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**Korean Preachers & Worship Leaders**

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## David Gibbons

Sam Pack

### Abstract

Dave Gibbons is the pioneering leader and pastor who planted the multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multi-continental, multi-site church known as Newsong Church. The author of *The Monkey and the Fish*, Gibbons is a vision-oriented leader known for his insightful thinking on the future of the church. In his book, teaching, and overall philosophy of ministry is based on his expertise on “Third Culture” leadership, a mindset and will to love, learn and serve in any culture even in the midst of pain and discomfort. Gibbons approaches his ministry and worship in a missional way. His heart for worship lies on his desire for this generation of believer to become “liquid”, a metaphor used to correlate the message of Jesus in every facet of his ministry. Gibbons believes that Christians must change the shape of the message to fit the cultural context of the people they are trying to love and serve so they too can receive the love of Jesus into their lives.

### Dave Gibbons and His Ministries

A graduate from Dallas Theological Seminary with a Masters of Theology degree, Dave Gibbons is the pioneering leader and pastor who planted the multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multi-continental, multi-site church in Irvine, CA known as Newsong Church. Named as one of the most innovative churches in America by *Outreach Magazine*, this half Korean, half Caucasian pastor also leads the Newsong Global Alliance, a catalytic church organization with expanding, worldwide reach into Asia, Central America, and Europe.<sup>1</sup> The author of *The Monkey and the Fish*, Gibbons is a vision-oriented leader known for his insightful thinking on the future of the church. In his book, teaching, and overall philosophy of ministry is based on his expertise on “Third Culture” leadership, a mindset and will to love, learn and serve in any culture even in the midst of pain and discomfort.<sup>2</sup> Third culture is about the combining of multiple cultures, the art of adaptation, dialogue rather than dictation, diplomacy over strong arm tactics,

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<sup>1</sup>Willowcreek. *The Leadership Summit*. 2009. <http://www.willowcreek.com/Events/Leadership/2009/david-gibbons.asp> (accessed December 3, 2009).

<sup>2</sup>Dave Gibbons, *The Monkey and the Fish: Liquid Leadership for a Third Culture Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009, 38.

and the embrace of discomfort as part of the journey to real community. In short, third culture is “painful adaptation”.<sup>3</sup>

Gibbons is an on-demand speaker, innovative strategist, and cultural specialist with global experience in the arts, business, church and community development. Dave is on the board of World Vision US. He’s also founder and chief visionary officer of Zealot, a strategic innovations group, creatively connecting resources to leaders around the world.

### **Dave Gibbons and His Worship**

Being the founder and creator of one of the most influential multi-ethnic churches today, Gibbons has created a place for many second generation Korean Americans who have been hurt by their previous experiences with the first generation churches which Gibbons refers to as “your mama’s church.”<sup>4</sup> Gibbons approaches his ministry and worship in a missional way. One of the values he created at Newsong is for the community to come together to serve and impact the world through the arts, relevant and holistic ministry to the poor, technology, business, media, church planting and leadership development.<sup>5</sup> His heart for worship lies on his desire for this generation of believer to become “liquid,” a term he created after watching the film *Enter the Dragon* starring Bruce Lee. In the film Bruce says to a pupil of his, “You put water in a cup, it becomes a cup. You put water into the bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put it into a teapot, it becomes a teapot. The water can flow. The water can crash... be water my friend.”<sup>6</sup> This water metaphor is used to correlate the message of Jesus in every facet of their ministry. Gibbons believes that Christians must change the shape of the message to fit the cultural context of the people they are trying to love and serve so they too can receive the love of Jesus into their lives.

In his book, Gibbons uses this liquid leadership style to appeal to a generation of people whom he refers to as “third culture” people. This term “third culture” was

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<sup>3</sup>Dave Gibbons, *Dave Gibbons*. <http://davegibbons.tv> (accessed December 3, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> —. Newsong: Welcome to Newsong, Our Story 2009. <http://www.newsong.net/about-us/our-story> (accessed December 3, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> —. Newsong: Welcome to Newsong, Newsong Vision and Values. 2009. <http://www.newsong.net/about-us/newsong-vision-values> (accessed December 3, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> *Enter The Dragon*, Directed by Robert Clouse, Performed by Bruce Lee. 1973.

originally a sociological term that refers to the offspring of foreign-service workers whose children are immersed in foreign cultures due to their parents' work. It's been observed that these children tend to feel compelled to come to terms with their indigenous culture but also assimilate into their new culture the parents have plunged them into. And when these children grow up to become adults, they possess a heightened sensibility and intelligence about embracing and bridging cultural differences wherever they go. This third culture is able to relate to people of very different cultures far more easily than people who have grown up in their own indigenous society. Due to this ingrained understanding of the inherent richness and values of different cultures, worldviews, and perspectives, they're also convicted to expose their own children to the diversity of the world's people and cultures.<sup>7</sup> Gibbons believes that this third-culture ways is at the heart of the gospel, and is something that all Christians are called to become today.

