



My Destiny in Cross-cultural Ministry

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My wife and I have been working in Kenya for the last eight years with Africa Inland Mission. Our ministry in the first six years was teaching in a Bible college in a rural area. Our job was to train and equip lay leaders and pastors to be more effectively serve in the local churches. The past two years, our ministry focus has switched to a more challenging northern Kenya among the tribe of Turkana. We were assisting another senior missionary to start a high school for local children. We have faced many facades of challenges, from daily survival issues to the opposition of nearby village. It has been a great challenge to do ministry in a different culture. But we have learned many lessons and still believe this is where God wants us to be and wants us to do.

I believe my involvement in cross-cultural mission is not just an accident. Looking back in my life, God has put different people in different time to shape the direction of my life toward this ministry. It is what Robert Clinton talked about “destiny” in his book *Emergence of a Leader*. He described the term destiny as “a grouping of process items which are significant acts, people, providential circumstances, or timing which represent the completion of destiny processing that has gone on previously.” We believe God calls people to mission field or full time ministry according to His own time. But before he called someone to serve him, He also prepares the person to be ready and fitted for that call.

My destiny of cross-cultural ministry was shaped by many people and events. One of the background influences that God put me in was the multicultural environment that I lived and grew up from. I was born and raised in Singapore in my formative years. Singapore is a multi ethnic, multi cultural country that has different ethnic groups. It gives me an environment to learn how to live with other ethnic and learn about their cultures.

But most of all, my family has set the foundation for my future cross-cultural ministry. My father was a senior pastor in a Chinese church in Singapore when I was a child. Under his leadership, the church was one of the few churches in Singapore that has started its

own mission conference and supported missions work in the world. This same church continues the mission mandate until today. In order to motivate the church to reach out to the world beyond local ministry, my father also went aboard to participate and observe ministry in different cultures. I remembered the excitement and changing experience he had after he came back from short term mission trips to Seoul and Indonesia. His participation of short term mission was not only his personal renewal and vision for cross-cultural ministry, but also had made a profound influence for my full time ministry and mission involvement in the future. Although I could not remember the detail of what he said, but his excitement about the mission work had made me realized that God can change a person through the short term mission experience. He had set the example for me to stretch beyond my own comfort zone.

My parents have always been an encouragement for me to go for full time ministry. It is not because they are serving God in full time ministry themselves, but they are willing to let God use them as the example and model for others to follow God’s will. It is not always what they say to us, but their faith in God has encouraged us. When my wife and I have decided to join Africa Inland Mission, we were ready to leave for Kenya in summer 2000. It was also at the same time that my mother went to be with the Lord. My father had just retired from his pastor ministry for many years. We struggled whether we should stay home to take care of him or go. I remembered the conversation we had with him. He said that he would be lonely and it would take him some time to grief for my mom. He knew that the brothers and sisters in the church would take care of him. Ultimately, it is the Lord who would walk and comfort him during this journey. He encouraged us to go where God is calling us. His willingness to let us go, enable us to step out to the mission field without much worries of him. We won’t be able to focus on what we are doing today as missionary in Kenya without his blessing and encouragement.

(Author is a Missionary working in East Africa.)