

BEHAVIOR TRANSFORMATION IN FILIPINO CHRISTIAN WOMEN

By Dr. Kimberley Snider

After spending more than twenty years in the Philippines producing discipleship tools for Filipino Christians, I wanted to know: Does the Gospel really have transformational power?

Tired of hearing religious platitudes about “trusting that God was doing something even though I couldn’t see it,” I conducted a grounded-theory study on behavior transformation among Filipino women. The research was designed to discover whether or not transformation of behavior occurred after conversion. If I found that it did, I wanted to understand how the process of transformation unfolded among Filipino women, and to discover the catalysts for the change process. This paper summarizes the findings of my research and underlines the importance of the Bible as a catalyst in the transformational process.

Research Methodology

To find the answers to questions about the transformational process, I completed twenty-four semi-structured interviews involving urban Filipino women. They ranged in age from twenty-two to sixty-two, identified themselves as having become born-again Christians as adults, and came from a Roman Catholic background. All had quit attending Roman Catholic churches by the time I interviewed them. These participants were selected by referral from reputable pastors or Christian leaders. All of them had attended college, and all were members of various segments of the middle class.

In view of the fact that women are the “heart” of the Filipino family, and sometimes the power brokers, I expected that a discovery of the process of how born-again Filipino women change their behavior patterns—perhaps in ways that are counter cultural—might provide valuable insight into how Christian workers could facilitate the behavior transformation process.

Behavior Transformation—A Consequence of Conversion

My personal observations spanning two decades in the Philippines had led me to believe that Filipino Christians did not always expect behavior change after conversion, either from themselves or from others. Due to the non-confrontational nature of Filipino culture, pastors seldom addressed behavior issues directly. Additionally, both lay Christians and pastors repeatedly told me that I should not expect people to automatically change their behavior when their “culture script” differed from the Bible. As a result, I formed the opinion that behavior change after conversion either did not matter much to Filipinos or did not happen much.

My Opinion Changed

It is crucial to understand that my beliefs about behavior transformation in the Filipino context have totally changed as a result of this study. I have now come to believe that if there is no behavior transformation, Filipinos themselves do not view conversion as genuine. In each of my interviews, participants conveyed their expectation that conversion would result in behavior transformation for themselves and for anyone else who became born again.

Each individual I interviewed recounted, without hesitation, how her behavior changed after conversion. In fact, one of them dated her conversion from the time that she changed her behavior instead of from the time that she believed. The only variances I found were in what changed, how long it took, and how the process occurred.

I have come to believe that my own mono-culturalism and Western Protestant background blinded me to all that transformation really entails in the Philippines. I was listening for strong verbal statements of change of spiritual allegiance. I was expecting immediate cessation of drunkenness, resignation from companies with questionable ethics, and termination of immoral living arrangements. I was looking so hard for these behavior changes that I did not see what was really happening.

While the things I delineated do indeed happen after conversion, they are neither the most important, nor the first change, in a Filipina’s behavior pattern. The most important and immediate change after conversion, according to my interviews, was that Filipinas stopped worshipping idols. Behavior transformation began with obedience to the First and Second Commandments.

Definitions and Clarifications

Before I unpack the results of my study, it is important to clarify that the practices of Filipino “folk Catholicism” are not all sanctioned by the official Roman Catholic Church. The data I present here are qualitative, so the conclusions I have drawn derive from the stories and opinions of the women that I interviewed. These opinions may or may not reflect the official stance of the Roman Catholic Church of the Philippines.

Also, it is important to explain what I mean by the word “conversion.” In this paper, I define it as the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual, enabling him or her to make a personal decision to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, not as initiation into church membership. The words “saved” or “born again” are used by some Filipino participants to mean “converted.”

Lastly, it is necessary to explain my definition of ‘worldview.’ Worldview includes the way that persons look at others, at their life circumstances, and at their purpose as human beings. It influences how people process what happens to them and affects behavior. Worldview affects the way people see and understand their Creator, thus it comprises their theology. It also encompasses the way people engage with their own cultural paradigms and biblical behavior options.

