

**Introduction to Back-to-Jerusalem
Bible Story Lessons #1-24**

1.	Mailu's Story.....	2
2.	Foundational Thinking Changed	2
3.	Farming and Cross-cultural Church Planting Parallels.....	4
4.	First Things First.....	5
5.	Develop Relationships with the Host Society	5
6.	Learn the Host Society's Language and Culture	6
7.	Teach the Bible Chronologically	7
8.	EE-Taow Video.....	7
9.	Debrief EE-Taow Video.....	8
10.	EE-Taow, the Next Chapter	9
11.	Debrief EE-Taow, the Next Chapter	9
12.	Discipleship and Equipping	10
13.	Summary	11
14.	Notes for Teachers.....	12

1. Mailu's Story

The Gospel had been presented several years earlier and many of the people, including Mailu, were now believers in Christ. Their response to the Gospel was phenomenal. It was more than just adding Christianity, another religion, to their traditional animistic beliefs. Their conversion was real. Step by step the validity of their beliefs had been called into question as the Word of God was taught to them. Decision by decision, the people believed God's Word and turned away from their former beliefs.

As the missionary reflected on the good changes in the tribal society, he remembered that Mailu, one of the gardening specialists, had special painted stones which were placed in his garden for its 'good health'. Later, he went to Mailu and asked him about his special painted stones.

"My friend," said the missionary, "do you still have your special painted stones which were placed in your garden to help it produce a good crop?"

"I don't have those special stones any more!" replied Mailu. "The first time I heard the Bible story about God creating all the vegetation by his spoken command, I believed it. Then I thought, 'If the Bible is true, then my stones are powerless and useless.'" After the meeting was over, I went to my garden and picked up those stones. Then I walked out along the ridge until I came to very steep bank. Then I threw the stones far away down that steep ridge. It would be impossible to find them in the dense jungle undergrowth."

"Why did you throw them away? Did someone tell you to get rid of them?" asked the missionary.

"No one told me to throw away the stones," said Mailu. "When I heard the truth about creation, I believed it. Right then I knew that those painted stones were powerless and useless. Since God is the creator and owner of everything, I threw away those stones because I knew that they were useless."

2. Foundational Thinking Changed

Let's talk about Mailu throwing away his special stones. What happened to Mailu that led him to no longer believe in his special stones? What changed his thinking?

Mailu's belief about his special stones changed in reference to his understanding of the truthfulness of God's Word. He had heard how God created time and space when he created the heavens and the earth. He had heard about God's awesome power by which he

created material from nothing, from no raw materials. He believed the Bible's truth which teaches that God simply spoke these things into existence. Mailu's worldview and was being shaped by the truth of God's word. Unknown by him at that time was the work of the Holy Spirit in his mind. As Mailu listened to the Bible stories, the Holy Spirit opened his mind made them understandable. The Holy Spirit also testified within his mind that he was hearing ultimate truth, not a mythological creation account.

At the time when Mailu threw the stones away, he had only heard Bible teaching about the first three days of creation. Yet within himself he knew that he was hearing ultimate truth. As he thought about, it he felt tension within himself. "If God's Word is true, then my belief about these stones is wrong," he reasoned. As he thought about the issue, Mailu concluded that the Word of God alone was ultimate truth.

Let's think about the tension Mailu experienced. First, as he heard the Bible stories for the first time, the Spirit of God testified to their truthfulness. That means that Mailu was convicted that he was hearing infallible truth. Then Mailu examined his own beliefs in light of what he was learning from the word of God. Within himself he experienced a tug-of-war. On the one hand, there was pressure to remain loyal to his former beliefs. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit testified to its truthfulness of the Bible stories, something his former beliefs did not provide.

