

## Showings

The main purpose of this trip to Suriname was to make observations about the possible impact of the new Sranan-Tongo language version of the Magdalena movie about Jesus. This article presents reflections about what was observed and discussed. It also looks ahead to the future, exploring possible ways to share the story of Jesus and the gifts that he offers to everyone, those closely related to local churches and especially those of other cultures who would not otherwise consider investigating the claims of Jesus.

Upon arrival in Suriname and meeting with the Bible Society team I learned that our effort would be the first time the Sranan-Tongo version of the Magdalena movie would be used in group settings, even though it has been available for about a year and a quarter.

The Magdalena version of the Jesus Film was produced by a team of women and focused on showing the relation of Jesus to women. This is particularly appropriate for use in cultures where women are less valued than men. Magdalena is in two different durations - about 1 hour and about 80 minutes. The latter has Directors Cut in the file name and a larger file size. I think that the long version was used for the first two (southern) showings and the short version was definitely used for the last two (eastern) showings.

These initial showings of Magdalena in Suriname were done in church buildings, or that was the plan. The small audience in each case was of people already closely related to the church community. It is appropriate to strengthen the faith of the followers of Jesus and to encourage the others to join the faith in him. But that is unlikely to impact the local people who are not followers of Jesus. So these initial showings did not assess the possible impact of the new Magdalena translation on the general population, many of whom are Muslims.

The Biblical parable of the Sower and the Seed, given by Jesus, has some parallels. Showing the Jesus Film products (including Jesus Film and the version for Children) within established churches might be like fertilizing and weeding the soils that are already productive, making the crops better. Yet the Sower (God) is generous and spreads the seed (Good News) onto the other soils as well. In the banquet parables everyone else is invited (Matthew 22:9, Luke 14:21-22). God's intent is to use the faithful to bless everyone else on earth (Genesis 12:3).

During my December 2015 Jesus Film Mission Trip to Lubumbashi in southern D.R. Congo, we trained local pastors and evangelists to use short film segments on smart phones and tablets in public places to initiate discussions about Jesus. Showings of the major films could follow with the interested individuals.



training with smart phones

training with tablets

actual sharing on a street



Smart phone and tablet access to film segments and entire films can be initiated with a scan of the QR code. My habit is to download Jesus Film products to my laptop by navigating through <https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch.html> to find various countries and their languages. I then transfer the many films to USB flash drives to give away to people who show interest in knowing more about Jesus.

In addition we showed Magdalena during four evenings using the local Swahili language. These were outdoor showings somewhat near a church, but definitely in an open area where hundreds of people could gather. A large screen was erected during the early evening while there was still light. The screen could be viewed from both sides. The miniature projector (same model used in Suriname) filled the screen. An adequate sound system was used, powered by an electric generator. In some places teams roamed the neighborhoods in the afternoon, passing out invitations to the free evening movie showing to anyone they met. The local church, or cluster of churches, had many pastors, evangelists, and teachers deployed around the crowd. They were available to answer questions and record responses when the invitation was given at the end to become followers of Jesus. At each showing there were many people, including those of non-Christian backgrounds who would otherwise not enter a church building, who responded positively to Jesus. Contact information was shared for future follow-ups.



setting for first showing, local street

setting for second showing, wide alley

setting for third showing, large field



erecting screen for fourth showing



setting for fourth showing, busy street

Setting up the screen created curiosity, resulting in crowds of a couple hundred viewers. Many dozens of people decided to become followers of Jesus at each of these showings.

These settings were in suburbs of Lubumbashi, the capital city of Katanga Province of the Democratic

Republic of Congo. An equivalent would be anywhere around Paramaribo, the capital city of Suriname.

Such an outdoor strategy seems appropriate for the communities along the rivers. The settlements are compact, as shown in these satellite-view examples, and a movie showing in a community open area could be attractive to everyone.



church -

100 m

Abenaston

Passing out viewing invitations would be easy, to supplement those who are attracted by the setting up activity.

The various Jesus Film products could be shown on different nights of the week, month, and/or year. Sometimes it would be the full length movies. At other

times an assortment of the short films could promote discussions.



school

-church

100 m

New Aurora

In the coastal regions of Suriname the homes are typically along long roads. They are clustered into villages or small cities in only a few locations. The linear settlement style is illustrated in this satellite view.



In such areas it may be more useful to distribute copies of the Jesus Film movies and short segments electronically, as on USB flash drives and SD cards. People could download the film contents onto the computers and smart phones of their friends. Then families could watch them in their homes and repeatedly share the contents with other friends and families and neighbors. In that way it becomes likely that people who are not followers of Jesus will get to learn of his story and gift of eternal life.

I went to Suriname with a hoard of 32GB flash drives pre-loaded with Jesus Film products. The Dutch and Sranan-Tongo folders each had the Jesus Film, that for Children, Magdalena (long version), and a folder with 11 short films. The English folder was used to fill the flash drives. It had the same contents, plus the Gospel of John, (no room for Book of Acts), and four folders for collections of films. The Following Jesus folder had 5 movies about basics for new followers of Jesus. The Walking With Jesus folder had 5 movies for additional guidance of new followers. The Rivka folder has 12 episodes for spiritual growth, in a setting and story line of life and problems in the first decades after the resurrection. The shorts folder has most of the short discussion starter movie clips. A few were omitted because of lack of space.