The Ways Behavior Changes

My study participants explained that their post-conversion behavior transformation consisted of two parts. The first part was the termination of behavior that they determined was counter to the tenets of their new faith. The second part involved establishing new behavior patterns.

Behavior that Stops

The behavioral changes regarding the things that the participants stopped doing made a deep impression on me that led to my change of opinion noted above. The transformation of their behavior suggests that the participants had grasped the truth of the gospel and had applied it to their lives.

Worship of Idols

The first behavior transformation to take place after conversion among the women I interviewed was that they ceased worshipping idols. They were adamant that their conversion was what initiated this change. Although professional Catholic clergy claim that images are not really worshiped but only depict Jesus or the saints to draw attention to them, all my study participants declared they had believed and practiced the opposite. They said the images were not reminders to them but rather idols that they actually worshiped. The following is a typical statement: “What I remember was we have all these saints, idols. I used to pray at night to those idols. But right after I accepted Christ, I cannot even look at those idols.”

Praying to Mary

Eleven of the twenty-four interviewees declared that they worshiped and prayed to Mary before their conversion. In fact, they said that their relationship with Mary was more important to them than their relationship with her Son. They depended on her to answer their prayers and forgive their sins. One woman reported that she prayed to Mary as soon as possible after she committed a sin so that the sin would not be counted against her. Another related that she had been raped and during this experience had cried out for help to Mary, not Jesus. Stopping Mary worship and getting rid of images of Mary proved to be a defining moment for the participants who had depended on her. They also gave up the notion of multiple mediators for sin. One young lady said, “There’s only one mediator. Because when you’re Catholic you seem to be praying to so many people not just to God, go to Mary.”

Practice of Various Rites

Ten of the women interviewed claimed they were “saying the rosary” regularly before they became born again. Interestingly, even when doing so, they did not feel they benefited from it, one reporting: “So seems like I am going to church every day and of course the rosary. . . . But, I haven’t seen that changing in me. Feel like I am not doing anything good at all.” By the time I interviewed them, not only had all ten given up saying the rosary, they had also stopped saying novenas, practicing repetitious praying, and wearing the scapular. In conjunction

with stopping the practice of these rites, they had destroyed the paraphernalia that went with them fairly soon after their conversion. Their reason was extremely practical—Why should they keep something that did not work? They recognized religious articles were powerless. “So why will I be afraid?” one woman asked. “I am stronger than holding that number of beads of that rosary. I am much stronger now.”

Confession to a Priest

Another behavior that study participants stopped after their conversion was participating in routine confession to a priest. Instead, they began to confess their faults directly to God, which they found more difficult than confessing to a priest because they said that when they talked to God, honesty was not optional. One woman reported:

Because . . . it is so easy to go to confession and get the priest’s blessing and he says, “Child, you’re forgiven.” Moreover, it’s easier than confessing directly to God. . . . It’s like who you fooling? You know it’s so difficult to go back to God after you’ve sinned. Because it is you and Him, there’s nothing you can hide from Him.

Attending a Catholic Church

As previously stated, by the time I interviewed them, all study participants had stopped attending the Catholic Church, some for doctrinal reasons, others because they appreciated more demonstrative forms of worship and fellowship. Explaining why she began attending a non-Catholic Christian church, one said, “I was just so inspired. How can they have a God like this who inspires them to worship this way? So I came back again, and again, and again until I got saved.”

For some participants, leaving the Catholic Church was a welcome relief because they had never enjoyed it. Others found it to be a wrenching break with their families and their identity. For a while, some of the participants tried to attend both the Catholic Church and their born-again fellowships. Eventually, however, those I interviewed came to feel they had to leave the Catholic Church. Several told me that they believed some Roman Catholics had a relationship with Christ, but staying in the church was something that they personally could not do.

