bulgaria	33	50	+17
Russia	26	37	+11
Japan	29	39	+10
Mexico	61	55	-6
Turkey	84	75	-9
Slovene	62	50	-12
South Korea	56	45	-11
U.S.	56	44	-14

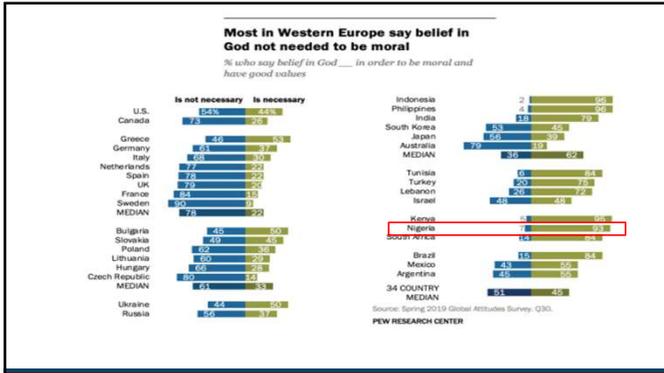
Note: All differences shown are statistically significant.

Source: Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey, Q16.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



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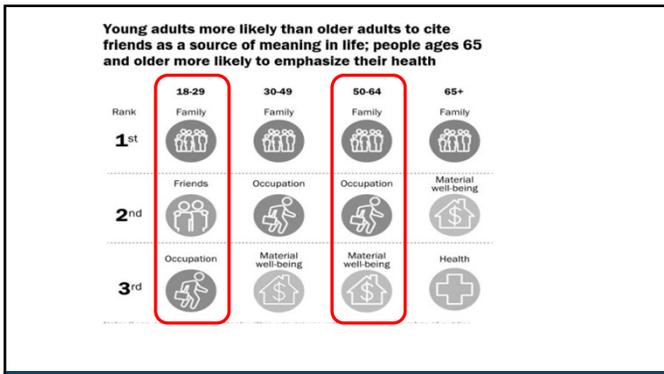


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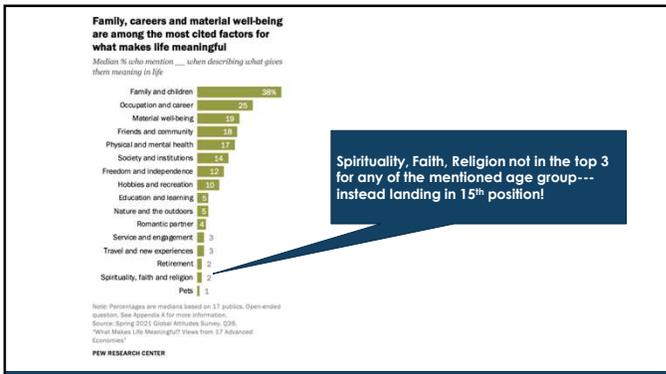
Result: Meaning in life comes less from God and more from humanity and nature

- An over-riding philosophy of accepting humanity "unconditionally"
- The "right" focus needs to be on nature and the future of the physical world
- Governing models such as socialism and Marxism are morally right models (Don't need God's input to be moral)

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Summary

- God's waning influence in man's intellect, philosophy and lifestyle continues.
- Global thought continues to expand – change is accelerating.
- Degradation of Godly morality is finding support through education, law, social mores, financial

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Socio-political

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Socio-political

- The breaking of traditional relationships
- Social and political influencers have global reach
- Increase of global think is "uniforming" action



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Socio-political change through multiple channels

1. Financial/Economical
2. Manipulation of reason and common sense (Logic Fallacy)
3. Guilt by historical association
4. Civility replaced by targeted incivility
5. Man's pursuit of increasing intellect, God's disappearing influence



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Financial/Economical

- Nigeria 2021 GDP: \$407B USD, 28th position WW; wealthiest country in Africa
- Nigeria 2021 per capita GDP: \$2,209 USD, 154th position WW. Nigeria today
- Millionaires: .00004% of population (9100/206M)
- Per Capita GDP increasing ~8% annually -- \$2083 USD in 2022