As Mailu heard God's Word proclaimed he realized that an inanimate object such as a stone had no power over his garden crops. "Stones do not have life. They have no power to act or affect anything," reasoned Mailu. Then Mailu made a right rational and moral choice about his special stones. He said, "I threw them away. No one told me to throw away the stones," said Mailu. "I knew it was the right thing to do because God alone is the creator and owner of everything. That means he controls the plants that grow in my garden. However, lifeless objects like those stones have no power to do anything."

Mailu's belief in the word of God continued to grow and shape his thinking as he heard the story of God's work in history which was taught to him step-by-step. When Mailu heard new biblical truth, he believed it. Within his heart and mind a biblical worldview was being developed. It took time for Mailu to process God's truth. He and many others discussed the Bible stories many times over and over again because they wanted to understand them. When the Gospel of Christ was presented to Mailu, he believed in Christ's sacrificial work for his personal salvation. So too did many others.

Mailu's story is the result of the missionary laying the foundation for understanding the Gospel of Christ before talking about it. As this foundation was laid in Mailu's mind it led him to understand and believe in the work of Christ for his salvation. By his own

testimony he said, “How could I ever have been able to understand Christ’s work at Calvary for me without first hearing the foundational stories?”

3. Farming and Cross-cultural Church Planting Parallels

When the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth (I Corinthians 3:6-11), he used two illustrations to help us understand aspects of church planting work. These two aspects are God’s field and God’s building. Your ministry is be involved in planting of the Word of God in his field. According to 1 Corinthians 3:10, you need to be expert builders or wise farmers. Let’s take time to compare church planting work with a farmer’s work. It will help us see the importance of teaching selected Bible stories chronologically.

The Bible is full of illustrations from agriculture that are useful for us to understand important spiritual truth in relation to our spiritual lives and in relation with the church, both in the Old and New Testaments. Let’s consider the passage of **Isaiah 28:23-29** and its teachings for planting churches in other cultures.

Read Isaiah 28:23-29:

There are three main points in this passage that will help you understand important church planting principles and the importance of teaching God’s Word chronologically.

Group Activity:

Let’s talk about **Isaiah 28:23-29**.

What are the different tasks named in **Isaiah 28:23-29**?

What agricultural lessons does this passage teach us?

Do you know the five plants mentioned in this text?

Choose five different crops that you plant in your region of China and describe how you plant them.

Rehearse the steps for planting the crops you chose. What would happen to these crops if the steps for planting them were reversed or used randomly?

A farmer knows that there is a right sequence of tasks that needs to be followed for planting, growing, and harvesting a specific crop. So it is with church planting. There is no way around using these steps and it is impossible to reverse the order.

First, church planters, like farmers, need to prepare the soil before they sow the Word of God. A farmer starts by choosing the right place, a suitable field, for planting the good seed. Then he needs to remove trees, roots, rocks, or anything else that competes with the crop he wants to plant. After doing all that work, it’s important to prepare the soil according to the crop which will be planted. The farmer may need to plow, to harrow, to

break up, soften, and level the ground so that it is ready to receive good seed. Just as farmers cannot neglect the importance of good soil preparation before planting seeds, neither should church planters fail to prepare the hearts of the people they intend to teach. How should a church planter begin to prepare the soil, the hearts of the host society, for receiving the Word of God? What needs to be done to facilitate them believing the Bible's truth?

4. First Things First

Cross-cultural church planting involves doing a significant amount of tasks and an investment of time according to each situation. Obviously, the Lord directs all aspects of a church planting ministry. Just as doing the right sequence of tasks is important for farmers, it is also important for cross-cultural church planters. The first task is to survey prospective areas for ministry. During this time, the church planter seeks to find unreached communities that demonstrate the best potential for starting a church and spreading the gospel to the rest of the community (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 16:13,14). Normally, at least some of the community is open to hearing a new message. This is the open door through which communities are entered and by which good relationships begin to develop within the host society.