Behavior that Starts

Behavior transformation after conversion includes acquiring new as well as abandoning old behavior patterns. My study participants listed their newly acquired behaviors as: Bible reading, prayer, tithing, and serving.

Bible Reading

After being born again, all twenty-four women started to read the Bible and, in most cases, immediately upon conversion. Many were encouraged to do so by those who were discipling them. They said that Bible reading was the key motivating force behind their decision to destroy family idols. All of them appreciated the freedom to read the Bible and noted its life- changing quality, as this participant affirmed:

When I became born again. I could not have enough with the Bible. I would read sometimes 24 hours you know. I didn't feel sleepy, didn't feel tired because I felt the presence of the Lord then. I did not understand it was the presence of the Lord but there was something that was really good.

Prayer

After conversion, most of the women said that prayer took on a more informal quality and became personal. One told me that before conversion she did not pray at all; now she prays for everything from getting a parking place to purchasing a new business. This same lady also said that, since all her professional friends know she is born again, she is always asked to pray spontaneously in large social and professional gatherings.

Tithing

My study participants also started tithing. One admitted that it was difficult for her because she kept thinking, "I can buy a lot of things with that tithe." However, she now attributes her family's financial success and retreat from bankruptcy to the obedience of tithing.

Serving

Lastly, most of the women are now involved in activities they see as service unto the Lord. Three of them expressed that, if individuals were not serving, they did not have a real walk with God. One told me: “Kasi [because] . . . You can’t just say, “OK Lord, you’re my Lord and my Savior, but I’m not doing anything about it.”

Worldview Change Influences Behavior

As I analyzed my research, I realized that the transformation that occurred in the lives of my study participants encompassed more than the rejection of former religious practices and the adoption of new ones. Rather, it was really one of a personal worldview change, which became the underlying motivator for their behavior changes. I discovered that the women’s worldview had changed in three ways: (1) they saw life’s purpose in terms of God’s kingdom rather than in terms of fate or personal whim; (2) their spiritual understanding matured; and (3) their cultural paradigms were revised to fit a growing understanding of the Bible.

New Life Purpose

After being born-again, the study participants’ recognition of the purpose for their lives changed to one of seeing God’s hand, not fate, in the things that happened to them and in their lives in terms of His kingdom. Most admitted that, before their conversion, they wanted money and material things above everything else. Those priorities changed as they realized God had a plan for their lives outside of making money. One said:

Before, I’m thinking I’m here on earth just for myself and my family. But as I learn every day and as I pray and read the Bible I realize that I’m here, I was sent here, not to live for myself but for a purpose; like everybody has a purpose and I have my purpose. And now, I’m confident that God will provide my every need.

The realization that God had different priorities than they had led the participants to believe that obeying God must encompass the way they made and used money. For example, one of the women quit her

job as an insurance salesperson because of the pressure to give sexual favors to men who bought her policies. Two others told me they were so passionate about their new faith that they became concerned for people in general and shared their faith whenever they could. One woman recalled: "I look at them and I pity them. That's right. Because I know I have something, I have somebody in my heart that they do not have. So I was on fire even in the bus; if I had the chance to talk with them, I shared with them."

Mature Spiritual Understanding

Many of the participants talked about coming to terms with the reality of the person of Christ and knowing Jesus intimately. They had not known Him in this way before being born again. One woman described the difference this way:

I can remember that he was talking about Jesus, and a different kind of Jesus than I knew. He was different. He was somebody that you could know, He was somebody, in fact . . . this is somebody that you can touch and have. It was something personal; it wasn't about a Jesus that was up there when I would pray and hear nothing.

Another evidence of matured spiritual understanding was the participants' revelation with regard to sin. They underlined that after conversion they knew when they were sinning and what they should do about it. One of the women shared:

Before, I don't know that what I'm doing is a sin. I have no conviction at all. Unlike now, even the small things that I'm doing that is not OK with the Lord I felt the Holy Spirit's conviction already. And it's so different that you know there is something in your heart that you really need to confess it. Anything you do that you learned wrong, you have to confess it and you even have to cry. Sometimes you have to pour out what's in your heart. Unlike before that it's, it's just nothing. Sin is nothing . . . Unlike now I'm just scared to once again commit sin. I'm afraid of the Lord.

