**AFRIGO 2.1**

**TALENTS, SKILLS and CAREERS: TOOLS IN THE HANDS OF GOD**

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**Editorial: SKILLS FOR WORSHIP**

“Now the LORD spoke to Moses,

saying, ‘See, I have called by name

Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur,

of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him

with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in

understanding, in knowledge, and in all

kinds of craftsmanship.

“And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of

Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in

the hearts of all who are skillful I have

put skill, that they may make all that I

have commanded you.” (Exodus 31:1-

2; 6-7).

Many people see their gifts and

skills simply as means to a livelihood, a

means to an end – our own end. Selling

our skills to earn a comfortable living,

provide for our family and live the good

life is a common ambition. There’s

nothing wrong with ambition. The

question is whether we are made simply

for our own enjoyment or for something

greater. Is our skill only for sale, or is it

for worship?

In Exodus God instructs Moses to

build a tabernacle where his presence

could dwell and around which his

people could worship Him. The work

would require significant materials, but

also a high level of skilled craftsmanship.

How was Moses to get that? Well, God

had an answer.

Building human tabernacles

Several lessons from this passage

are relevant to missions today. First,

God is the initiator of all his work in

and through us, and He is the giver of

all skills and gifts – even those that we

might think we have acquired. Indeed

Bezalel and Oholiab worked hard to

become skilled craftsmen. However,

the Lord said that He had not only

called them and appointed them, but

that He had given them the ability to

acquire those skills: “I have filled him

with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in

understanding, in knowledge, and in all

kinds of craftsmanship.” (Exodus 31:3).

Then God provided for others with

skill to join this work. Finally, God’s

people had a heart to give for the

needed materials. Both Bezalel and

Oholiab, as well as the children of

Israel, recognised that God’s gifts and

the skills were not meant for acquiring

more for themselves. They were meant

for worship and for building God’s

tabernacle.

The Lord is still calling people with

diverse skills to engage in his work

of building human tabernacles, the

dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. He

gifts people with diverse spiritual

gifts and all kinds of knowledge and

skill for this work. He uses those with

abilities in medicine, engineering,

accounting, theology, education, law,

construction, agriculture, plumbing,

nursing, computing and others! These

skills have come from the Lord so that

each of us may use them to make Him

known. They can be turned over to the

Saviour for the sake of those who will

otherwise live and die without ever

hearing his good news.

God is using professionals

Twenty-one years ago, my wife,

Joanna, and I chose to put our skill

in medicine at God’s disposal for his

global mission. We have been blessed

to see God use such little offering in

the life of patients and their families in

a mission hospital in a predominantly

Muslim country. We have seen the door

to a 100 percent Muslim village open

to the gospel because of the gift of

medicine. We have seen young men

become disciples of Jesus – and now

they are carrying the gospel to others.

Many who still live without the

light of the gospel will not welcome

a traditional missionary, but they will

welcome a skilled professional. Many

of those who brought us the gospel are

themselves professionals.

The only skill that God cannot use is

one that has not been surrendered to

Him as an act of worship. Let us today

offer Him our gifts and skills for his

global mission.

*Rev. Dr. Joshua Bogunjoko*

*SIM International Director*

**SKILLS: TOOLS IN GOD’S HANDS**

[1178 words]

**Dr. Bode Olanrewaju** is a veterinary doctor and missionary with CAPRO. He uses his profession to reach those who have been closed to the gospel in Northern Nigeria.

It is a great honour to use the skills of veterinary medicine to serve the materially poor, whose livelihoods revolve around livestock. It has enabled me to model Christ’s love and compassion in a tangible way.

My veterinary help to the Fulani people is a bridge to start conversations, as barriers of mistrust and negative stereotypes are broken down. Everyone responds to love, if we can only strike the chord in their hearts. Fulani hearts are reached as we care for their herds.

Almost every rural household has a chicken. In fact, chickens have been described as the ATM of the poor. But when diseases hit, flocks and herds are decimated.

So we train indigenous people and missionaries as com-munity vaccinators. This has given us greater access to households and has improved goodwill. Some share very intimate details about their lives as they see the love of Christ demonstrated.

Testimonies such as, “I paid my children’s school fees by selling local chickens” abound among those benefitting from the programme supported by Tearfund UK, our long-term partner. The improvement in local chicken production has resulted in improved livelihoods.

A Muslim who refused to even greet an indigenous missionary changed his mind when he saw that the chickens vaccinated by the missionary did not die during outbreaks of disease. He came and asked us to vaccinate his flocks!