5. Develop Relationships with the Host Society

At all times, church planters should strive to achieve good relationships with members of the new host society. When locating in a new area, it is necessary for church planters to diligently apply themselves to the task of developing good relationships with the host society. As much as possible, develop good relationships with everyone, or at least with members of each social strata. Work through the local culture for developing good relationships with them without compromising biblical standards. In many cultures, it is necessary to have a good relationship with the leaders and other important persons. Without these relationships in order, endorsement of your presence in the community may be precarious.

Practically speaking, the importance of the relationship between the message and the messenger cannot be ignored. If the messenger has good relationships with the people, most likely they will listen to his message. But, if relationships are not good, the message will not be as readily accepted. You will need to work hard at developing good relationships with the people to best of your ability in light of the context of your situation. Make it your high priority to develop good relationships with the host society.

Let's think about this important point: The first representation of God to the host society is you, the church planter. It's your life, the way you live, that will impact them. For many people, the first Bible that they will read is your life! You will provide the first picture of what God is like to many of these people. You should strive to make that first picture a good one. If your testimony among the people is a good one, they will be predisposed to find out why you are the kind of person that you are. Whether spoken by the people or not, it's good for them to see that something about you is unusual from their point of view. It is good if they have a curiosity about you. Most likely they will not know why you are different—different in a good way—and they will want to know why.

The development of trust relationships with a new host society is essential, especially during the early days of your ministry. Though this can be challenging, intentionally try to become a friend of theirs and have them as a friend of yours. It is not enough for you to think that you have a good friendship with them. It needs to be a reality. As reciprocal friendships develop and grow, so too will a mutual trust relationship develop.

Work hard to avoid paternalistic attitudes developing within yourself. Do not allow your relationship with the host society to become clouded with paternalism. To the best of your ability, develop true friendships with the people and continually ask the Lord to help you achieve this goal. Seek to enter into reciprocal relationships with the people which will enable you to demonstrate your desire to be one of their friends and to have them as your friends.

Be wise and prudent in all of your interactions with the people. Think twice before you speak. Do not assume that you have the right to speak into every situation or answer every question. First, learn from the host society how they would respond to situations you encounter as you live among them. Observe how they handle situations while maintaining their dignity and showing respect for others. To the best of your ability, function as they do within their culture without compromising biblical truth and standards. Because this is so challenging to do, ask the Lord daily to give you wisdom in all things.

6. Learn the Host Society's Language and Culture

While you are in the process of developing good relationships with the host society, learn their language and culture. Effective communication requires both parties to be able to use a common language and understand each other. If you do not know the host society's language, learn it.

If you do not know the host society's language, how will you be able to communicate clearly with them? How will you know whether or not true communication happens?

How will you be able to clearly teach God's Word, specifically the Gospel? How will you be able to use the proper key terms for communicating essential biblical truth? Learn the host society's language well!

Understanding the core values of the host society's worldview is very important. You need to know how the people think and what they value to be most important. What do they believe about the origin of all things? What do they believe about man? What determines right from wrong? What is sin? What happens to people when they die? Do they continue to exist somewhere? What is the afterlife like? Do all people go to the same place in the afterlife?

It is important that you understand these core beliefs of the host society. Without understanding these beliefs, you will not truly understand how the teaching will impact them. With an understanding of their core beliefs, you can project what aspects of biblical teaching will be most problematic for them to understand and adjust your teaching accordingly.

7. Teach the Bible Chronologically

With a good command and understanding of the host society's language and culture, you are now ready to begin teaching the Word of God. As described above, your goal is to see people come to salvation, to grow spiritually, and to reproduce the model and the message that you provide for them.

Let's think about this question: How should a cross-cultural church planter start teaching the Bible to the host society? What method or model should be used to teach God's Word to spiritually needy people? Is there a good way to teach God's Word that facilitates people understanding it? How can the Word of God be taught so that people's hearts and minds are prepared for believing the Gospel of Christ when it is first presented to them? Is there an effective reproducible model that should be used?