As the participants understood sin for the first time, they also began to understand more fully what salvation meant.

They talked about a sense of relief as they realized their future was now secure. One commented: “So, that was the main difference between when I was a Catholic and when I received Christ—that I’m not scared to die. I know where I’m going when I die.”

Revised Cultural Paradigms

Because my original motivation for this research was to discover if and how transformation took place after conversion I asked the study participants for their views about Christianity as it compared or contrasted with their culture.

They were divided as to whether they felt their new behavior aligned with or went counter to Filipino culture. A number of them equated Filipino culture with Catholic culture—i.e., “to be Filipino is to be Catholic.” Therefore, it was a new concept for some of them to think of Filipino culture as separate from and different than the Catholic faith.

A number of participants stated that Filipino culture definitely ran counter to their new beliefs. According to one woman, Filipino culture entailed celebrating fiestas, borrowing at high interest rates, gambling, drinking, smoking, and cursing. As a result, she saw her born-again behavior, which rejected these activities, as counter-cultural. Another participant felt her new born-again behavior was counter-cultural because she had not taken her family elders’ advice regarding her religious beliefs. She said: “In Filipino culture, older people know better so they should be listened to and obeyed about the church and religion.” Still another participant felt Filipino superstitions were so strong in the culture that to deny them, something her new faith caused her to do, was counter-cultural behavior.

By contrast, some participants felt that their transformed behavior readily aligned with Filipino culture. One woman described her transformation as not really that different from what other Filipinos believed, just a deeper understanding of what she already knew. Another felt that her transformation aligned with the culture because: “Filipinos are originally religious already. And so, I think there hasn’t been a problem with me in regards to shifting into a new faith.” Still another felt that the Filipino culture is largely biblical because of the strong family ties, saying that Filipinos have close families even after the children are grown, and that Filipinos are concerned about their neighbors and help each other in times of crisis.

Another participant said that, as a born-again woman, she still could practice some, but not all, of the Filipino cultural values, such as *utang na loob* (i.e., debt of gratitude) because she was grateful to those who had helped her, but not *pakikisama* (i.e., doing whatever it takes to insure smooth interpersonal relationships). An older woman who used to love saying the rosary said, “This is the Filipino culture; we pray every six o’clock the rosary. Now I don’t pray the rosary. I pray directly to the Lord, but its six o’clock, the same six o’clock.”

As the participants’ recounted their conversions and subsequent behavior transformation, the impact of their new behavior—both on them and those around them—became evident. One middle-aged lady articulated that Christian behavior transformation could potentially affect the culture as a whole. She said:

The Filipinos . . . a large percent of us still have to have a relationship with Christ. Because there would be a great change if we Filipinos, if most of the Filipinos, if all the Filipinos should start a true saving relationship with Christ.

Catalysts for Transformation

What sparks the process of change in Filipino women after conversion? My research identified four transformation catalysts—(1) spiritual disciplines, (2) God’s activity, (3) the individual’s desire to change, and (4) the individual’s relationships with others.

Spiritual Disciplines

I have already identified two spiritual disciplines as catalysts for behavior change—Bible reading and prayer. My Filipina participants credited Bible reading and knowledge as impacting personal transformation (i.e., their specific behavior and worldview) more than any other catalysts. There were many comments about how the Bible had empowered personal change, one of the most salient being: “The ones who are deep in the Bible are the ones who change or try to change. Because the ones who don’t read the Bible and aren’t familiar with His truth and expectations don’t have any motivation to change.”

From my interviews, three themes emerged from the data that identified how the Bible facilitated fundamental personal change. First, the Bible caused the women to put aside their personal agendas and submit to Christ.

