

Kenyan Pastors Speak the Truth

Does EMI training work in remote villages of Kenya?

The door closed softly behind us. Finally, we were alone. I felt a twinge of guilt at what I was about to do, but as a journalist, my integrity was at stake.

Equipping Ministries International had invited me to the EMI headquarters to interview two Kenyan pastors who were in town to complete their training to become EMI Certified Trainers. Now myself, Walter Liatema and John Achar were alone in the conference room.

"Gentlemen," I cut to the chase, "I don't work for EMI. You can level with me." They glanced at each other with blank faces and shifted a bit in their chairs. "Does EMI training really work in Kenya?"

How do you Speak the Truth in Love in Kenya?

Anthropologists and cross-cultural experts will tell you that almost everything is culture-specific, and that it's difficult to translate practices from one culture to another. So, alone with Walter and John, I wanted to press them a bit to tell me how they would have to "Kenyan-ize" EMI training to make it work in Kenya.



Walter



John

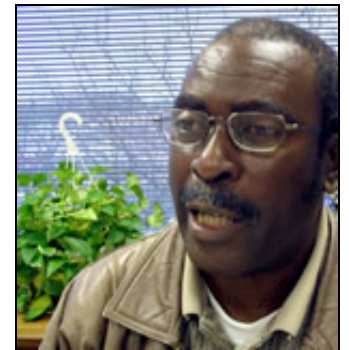
"Does EMI training really work in Kenya?" The question hung in the air. "Brother Jon," Walter began, "It does work. It works wonderfully well."

John jumped in at this point. "Kenyans do not like to be too direct. It's offensive." I interrupted him, "So how do you speak the truth in love in a culture that handles the spoken truth with kid gloves?" John went on, "Brother Jon," (I started to like being called "Brother Jon"). "The reason Kenyans are careful when speaking the truth isn't because they don't like telling the truth, it's because they value the relationship so much they don't want to offend one another."

"You ask if EMI works in Kenya? **It works very well.**"

"Let me tell you a story," Walter said. "I work in western Kenya in a rural village. One day I was visiting a family from our church. I noticed everyone seemed lethargic. Something wasn't right. It was when they brought me a small tray with a few meager peanuts on it that I knew--

they didn't have any food. And I also knew they couldn't say that to me directly. So I told them about how my wife had run out of cooking oil the day before and wasn't able to make bread for our evening meal. 'Yes,' my friend said, 'That happened to us too.' He then went on to say that they hadn't eaten solid food for three days, that they had run out of food. I had some oil and sugar in my bag but would have shamed them if I had offered it to them before that. It was only after I had listened carefully was I able to say, 'My wife asked me to bring you these small gifts,' and I gave them the oil and sugar."



I was reeling from that story when John said, "Respect, humility, caring--these all mean the same thing in any language or culture--it's called love. EMI has helped us to see it that way. To speak the truth in love in Kenya means to show respect, be humble, listen reflectively. You ask if EMI works in Kenya? It works very well."

John and Walter were both grinning from ear to ear. I couldn't help myself. I started grinning to. It was contagious.

Pastor Walter travels all over Kenya by bus training pastors-- 80% have had no training. His response to EMI training: "EMI has changed my life completely and has given me a new approach to teaching the people of God."

Pastor John leads evangelism for his denomination and pastors his village church. His had this to say about EMI training: "I now have confidence to truly care for others that God has placed in my life."