Today veterinarians, doctors, IT specialists and others are desperately needed to use their skills to support church planters and provide relief to communities ravaged with poverty. Even a short engagement in mission could make a huge difference.

**Netball coach Jane Banda** serves with Sports Friends, a SIM ministry that uses sports as a tool for transforming lives with the gospel. She is from Malawi, where many Christians would never dream of using sports as a ministry tool.

One day Sports Friends Malawi was introduced at Jane’s local church. She had stopped playing netball, because it was causing disunity with her parents. They believed that allowing a girl to participate in competitive sports would eventually result in losing her, perhaps to prostitution.

Sports Friends Malawi was able to give them new information, and they decided to allow Jane to participate in sports. Now she is one of their most reliable netball coaches and leads her local church-centred netball team.

Many children love Jane and her sports ministry. Several of the girls she coaches have given their lives to Christ and are part of the church. Her parents are happy now because she is being used to reach the community for Christ.

Jane’s story reminds her of the Scripture that says, “The stone rejected by a builder one day became the cornerstone.” Sports, which was considered useless and could lead to bad behaviour, is now seen as a great tool to help with life change!

Indeed Jane is a tool in the hands of God. She is now more active in her church and is making an impact in her family. She also has the joy of seeing members of the community come to faith.

**Rev. Edwin B. Fussi** is a full-time missionary, with a business background. Before going to missionary training school and starting work among an unreached group in Tanzania, he owned a small shop.

When my family arrived in the community where we serve it was 99.9 per cent Muslim. There were many barriers to the gospel: we experienced rejection, insults and ridicule. I was introduced to the villagers as a Christian religious teacher, and in some areas as a pastor. Our strategy was door-to-door evangelism, but the community rejected us.

The youth ran when they saw us, afraid we were government spies. The mosque leaders warned others to avoid us because we would convert them to Christianity. Some people said, “You have your religion, and we have ours.” We prayed and waited on the Lord.

There were other challenges too. When our sending churches did not see results, they slowly started reducing their financial support. And some of the prayer group members left. I began to think it was better to quit – after all, I could preach and share the gospel at home, as well as running my business.

But one day when I was reading my Bible, God showed me how Paul used his skills in ministry. The Lord said to me, “You can still serve me in this village. You can overcome the barriers and challenges if you obey and use the skills I gave you.”

“Thank you, Lord. I know how to run a business. Is it possible to start a business here, and continue to reach the goals?”

With a small amount of capital, I set up a shop, where I sell solar panels and drinks. I charge phones and batteries and have a haircutting salon. After a few months, I made many friends. The villagers stopped thinking of us as enemies. There was no electricity, but they could charge their phones or buy a small solar power system at my shop.

The mosque leaders told me they wanted to buy a solar power system and they wanted me to install it. So I did this, and put Scripture verses in all the bulbs I installed.

Running a business removed many of the barriers we had faced, and helped us build a strong bridge to reach the tribes in our area.

**Architect Titus Oludotun Kumapayi** is the Director for Mission and Evangelism for the Church of Nigeria Society, Anglican Communion. He has an architectural firm in Ibadan, where he lives with his wife, Margaret.

In 1991, during a training session at Haggai Institute in Singapore, I had the conviction not to take church ordination but to sit at my architectural table and use my training for evangelism, soul winning and discipleship.

So in my office each day began with 30 minutes of prayer and Bible exposition. As the fellowship grew, some of the staff members came to me seeking counsel about their choice of career and spouse. Before long the impact of the staff fellowship started rubbing off on the workers in terms of their commitment to duty and supervision of projects. The firm started attracting Christians who desired the best for their projects.

Once, when we were supervising a government project, one of the builders from the Islamic faith approached me and commented about the grace and poise with which our work is carried out. There and then he opted to give his life to Jesus. This converted Muslim now serves as a deacon in a local church.

As the pulpit is to the ordained minister, so is the workplace to a Christian professional. A professional can be anointed to serve his environment for the growth of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Occasionally I tell people that the real job is soul winning and discipleship, while the architectural work is part-time.

**Perspective**

**SERVING GOD THROUGH YOUR PROFESSION**

**FEMI B. ADELEYE**

Because the workplace is where most

of us spend most of our time week after

week, it provides a unique opportunity for ministry.

In my years of working with students,

several asked me for counsel as they

prayed and fasted about starting a

church or joining a mission agency.