Secondly, the Bible revealed to them what behaviors should change or be eliminated. One woman said that Bible reading motivated her to stop drinking and another to stop cursing. I also discovered that reading the Bible changed the view participants had of their traditions and, in some cases, caused them to terminate their practice of those traditions. For instance, when I asked, "How did you know idolatry was wrong?," one answered: "It is in the Bible." This same woman told me that the Bible was why she quit going to Mama Mary for help, saying:

The Bible did not say that we have to go to Mama Mary. So if that is what in your mind, well it's your choice. But it's my choice [to stop praying to Mama Mary] because it is written so I have to follow. Because I know the words here in the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by the human being.

Thirdly, the Bible empowered counter-cultural behavior. For example, one Filipino cultural mandate is filial obedience to fathers in areas like education, career choice, and religion. One of my interviewees reported she had taken a strong stand for Christ in her early teens even though her parents were against her born-again faith. When I asked how she had been able to do this, she said: "I think because there are some verses that say the truth will set you free. So I think I just need to speak up what the truth is. And the truth is because I am seeking the real God."

The participants think that prayer has the potential to empower behavior change in those who are praying, as well as those being prayed for. If personal transformation was slow or transient instead of permanent in nature, they felt that it was likely prayer had been lacking. One said: "Maybe they don't give much time in praying. Because if you will continue to pray, it's impossible that you will not feel those kinds of discernment coming from God."

God's Activity

God's involvement is another catalyst that emerged from my research as motivating change. The participant who became born again at the youngest age of any whom I had interviewed told me about how her perception of God's presence changed her: "When my Sunday school teacher taught me to pray, I felt God's presence. I felt that He hears my prayer. I felt that He's there, that He's alive."

In addition to God's presence, His kindness emerged as generating transformational response. Among the Filipinas I interviewed, God's kindness to them motivated a desire to reciprocate by changed behavior, as this comment illustrates:

I would say it's His kindness; the kindness of the Lord in my life. Because I've experienced a lot of hardships but every time that I would ask Him to help me, He will always help me. He will always be there. So, I was thinking, what kind of a person, what kind of a daughter am I to hurt my Father [by my unbiblical actions] who is so good to me?

A third way God empowered change was when the Holy Spirit directly instructed people to change. Two of the women referred to the Holy Spirit as "the voice in my head." Another said that miracles done by the Holy Spirit were change catalysts for transformation: "When they see a miracle, they change." Many participants also noted that knowing Christ personally as enabled by the Holy Spirit as well as knowing what is written about Him causes transformation. One put it this way: "It's just you can't help but change. Because this Person truly, this God up there, this Mighty Being loves you so much so that He's willing to die for you . . . and then after that, you can't help but change."

Individual Desire to Change

Participants said transformation also depends on each individual's depth of commitment, their concern for God's happiness, their felt needs, and their life experiences. Their responses indicated that the desire to change after conversion comes at different times for different people. While almost everyone stopped idol worship immediately, other behaviors took longer to change. Deeper commitment to Christ, the women explained, brings about more profound behavior transformation, as the following affirms:

In my opinion, I think it's your relationship with Jesus. It's how deep it is. *Kasi* even if I attend all the seminars around, then I read the Bible 20 times a day, but if I don't love Him, it's just nothing at the end . . . If they love that person who gives them life then I am very sure that their lives would change.

Another thing that influenced transformation was how much a person cared about God's feelings—for instance, whether or not they loved God enough to desire to spare Him pain. One of the interviewees illustrated it this way:

Drinking, like if I want to go back to that again; well, I'm just, I'm just looking at . . . would that hurt my God if I'd did that? For example, if I wanted a relationship [with another woman], would that hurt my God? . . . The bottom line of it is, it's how you love God. It's still the love for your God. If you love Him, you have to show Him that you love Him by what you're doing and by the changes in your life. Because if you love a person, you won't want him hurt. And I didn't want to hurt Him; that's why I'm trying to be good. . . . I'm asking the Holy Spirit to help me to change because I want to be good for my God. Because He loves me.