### **Newsong Church and its Worship**

During the fall of 1993, Dave Gibbons was in his hotel room during a conference when he heard God saying to him, "Psalm 40." When he opened up his bible, he read the words, "*I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay; and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. And He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our god; Many will see and fear, and will trust in the Lord.*"<sup>8</sup> That was the beginning of how the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-generational mega-church known as Newsong Church came to conception. Today Newsong has campuses in southern California, Dallas, New Mexico, Bangkok, India, and London, has become one of the largest growing multi-cultural churches in the world today. With this liquid leadership style mentality in mind, Gibbons has set up Newsong Church to become a body that caters to their third culture community across the world. According to their webpage,

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<sup>7</sup>Gibbons, *The Monkey and the Fish: Liquid Leadership for a Third Culture Church*, 2009, 21

<sup>8</sup>Gibbons, *Newsong: Welcome to Newsong, Our Story*, 2009.



Newsong has designed their community to become “a community of misfits transformed by Jesus to be a catalyst for loving people on the fringes of our culture.”<sup>9</sup>

In its worship and practice, Newsong will use all of its resources to reach their third culture community where they are at, both stylistically and physically. And while there are a number of different campuses across the globe, they consider themselves as one church but with multiple locations. This means that on any given Sunday, you will hear the same kind of teaching but in different context on any given campus location. Each location does have their own head pastor, but they are all considered a part of a bigger body. This mode of operations is known as the “satellite church”. All of the head pastors will share the responsibility of what is being taught by going through various topical series. These series will be on rotation and are shared with all of the different campuses so the entire body will be able to receive the teachings and thoughts from their various leaders who serve across town, state lines, and even oceans. In other words, if Dave Gibbons’ is responsible for teaching a series on music and worship, the other lead pastors will receive all the information and research Dave has so they too can give the same series to their communities.

While the preaching and teaching is uniform, each of the campuses are given the freedom to be autonomous in how they worship stylistically. Because many of the locations have their services at the same time, it’s not like the worship team can be in two places at once. So like Newsong’s pastoral staff, each location will have their own worship team, compiled up of musicians and artists who have either made it their career to be musicians or artists or are highly passionate about music and the arts. Needless to say, the teams are highly skilled at what they do, considering that most of the members are professional musicians and artists. The emphasis on worship in music at Newsong is extremely high because they feel that music and art has a place in all cultures and societies. On their webpage they elaborate on their reason on why such emphasis is placed on music and arts.

If any place should be bursting with creative energy, it should be the church. Our dream is that Newsong will be known as a place for artists to get connected, grow and

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<sup>9</sup>Newsong Church, *Newsong: Welcomce to Newsong, Newsong Vision & Values*, 2009. <http://www.newsong.net/about-us/newsong-vision-values> (accessed December 3, 2009).

release their creative gifts to the world. This would be done through exhibitions, seminars, mentoring, festivals, cafés, media, recordings and concerts. Our hope is that we would be a center for children and adults to be developed, nurtured, provoked and encouraged in the arts.<sup>10</sup>

If Newsong were to give itself a one word description, it would use the word “Reconciliation”<sup>11</sup> This seems true today because Newsong has become a community for the third culture society of the world; it’s no surprise to see that more than 50% of the population in the Southern California campuses consists of Korean-Americans. Newsong has been able to bring a generation of lost and hurt Korean-Americans back to the church. These “marginalized individuals and misfits” have finally been able to find a place to be mentored and encouraged to make a difference with their lives. They now have a community that supports them as they take action to impact the world in extraordinary ways.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Newsong Church. *Newsong, Welcome to Newsong, Our Strategic Initiatives*. 2009. <http://www.newsong.net/about-us/our-strategic-initiatives> (accessed December 3, 2009).

<sup>11</sup>Gibbons, *Newsong: Welcome to Newsong, Newsong Vision and Values*, 2009.

<sup>12</sup>Gibbons, *Newsong: Welcome to Newsong, Newsong Vision and Values*, 2009.