My intention was to give these flash drives to whoever seemed to be interested in the movies about Jesus. I gave 3 to waitresses at the Eco Resort Inn after my lunches there, encouraging them to share the contents with their friends. At the Menimi Eco Resort I gave one to a woman of Hindu background who was interested in Jesus. On the flight home I gave two flash drives to a couple from Trinidad in the adjacent seats. The wife was a coordinator for Operation Christmas Child in Trinidad, helping select churches for box distributions. She viewed the entire short version of Magdalena using my laptop computer and headphones while we were flying over the Caribbean Sea and Bahamas. She was impressed with its Biblical accuracy. Her husband will view it later from the flash drive. They will give the second flash drive to a pastor that they will be meeting in America.

Upon return to my congregation in Colorado, I delivered a flash drive loaded for Suriname to our local coordinator for Operation Christmas Child. She had been curious about my trip and the movie contents. In 2017 I played Magdalena in the Algerian Sahara airspace of a flight from London to Ghana for a woman of Ghana origin who was already a Christian, giving her a loaded flash drive to share with others in Ghana and the UK.

We noticed in Suriname that most of the people in the churches were women, with some young children. Men were rare. It seems that teenage boys had the impression that church was only for women, and so they were completely absent, and thereby reinforcing that condition in the church. At the fourth showing at a boarding school there were many boys playing football (soccer) when we arrived. None attended our movie viewing. An outdoor showing of a short sports film might have attracted them to watch a subsequent movie about Jesus, also at the same outdoor screen.

Suriname needs to develop programs that make true disciples of boys and men, to serve as role models for future generations. Training should be given them to enhance living skills, proper family leadership, financial management, and other things. Adopting existing programs that can operate under a church oversight would likely be better than inventing a program. My thoughts go to the Awana program, and the old style Boy Scouts (not the modern version) or the new replacements (Trail Life and other conservative programs) for scouts in America. Biblical training needs to go beyond simple Bible stories to full lifestyle guidance and worldview.

I left a copy of my self-study guide to the Book of Revelation for the Bible Society library. It can be examined for its usefulness. I originally wrote it about 45 years ago for junior high level Sunday School students. This is an improved version, following and explaining the traditional interpretations. Many adults have found its explanations very useful. Anyone can download a PDF version from a link on its first page in my web site - <http://www.edholroyd.info/Revelation/>.

I also left a copy of the book "In Six Days - Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe In Creation", originally published twenty years ago. I am one of the scientists that contributed a chapter. Scientific understandings have improved since then, so I left a better set - a 90-minute DVD and book "Evolution's Achilles' Heels", again featuring the contributions of scientists. This has become a very important issue in western society. Evolutionary hypotheses have a near monopoly on what is allowed for the public - in schools, universities, media of all types, and courts. While natural selection is observable, that is not evolution whereby major organism types change over long periods of time to entirely different types. Even the Big Bang hypotheses and creation of the Solar System cannot actually create the universe that we observe because the laws of physics and chemistry prevent such development. About two hundred years ago the ideas that became modern evolutionary teachings were invented primarily to nullify the Biblical account, thereby freeing society from accountability to a God. Today that is the main reason why the great majority of young people reject what little Biblical exposure they have had.

There is an abundance of books and DVDs that support the Biblical declarations about Creation and its likely timescale. These are available from the book stores of major Creation organizations. Speakers are often available as well. I recommend Creation Ministry International (and their Creation magazine and Journal of Creation), Answers in Genesis (and their Answers magazine and Answers Technical Journal), Institute for Creation Research (and their Acts and Facts monthly magazine), and Creation Research Society (and their Creation Research Society Quarterly journal).

Suggestions for Jesus Film products for Suriname: (By Dr. Ed Holroyd, 11 May 2019)

1. Continue to show in various languages Magdalena and other Jesus Film products in churches. It is appropriate to strengthen the faith of those seeking to be followers of Jesus. The Jesus Film web site lists 11 languages for Suriname for the Jesus Film. Magdalena and Children are available only in Dutch and Sranan-Tongo (and Korean, a language to which I was not exposed in Suriname). Showing these in churches mostly reaches people already interested in Jesus.

2. Use electronic means of distributing Jesus Film products, particularly in coastal regions with the linear pattern of dwellings lacking central communities. Give out filled USB flash drives and SD cards for downloading onto computers and smart phones. Give out cards with QR coding for access to the Jesus Film web site and its download and viewing capabilities. This style of distribution is likely to be shared beyond Jesus-followers, reaching friends of different backgrounds.

3. Use large outdoor screens in public places in the compact village settlements and suburbs. Pass out invitations to the evening showing(s). Have church pastors, teachers, and evangelists mixed into the crowd to meet with those film viewers who would like follow-up discussions. This is likely to expose people of other faiths to the life and resurrection of Jesus.