8. EE-Taow Video

Let's watch this video called **EE-Taow**. It accurately shows how an animistic tribe responded to the Word of God as it was taught to them. It describes laying a foundation for understanding the Gospel before teaching the Gospel to the people.

The method of teaching, which lays a foundation in preparation of presenting the Gospel, is called chronological Bible teaching. The teaching begins at the beginning of the Bible, not at an arbitrary place in the Bible, and it teaches important selected Bible stories that

are helpful for bringing people to trust in the work of Christ for their salvation. Step by step the Bible's teaching unfolds for the hearer in its historical and chronological setting.

You too will learn how to teach the Bible chronologically. This is the way you will teach the Bible lessons to others. As you watch the video, think about similarities and contrasts with the context of your ministry. Observe and take notes of the principles the missionary used when teaching the people.

9. Debrief EE-Taow Video

Let's talk about the video:

What happened in this video that is so captivating?

What principles did the missionary use that were new to you?

What principles do you think were the most important for presenting the Gospel?

What do you think about this method of teaching?

What do you think about teaching God's Word for three months before presenting the Gospel of Christ?

Let's talk about some of the tasks involved in this ministry:

Learned the language and culture thoroughly first.

Started with what the people already knew before introducing new truth.

Told the story from the beginning ... did not start in the middle.

Laid a foundation for the final message by teaching the background first.

Didn't give all the answers – let the people puzzle things out for themselves.

Let it make sense to the Mouk by using Mouk actors ... not foreign drama.

Didn't rush into one-by-one Western style commitments ... actually didn't ask for commitments at all.

The host society heard and understood the Bible's message as it was presented to them in chronological order. The people were able to trust in the work of Christ for their personal salvation because the Gospel message made sense to them. They did not merely add the Bible stories to their traditional beliefs. The Word of God displaced their faulty beliefs step by step and a new biblical worldview developed which governed their thinking and living. What you saw in this movie is the first part of the ultimate goal of a missionary's work.

10. EE-Taow, the Next Chapter

As you teach the Bible stories to people, objectively you want to see people come to salvation through Christ. Then you want to see those believers continue to grow in biblical knowledge and understanding of their new relationship with God through Christ. You want to see the new group of believers meeting as church with their own pastors, teachers, and evangelists. You want to see the church reproduce itself, plant other churches, and impact the world around them! Your personal vision and goal should be to plant strong and reproducing churches among the people group to whom the Lord is sending you.

Let's carefully watch the video called, *EE-Taow, the Next Chapter*. Observe how the new believers were discipled and equipped for doing the Lord's work. Write down your observations and note the principles as they are used in this video.

11. Debrief EE-Taow, the Next Chapter

Let's talk about the video you just watched:

Name some principles which directed the way the missionary worked with the new believers?

How did the missionary motivate the new believers to get involved in church planting work?

What obstacles did the missionary need to overcome in order to train the new believers to teach God's Word?

Who did the missionary have to trust in order to engage the new believers in the ministry? Who else?

How did having a good trust relationship with the people help the missionary to actually involve the new believers in church planting work?

Do you think the missionary would have engaged the new believers in church planting work if his attitude toward them was paternalistic? Explain your answer.

Let's talk about the new believers' response to the missionary's challenge to engage themselves in church planting work:

How did the people respond to the challenge of being equipped for ministry?

What obstacles did the people need to overcome?

What practical obstacles or adjustments did the new believers encounter as they were trained and equipped for church planting work?

Who did the new believers need to trust as they engaged in ministry? Who else?

Does the historical example in this video help you see the importance of discipling the new believers as soon as possible?

Let's talk about how the new believers actually did their church planting work:

Did they follow the model used to reach them?

Did they work in teams with each member knowing how to do their part?

Did they have a mutual trust and respect for each other?

Did the Lord work through them effectively? Were there people saved through their ministry?

Did the outcome of their ministry differ from the outcome of the missionary's ministry?