Lastly, their desire to change was influenced by the participants' felt needs. One of the most interesting stories recounted was the transformation in one woman's family that came about as a result of a perceived demonic presence. She was praying constantly for her family because her parents were living with different partners. One night a demon spirit physically attacked her sister. This so scared the parents that they quit their adultery, reconciled with each other, became born again Christians and started attending church faithfully.

One woman suggested that people are open to transformation if they need healing. She reported that her brother's illness caused her mother to attend an evangelistic crusade—something, as a Catholic, she had not been willing to do before. Another participant confessed that she had neglected God; but when she suffered a stroke, she asked forgiveness for that neglect. A pastor's wife articulated that, in addition to sickness, financial problems, depression, and emptiness drive people to seek the Lord.

Relationships with Others

The final category of factors that energize change is that of relationships. Discipling relationships are strong catalysts for transformation; but for them to be effective, the disciplers must be credible and available. Behavior transformation must be evident in the disciplers' lives. Various participants also stressed that, in the Filipino

context, persons who are discipling must be readily available to those being disciplined. One woman said that her discipler called her every morning and prayed with her. Another related that her pastor came to her office weekly for Bible study and to pray with her. The participants explained that Filipinas want to talk and thus view availability as a part of a transformational discipleship relationship. One said:

There's a word that we use always, *tutok*. Tutok is you focus yourself on him; you know you're always there for the person. Anytime, 24/7 they can call you and if anything happens, you know, you're there. That's what we called *tutok*, you focus on that person; you follow through.

Culturally Appropriate Delivery Systems That Elicit Change

During the interview process, it became apparent that how information was communicated could affect whether or not transformation occurred. But although some of the Filipinas articulated learning style preferences, none of them ever stated that one presentation method was totally without value or that any one teaching method was the best for presenting information. Instead, the women's comments consistently emphasized that the life and actions of the communicator was what validated or invalidated whatever information or delivery method was used. Unlike a western mindset, which views information as separate from the information giver, Filipinos could not accept spiritual truth that was separate from the life of the communicator.

The Discipler's Life

My interviewees unanimously agreed that they had to see their disciplers as persons of integrity whose own behavior mirrored scriptural principles in order for them to take their discipleship instruction seriously. The participants generalized that, if people's lives did not match their words, most Filipinos would discount their instruction and not feel obligated to mimic their behavior. One woman said that a person would only have the right to talk to others about wrong behavior if their own behavior was right.

A reason that a discipler's integrity is so important is because Filipinos learn by example. One of the newer believers among the study participants told me that she was making an effort to witness by

her example to her non-born again friends; in her mind, a good example extended to every part of her life, not just religious issues. She said:

By the way I speak, the way I wear clothes, it's good that they are noticing it and they're mentioning it and . . . I was like very thankful to Him because even if I don't speak, His light will shine and people will know *na* how really different their life will be if you know Him, if your God is Jesus.

Besides looking at the integrity and example of someone's life, the participants also considered how their disciplers related to them personally. They explained that a good relationship allows one person to influence another; and, conversely, a poor relationship closes the door to influence. One woman, referring to her church and pastor as part of her family, explained that because of this close relationship, her church community was able to help her and her husband learn new behaviors and beliefs that saved their marriage.

A particular behavior transformation that emerged from my study as especially dependent on good relationships was regular church attendance. One interviewee confessed that there was a two-year period of time when she stopped attending church because she did not feel a part of that fellowship anymore. She said: "Then a church mate visited me and asked, 'Why don't I see you in church now?' Then I felt like, 'Oh, I was missed.'" She resumed attending church again right away.

Confrontation by one believer to another about his or her behavior is one way to illuminate the need for change. However, in Filipino culture, confrontation is only possible when strong relationships exist and it must be done privately. One woman said direct confrontation is so difficult for Filipinos that she prays hard before she ever attempts it. Although she confronted people regularly at work, she had never tried confrontation in her personal friendships. Instead, she would tell the friend a story about someone in a like situation and give her opinion of what should be done in that situation, hoping that the friend she wants to direct will "pick up" on it.