Sometimes I’d ask, “What if God calls

you to be an architect or engineer?”

They would reply, “But that is just a job.” They’d remind me of Ephesians 4:11, which is used to emphasise that “real” ministry or service is what is done by apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

I would explain that the purpose of

the various ministry gifts is to equip us

for works of service. While some will

be called to be pastors, evangelists,

or missionaries, most of us will be

teachers, businesswomen, technicians

or administrators – among others.

Many people think serving God is

only done in church or on the mission

field. But the gifts listed in Ephesians

are not the only ways to serve. Others,

such as encouragement, generosity,

showing mercy (Romans 12:8) or

helps (1 Corinthians 12:28) are equally

important.

**Unhelpful dichotomies**

“We are God’s handiwork, created

in Christ Jesus to do good works,

which God prepared in advance for

us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10). So our

professional callings are pre-ordained

to be spheres of service to God. If we

don’t appreciate this, we have probably

been influenced by one or both of two

unhealthy dichotomies.

The first makes an undue distinction

between clergy, missionaries and

theological educators and the rest

of God’s people who are in secular

ministry. Hence, those in professional

callings are perceived to be in secular

service, not Christian service.

The other emphasises ministry

contexts. Some people think Christian

service is done primarily in Christian

meetings, not in the public arena.

They say pastors, evangelists, and

missionaries have a calling; mechanics,

doctors and economists do not.

**All life is sacred**

Consequently, some believe we

are only accountable in the so-called

spiritual arena. And yet what we consider

to be secular has significant implications

for mission and transformation. For

example, politics is not mere secular

politics when ungodly government

obstructs justice for the poor or forbids

freedom to proclaim the gospel.

We need a Hebraic worldview of all of

life as sacred. In the Old Testament God

shows his interest in how governance,

agriculture, architecture, industry and

marketing are done. There were sacred

guidelines for international relations,

social engagement and all aspects of

life that we categorise as secular today!

I suggest three reasons, among

many, why it is so important to serve

God through our professions. First, this

is God’s world and He is concerned

with how it is managed. Just as He

gave Adam the responsibility to tend

the Garden of Eden, He calls us to be

stewards of all creation through our

professions.

Second, our professional workplace

is a unique context for bearing witness

to others. We not only do this by

sharing tracts, but also through our

commitment, due diligence, hard

work and efficiency. Our work is to be

done “as unto God”. In the Scriptures,

Joseph served God’s purposes as an

economic manager of Egypt; David as

shepherd and King in Israel; Nehemiah

as cupbearer to a King; and Lydia as a

dealer in purple cloth.

Third, workplace disasters caused

by carelessness, indifference, greed or

corruption call for a deeper appreciation

of God’s expectation that Christians

will serve his purposes through their

professional skills. Loss of life caused

by engineers who approve structurally

defective facilities or pharmacists who

sell expired drugs highlights the need

for Christian professionals.

When faithful Christians serve God

through their profession the Lordship of

Christ is brought to bear on all spheres

of life.

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*International Fellowship of Evangelical*

*Students. He is married to Affy, and*

*they are the parents of four children.*

GO! NEWS OF AFRICA’S MOBILISING CHURCH

**Addis Ababa: Evangelicals and Orthodox Christians gather**

Sixty Orthodox and Evangelical church leaders, theologians and

mission workers gathered 11-14 October 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

for the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative (LOI) Regional Consultation. In

support of mission and with a view to greater cooperation, they took

part at the invitation of Ethiopian leaders from both traditions.

The 2000-year-old churches live in the midst of great opposition

and persecution from other faiths. More than 50 Orthodox believers

from Ethiopia and Egypt have been martyred in the past two years.

A majority of those present came from Ethiopia, with further regional

representation from Egypt, Eritrea, India and Kenya.

Delegates expressed a commitment to supporting those in Ethiopia

with a vision to participate in God’s mission, and there was an emphasis

on encouraging the development of mission-minded leaders within

the respective traditions. With this aim in mind, an LOI consultation is

being planned for 5-8 September next year in Cambridge, England.

Go to: <http://bit.ly/2e3yqPE> for more information.

**15 new house churches for Pakistan**

Sent from Ethiopia, Zeleke and Kebebush and their children serve in Pakistan, with a passion for the lost and the poorest of the poor.

They have been pouring their time into reaching out to an

impoverished rural community. After engaging the help of the local

church, Zeleke started to make contact with the people. Twice a

week he travelled 20 kilometres in order to reach a group who had

never heard the gospel. Kebebush started a women’s Bible study.

