

TUTORIAL
9.2

Snapshot of the contexts

This tutorial introduces the different contexts which will be referred to during the interviews in this module.

Last Time

We reminded ourselves of the WILD outline which will provide the framework for the rest of this Module. We looked at the purpose of WILD and talked about how it can apply in cross-cultural church planting situations and also where a church already exists in any setting.

Snapshots

To give you some background, the WILD outline has been widely used over a number of years. This framework, or lens, for looking at maturity came out of cross-cultural, pioneering church planting situations.

It's easy in the context to start losing sight of your end goal and to be confused about where you're going. Having a tool like WILD available is helpful because you can use it as a measuring stick, "This is where we are at now and, through the process of discipleship, this is where we want to go." It has been quite useful in seeing people move towards maturity, both individually but also as a corporate body.

Oftentimes we can become consumed with the actual work we're doing and sometimes that can be disconnected from the end goal if we're not careful. Our focus can become producing material—it could even become producing a Bible translation—and we can forget that the intent of that is so there can be a mature church. So we've got to keep those things connected well. Using the WILD framework is incredibly helpful to guide us as we move along.

Throughout this tutorial we will be hearing from experienced church planters from a variety of contexts around the world. To lay a foundation for the rest of the module, in this tutorial we will be giving a 'snapshot' of each of those contexts.

Greg and Julieann

Greg and his wife Julieann lived in a city in Siberia for over ten years working with minority people from a former Soviet republic. Of particular interest for our purpose in these tutorials was their work among a deaf subculture in that region and the fruit that they saw. Greg and Julieann continue to be involved with that church but also in much wider contexts around the world. Greg shares:

The country of Russia changed quite a bit once the Soviet Union had collapsed. That process left few jobs available. Most of the industry was pulled out of the regions and so for much of Siberia, it was abject poverty. There was a massive increase in alcoholism which had really impacted the region, so we were the first foreigners to enter that place at a very dark time. It was a time where people were wondering if there would be any food the next day, if there would be any kind of livelihood for their future. It was a very depressing time, and as far as a government, there was a lot of uncertainty about the future. What would happen? What would it look like? So there was a huge transition taking place.

When you're talking about their worldview and how that impacted their livelihood, the decay of the Soviet Union caused a sense of hopelessness. The idea of morality was eliminated. The people had been raised under a Communist system which had thrived in this area. There was no God and therefore no moral value, no moral right. They were struggling with what that meant for them as people. Darkness and hopelessness were probably the most predominant feelings that existed in the area. It was visible in almost every part of their lives. The value of life was gone. You would see people who had died and were lying on the streets and not being moved or touched by anybody, just because the lack of care had gone. It was a society that was just empty.

When we arrived in the place where we lived, I would say there was a rediscovery of Buddhism taking place. Christianity wasn't really predominant in the region that we were in. There was an Orthodox church that had existed under the Soviet Union that was still alive at that time, but it had very little power in the region. It had almost no understanding of what Christianity was or who God was.

This sort of resurgence for Buddhism had begun among the people. Buddhist temples were being built again and there was a sort of return to Buddhism, but there was a very strong shamanistic veneer that had been placed over the whole thing.

There were two sides to the people group that we worked in. One side was more shamanistic, the other side was more Buddhist. Yet, the whole veneer of the whole country was shamanistic in a lot of ways.

We found that it was very difficult to go to our area as a missionary and so we found other ways to get into the country that built relationships. Finding ways to build relationships was fairly difficult, being from the nationality that I was from. They weren't exactly open to Americans and to the American mindset. Yet there was also this kind of sense that there must be something better out there. So building relationships took a lot of time, especially amongst men. We began by building relationships with deaf people. These were some of the poorest of the poor and some of the people who had suffered the most persecution under that regime. So they were desperate for jobs and a livelihood and we began to develop a relationship with them, partly because we were learning the language and they didn't speak the national language (verbally anyway). So we began learning their language and began building relationships with them.

Dave and Nancy

Another snapshot from a very different context and climate is Dave and his wife Nancy. They lived and worked in a difficult-to-reach people group on an island off Papua New Guinea. They had the opportunity to see the full scope of church planting work from Dave's primary role as translator. He has spent many years since as a translation consultant and cross-cultural trainer. Dave tells us:

The people live in a very remote area of New Britain Island. It's just dense jungle. There are no roads going there. Generally, they would have to hike through the jungle for one or two days to get to a major river or to the coast. It's lowland, tropical rain forest, it's hot and has a very high annual rainfall. The people there do subsistence farming. They cut down areas of the jungle and grow their food. They're really not very dependent on the outside world at all.

