

The Person of Peace, God's Cultural Bridge to Movements

BY **JERRY TROUSDALE AND GLENN SUNSHINE**

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This article is excerpted from the 13th Chapter of *The Kingdom Unleashed: How Jesus' 1st Century Values are Transforming Thousands of Cultures, and Awakening His Church*. Coming March 2018. Used by permission of DMM Library. Why are rapidly multiplying, Kingdom movements happening all across Africa and Asia but just a handful are in North America or Western Europe? *The Kingdom Unleashed* addresses that question in the context of Jesus' most foundational themes that the Global North often disregards, but which are at the very heart of every movement.

THE FIRST BARRIER: WORLDVIEWS AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

When we look at mission fields, we quickly recognize both cultural and worldview barriers that stand between the gospel and the lost. What we often do not recognize, however, is that the same is true in the Global North. Cultural mindsets, values hostile to the Kingdom, alternative worldviews, stereotypes, misunderstandings, bad experiences with churches or individual Christians, and a host of other issues create barriers to disciple making that leave both churches and believers unfruitful in engaging their neighbors with the gospel.

Christian values and worldviews are being marginalized at an alarming rate in universities, the news media, entertainment media, and popular culture. Biblical worldviews are categorized as “bigoted,” “uninformed,” or “hateful,” and so Christians are excluded from important discussions about society. We are becoming a marginalized minority with the cooperation of many so-called Christians who adopt ungodly values in the name of being “open-minded.”

Millions of Americans have rejected our religion, but when they discover the person of Jesus in the Bible they are drawn to Him. The trick is finding ways to get a hearing with these people.

Outside of America, cultural issues are the most difficult hurdles that missionaries must overcome; in America, the issue is exactly the same. Christians don't speak the same language as the general population. We often don't dress like them. Sometimes we don't live in the same space as them. So we need a way to get those people to come together and discover Jesus on their own.

The difficulty that we face is finding people who are open to hearing the gospel, and more, who can be “Bridges of God” into communities and social networks that are ripe

for the gospel. Fortunately, Jesus gave us instructions on precisely how to do those things.

Barrier Breaker #1: People of Peace: God's Provision for Access into an Alien Culture

“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.” (Luke 10:5-7)

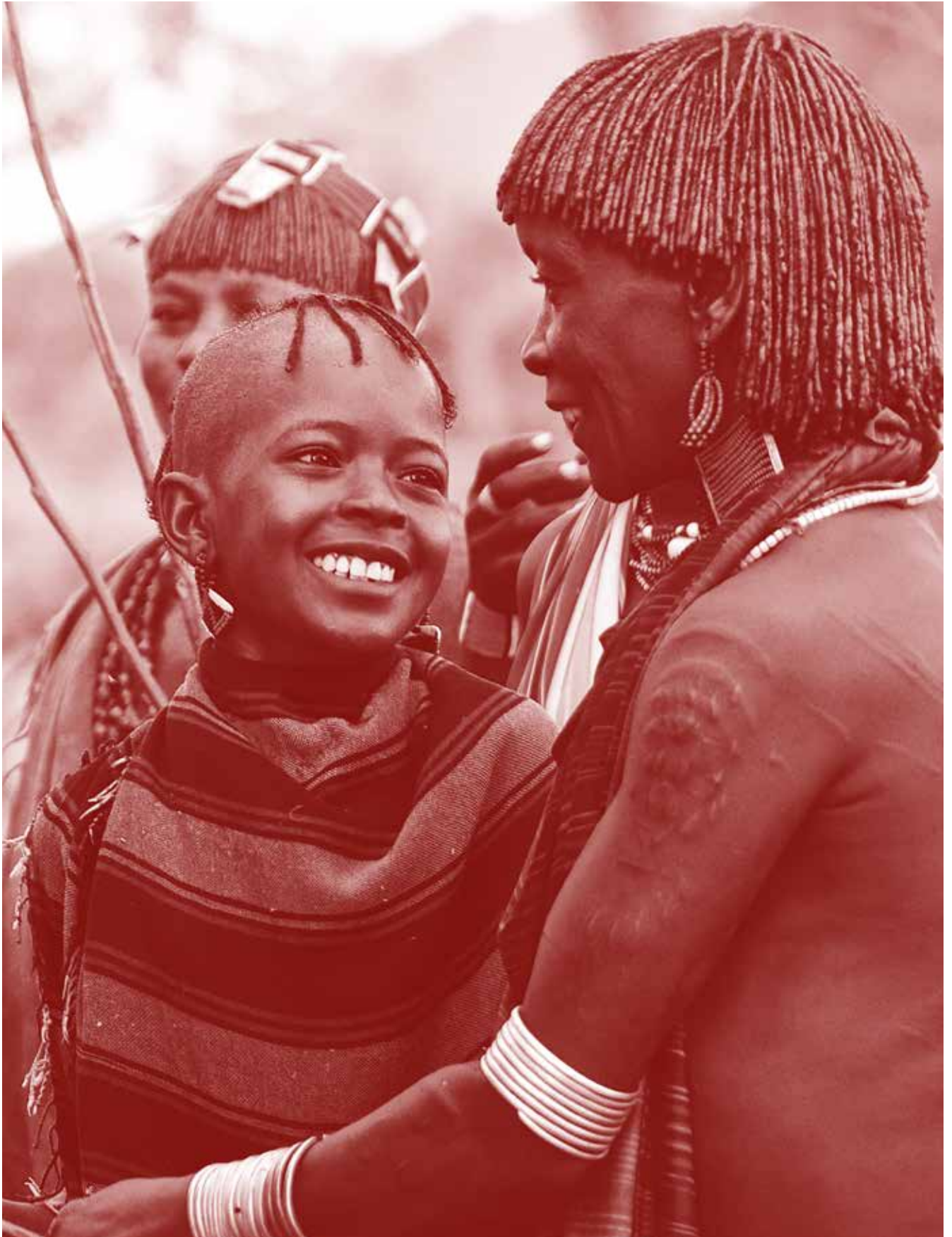
Don't try to kick in the door—let someone inside open it! —*Harry Brown*

