

ARE MOVEMENTS THE SEEDS OF A SECOND REFORMATION?



by Robby Butler
Guest Editor

Robby's pursuit of God leads him into researching what is working best to advance God's kingdom globally, distilling this to equip others for greater fruitfulness, and seeking to apply it himself. He lives in Mount Vernon, WA with his wife Jackie and their three teenagers.

It is again my privilege to fill in for Rick Wood, who is still catching up from recent surgery and major home reconstruction following an attic fire caused by lighting. Please pray for God's blessing on Rick and his family far beyond the attacks they recently endured.

A revolution is unfolding in the Church—perhaps even a *second Reformation*. Nearly 500 years ago (1517) Martin Luther ignited the Protestant Reformation with his 95 theses. This issue of *MF* documents a change of similar significance spreading among sending-base churches, coming this time through the application of mission field insights regarding the biblical principles Jesus and His disciples modeled:

- Going to the lost instead of asking them to come to us,
- Training everyone to obey all Jesus commanded,
- The authority of all believers to baptize, etc.

Many mission leaders have known for some time that nations are disciplined through *movements*—rapidly reproducing generations of disciples, churches and leaders—but now this understanding is spreading like leaven in sending-base churches. Two years ago *MF* reported on one church moving this direction.¹ Now we offer five case studies, from three continents, including several mega-churches and a small ethnic church (pp. 6, 12 & 14). We also excerpt five (mostly) new books (pp. 6, 20, 23, 24 & 36)—all aimed at awakening and equipping Christ's body to pursue God for movements everywhere, until there is *No Place Left!*

A SECOND REFORMATION?

Whether or not we call the application of this insight a “reformation,” it has broad implications for:

- “ordinary” church members,
- “house” churches and “dedicated-building” churches,

- our households, workplaces and wider communities,
- internationals in our midst, and
- the laborers we send to the unreached and unengaged.

What will God do in and through “**ordinary**” church members when we pursue *loving obedience to Jesus* as seriously as we take *adding to our knowledge*? What does it do for us when we learn to share our testimony and the gospel with faith and confidence, and become consistent in praying for lost family and friends (p. 32)? What happens to our faith and maturity when we seek God's guidance with others to reach the lost in our communities (p. 20)? What happens as movements multiply leaders (p. 25)? Can we better care for our members by equipping and sending them to bring Christ into their relationships with family and friends who will never come to their church?

What will God do in and through **our churches** when members come to expect *training and equipping* alongside *comfort and communion*? What happens in churches where Sunday worship incorporates training and celebration of how God is working to multiply disciples (p. 12)? What happens

when one goal of a weekly “service” is worship unfolding in our homes and multiplying in homes of the lost *around the clock* (p. 23)?

What will God do in **our communities** as local churches move from being a *hub to which we invite others* to a *sending base that equips members* to lead the lost to follow Jesus? What happens in communities where believers are trained to make disciples where they live, work and play—including broken households and families (p. 22), their businesses (p. 19), and their recreational activities?

What will God do among the **internationals in our midst** as we go to *their homes*, offer to *pray with them*, and train *them* to lead their own and other families in following Jesus? What will God do in Muslim and other ethnic communities in our midst (p. 20)? What might He do through the future international government and business leaders now among us as students (p. 38)?

Finally, what will God do in **preparing laborers for the unreached** as senders and goers alike gain *firsthand experience* in movements? What will happen in the toughest harvest fields when the laborers arrive with prior experience in cross-cultural evangelism, discipleship, church-planting and leadership development (p. 17)? And what will happen when laborers from different movements collaborate and learn from one another (p. 29)?

PARADIGM SHIFTS FOR AN EMERGING REFORMATION

Teaching is NOT *Training*

Would you accept surgery from a doctor who had only listened to

What happens to the faith and maturity of church members when we equip them to reach the lost in our communities?

lectures? Jesus didn't teach disciples in a classroom. He took them into dangerous and difficult situations to model ministry, then sent them out as sheep among wolves. Classroom orientation and practice can offer helpful preparation, but *learning* occurs as we together go with Him into the harvest.

Ekklesia is NOT primarily a *Gathering of Strangers*

Jesus loves to enter, restore and transform existing relationships. In the gospels and Acts we repeatedly see Jesus and His disciples restore individuals to their community and extend God's blessing to whole households and communities.² When households and relational networks believe together, the witness of their round-the-clock community is far more compelling than any event or program. When we do gather with relative strangers for worship, let this also become a training environment that equips us to bring Christ to our loved ones who won't attend a church.

JOINING THE REFORMATION

One book excerpt in this issue of *MF* introduces the true-to-life fictionalized account of a movement, with discussion points after each chapter, for a team to follow and adapt step-by-step in seeking God for a movement (p. 20). Two other articles here can help you better pray,

lead others to follow Jesus, and train others to do the same (pp. 32 & 33). And two more articles on the website present proven models for following up two kinds of peoples: Those open to conversation *prior to following Jesus*, and those who have already *determined to follow Him*.

REACTIONS TO REFORMATIONS

Whether we call the emerging transition a reformation, an awakening, or something far more modest, it is already clear that some will resist the change while others embrace it warmly. Those who want to “get in the game” can email me at RobbyQButler@gmail.com.

May God guide us forward with clarity and charity, maximizing the benefits and minimizing the problems.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 

¹ *No Longer “Church as Usual”* Missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/no-longer-church-as-usual

² In today's fractured world we can legitimately extend this to relational networks.

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