There was no nearby medical help available when we first went there. It was estimated that the infant mortality rate was about 55%, which means more than half of the babies didn't make it to their first birthday, and that's because it would take about two or three days to get out to the provincial capital, where the closest hospital was. They knew by past experience that if they had a very sick child and tried to make that journey, generally the baby would die en route, so they mostly just did not attempt it.

As far as education, the government established a primary school in our area, but it was very difficult to get the teachers to stay there. The teachers would come from other parts of the country and had grown accustomed to living in town and I think, pretty much without exception, the teachers that were allocated to our area viewed it as a stepping stone and a temporary allocation. They looked forward to a better allocation, from their perspective, closer to town. If there was a national holiday that was supposed to be a three-day weekend, they would go to town for that holiday and it might be a month before they came back, so the kids that attended this school did not get a very good education. There's a test that they would take at the end of year six to see if they qualified to go to high school, and pretty much none of the kids that went through that school would qualify. It's not that they weren't intelligent enough, but the teachers just weren't there consistently enough to give them a reasonable education.

Well, when the people in that area look at the world around them, they see a vast array of spiritual forces, personal spirits and also impersonal spiritual forces. They need to know how to avoid these or how to manipulate them because these forces can have a very negative effect on their lives. In fact, every major event that they see in the physical realm has some kind of spiritual cause, such as death, serious illness, a garden that produces food well or that doesn't produce food. There is some kind of identifiable spiritual cause in their mind, and to be able to survive, they need to learn how to manipulate and control these spirit beings and impersonal spiritual forces.

The people had nominally been exposed to Catholicism. There was a small Catholic church building about 30 minutes away from the village we lived in. There was never a priest located there. They had Catholic catechists who were married with children. They came from a different part of the country, and when we first started teaching them, I think we overestimated the depth to which this Catholicism had gone. We found that really it was just a very thin veneer over deep, deep animistic beliefs.

For many of them, going to that church every Sunday morning was nothing more than just a social gathering. There were three other villages and many of them would gather every Sunday morning there. They would take some of their fruits and vegetables to sell at a market and I think they would catch up on the community news. It really was more of a social gathering than a deeply religious gathering. I won't say that's true for 100% of them, some of them probably were serious about following Catholic beliefs, but for most of them it wasn't anything that went very deep at all.

They didn't have a well filled out understanding of God. They had a being that they said, in their history, created the taro, which is their main staple food. Beyond that, they didn't really know very much about him, so they didn't really have a clear picture of any kind of supreme being. It really was more just the spirit beings and spiritual forces.

We first made contact with these people in 1980 and started making trips in there to build houses. Once it was agreed that we would locate in one particular village, we started building houses. We started on an airstrip which actually took more than three years to complete, but then once our house building was basically finished, we started learning their culture and their language, and we started building relationships with them, gaining their trust, becoming their friends, so that eventually there would be a reason for them to listen to what we had to say.

John and Betty

Another snapshot is John and his wife Betty who lived on an Indonesian island with a people group who were quite cut off from the outside world. The church planting team they were part of faced significant challenges as they brought God's Word to a community that was oppressed by formidable traditional taboos. After establishing the church there, John and Betty have since been giving guidance and training to cross-cultural workers in Australia and beyond:

It was 1982 when we first moved in amongst the people of Halmahera Island on the Province of Maluku in Indonesia. They were a completely unreached people group. They knew nothing of the Bible at that time and had no portions of the Bible in their own language. They were a very difficult group to get to and I think that may be one of the reasons why they were unreached at that point in time. In order to get there, we had to do quite a bit of boat travel, and there were moments where we almost drowned on a number of occasions—actually a boat on one occasion did sink. So it was a difficult work in that it was extremely remote.

It was also difficult because they were monolingual so we couldn't use Indonesian at all with them, which made it very challenging. The third reason that it was difficult was that they were a completely illiterate group and had no exposure to any sort of education. They were semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers, so we would think we had a group around us for a little while and then we could wake up the next morning and they'd all be gone somewhere else.

In the villages around the area that they roamed and out in the township that we based ourselves in, people were very nervous—nervous for us when they heard we were moving in amongst this people group. Some

of the people who we developed friendships with were quite concerned for us and really thought we were crazy for going and living amongst them.