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Guilt by Association

- Responsibility for previous generation's actions
- Universal faults, individual for recompense – in some cases legalized
- Every man/woman/child shall have equality – or guilt
- Natural outcome of humanism --- ultimately there is no grace or mercy



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Selective Civility

- There is no place for the moderate --- extremes are managing the attentions, content and flow
- There is no refining fire – no critique – but there is retribution
- No longer an environment of independence and individuality, rather universal think



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Man's intellect, no need for God

- Technology itself is a god –trusting the output of AI more than any other source
- Those with the ability to think, develop, push, integrate the content is the owner of the culture
- Many great things have come from technology --- and many nefarious things; in both extremes is the recognition is given to man



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Pornography

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Pornography's Influence

- 27% of all websites are porn related
- 93% of males; 62% of females exposed to porn on line by age 18
- 62% of males who have viewed porn admit first encounter was accidental; 28% thru friends, 8% purposed search.
- Porn sites get more views than Amazon, Netflix and TikTok combined.
- 75% of surveyed parents say their children have not viewed porn online, but 53% of these children admit they have.

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Summary

- The current Babel --- result of man's pursuit of more, better, and higher.
- More information, greater understanding, abundant access to information has fundamentally (if not visibly) created an environment of..... cultural change.

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Missional Trends

Encountering brand new leadership challenges

- ➔ A. Changes in the Mission Field
- B. Changes in the Mission Force
- C. Changes in Mission Strategy

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Mission Field – What is Changing?

1. Increasing antagonism toward Christianity
 - National hostility
 - Social hostility
 - Economic
 - Scientific
 - Educational
 - Legal



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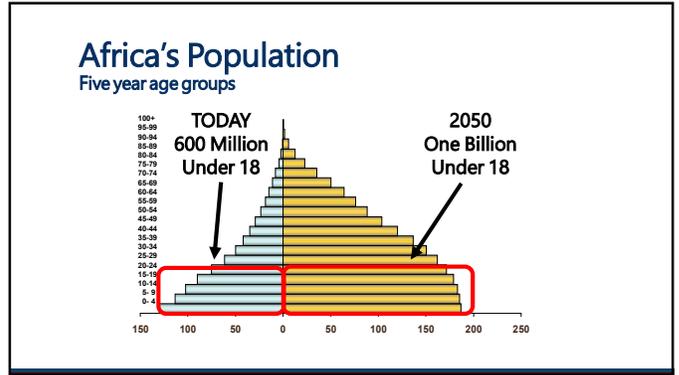
Mission Field – What is Changing?

3. Explosion of African Youth Population

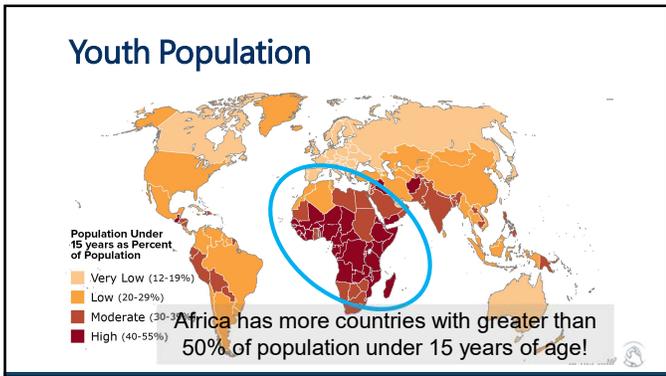


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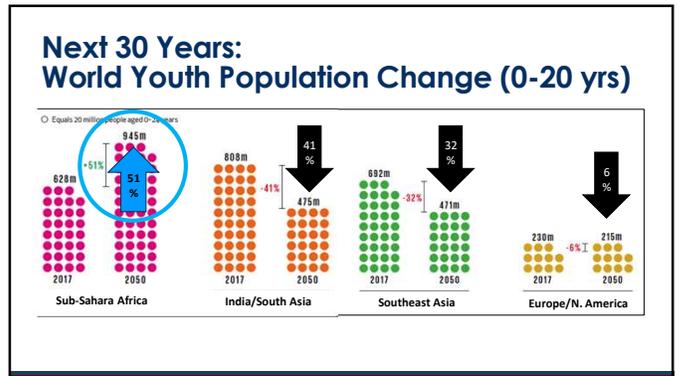
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Mission Field – What is Changing?