Jesus sent the Twelve and the 72 (two-by-two) on their healing and preaching tours, telling them to look for a person of peace, someone who, knowing they represented Jesus, would nonetheless welcome them into their village, house them, feed them, and introduce them to the community. The person of peace was thus to be someone who showed spiritual interest and who had a circle of relationships within the larger community.

Jesus also told them that, if they did not find a person of peace, they were to leave, though they were to tell the residents that the Kingdom had come near them—perhaps to lay the groundwork for future engagement. Jesus was clear that if the Father is not drawing them, they are not going to come to Jesus. But if the Father is drawing them, then in effect while you are looking for them, they are looking for you. This is why a level of spiritual interest is so important in identifying persons of peace.

This strategy is followed everywhere that Disciple Making Movements happen in the Global South. Because the person of peace ministry model is very practical and effective some Global North churches and ministries are adopting it in their outreach programs. Still, many churches in the Global North are not yet aware of it. There are several reasons for this.

Global North churches base their evangelistic approach more on their reading of the book of Acts than on Jesus' words. They see this in terms of proclamation, which generates individual responses of faith. This model underlies crusade evangelism, evangelistic preaching in churches, and even most systems that teach personal evangelism.



Yet a closer reading of Acts shows evidence that persons of peace were involved in spreading the gospel through opening social networks to the gospel. Examples include:

- Aeneas, Acts 9:32–35
- Cornelius, Acts 10, esp. vs. 24, 44 (note “all”)
- Lydia, Acts 16:14–15 (note “household”)
- Philippian jailer, Acts 16:32–33 (note “all his family”)
- Titius Justus, Acts 16:7 (note that Paul stayed with him)
- Crispus, Acts 16:8 (note “entire household”)

This shows two things: The apostolic church made very effective use of persons of peace to introduce the gospel to new social circles, and conversion was often not a purely individual matter. Sometimes in the Global North, we miss opportunities to utilize the power of close family relationships because, in our highly individualized understanding of “salvation,” we don’t think in terms of a family and social networks moving together toward the Kingdom of God.

Households and affinity groups become Christ followers together when a catalytic Kingdom agent introduces the Word of God into a person of peace’s family or social network. Not only have we seen this happen in families, but we’ve also seen this among co-workers, sports teams, and even (now former) criminal gangs.

This process is how billions of the people of the world make major family or communal decisions. A half-century ago, Donald McGavran coined a name for this reality: *multi-individual, mutually interdependent decisions*, the phenomenon that moved whole communities to abandon animistic and other religions to become faithful disciples of Jesus. McGavran later simplified this to “People Movements.”

This is much more than an imaginary, spiritual group-health concept, where one person gets a job and everybody in the family is spiritually covered. It is a blending of the power of family and community in making a Kingdom choice that will redefine future generations. As Hassan, a leading DMM practitioner says, “The gospel still flies best on the wings of relationship.”

The Person of Peace principle is a simple way for any Christian to assess the spiritual hunger of people that they

already know or meet casually, and to determine their interest in self-discovering the Bible in their own home. The reality is that there are many, many people just waiting for someone to extend that invitation. Any organization will typically double their impact when it adopts Jesus’ Person of Peace principle in its strategies, rather than using a mass media or door-knocking approach to ministry.

So how do you identify persons of peace in a community? Before Jesus sent out the Twelve and the 72, He told them to pray. In our efforts to make disciples, we similarly need to begin with prayer.

So a Person of Peace is really a person that God has prepared in the community to receive you. Somebody that God has placed in that community somehow, by his own divine arrangement that will receive you. A Person of Peace is a local of a community, lives within the community, knows the community, understands the community.