We'd heard many stories about them, like they would fly through the air and they would kill animals and tear them apart and eat the raw meat with their bare hands. So we assumed that probably some of these stories were gross exaggerations as well, but later on we found out that some of them were indeed true. In fact, there were a few attempts to dispose of us at different times, but God amazingly thwarted those attempts. As I look back now and think about the work there, I just marvel at how God looked after us that whole time, both on the sea and with the people in those early days.

They believed that if they had any contact with the church, as they perceived the church to be, someone in their family would die. They thought if a member of a family actually went to one of the village churches that were dotted along the coast and attended church, then a brother, sister, mother or father would die as a result of that. That was probably the strongest taboo and that may have also applied for Islam, although we became more aware of their beliefs to do with Christianity.

As animists they were under the domination of spirits, their lives were controlled by the spirits and they lived in fear of them. They would set pig traps that comprised of razor-sharp bamboo that was catapulted into the animal when it tripped a cord that was set in the jungle. But they believed that if they visited those traps more often than every third day, the spirit of that trap would be angry with them and that trap would never again catch any food. So you might set a trap and that night it would actually catch something, but then you couldn't retrieve it for several days. Once retrieved, they also believed that you had to consume that meat so even if it was rotten, which on occasions it was, they would still feel that they had to eat it. When we were in there, they would often come to us with stomach aches and you could actually smell them coming because of the smell from their pores and you knew that they had been eating bad meat.

They believed that twins were the result of an evil spirit, that a man could only father one child, and therefore if there was a multiple birth then that was the result of an evil spirit fathering that second child. So they would try and determine which one was the offspring of the evil spirit and that child would then be taken out and left to die. If they were unsure which child was the evil spirit, such was their degree of fear that they would take both out just to make sure that they had rid themselves of this baby that had the potential to kill them all. It was very important for the preservation of the tribe that this be done.

In talking to some of the women who had actually done that, we found that it broke their hearts to do it. Here was the baby that they had carried for nine months and now had to dispose of, and even though there was that fear, there was still some bond existing between them which made it very difficult for them to do, but they knew that they had to for the sake of the tribe.

We had a very multi-national team. There was Keith and Anita Miles and their boys from America, Don McCall from New Zealand and Heather from Australia, then Betty, me and our kids and also an Indonesian couple, Chris and Ida, who joined our team, so we had quite a mix of nationalities. Chris and Ida insisted we hold team meetings in Indonesian and I look back and think that was one of the real positives of our work. They brought an understanding of the culture and they picked up on a lot of things that we missed, and for that reason, I'm just so thankful that we had them on the team.

As the years went by, we would be out spending time with the people in their homes, trying to just absorb as much as we could of how they lived, and not only how they lived, but why they lived that way. We kept a culture file and would get together every week and compare notes of all the things that we'd discovered. We did genealogies and mapping and all the sorts of usual things that most tribal workers do.

Year started to go by and we got more and more discouraged because we thought, "Are we ever going get this language?" But the time did come when some consultants came in, and even that was a challenge because it was just so difficult to get in there, but they did come in and they checked our language and said, "Okay, a couple more months and you'll be right. Just cover a few more details and you can go ahead and start translating and preparing lessons."

So that was a wonderful time, but the thing was, we still had this taboo to deal with. Would the people actually listen to our story? I tell you what, the times when I thought to myself, "If I've spent all this time learning this rotten language and they don't listen, I am going to be very ticked off." Because, boy, that took a lot of hard work. I'm not a really gifted language learner so I had to work very hard. I think the whole team did actually.

So anyway, one day I was talking with a couple of guys and I started to tell them that we'd actually come with a message. It was great that we could help them medically and honestly, I believe the medical program was a tremendous tool for building relationships and developing that trust. That was a very tangible way of showing them that we really did

care about them and building those relationships. But I said to them, "It's been great that we could do that, it's been great that we could do some things to help you economically as well, but there's another reason we came and that's the most important reason. We've come with a message, and the One who made everything that you see around you wants you to know His Story. That's why we've left our families back in Australia and America and Chris and Ida have left their families and come here to live amongst you, and we've spent all this time learning your language. It's so that we can tell you this Story."