This is not to say that direct confrontation regarding behavior never happens in the culture. One of the older interviewees says that she does not follow Filipino cultural dictates regarding confrontation but rather talks directly to the persons she feels need correction. She says she does this because "I was taught by the Bible to be honest with myself. That's the reason I want people to be honest with themselves also."

Although only one study participant admitted to practicing direct confrontation, all of them said that, if they needed correction or instruction regarding their behavior, they would want to be told about it directly, without third party involvement. One said that she wanted the direct approach as well as specifics on exactly what she did or said that was wrong even though she admitted it would be hurtful.

When participants deemed confrontation impossible, their recourse was prayer, asking that God would speak to the person who needed to change or send someone else to do the confronting. One woman said:

Because I don't have that confidence in confronting them, or talking to them, explaining to them, this and that, because I'm afraid that they might think, "Who are you to talk to me like that? Your being a Christian doesn't give you a license or the right to enter my life." So what I'm doing is I'm praying for that specific person, and I'm confident that God will send somebody to them to help them. Not me.

Listening

Several Filipina participants emphasized that it is vital to earn the right to give instructions or advice by listening first. Listening builds a relationship that grants the listener the right to speak into the life of the other person.

Using Scripture

One technique participants suggested for giving information on how behavior should change is using Scripture to correct someone rather than using one's own words. This technique avoids direct personal criticism and places the "blame" for the potentially hurtful information on the Bible rather than on the instructor. One of the women said:

I respect their religion. I don't say anything against them. When we talk about the Lord, I only say what I written in the Bible . . . because they all keep on telling me, "Why you don't pray to Mama Mary, which we usually do?" Then I just tell them. "The Bible says that we have to pray to the Lord, because we cannot go to the Father if we will not go to Jesus first. The Bible did not say that we have to go to Mama Mary.

So if that is what's in your mind, well it's your choice. But it's my choice because it is written so I have to follow. Because I know this, the words here in the Bible, this was inspired by the Holy Spirit written by the human being.”

Text Messaging or Letter Writing

One of the younger interviewees suggested text messaging as a means people could use to communicate with her if they felt she needed to change her behavior. She said text messaging would give her time to think about what was said rather than just react. Letter writing was another activity participants found effective and non-threatening.

Direct Instruction

Although in most cases, direct instruction for the purpose of motivating behavior change is deemed impolite or insulting in the Filipino context, participants conceded that there are times when direct instruction is appropriate. One example is when one person is older than the person that she is trying to instruct, especially adult to child.

Storytelling

My research participants agreed that storytelling is a good tool for teaching and motivating change. In a Filipino context, storytelling is used to cite examples of good or bad behavior and give hints as to who should change what in their lives without saying so openly. While a variety of story types can be used, drama and soap operas were cited as being particularly popular. Parables from the Bible and true-life testimonies were also noted as effective story forms for motivating change.

Other Learning Techniques

Study participants mentioned other techniques them to grasp concepts about behavior transformation. Reading received strong support as a preferred learning method; many talked about Bible reading as what changed the way they acted, as this statement illustrates:

When I was reading the Bible, it's like the Spirit of God talking to me. But during that time it's like I'm reading for the first time something that I can understand. Something that my spirit is being fed. Something like that.

Experience was also mentioned. "Good and bad experiences in the past have taught me and made me who I am today," one woman declared. In addition to learning from their own experiences, participants said they learned from the experience of others.

Also, small group learning is both effective and popular, according to a number of interview respondents. One reason is that this learning method is a format wherein people can ask questions.