A Person of Peace is a person that opens his door voluntarily to you. It’s a person that wants to listen to you and hear your story. A Person of Peace is willing to introduce you to the community and if possible will become your advocate to the community. A Person of Peace, also, is a person that is willing to take the gospel that you bring. But what normally we say is that, if you go to any community, if you can’t find a Person of Peace you have to move on. No Person of Peace, no church planting.

The Person of Peace can be a man/woman. Can be young/old. And can be someone very bad in the community. Younoussa Djao, *Engage! Africa Video*, Person of Peace

This is always the vital first step to all Kingdom work. We need to pray for guidance and discernment to identify the persons of peace whom God has placed in our personal mission field, and to pray for our interactions with them.

To put it simply, people who spend a lot of time in prayer are the ones who tend to find people of peace.

Part of the reason for this is that people who are searching and open to hearing the gospel tend to be attracted to people with an active and vivacious spiritual life. Christians who naturally and unselfconsciously introduce spiritual themes into their everyday conversations attract the interest of those who are spiritually open. According to David Watson, people of peace find disciple makers rather than the other way around.

That said, we need to place ourselves in positions where we can connect with persons of peace. These can be almost


anyone, male or female, young, old, or somewhere in between. They can be educated or uneducated, respectable in society or not. They can be drug lords, drunks, community or religious leaders, business people, students, or teachers. They can even be hostile (at first) to the gospel.

The point is, it is important not to prejudge the kind of person who will be a person of peace. The only prerequisites are a spiritual hunger and a divine call on their lives, both of which are invisible to us.

Access ministries, sometimes called compassion ministries, discussed in chapter 14, are one important approach used in the Global South to connect with persons of peace. This is readily adaptable to communities in the Global North. But this is just one approach.

For example, Sean Steckbeck often approaches local shopkeepers and asks them, “If you could ask for one thing from God, what would it be?” He then prays with them about it, and comes back later for updates. Other questions are also possible: what do you see as the greatest need in the community? What can our church do to help the community? What can we do to help you? Pray with the person you speak to, and then follow up, taking whatever action is appropriate.

As you build a relationship with the person, it opens the door to asking about needs and challenges in their own life, which in turn can open the door to a Discovery Group using Scriptures that address the person’s (or community’s) needs. This last step is part of an approach that Jimmy Tam teaches his congregation in Los Angeles. This is only one example of an approach that has been successful. Every situation and person are different, and a measure of creativity is necessary, so see this as a jumping off point to help start your thinking.

How much would change if churches taught and pastors modeled simple ways to identify persons of peace and catalyze their families, friends, or co-workers into a simple Discovery Group? This approach is being used by God to harvest millions today in the Global South. Kingdom movements occur because ordinary Christians become Kingdom catalysts—causing or accelerating a reaction that can multiply into hundreds of new Christ followers if given the chance. In New Generations, we have tracked up to 27 generations of discovery groups becoming churches that plant other groups, which also become churches. And there is every reason to expect further generations of churches to be founded by the same method. 

For Such A Time As This

Cityteam International Becomes New
Generations

Harry Brown

God is full of surprises! Who would have ever guessed that when a recovered alcoholic named Lester Myers founded the San Jose Rescue Mission with a few hundred dollars in 1957 that it would become a multi-dimensional and multi-city urban ministry called Cityteam? That was a surprise but what is absolutely shocking is that Cityteam would become the pioneers in spreading Disciple Making Movements around the world.

Since 1995, Cityteam International has been the globally-focused church planting branch of Cityteam. During the first ten years a lot of good things were happening in places around the world but nothing revolutionary. But the Spirit of God was laying a foundation for a very different future. In March 2005, Cityteam International embraced the idea of Church Planting Movements (CPM) which eventually morphed into Disciple Making Movements (DMM). By God’s grace and to His glory, since the transition to a CPM/DMM approach, there have been over 50,000 new churches planted that encompass over 1.3 million new followers of Jesus. Even more significant has been the launch of 102 movements (defined as at least 100 new churches that have multiplied to the fourth generation). The longest movement currently being tracked is 27 generations of churches planting churches.

Cityteam’s core business is to serve people in need, proclaim the gospel and establish disciples among the disadvantaged and damaged. So after 22 years of growth and development as part of Cityteam, coupled with several years of intense prayer and discussion, the Board of Cityteam decided that the “teenager had grown up and was ready to leave home.” With that realization, the Board of Cityteam voted unanimously to ‘set apart’ Cityteam International (as per the commissioning of Saul and Barnabas in Acts 13) to become a separate organization called *New Generations*.

The calling of *New Generations* is to train national leaders to launch and sustain Disciple Making Movements around the world and help like-minded ministries to do the same. The purpose for this ‘setting apart’ is the clarity of one purpose, one goal and one message for both branches of an incredibly fruitful ministry.

There is no way that Lester Myers could have imagined when he founded the San Jose Rescue Mission that one day it would be the launching pad for a global church planting ministry called *New Generations*. But if he had known, I think he would have been happy. Lester was a Kingdom entrepreneur.