



WILL WE HINDER OR ACCELERATE MOVEMENTS? THE CHOICE IS OURS.



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EDITORIAL

THIS IS A SERIOUS problem! All over the world Christian workers are employing mission methods that hinder the development of movements to Christ. Worse yet, these well-meaning, hard-working, self-sacrificing servants of God may be doing more harm than good. They may be creating a backlash to the gospel that is making the unreached peoples so much harder to reach. This is not just a Western or American missionary problem. This is a global church problem.

Whenever a person from a people or culture where the gospel has become indigenous seeks to go out to make disciples cross-culturally, that person is in danger of **extracting** new believers from their native culture, family, community and people to join a new artificial family of faith, thereby destroying the natural “bridge of God” for the gospel that this person could provide. When people are extracted one-by-one from their family, clan, tribe or people to form a new community of faith, the reaction from the family these people left

behind is often hostile with the potential of bloodshed. Rather than being good news to lost people in darkness, for those left behind, the gospel has come as the “invasion of the body snatchers,” with all the horrors and grief attached to the death of a loved one. Instead of being more open to the gospel, the family, clan or tribe left behind have become more resistant to the loss of any more of their people. This community is now much harder to reach. Dr. Donald McGavran points out this tragic scenario and how to prevent it in his classic article, “A Church in Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject” which starts on page 627 of the book, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, A Reader, 4th Edition*.

In this latest issue of *MF*, we revisit the foundational principles of how movements develop and grow that McGavran laid out decades ago. In our lead article, Robby Butler describes the modern-day implications of McGavran’s ground breaking missiology as we pursue movements of disciple making and church planting in every people. See Butler’s article starting on page 6. This is not light reading but it is essential to understand these principles if we are to successfully foster and accelerate movements

rather than preventing them from ever getting started.

As McGavran made clear, Christian history demonstrates one certain reality; ***the only way that peoples are ever reached is through movements.*** So if it is our aim to see all peoples reached with the gospel, then we *must* learn to cross the “bridges of God” into new peoples and start movements to Christ there.

A Better Way

What happens if rather than *extracting* people from their culture, family or clan; we were to work to keep the new believer within their family to share the biblical truths they are learning with their family and other relational connections?

According to McGavran, Winter, Butler and many others, movements can develop. If the new believer can share biblical truths within his sphere of influence without being expelled, then whole families, clans and tribes can choose to follow Jesus. It may seem strange or even unbiblical to us as highly individualistic Westerners, but in communal societies groups of people can and do make joint decisions to follow Jesus. You can see throughout the New Testament that whole groups and families did choose to follow Jesus. T&B Lewis

point out this fact in their article starting on page 16.

The Lewis' experience illustrates the pitfalls of extraction and the blessings of keeping new believers within their family or clan—what the Bible refers to as their *oikos* or household. They thought church planting was easy at first when they gathered together a group of people who had left their respective families to join a new artificial “family” of faith. The Lewises soon discovered that this new church was unstable and it soon disintegrated because it wasn't based upon long-standing trust relationships of family or clan. But then God enabled them to discover a better way of planting churches that kept new believers within their family.

The Lewis' recount their story. “Struggling with our failure to plant a church, we received an entirely unexpected letter. The hand-carried letter notified us that two brothers from our people group had finished a Bible correspondence course. They now wanted to meet a believer. We promptly sent off our best Arabic speaker to their distant town. When he arrived at their house, it was packed. Our team member wondered if he had stumbled onto a wedding, so he hesitantly asked for Hassan, who had written the letter.

Hassan and his brother rushed forward to welcome him into their household. They had gathered all their relatives and close friends to hear their honored guest explain what they had learned in their course. They eagerly received the gospel and pledged *as a group* to follow Jesus. Our teammate was thrilled. When he returned home, we shared his amazement.

This new church, consisting of an extended family and friends, continues strong to this day. Decades later, they are still spreading the gospel from town to town through their natural networks.”

From the Lewis' account we can see that it is possible for new believers to take the gospel back to their family and not have the gospel or the new believer be rejected. The new churches being birthed were stable and reproducing because they were based upon strong long-standing family relationships. The gospel became good news to these people and they shared it with their wider network of relationships. The gospel was in the process of becoming indigenous—normal and natural—to this family and their people. A potential new movement was also birthed.

We Have a Choice

Even decades after McGavran highlighted the problems with *extraction evangelism*, around 90% of mission workers still practice it. These well-meaning people have not learned that there is a better way—one that leads to movements. Some even take pride in the suffering and sacrifices that their converts endure to become a “true Christian,” even if it means leaving their family and people behind and burning all bridges of relationship.

While some struggle to make progress with ineffective models of ministry, God is quietly showing the global church a new path that is far more hopeful than anything we have seen since the book of Acts, 2000 years ago. There are many practitioners that are having great success in seeing movements develop all over the world. They have learned to cross the “bridges of God” into unreached peoples. The article by Robby Butler, *Glimpses Through the Fog*, starting on page 32, tells the astonishing story of what God is doing to foster movements in various unreached peoples. In the year 2000 there were at least 10 movements with 100,000 new disciples. Today, there are at least 645 movements with 47,500,000 new disciples!

That is an incredible rate of growth. The number of known movements has increased from 609 to 645 just since our last issue of MF. Read carefully this important article to learn what hinders and what accelerates movements.

The choice is ours. We can continue with missionary methods such as extraction that do not lead to movements or join God in the most exciting and historic opportunity in perhaps 2000 years to foster movements in all peoples. Are you in?

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We have only had three weeks to collect donations since the Jan-Feb 2018 issue of MF hit the streets, but the donations have begun to come in. One reader wrote, “I loved reading your January/February 2018 newsletter, and hope that I would be able to organize myself to be an effective part of this work. Enclosed is \$200 to start the translation work.” Jean, San Luis Obispo, CA. To translate each issue of MF, we will need many more gifts such as this. So prayerfully consider giving so that the vision of reaching all peoples can spread much farther. Thanks to the very effective work of the 24:14 Coalition, featured in our last issue, MF has been translated into 10 languages for the very first time. Go to 2414now.net and click on Articles at the top of the page to view these 10 translations. Share this with all your friends who speak other languages. 

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