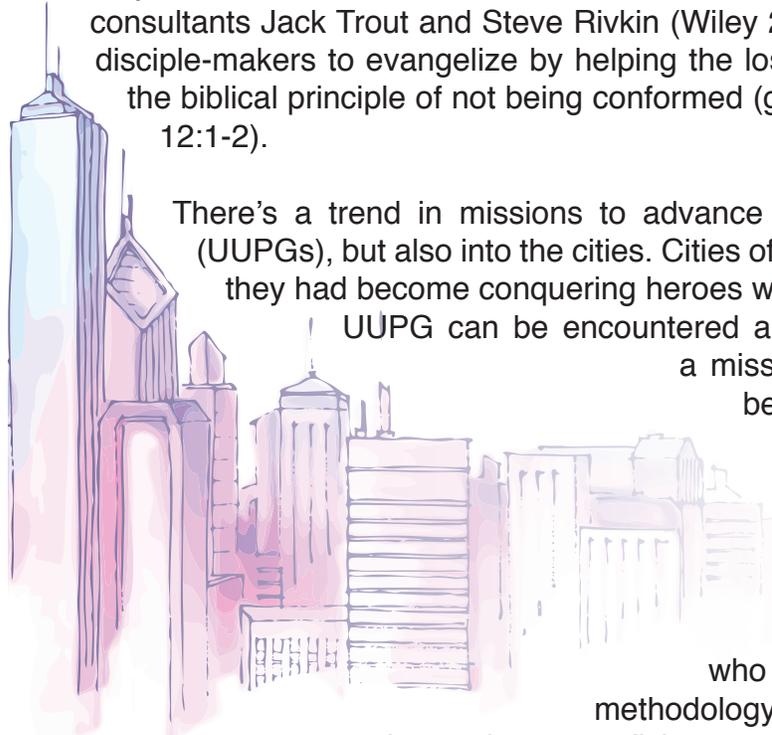


How can you leverage the Homogeneous Unit Principle to your advantage? Or who should be in your Storying Group?

Donald McGavran, a missiologist, defined the Homogeneous Unit Principle as “a section of society in which all members have some characteristic in common.” The global work in missions for people groups was built around the HUP. IMB defines a people group as “the largest group through which the gospel can flow without encountering significant barriers of understanding and acceptance.”

“Generic” is the enemy of the HUP. One-size-fits-all. Publishers excel at what they call “economy of scale.” Broadcasters get excited about “market share.” This means that production costs shrink while the profit margin expands. At some point in publishers’ competition, they rely so heavily on mass production that they lose relevance for anyone not like them. And this is where “assimilation” comes in. A Korean friend considers the word “assimilation” to be despicable; characterized as traitor at worst, wishy-washy at best.

One of my favorite business books is *Differentiate or Die: Survival in Our Era of Killer Competition* by marketing consultants Jack Trout and Steve Rivkin (Wiley 2001). For followers of Jesus, this book teaches godly disciple-makers to evangelize by helping the lost count the cost. For disciple-makers, they recapture the biblical principle of not being conformed (generic), but transformed (biblical worldview) (Romans 12:1-2).



There’s a trend in missions to advance not only into unengaged unreached people groups (UUPGs), but also into the cities. Cities of the world can harbor innovators who return home as if they had become conquering heroes who had been to the moon and back. Individuals from a UUPG can be encountered apart from the pressures of their people and become a missionary back to their own. And city dwellers can also be abused outcasts licking their wounds in obscurity who don’t want to be found. Some embrace assimilation, but there are also those who are experimenting with life beyond the known.

The rural village is where Bible Storying caught traction. Testing began among primary oral learners who were non-readers. But after twenty years or so, orality methodology has begun to thrive not only in urban arenas, but among those who are proficient readers who appreciate their own oral learning preference.

In the typical village, the homogeneous principle is not really tested. The outsider is easily identified. Forming small groups may not be easy, but it is far more predictable. Does the homogeneous principle become irrelevant in areas of population density and diversity? I don’t think so, but it does influence who becomes part of a small group in which God’s Word is the focus and spiritual transformation is the goal.