Now by this time, they knew that we were Christians, and they were pretty wary of that, but somehow I think God had been at work building these relationships and we'd been hard at work too. So I think they were fairly confident that we were on their side, that we were there for them, we cared about them and we'd had ample opportunity to show them love. They had seen that the things that scared the daylights out of them didn't scare us, and that had a huge impact on them.

In fact, one woman said to my wife, "Why aren't you leaving the house when your neighbours die because his spirit is going to come back and get even with anyone who's offended him. We're all taking off and you need to take off too." And Betty said, "No, we're just going to stay. We're not afraid." The woman said, "Why aren't you afraid?" And Betty said, "Well, that's the real reason we've come here to live amongst you and are learning your language, so that we can tell you that." This woman said to Betty, "Oh, I hope you learn our language quickly, because we want to know that."

Phil and Elin

Phil and his wife Elin have been working in Mozambique for the last ten years in a coastal people group. Historically they have identified with Islam, and that is present to this day along with traditional animistic practices and beliefs. The team has taken a careful approach in terms of their identity to keep clear about what it is that they are bringing to the community. God is blessing them, and through the experience He is giving Phil insights that he has opportunity to share in many contexts around the world:

We came into Mozambique in January of 2004 and our intent was to work with whatever was the least reached people group in Mozambique. The first few months, we got settled in the city of Nampula and then we ended up coming and doing surveys. Our armchair research had said that this people group that we're in right now was the least reached. It had received its name from a river and we figure there's about 180,000 people who speak that language. It's a dialect of the Makua dialect which is a big, big language group in northern Mozambique.

They're one of the dialects that needed a Scripture translation in that particular dialect, according to those who investigate such things. That was the group that was on the list. It's right on the coast and so they tend to be fishermen. The main income is from fishing. It is basically the last people group, if you look at Islam coming down the East Coast of Africa, that's Islamic. After that it tapers out and becomes nominal Christian and Catholic. But in the days before, it would have just been straight out animism or paganism or whatever you'd call it. This is the last group that has a strong identity, that we are Muslim, and that makes us distinct from the people groups around us. It's one of the high identity points for them as a people group. This is what makes this group different. So coming into that then we knew ahead of time that there was going to be certain things that we were going to need to be careful about. There were going to be things that we could say that would obligate them to oppose us. The degree to which we came and associated overtly with Christianity and with the Church, to that degree you could bet money that they would be obligated to oppose whatever it was that we're doing. We'd seen and heard of examples of people coming in with a very strong Christian emphasis who had been categorically rejected by these people before, and so when we came in, you could tell that that was in their mind with the nature of the questions that they were asking. "Okay, what is this? Is this a church? How is this going to be?"

We said to them, "Hey, we're not here to build buildings, like church buildings and paint names on them. We're here to teach you what God's Word says in your language, translate it into your language, teach you how to read and write it and sit with you. We can sit under a tree and we can teach and explain everything that needs to be done under a tree. We're not here to build these buildings." In their mind, missionaries like us are coming in the name of some organisation to build that organization's kingdom in this place. We weren't wanting to perpetuate that idea. We wanted to be open and free for all the different groups to be able to come.

So when we came, we explained that to these different villages. In every location that we visited, they all said the same thing. They all said, "We'd really like for you to come and do that if you would." So we were like, "Okay, we've been invited. We've got this open door to all of these different villages. Which one are we going to choose?" So we were praying about it and we had different criteria. Some of the criteria, looking back on it, were pretty lame, but we had all these different criteria that we were thinking of, so we ended up in this particular village where the reception had been really good. They seemed really open, all the way from the top leaders down.

We were nervous about the first surveys. Are they even going to accept us and be open to us coming? We were nervous halfway through the years about whether we were going to even learn the language or not, but graciously the Lord allowed us to learn the language. We were nervous when we wanted to start teaching whether anybody would even come. We were nervous when we started teaching whether or not people were actually going to keep coming when they saw where this was going and who we were talking about. When they saw that the focus was on Jesus, would they even stick around? And if they stuck around and believed, what's going to happen in the next village when they hear that the guy we're talking about is Jesus?

We were worried that maybe we'll get these guys in this village to believe, but then what? Will that be the last village we get because it will just be shut down after that? Then we were worried are these guys going to take it and run with it and go with it, or are they going to be so secretive about it that they won't be able to speak about it publicly. So there were a lot of things that we were worried about.