She and the local women spent time cooking together, and sharing

life and the gospel of Christ over cups of tea. The couple’s children

have taken opportunities to share their faith with school friends.

Once God opened the door for Zeleke to speak at the school

opening programme. All who attended heard the good news, and

many were influenced by it.

During the past four years, the Spirit of God has moved mightily

through Zeleke and his family, through healing, deliverance and

teaching. This has resulted in 15 house churches and 20 evangelism

centres. Giving their all, they have served in one of the world’s most

challenging mission fields. As a result of accepting this privilege,

they have seen amazing answers to prayer: 1,000 people heard

the gospel, and 385 received the good news of Jesus. Forty-eight people were baptised after follow-up teaching, and 78 backslidden Christians repented and returned to the Lord.

SIM’s East African Office and the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church

work hand in hand to respond to God’s voice, sending out those

who say, “Here am I, send me.”

**God is at work in Mali villages**

In February 2015 Coulibaly started attending a weekly ministry

led by Joshua Ngunta, a missionary from Nigeria. It was held in a

large city, and Coulibaly came from the countryside. The study drew

a collection of people interested in learning about the Bible.

On his second visit, Coulibaly professed his sincere belief in

Jesus. So dramatic was his conversion that he immediately asked

Joshua if they could go to his village to proclaim the good news

that is found only in Christ. “My ministry partner and I were reluctant

to go,” says Joshua, “but he persisted, so we chose a date to visit

his village.”

By God’s grace, the village warmly welcomed Joshua and his

ministry partner. The church there has grown under the leadership

of a local Malian pastor, and the people have reached out to another

nearby village that had no church. A group of seekers has been

meeting in this second village since December 2015.

“We have seen the work of the Holy Spirit there,” Joshua comments. “In one outreach we saw 30 young people and one adult give their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are trusting the Lord to send someone to care for the new believers and start a church in this village.”

PEOPLE GROUP: The TOPOSA

The Toposa are a large agropastoralist people group with an estimated population of 500,000. They live in three counties in the East Equatorial State (EES) of South Sudan – Kapoeta North, East, and South – and also in neighbouring Ethiopia.

**Culture and daily life**

The people rely on cattle, sheep and

goats. Boys are given care of goats and

sheep, and graduate to looking after

cattle when they come of age. During

the wet season the animals graze near

the villages. When the rains end, the

men take the herds to dry season

pasturage, then lead them back when

the next rainy season starts.

Sorghum is the main crop. The

Toposa also pan for gold and other

precious minerals in the stream beds.

Every major social event involves

cows being given as a payment or

promise. This can place pressure on

relationships between neighbours,

when there are not enough cows for

the dowry (bride price) of the first wife.

Hence the tribal reputation is one of fierce

cattle rustling among most neighbouring

tribes. As warriors, the Toposa’s allegiance

has been open to the highest bidder,

especially during the 50 years of civil wars.

Political organisation is not apparent,

although respect is paid to elders, chiefs

and wise men. Most decisions about the

clan or community are made in meetings

attended by the men. Women remain

at home farming, cooking and raising

children.

The Toposa culture is orally transmitted

through songs, dance, music, poems

and folklore. Recently, improvements

have been made in health care, water

supply and veterinary services. Many

Toposa children now attend school, but

the literacy rate remains low. Women are starting to take a more prominent role in resolving disputes.

**How can they be reached?**

The people believe in a supreme being and in ancestral spirits, who may assist in overcoming problems such as drought

or epidemics of disease among their

herds. These beliefs are patched

together with Catholic catechism, with

charms and animism completing their

spiritual awareness.

The number of professing Christians

is less than one per cent. Missionaries

have used a discipleship model of oral

Bible “storying” that has been taught

to key leaders. The movement started

by these pioneers is now beginning

to multiply. Servant-hearted people

with professional skills in areas such

as medicine, veterinary medicine,

agriculture and water development

will find avenues for effective outreach

among the Toposa.

Some portions of the Bible have been translated into their language.

**Ask God To**

* Send missionaries with agricultural, medical and veterinary skills to reach out to the Toposa people.
* Provide translators, so that the people will have the full Bible in their mother tongue.
* Provide gospel workers who are skilled in oral Scripture sharing.
* Help the Toposa maintain good relationships among themselves and neighbouring peoples.

*Photo by Trent Cox*