



Disruptive Missiology Part 1: Definition

Greg H. Parsons



Just the other day, I ate in church. I had fajitas.

It was a grand church, hundreds of years old with dozens of large, beautiful stained glass windows depicting the message of the Gospel. But now it is a restaurant called *Souls*, a fitting name. Though in a part of the world that has had revival in the past, for some reason unknown to me, it could no longer be sustained as a gathering place for believers and was sold (I assume) and turned into a place where people gather for a different purpose.

It is hard to know why these things happen. Often it is related to the value and place of God's Word on the part of the leadership and how that Biblical message is communicated as a culture shifts. Or perhaps these believers had not really followed the Lord. Perhaps they did, but, in the end, what was needed was something that would "disrupt" the status quo of the members in these churches and allow them to reach the next generation.

Unless believers in a given culture attempt to understand and relate to future generations, the advance of the gospel can be sidetracked—or at least it seems like it to us.

Disruptive technology is a phrase used by many in the tech world, which initially sounds negative. The idea behind it is for a company to create a technology that overturns the existing dominant technology or "status quo" (according to Wikipedia). In other words, it changes the way people look at a particular concept or the way they accomplish a particular task. Prime examples are Microsoft, Apple and Google. Microsoft created software that changed the way people do business. Apple changed the way people interface with computers and, more recently, the way we listen to music. Google has changed the way we get information. Naturally, if you invent or create such a technology, you can make a lot of money and/or "change the world."

In our circles, the latter is what we are interested in—not changing the way the world works or plays, but the way people connect with the living God.

At times, to see that happen, we need a *disruptive missiology*. Something that looks at what is happening,

what is not happening and dreams about what might happen. Something that hears the footsteps of the working of God in breakthrough and thinks, dreams, and works towards what might happen should God choose to move in peoples where we haven't seen Him yet move.

For example, Paul didn't expect the Greeks of his day to become Jews or to embrace Jewish culture. Why should we expect Muslims or Hindus to embrace "Christian" culture—often Western, no matter where in the world it is found? If only ten percent of Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists were to take the Scriptures seriously and embrace Christ within *their* cultural context, hundreds of millions could be following Christ.

To the degree our message is tied with our culture may be the same amount others will reject it. In the past, breakthroughs came because God moved and people felt convicted that He was moving them in new ways and something needed to *disrupt* standard approaches.

Of course, we seek to live and work by faith. Our approaches must be grounded in the Word of God, but not tied to Western or Eastern ways of interpreting it. God works in line with His will when He is ready and in the way He chooses. He is not limited to methods in Acts or elsewhere in the Bible. They are neither prescriptive, as if they are the way He *always* works, nor descriptive as the *only* ways He will work. One thing we can say about the creative ways God works in Scripture: it was often surprising to those directly involved. People like Abraham, Moses, David, Habakkuk, Mary, Joseph, Paul (and Ananias!) among others were surprised if not shocked.

Why wouldn't we expect to be surprised today and seek to be open to His move through approaches to spreading His fame in ways we haven't seen and didn't think up? Not only is God a creative God, but we, as His creation, are His creative children. How might God use your giftings and creativity beyond what you have dreamed to disrupt something for good?

Share your "disruptive missiology" story with me at: greg.parsons@uscwm.org



Rev. Greg Parsons is General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. He and his wife have been on staff at the USCWM since 1982.