As we look back on it now, we realise that the Lord was at work and all of those things took care of themselves. As they heard about His Word, they were willing to keep hearing it. When it got time to talk about Jesus, they were willing to keep sitting there, they were willing to wrestle through that and understand that it is Christ that we have to trust in and nobody else. The other villages were open to hearing and believing. We still are constantly getting requests from different villages who say, "Can you come and please teach us?" So for us it's just been amazing to see the Lord progress ahead of us and provide and work out everything that we were worried about.

Matt and Starr

Matt and his wife Starr have been working with a people group from a mountainous area in southern Mexico for over a decade. They have seen some fruit in the very difficult soil there but the recent violence related to the drug trade has had a significant impact on the work. This has created an enormously challenging church planting situation to which Matt and the team have had to respond. Matt and Starr have been involved in wider leadership, consultancy and pre-field training roles:

My name is Matt and I work with a people group in Northern Mexico. My wife Starr and I have been with them for about 20 years. We recently re-engaged with the people after a short time away. We've spent the last two years getting back engaged with them and looking forward to seeing the Lord move the work forward with them in His time.

Regarding God's Word in their language, we have a co-worker who is finishing the New Testament within the next year. We're pretty excited about this people group having the New Testament. There are about 25 to 30 Christians so far. The people group numbers about 9000 and they live in the high mountains of Northern Mexico. They are drawn to folk Catholicism, a worldview system that is very animistic, very fear driven, and yet is labelled as being from the Catholic Church.

My role on the team for the last number of years has been to develop the foundational Bible teaching curriculum for them, and as such, my wife and I are some of the teachers. My wife has learned the language fluently and has many opportunities with the women to teach and disciple.

We work together as a couple. Most of our teaching opportunities are in homes with family groups of 10 to 12 adults. The people are very suspicious of outsiders and very suspicious of one another. That part of their culture has gotten worse. It's become more challenging due to the pressure from the illicit drug trade in our area and the dangers that are inherent in that situation. So that aspect of their culture, being very suspicious of outsiders, has now impacted their suspicion even of one another and so it's been very challenging to get them to come together in groups, so we've been, in a sense, forced to teach in smaller groups and to see the church gradually build in that way.

Clark and Mary

Clark and his wife Mary have worked in Thailand for many years. Along with wider leadership roles, they have been part of an effort to see a church established in a minority group in that country. Nationally Buddhist, but locally animistic, and also with an extremely low self-esteem, the community has taken a long time to embrace the Truth. But access to the Scripture, that Mary has translated and that Clark has taught, has greatly strengthened the church in recent years. Clark tells us:

We work with a people group of north-eastern Thailand. They are in north-eastern Thailand but extend across Laos and also into Vietnam. When we moved in, there was no written language. The people there have a legend that they at one time had an alphabet, but they wrote it down on a water buffalo skin and hung it out to dry and the dogs got it, so they don't have their own written language. When we first moved in, we had to develop orthography and a literacy course.

They used to live in hamlets out in the rice fields so they don't have a really strong cultural bond together. Now they would live in larger villages, anywhere from 100 to maybe 500 or 600 people per village.

When we first moved in and we first started teaching, it was pretty much an oral presentation of the Gospel. We worked off lessons but didn't have any Scripture that we could use. If we did use Scripture, it was the Thai Scriptures. We started Bible translation about eight or nine years into the church plant. The people don't have a real desire for God's Word in their own language. They can read Thai, but we found that the more we've translated, the more they've appreciated having God's Word in their own language. We've seen that the effect of having it in their language has been more understanding and more growth.

There's a group of about 100 believers, primarily the village we located in. Also, a few believers are in two or three of the other villages in that area. Totally, there're 16 villages in an area of about 40 kilometres. But right now, there are believers in three of those villages.

Bill and Kelley

Bill and Kelley are part of a church planting team in the Madang region of Papua New Guinea. The language group they work with is located in a low-lying rainforest delta. The Gospel has been welcomed now among many villages and has radically transformed their way of life. The churches are part of outreaches to neighboring people groups. Bill and Kelley are now involved in on-field equipping and leadership:

We moved into the area in 2003 to this very, very remote location. We actually did surveys to find a place that was away from any other roads and went back to this area where there was no contact at all with the Gospel, and the people were very, very receptive of us, very animistic but very receptive of us and wanted to have us in there. The five things that we said that we were going to do was learn their language, translate the Scriptures, teach literacy, teach them the Bible, and then we were going to equip them to be able to teach others in their village.

