

Breaking the Mission Field Code:  
What Missionaries Have Known for Hundreds of Years  
by Mike Ruhl

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Let's face it. You would have to be an ostrich, with head in sand, not to have heard the "buzz" about the motion picture and book *The Da Vinci Code*.

The truth-distorting story line of that movie involves a mythical plot by the Catholic Church to cover up the "true story" of Jesus. Cryptic messages are embedded in the famous artworks of Leonardo Da Vinci. Mary Magdalene is said to have married Jesus and given birth to his child. Leonardo's *Last Supper* supposedly shows Mary Magdalene, rather than John, at the right hand of Jesus. The absence of a chalice on the table is used to support the ridiculous notion that Mary Magdalene is the Holy Grail, the bearer of Jesus' blood.

Many Christian web sites and journals are speculating on the potential confusion which both the book and the motion picture are causing in the hearts and minds of many people with shallow biblical training or knowledge. Christians and Christian congregations are being called to *break the Da Vinci code* and bear witness to the truth of God's Word and the reliability of historic Christian Christology.

The Holy Spirit has responded by raising up learned and biblically faithful "prophets," such as our own Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Vice President Dr. Paul Maier, as well as writers such as Lee Strobel and Josh McDowell. The Spirit of God is using them to equip Christians and congregations to *break the Da Vinci code* and to engage spiritually confused/deceived people with the truth of God's Word and the "whole counsel of God" about the doctrine of Christ.

**In the same way, every Christian congregation must break the *mission field code* of their community before effective mission work can take place.**

Missionaries in foreign lands do not do effective mission work by replicating their own church culture. Instead, they are trained to break the mission field code by understanding the culture, the history, the hopes and the heart language of the culture where they have been sent. This knowledge and understanding of culture supports their mission work by creating "bridges" of redemptive connectivity and relevant opportunities for Gospel proclamation.

All too often the local congregation develops its own *internal cultural code*--rituals, attitudes and repetitive behaviors. A focus on internal congregation culture results in ignorance of the new and morphing culture of the community mission field. "Connectivity bridges" begin to disappear. When this happens, the congregation loses its

outward focus and becomes CODE-DEPENDENT (addicted to its own internal cultural definitions). Some of these congregations have been described as an 8-track cassette trying to make music in a DVD world!

It takes hard work to “break” (understand and reach) a mission field code! Sad to say, many pastors and congregations will never even attempt it.

Apparently those congregations are not even convinced that there is a mission field code in their community that needs to be broken! Others will offer many explanations and reasons for not doing it. They will spend energy copying others or retrying failed strategies, assuming that “what worked in Cincinnati will surely work out here!”

Yet others will be led by the Holy Spirit to break the mission field code in their respective communities, rejoicing at the blessed alignment of culture, context, spiritual gifts, marketplace saints and Gospel proclamation in a way that bears abundant fruit for the Kingdom of God.

#### POWERFUL PONDERINGS

1. What specific passages of Scripture is God using to confirm and shape your calling to break the mission field code in your community?
2. How can you (and your church) cultivate a passionate love for the people of your community?
3. Describe the culture in which you are called to minister in terms of life issues, generations, music, dress, learning approaches, leadership (governance) style preferences, how these relate, etc.
4. Describe the kind of culture within your church which you need to create in order to effectively reach your community.

Link:

Check out [www.breakingthemissioncode.com](http://www.breakingthemissioncode.com) for insights and downloadable resources for breaking the mission field code in your community