

Where to start by Durk Meijer, March 31, 2016

One Sunday when I was in Northwest Botswana, I had been asked to share through a translator in a Khwe community. I didn't know the translator. I didn't know much about the audience. Except that the people had been exposed to teachings from different denominational perspectives, some very syncretistic and with challenging doctrines, I had no idea what they knew about God or the Bible. I knew also that nobody could follow through for the next seven weeks, while more random teaching would take place. I did learn that the Khwe knew their plants, trees and bushes well and that they love to share that knowledge with others. What could I share in a single opportunity? I started off showing them a branch that I found on the way. They recognized the branch and they began to tell me everything else they could do with it, starting with the leaves, to the branches, as well as the roots. I asked next who taught them this... they answered spontaneously that it was their parents and grandparents. Then I asked them to bring in more fruits and it took them no time to bring several more. We next talked about that a plant is known by its fruit and the issue that good teachers are known by the fruit or testimony of their lives. This led to a Bible story from Matthews about knowing the difference between false and true prophets. I also challenged them to test me and any other teacher to see if our lives were a testimony to the Bible.

God deserves the praise, honor, and glory of His creation and that is the ultimate. So, our primary and foundational mission as we serve other people is for God to be glorified among them and in them. Often we try to engineer that mission and focus mostly on what we do, but it is actually about who we are. Who we are is related to our mission. Any possible ministry should start with us being a reflection of who Jesus is and in that context we should develop relationships, modeling the restored relationship we have with our Savior. His work in us is very important. As He works in us, he will work through us, enabling us to be wise stewards of everything in our lives. It is important to plan what to do, but our plans should never ignore God's leading. If this is our foundation, then it becomes much easier to come alongside those we serve as a catalyst or discipler and allow God to work in them. This will bring local ownership from the start. Tools, courses, curriculums, story sets, they all can become part of the work to the extent that they are useful, instead of that they define the work.