UNMUZZLED OXEN

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Categories: Christian Life, Mission, Observations

Over the years that I've worked in mission leadership, I've faced some difficult situations. Like any leader, I have to deal with tough decisions, conflict and criticism; they go with the job. Sometimes when faced with a difficult situation I'll say; "this is what I get paid the big bucks for."

Of course, the point of the comment is that I don't get paid big bucks. I have a grandiose title, but Wycliffe don't actually pay me a salary. (Read more about how we are funded here.)

So, if I don't get paid a salary for doing my job, what do I get paid for? Well, another slightly cynical saying of mine is that I don't get paid for doing a job, I get paid for writing letters (or emails and blog posts, to bring it up to date).

Let me unpack this a little.

Those who generously support us in or work very rarely get to see what we actually do. This is just as true here in England as it was when we lived in Africa. Our work is carried out at a distance from those who pray for us and who provide the finances to keep the mortgage paid. The only way that people know what we are doing and what we are accomplishing is by reading the letters, emails and blog posts that we produce.

This means that there is a huge temptation to put a positive spin on things in our communication. We want people to support us and we want them to be encouraged by what is beingÂ achievedÂ through their support. It is very easy and very tempting to make things sound just a little more exciting or encouraging than they really are. I picked up on this in a little booklet about praying for missionaries which you can find hereÂ (share it with your friends). We try and make our letters as honest as we possibly can - but the temptation to spin is a hard one to avoid.

I was prompted to write this post by reading this from Jamie. It's funnier, blunter and better written than mine, so you'll probably want to read it! It will be all over Facebook in the next couple of days, anyway!

> *It's kinda scary when you think about it, but Christian Missions is a billion (that's BILLION, like,Â with a B!) dollar industry â€“ with virtually no oversight, no standards of practice, and no hiring requirements. To top it off, it's shrouded in a cloud of overly spiritualized language, easily manipulated to allow people to believe that more good is coming from their missions dollars than is necessarily true.*

By the way, if you would like to test the accuracy of our newsletters, you can sign up to read them on the sidebar of this blog.

Oh, and if the title of the post makes no sense to you, then take a look here.