An important point for you to remember is this: **What you win them with, you win them to.** That means if you teach the Bible stories well using a good reproducible model, those who come to faith will likewise tend to teach others in the same way. In that manner, the Gospel of Christ can spread to others as it should with the purity of the message preserved.

12. Discipleship and Equipping

Church planting work is not just a missionary's task. It is the task of the new church and they need to be challenged to get involved. The new believers in *EE-Taow, the Next Chapter*, were challenged to take the Gospel to other villages on the day of their salvation. Of course, the missionary knew that they were not equipped to do so. At this stage, they were challenged to be engaged in church planting work before they became 'routine Christians' content with their salvation but without a desire to see others saved.

New believers should be involved in church planting work as soon as it is practical. They need to share their testimony in an appropriate way without creating unnecessary barriers. Often, church planters wait too long before involving the new believers in the ministry. This flawed approach tends to take the life out of the new church. In your ministry, intentionally disciple the new believers for serving the Lord including doing church planting work as the Lord directs.

Who should be trained for ministry? Initially, you should work with any believer who will work with you in a student-teacher relationship. This relationship is important so that the student will learn the 'how-to' of ministry while being accountable to his teacher during the stage of development. With that principle in mind, be sure that you do not allow it to turn into a paternalistic relationship. In all your discipleship activity and training, work hard at avoiding the new believer having an unhealthy dependency upon you for his spiritual development. Your discipleship should lead them to depend upon the Lord more and more as they mature spiritually. As they become more dependent upon the Lord, they will experience the reality of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Most effective, life-changing discipleship occurs in context of everyday situations. That means you should take student-disciples with you as you do your ministry. In daily life events, you model for them how to live biblical truth. Your model provides a practical example of the Lord's servant relying upon the Lord and the leading of the Holy Spirit as you engage in your ministry work. If you, the teacher, is called upon to help resolve an issue, do it with the student-disciples so they can see a real-life example of ministry.

In time, more prominent leaders will emerge from the whole group of believers. These should be discipled for the ministry with the objective of identifying the church's first leaders. It is best to follow the biblical standards for church leadership when identifying and ordaining church leaders. Traditional models for leadership selection may compete with the biblical model so you need to be prepared to spend as much time as necessary to see the goal of biblical leadership realized.

13. Summary

Remember this: **What you win them with is what you win them to.** Teaching the Word of God chronologically is a good way to present the Word of God so that it develops a biblical worldview in the host society members' minds. Before Mailu trusted in Christ for his salvation, step by step he believed the new-to-him biblical truth and he rejected his former false beliefs. Teaching important Bible stories chronologically was key to his conversion to Christianity from animism.

Selected Bible stories which focus on God's work in history for the redemption of mankind are taught. The focus of these stories is history's main character, God, and how he worked in each historical event. Teaching the Bible chronologically lends to people seeing the importance and supremacy of God instead of focusing on the subjective needs of man and the importance of man. It lends to new believers catching the vision to reach others with the Gospel of Christ. It lends to new believers reproducing the model used to win them to Christ and disciple them for ministry.

Years have passed since Mailu and others first believed in Christ for their salvation. Yet the indigenous church continues to function. Every outreach is conducted following the model first introduced to them by the missionary. **Truly, what you win them with is what you win them to!**

14. Notes for Teachers

Introduction Points #1-2: Mailu's story is told to emphasize the necessity of laying a foundation for understanding the Gospel of Christ before teaching it. As Mailu was taught

selected stories which highlight God's work in history for the redemption of mankind, his whole thinking changed. Step by step he believed the Bible's teaching and discarded former animistic beliefs and practices. When the Gospel was presented, beliefs and practices which normally would be syncretized with the Gospel, had already been judged to be wrong. This facilitated Mailu believing in the work of Christ for his salvation. He did not believe the Gospel while at the same time hold onto faulty animistic mythological beliefs.