There were about 10 different villages and it was all spread out. We started right away building houses. We took chainsaws in and actually didn't take a lot of teams in with us. We used the people and tried to model that aspect of discipleship right from the very beginning of how we want to integrate them into what we're doing. It's not about what we're doing but how we're going to do this as a team. We had two girls at the time, five and seven years old, and we moved in with our team and immediately set up home school for the girls and we both worked on language. Both of us actually passed the checks that we had at the same time and were able to move right into literacy. Kelley kind of headed up the literacy programme and I started right in on Bible translation.

When we first got there, one of the things that was really interesting was that the women had just taken off, so when we first arrived in the village there were no women there. Most of the kids were gone. Some of the younger ones and older ones were there, but most of them were gone. The men had told them that we were coming in to steal their wives, so the wives gathered up everything they owned and hit the bush and hid from us initially.

Moving in, we saw a lot of rituals that they were doing. Cargo cult was a huge aspect and there were certain people in the village that were trying to promote the idea that we brought these guys in and now we're going to find out how to get all this stuff that we need.

Babies were dying like crazy because they had sorcerers that were actually doing things to cause the kids to die, so it was a really evil place. People were very friendly though. They thought that we were bringing them something. That was part of the invitation that we got to come move in with them. They thought we were going to be bringing them something and so they were very excited. They didn't know what that was, but they were very excited and they were very helpful. They gave us property and didn't charge us anything for the land. They helped us build, all with the idea that we were going to be giving them something. It was a very inviting environment for us, so the actual moving in and learning the language and asking them to help us went very smoothly in that regard.

We think that as you begin to work, too, that you're always looking forward to the mature church and what's going to be coming up later and how you're going to start from the very beginning, but then you want to continue to shape their thinking towards something that's true. So as we went through the culture and language learning, we kept note of their questions because they had lots of them and of course you can't answer them. They had to wait for the teaching and that was a long time—two years. So we kept a list of all the questions that they were asking. We promised them that the teaching that we're going to share does address every issue in our lives and that it can be used for every problem in our life, and so we would keep those questions and put a note at the end of the lesson where we could work that question in and their names. When we taught later, we were able to bring those questions back into the teaching and help them begin to judge the physical and material things and the concerns that they had with the Word of God.

As we were studying, there are three specific examples I can think of where we saw things in their culture that needed to be changed, but we

weren't at a point where we'd earned the right to speak and we didn't have the Word of God yet to stand on to make those changes.

One of the examples was in the area of education. They were being taken advantage of constantly by others out in town. They didn't understand money, counting or business and they were constantly being taken advantage of. They would hear stories from town that if you put money in the bank then it's going to just grow until you become a millionaire and you'll never have to worry about education again. They were just really pinning their hopes on these things and, time and time again, just being stolen from.

After the presentation we began to teach a class, educating them on what a bank is and what it looks like to make a fortnight and how to invest that and how to save their money. So as we're learning their culture we're always thinking long term how can we help them shape their worldview, not just through salvation, but then for their life and godliness.

One of the big things that we faced was that the witch doctors in the village were actually saying things to the people that in reality were killing the kids, like I mentioned before. Just one of the things they told them was when your kid gets sick, don't give them water. Water is bad. So people were coming to us with their kids dehydrated, to the point that there was no way for us to help so we actually just watched several kids die in our laps because we had no way to help them. That's really frustrating, because there's no reason this kid should die except for these rituals—rituals they've been told are going to save their kids, and they are actually killing their kids.

When they came to us, I used the example of a canoe. When a canoe is going under water and it's mostly full of water and ready to go underneath, it's too late to try to bail it out, and that's the way it was with the kids. They were bringing them to us right as they were dying and there was no way for us to help them so that was really heartbreaking and frustrating.

There're so many areas in animism where Satan's cutting away at their lives, at their marriages, at their family bonds. This was one of the ways, not taking medication, not drinking water, and after they became believers, we had said, drink water, you need to drink water. Then after they're believers, they'd come up and say, "Satan's been lying to us and we've been killing our own children." They were just realising the changes that will take place with the Gospel.

Before you even get to the point where you present the Gospel, your mindset should be to bring people on as a team to help you. We started looking for faithfulness in people who were actually being faithful to the work that we were asking them to do. The Lord was really good to us, because we saw that little bit of faithfulness in some, even before they were believers. And those men and women tend to be now the ones that are strong who are helping to lead the church on. I think it is really important to look for faithfulness, even before you present the Gospel, because those characteristics are something the Lord really used later on in their lives.

