



An American Adaptation of **Church Planting** **MOVEMENT** Principles

Jeff Sundell

After several years as a CPM trainer in South Asia, I found myself back in the buckle of the Bible Belt near Shelby, North Carolina where people also needed the gospel. As I sought to implement CPM Training for Trainers (T4T) principles that had been so effective in South Asia, I found it necessary to make some adjustments.

The first adjustment was to move away from terms like “house church,” “simple church” and “organic church,” and we ended up calling the process Discipleship Cycle.

Every week, we would meet using the T4T pattern of 1/3rd, 1/3rd, 1/3rd for our meetings¹ with the content being what every believer needs to know, with whom to share his story in the community, what to say, how to share his story and the Gospel, and if the person with whom he shared believed, how he would disciple them.

We used the Seven Commands of Christ for the discipleship content based around an inductive Bible. The first six weeks went by looking more like a Bible study than a T4T group. We had prayed weekly for our lost friends in our *oikos* and consistently held everyone accountable to share their stories, but, for the most part, no one was sharing his story.

We had many tell us they did not know any lost people. The reason for this was that people could remember 40 years ago when little Johnny walked the aisle in a church, even though now Johnny was living like anyone else in the world. So, we quit using the term “lost” and began to ask people if they knew 10 people who were “far from God.” Now everyone had friends who were far from God and so could

write down many names. This was a huge breakthrough for all of the groups.

Next, based on the House of Peace model, we asked them which person of the 10 on their list had God working in their life right now so that they could share their story with them that week. All of a sudden, everyone understood with whom to share, and so began to grasp the concept of a house of peace.

We do not discourage people from going to church, but we do encourage our disciplers to keep discipling these people in small T4T groups. The Great Commission commands us to make disciples; that means the buck stops with us! This is still an ongoing struggle, but we are making great progress.

We were brainstorming one day for new ways to get into people’s homes to do evangelistic Bible studies. We decided to reverse the food pantry, so the guys from the group distributed flyers in the community asking people to donate food if they had extra, but if a person needed food, they would call the phone number and it would be delivered to them.

We decided to go into the homes and listen to their stories, then share our stories of how Jesus changed our lives, then share Jesus’ story. In the first home there was a young couple who shared that they had been addicted to drugs but were clean at the time because she was pregnant. But, she also shared that DSS (Dept. of Social Services) had taken her other two kids and she wanted to get her life together and not lose this baby and eventually get her kids back from DSS. We prayed with her and her need for a job, crib, baby clothes and food. The following week, we shared this need in our T4T groups, and one of the men in the group said that he and his wife wanted to meet these personal needs of this young lady. They took a crib to her and took her shopping at Wal-Mart.

Soon a healthy baby came, and this couple moved out of the house they were sharing with other people and into their own house, but had no power because she had a huge unpaid electric bill (\$450) that needed

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¹ See Steve Smith’s “T4T: A Discipleship Revolution in the January issue of *Mission Frontiers*, p. 13.

to be paid to get back into the house. We began to pray again. The couple went to DSS and local charities looking for help to pay the bill; in the end, the couple in the T4T group gave the last \$40 to get their electricity back on. The young husband shared with the T4T couple that in the past he would have gotten the money one way or another, legally or illegally, but he wanted to change and have a new life.

Four months later, the husband gave his life to Jesus and is being discipled, working to overcome many

difficulties, but the young lady in this story is still struggling as we continue to pray and reach out to her. He is now sharing his story and learning how to reach his friends by sharing his story and Jesus' story.

In the 12 months, since starting the first T4T Discipleship Cycle in small-town North Carolina, I and my fellow trainers have seen nearly 40 discipleship groups started and seen many who were "far from God" draw close to him once more.^f

Some Great Articles are Waiting for You at WWW.MISSIONFRONTIERS.ORG

We had so much great material for this issue that we just could not fit it all into the 36 pages available to us. But we did not want you to miss these important articles from the people who know Church Planting Movements the best. Take a look at the following titles and introductions and go to the MF website to read them in their entirety. Happy reading.

Are There Church Planting Movements in North America? *Neil Cole*

David Watson has mentioned that it takes longer in contexts with traditional church presence for CPMs to get started. He also states that it takes about four years in developing nations for a CPM to go from initial missionary contact to a rapid movement, so perhaps in the US we are looking at a decade or longer to see the same type of exponential growth and transformation of society. Well, we are a decade in and all the major news outlets are beginning to notice something, so perhaps we are indeed at the beginning of a North American CPM.

A CPM Unfolding in Uganda Today, *David Garrison and Bill Smith*

A glance at the religious demographics of Africa attests to scores of untold church-planting movements. In 1900, the African continent's Christian population stood at only 9 million adherents. By 2010, the number had risen to more than 470 million.¹ What began a century ago as a colonial byproduct has emerged today as arguably the most vibrant expression of Christianity on earth,² a truly indigenous and exponentially spread-

ing contagion of churches planting churches touching every country and nearly every tribal community of sub-Saharan Africa.

The Bible on Church Planting Movements, *Steve Smith and Steve Addison*

A common criticism of church-planting movements (CPMs) is that fairly new believers become leaders of churches. This seems to contradict what Paul says about the qualifications of overseers: "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1 Tim. 3:6, NIV) However, this is not Paul's only list of qualifications for overseers. We must apply biblical expectations for leaders appropriate to their stage of responsibility and development.

Messy Mangers, Misunderstandings and Movements by *Wilson Geisler*

Anyone who has been involved in church-planting movements knows these two truths: Church Planting Movements are messy, and they can be easily misunderstood and thereby missed altogether. The first of these truths the church planter can do very little to prevent, but can take comfort in when his or her ministry proves to be a messy one. Proverbs 14:4 makes it clear that, "Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox" (NASB). When training church planting partners (kingdom oxen) to produce exponentially reproducing healthy churches (kingdom revenue), you can count on a messy manger.

¹ David B. Barrett and Todd Johnson, "World Religious Statistics," in the January 29, 2010 International Bulletin of Missionary Research.

² See, for example, Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 270 pp.