3. Explosion of African Youth Population

- Unprecedented demographic phenomena nowhere else in the world
- Poses huge challenges to the African church
- Impacts social structure → from creating dysfunctional homelife to radicalization of disenfranchised youth

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Missional Trends

Encountering brand new leadership challenges

- A. Changes in the Mission Field
- ➔ B. Changes in the Mission Force
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Mission Force - What is Changing?

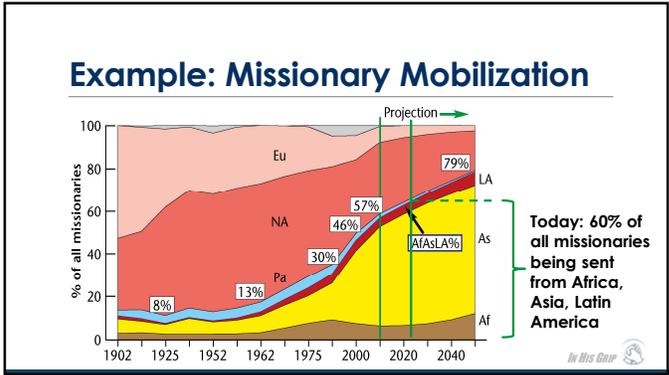
1. Acceleration of shift from Global North to Global South

Global North

Global South

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Creates key questions

- Is there adequate cross-cultural training?
- Are there adequate financial support structures?
- Are there adequate personnel and family support structures?

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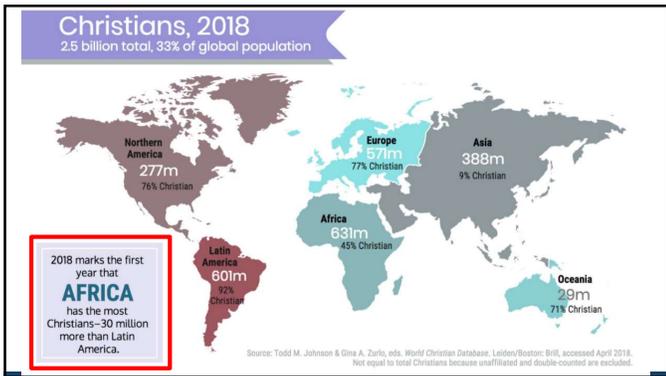
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Mission Force - What is Changing?

2. Emergence of Africa as world largest Christian continent

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Is the African Mission Force Ready

"Africa can no longer look to America as the model of evangelical Christianity. As the world's largest Christian continent, we must prepare ourselves to take up that mantle ourselves."

Dr. Reuben Ezemadu

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Missional Trends

Encountering brand new leadership challenges

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- B. Changes in the Mission Force
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Mission Strategy - What is Changing?

1. Self-reproducing Micro-churches
 - CPM/DMM – Church Planting Movements



1000's of small house churches being planted every year and discipling new believers



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Mission Strategy - What is Changing?

2. Creative new uses of technology



Online networking, virtual conferencing, social media

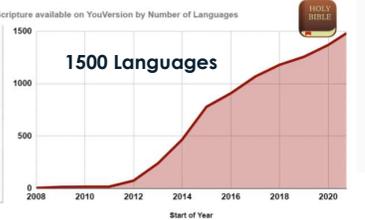


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Biblical Literacy via Bible Apps



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1500 Languages



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Bible Translation



Free Translation Software



Print-On-Demand Shops



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Kingdom & Covenant in the New Testament, Lesson 1

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Aviation and Transportation



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Missional Trends

- A. Changes in the Mission Field
- B. Changes in the Mission Force
- C. Changes in Mission Strategy

Just a few examples of the dramatic changes in how God's people are engaged in mission

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Discussion Questions

1. How have you personally experienced some of these trends and how has it impacted your leadership role?
2. What do you see as the greatest threat to the next generation's readiness for church leadership roles?

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