Usually, church planters are anxious to teach the Gospel to people with the expectation that at least some will be saved. They reason that as soon as there are new believers, they can more readily be discipled and trained for ministry. They rationalize that it will be easier for the new believer to understand the Old Testament stories once they are believers. That is flawed thinking!

That's not the way God worked in history. Progressively, God revealed himself in history. That is why selected Bible stories in chronological order from the Old Testament and New Testament need to be taught first to lay a foundation for understanding the gospel of Christ. People can only exercise faith in the work of Christ for their salvation if they understand the issues involved. They need to understand who God is, who man is, what is sin and against whom does one sin, and who the person of Christ is. It takes time to establish these fundamental truths in the minds of the people we teach. Remember, God chose to reveal himself over a period of time, not all at once.

When the selected Bible stories are taught over a period of time it gives people the opportunity to mentally digest and understand the lessons. These lessons include new teaching as well as calculated redundancy. Then, when the Gospel of Christ is presented, it is more readily understood because it is the logical and historical conclusion of God's work in history up to this point. This is how it happened for Mailu and hundreds of others in his village and other villages in his people group as well. (*EE-Taow* video shows this response.)

Introduction Point #3: The point in this section should not be hard to understand. Contextualize the teaching in this section so that it relates to the host society. Each person should choose an plant familiar to them during the **Group Activity**. You want everyone to see how the planting procedure and the sequence of tasks involved is according to a specific plant. And, you want to stress that haphazardly planting a good seed will not yield a maximum harvest. Proper soil preparation is necessary and doing each task involved in the right sequence is important.

Introduction Points #7-9: Now that you have talked about teaching selected Bible

stories chronologically, show the *EE-Taow* video and then discuss it.

Here are two ways the video has been used in training. First, show the entire video if you want to motivate the viewers with the testimonies of the missionaries involved. Doing this takes more time, but, at times helps viewers relate to the way God uses ordinary people for his special work of reaching people with the Gospel of Christ.

The second way it is used focuses more on the chronological teaching method. Usually the video is fast forwarded/prepared to start at approximately the 11:35 minutes mark, the place where the narrator is walking in the village with his Bible and says, “What you truly believe does affect what you do ...”

The debriefing time is important. Ask each set of questions and give time for answers. It is best to give a little extra time for interaction if necessary. Then complete the teaching of this section of the Introduction.

Encourage everyone to think about the input in this session. Encourage them to interact with each other and discuss what they learned.

Dismiss the class. The rest of the Introduction will be taught in another session.

Lesson Point #10-12:

This session builds on the last one and it goes beyond the content of Bible lessons 1-24.

Before you start this session, take time to review the previous session. Ask the people to share with everyone the important things they learned in the last session. Try to involve as many persons as possible and listen carefully to their statements, questions, and answers.

To prepare them for viewing *EE-Taow, the next Chapter*, go over the debriefing questions from the first video, *EE-Taow*. Again, allow sufficient time for answers and discussion. But, do not spend too much time in this exercise so that the rest of the Introduction points can be covered in this session.

Then view the entire *EE-Taow, the next Chapter* video. In this video they will see rehearsed in a condensed manner the effect of teaching the Bible chronologically to the host society. Tell everyone to note any observations for later discussion.

After having viewed the video, debrief using the questions in this section. The questions in the debriefing section are divided into three categories. The first ones focus on the missionary doing his work and relating to the host society. The second set of questions focus on the host society and their response to the message as well as the way they were

initially trained for ministry.

The third set of questions focuses more on the new believers reproducing the model of church planting work which was used to evangelize them. This aspect of the second video goes beyond the content of Bible Lessons 1-24. However, these questions are included here (and should not be skipped) so that before you start your ministry, you will have some understanding of the big picture of church planting which goes beyond bringing people to salvation through Christ. It involves discipleship, training, empowering through equipping, and committing the work of church planting the new indigenous church.