Detrimental Communication Styles

I also discovered several communication styles the participants deemed detrimental to the learning or correction process. Being too blunt does not encourage behavior change. A mature Christian woman said this regarding her pastor's poor method of presenting the Gospel when she was considering becoming born again:

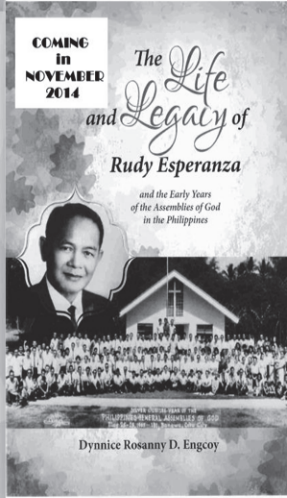
But then I, I told him directly, "Pastor, if I have heard the plan of salvation from you, I will not be saved. Because, you know the Baptists. When you die where are you going? *Di ba* bluntly they will say that 'Oh, you will go on hell. You are a sinner; you are *ganyan, ganyan* [like this, like that].' *Parang judgmental ang dating eh.* [Very judgmental] So, Pastor, if I have heard this plan of salvation from you, I will not be saved."

Conclusion

My research confirmed that transformation resulting in behavior that conforms to biblical principles was a natural sequel to conversion among Filipino women. The conclusions drawn from this study's finding were deeply significant to me on a personal basis. Furthermore, some of the study conclusions were personally life changing. For instance, I learned that God's priorities line up differently than my own and that He understands the culture more deeply than I could ever comprehend it. God's main concern is always that people understand the truth about Him and that they give up idolatry.

(Readers should note that, for the purposes of brevity in this article, I –included only the most salient responses to my research questions. For a detailed explanation, I refer you to my 2011 dissertation published by William Carey International University Press, titled *A Grounded Theory of Behavior Transformation Among Filipino Christian Women*.)

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Rose Engcoy's insightful study of the life and ministry of Rodrigo ("Rudy") Esperanza is important for two reasons.

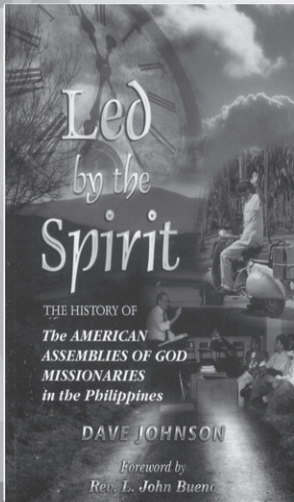
The first is that all of us have much to learn from Rev. Esperanza's example. After all, he was one of the pioneers of Pentecostalism in the Philippines. His work as a church planter, pastor, educator, and long-time senior administrator of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God (PGCAG) was vitally important to that denomination's early success which has situated it in the front ranks of the community of Spirit-filled believers in his beloved homeland.

...Rev. Esperanza, a veteran ecclesiastical firefighter who doused the flames of many a conflict that threatened to disrupt the PGCAG's unity, not only helped to pilot the United Pentecostal Fellowship but also led his fellow Pentecostals in collaboration with non-Pentecostal evangelicals in a range of evangelistic and ministry activities that went a long way toward allaying suspicions on both sides. Growing churches are always the most vulnerable to conflict and schism, so Christians who long for unity in the body of Christ can learn a lot from Rev. Esperanza. This book will help with that.

But Dr. Engcoy's study is important for another reason as well. Today the Christian community is growing rapidly in Asia, especially East Asia, rivaling the explosive growth of the church in Africa. Riding the crest of the wave are Pentecostal denominations like the PGCAG. ...This study of Rudy Esperanza and the early years of the PGCAG gives us a very good idea of what lies ahead for Philippine Protestantism. I find that enormously encouraging.

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Dave Johnson has provided a revealing and inspiring look at the history of Assemblies of God missions in the Philippines. The story begins with the early Filipinos and American missionary pioneers who often ministered in the most difficult of circumstances and continues into the twenty-first century chronicling the miracles and triumphs, struggles and tragedies of men and women called to serve in the land far from their own. Some of these experienced great success and others, failures. But through it all one can see the hand of God leading a national church into maturity and self-direction through Spirit-born cooperation among missionary and national leaders. Anyone interested in the study of missions will find the book valuable case-study from which to gain new insights and understanding of missionary endeavor

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