

The Radical Experiment

Robby Butler

Throughout his book *Radical*, Dr. David Platt presses us to come to Jesus on His terms, to be made free and eager to give whatever He asks and go wherever He sends. Thus *The Radical Experiment* introduced at the end of the book may seem anticlimactic. Mission mobilizers have long challenged individuals with more radical steps than these:

- Pray for the entire world
- Read through the entire Word
- Sacrifice our money for a specific purpose
- Give our time in another context
- Commit our lives to multiplying community

Platt's approach to discipleship, like Jesus', is short on tasks to check off. Instead Platt urges us to press in to hear from God through His Word and be changed by Him. What is radical about *The Radical Experiment* is that

- each of us can embrace these steps and invite others to join us (even if we are already doing more),
- these basic steps guide us toward sharing God's compassion for the lost and the poor,
- The Radical Experiment is not an end to be achieved, but a foundation for a lifelong journey, and
- none of us should be tempted toward self-righteousness for doing these basic things.

Platt's church, The Church at Brook Hills, began *The Radical Experiment* this past January, and will soon be announcing a new ministry to support other churches in applying what they have learned. For now see their resources at: RadicalExperiment.org/resources.html.

Following are this mobilization strategist's reflections on *The Radical Experiment*.

Pray for the Entire World

Helpful Resources:

- Brook Hills utilizes *Operation World*¹, both the print and web versions OperationWorld.org/today.html, as well as the simpler *Window on the World*² for family devotions.

- Pray daily for unreached peoples at UnreachedOfTheDay.org (embed in your own site), or GlobalPrayerDigest.org (also available in print and by email).

Read through the Entire Word

Helpful Resources:

- Toward better understanding and applying the story of Scripture, Brook Hills is field-testing a chronological reading plan developed by Dr. George Guthrie of Union University.³
- Brook Hills' 2010 sermons⁴ follow a one-year Bible chronology.
- MF readers may find value in a Bible overview such as God's Story (Gods-Story.org). Now in use in 246 languages, this has become an important complement to the Jesus Film (JesusFilm.org).
- Bible storytelling training is available through Simply The Story (SimplyTheStory.com) and other resources listed by the International Orality Network (OralBible.com/resources/links).

Additional Thoughts:

- Brook Hills is developing its own TEE (Theological Education by Extension). For similar benefit, MF readers can:
 - ~ study half-time anywhere to complete a B.A. or M.A. through WorldChristianFoundations.org,
 - ~ pursue a year of Intensive Study of Integrated Global History and Theology (INSIGHT) at several U.S. locations for transfer credit at many colleges (YearOfINSIGHT.org), or
 - ~ gain an introduction to mission strategy and insight in a local or on-line class through Perspectives.org.

Sacrifice our Money for a Specific Purpose

Helpful Resources:

- Along with *When Helping Hurts*⁵ ..., Brook Hills lists many great inspirational books.⁶
- The *Great Omission* by Steve Saint⁷. From firsthand experience helping a tribal people recover from well-intentioned generosity, Steve illustrates the value of steep financial investment in low-cost technology that empowers the "poor." He also observes that money among the poor is like medicine, in the sense that too much can be more harmful than too little.

- Glenn Schwartz' book *When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement*.⁸ See his column on page 23.

Additional Thoughts:

- It isn't only the rich that struggle with the love of money. Many long-term mission efforts have been devastated by the sudden introduction of outside funds which, to the recipients, were equivalent to winning the lottery. Let your giving to the poor be guided by and delivered through those who care enough to live among them.
- Platt encourages prayerful consideration of a cap on what we spend on ourselves. Find a missionary family the size of your own and learn what their allowance is for personal expenses. Then aim to reduce your own expenses to match. Use any surplus to get free from debt while also storing up treasure in heaven.
- Aim to match, in your giving toward long-term efforts, what you spend to participate in short-term outreaches.
- In helping the poor, identify and address the mixture of factors which may have produced the poverty: oppression, unemployment, poor work skills, ill health, sinful desires, lack of self-control and catastrophe.
- Missionaries often first catch their vision through personal contact with a missionary they agreed to support. However else you give, support a missionary who communicates consistently and will be your eyes, ears and hands among the lost and poor.
- Seek out missionaries to support who:
 - ~ Embrace insights from other effective missionaries (such as those distilled in *Perspectives*).
 - ~ Target people movements, not just starting a church or meeting practical needs.
 - ~ Aim for multiplication by developing a few mature disciplers ahead of masses of converts.
 - ~ Cultivate local self-reliance and sacrificial giving rather than dependence on external funding.
 - ~ Utilize Bible Storytelling both for inductive study in devotions, and for multiplication in discipling and witnessing.

Give Our Time in Another Context

Helpful Resources:

- ShortTermMissions.com will help you sift through 1200+ short-term opportunities from 100+ organizations.
- Two excellent matching services, for those considering longer-term service, are:
 - ~ Finishers.org for those at the end of a first career, and
 - ~ MissionNext.com for those with less life-experience.

Additional Thoughts:

- Prayerfully identify and work to eliminate your most significant obstacle to long-term service, and work toward going until God clearly directs you to stay.
- Pursue ongoing local involvement with the lost and the poor, and engage your family and friends to join you.
- Select short-term trips aligned with Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions (stmstandards.org).
- Arrange your short-term trips to assist a field missionary you are supporting. Plan repeated involvements to build relationships and maximize long-term benefits.

Commit our Lives to Multiplying Community

Helpful Resources:

- Rick Wood mentions on page 5 the effective model Real Life Ministries has developed for church-based community discipling. Check out:
 - ~ *Church is a Team Sport*,⁹ *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples*,¹⁰ both by Jim Putman
 - ~ *Overview of the Discipleship Process* (23 mins), and schedule of training experiences at reallifeministries.com/immersionone.

Additional Thoughts:

- Every believer should be a discipler, but in practice we are trained mostly to be spectators. Thus many of those now engaged in cross-cultural discipling had no practical experience in discipling in their family, church, or community—this must change!

Note that Platt has proposed the Radical Experiment not as a new program, but as a one-year step, which should lead us toward greater clarity in understanding and embracing who Christ is, and how He calls us to join Him among the poor and the lost in discipling all nations. 🌐

Footnotes

- ¹ Gabriel Resources, 2005. (See page 16 for a special MF offer on the 2010 edition.)
- ² Authentic Books/Biblica Publishing, 2007
- ³ *Biblical Literacy Initiative*. ReadTheBibleForLife.com.
- ⁴ For free Brook Hills sermons (video or audio), visit BrookHills.org media and select a podcast link (on right).
- ⁵ *When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Ourselves* by Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett, Moody Publishers, 2009.
- ⁶ RadicalExperiment.org/resources.html.
- ⁷ YWAM Publishing, 2001.
- ⁸ AuthorHouse, 2007.
- ⁹ Baker Books, 2009.
- ¹⁰ NavPress, 2010.