So overall, early on, there was a spirit of animism, a spirit of fear. They were fearful of everything, fearful that they when they went to the water they didn't wash properly, fearful that they ate something that they shouldn't have eaten, fearful to go by themselves to the garden, just in a constant spirit of fear in every aspect of their life.

In the later stages, that's what actually drew others into wanting to hear the Gospel. Others were looking at them and saw this lady going to the garden on her own and they're asking her, "Hey, are you going by yourself?" and she'd reply "Yes, He's with me. He's marked my day." So that's what attracted outsiders to the Gospel.

The whole story of the Gospel, from beginning to end, is just crucial in this whole process, but one of the stories that was really a tipping point of seeing where the people were moving, was the Tower of Babel, because the Tower of Babel, for the first time, explained how there were different people with different languages all over the world. They had a myth that they were spirits actually coming back to us. When they heard that story, the Lord used that powerfully to change their whole mindset to realise, "Oh, they're just people. They're not spirits." So that was a story that the Lord used to really empower and change the thinking of a lot of people, which led them to believe the story as it started to unfold.

As they heard the Gospel, many believed and the church was born and they started meeting. One of the big things was the whole idea of being brought in through baptism, abiding with the body through communion, elders being raised up eventually and then looking out beyond their own borders to the villages next to them where they had family, and that all came from the book of Acts really. They started walking through the book of Acts and realising the church met together and grew together, then it went out into the community, and so that's the model they followed.

We really didn't push them into any of those things. We just kept teaching the Word of God and making sure that we were pointing out

the fact that this is a message that is to be taken out to others. It has meaning in your own life and then it is supposed to spill out into your other relationships, and the church has really done that. One of the things that we've seen over the years is the Lord growing the church and strengthening the church by making it smaller.

Because we were in that animistic context where everybody was looking for something and so everybody latched on to it, it's taken many years to get to the point to where the people who were just holding onto the Gospel for the sake of what they could get out of it for themselves are starting to fall away. It's leaving this mature, strong body, smaller (and it's kind of sad to see that when you see some of your friends walk away from the Gospel) but a solid group that is the church and doing really well. They're feeding themselves and growing together in their context and that's where the church is right now.

The day that we started to present the Gospel, we had two little girls, aged five and seven, and they had been part of our team and very supportive and excited about bringing the Gospel to this people group. That morning we got out little mustard seeds and we taped them on the front of their Bibles and we told them that we're trusting the Lord, like this little mustard seed, to do work here. Then we walked out the door, all nervous, for our first day. Everybody's going to be talking about these spiritual things that we've been so excited to bring.

We walk down and pray with our co-workers and get to the trail where the trail begins to narrow. Right in the middle of the trail, there's a snake and its head has been crushed. Somebody came by with a pole or a post or something and crushed his head and it's just laying right there in the trail. We just all stopped and thought, "Yeah, this battle is the Lord's. He's the one building this church and this little mustard seed, it's going to grow. It's not dependent on us; it's the Spirit of God."

To see them now on the other end, elders who are discerning and kind and merciful and full of wisdom and able to lead—they've gone from fear and death to these leadership qualities that God promises—we know that it's just His Word. It's prayer and it's the Spirit and Him that will get His work done.

All the snapshots above represent a wide range of contexts and a lot of different challenges. We will continue to see what we can learn from these different case studies and how the WILD framework applies to them. It will help us make what can be actually quite an ambiguous process a lot more concrete as we start to see some of these patterns unfold and how these different church planters, through God's wisdom and through His Word, are able to

apply the things that they were learning from Scripture. We'll explore God's intent for these churches and see that process unfold in their individual contexts.



DISCUSSION POINTS

Snapshot of the contexts

1. As you listen to the contexts described in this tutorial, use the following headings to note anything that you think could have been a significant barrier to the Gospel.
 - Physical
 - Linguistic
 - Cultural
 - Relational
 - Other challenges related to the country or context
2. A comment was made in the video that it is easy to lose sight of the long-term goals of church planting in the context. What do you imagine are some of the possible consequences of not keeping overall goals in sight?



ACTIVITIES

Snapshot of the contexts

1. Research and in a short paragraph describe 'Buddhism'. Note down your sources of information. (You will find a 3-part video series on Buddhism at [AccessTruth.com](https://www.accesstruth.com))