

# SIMPLE, COMMON-SENSE SOLUTIONS TO WORLD EVANGELIZATION



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**D**o tough problems or seemingly insurmountable obstacles always require complex or difficult solutions? Not always. Sometimes the best solutions to tough problems including those in world evangelization are simple and straightforward, but not often obvious at first. What is common sense today often became so because someone was willing to challenge the entrenched interests behind the conventional thinking and practices of their day. These

pioneers often pay a terrible price for having the vision for a better way of doing things.

## ONE MAN'S SIMPLE SOLUTION CHANGES THE WORLD

Here is one notable illustration of this point from history. Today, we all know that washing your hands is an effective way to prevent disease transmission and infection. This is a common sense, simple solution to what had before often been a deadly problem. But in 1867 when British surgeon Joseph Lister first developed antiseptic surgical procedures and proved that washing your hands and surgical instruments in carbolic acid prevented infection, few believed him. The doctors of his day thought that it was too much trouble to wash their hands and instruments between patients. They were convinced that it was “bad air” (miasma) that caused infections not “invisible germs.” These doctors actually took pride in their dirty, blood-caked surgical coats and referred to the terrible smells as “good old surgical stink.”<sup>1</sup>

For decades, Lister worked tirelessly to get his proven “common sense” solution accepted by the medical profession of his day—meeting with greater success in Europe than in the U.S. Fourteen years later in 1881 when U.S. President James Garfield was shot in an assassination attempt, the “best doctors” in the U.S. still saw no problem with repeatedly probing the bullet wound with unwashed hands and instruments. Garfield died a painful death 79 days later from massive infection.

By 1902 attitudes had largely changed when just two days before his coronation Edward VII, King of the United Kingdom, came down with an appendicitis which was typically untreatable by surgery at that time because of the high risk of infection. Lister was pulled from retirement to advise the surgeons on his antiseptic methods and they worked. The King credited Lister with saving his life saying, “I know that if it had not been for you and your work, I wouldn't be sitting here today.”<sup>2</sup> It literally took over 20 years of tireless advocacy for Lister's common sense, simple solution to become generally accepted for its tremendous value in saving lives.

## A MODERN DAY EXAMPLE

Today, we are in a similar situation in the area of world evangelization. There are proven, simple, common-sense strategies for discipleship and church-planting which are challenging the way that things are typically done. There are millions of transformed lives and hundreds of thousands of reproducing churches that demonstrate the tremendous power of simply teaching and empowering all people to obey the Word of God, make disciples and plant reproducing simple churches. Jerry Trousdale, author of the book, *Miraculous Movements*, tells the stories of transformed lives that are taking place among Muslims through simple obedience to the Word and simple churches. See the article starting on page 6. This is a revolution in the making, but it is actually a recapturing of the lost art of disciple-making as seen in the book of Acts which transformed the ancient world.

As Joseph Lister experienced, when you challenge the conventional thinking of your day, progress is slow in convincing people of the value of these “new” ideas. People are slow to let go of the traditional way of doing things that they have grown up with. An entrenched “Church Culture” must be challenged that says that: only the highly-trained professionals can do church planting and discipleship; we need big buildings, big budgets, large staffs of pastors; and a complex array of programs and organizations in order to further God's kingdom.

We are told to bring our friends to church so the professional

pastor can lead them to Jesus and “disciple them” through his sermons. (Educators tell us that just listening to a speaker is a rather poor way of transmitting information.) We have been made spectators when we are actually a kingdom of priests who have the God-given obligation to share the truths of the Word with all who will listen and disciple them. Instead we have largely become passive listeners depending upon the professional clergy to do the work of ministry for us. There is a better way.

In this issue we tell the stories of dramatic transformation in the lives of real people as a result of using some simple, common-sense strategies for making disciples and planting churches that are getting the attention of church and mission leaders around the world. We present the testimonies of practitioners who are employing these simple solutions with dramatic results in the lives of Muslims in Africa and the secular people of Europe. In each case it is average people being transformed by obedience to the Word of God and the power of the Spirit who lead others to do the same—creating a movement in the process.

## COMMON SENSE FOR WORLD EVANGELIZATION

Here are some common sense, simple solutions to some tough ministry challenges that you can employ in your church. See if these make sense to you.

### *How can we best reach the lost?*

Simple Solution: Instead of inviting unbelievers to your church or even to your home, offer to go to their home to explore what the Bible has to say. If these people come to faith, you have already established the basis for a church in their home that can reach into their family and spheres of influence. The church is often the biggest obstacle for the unsaved, not Jesus or the Bible. One ministry leader who is applying this principle in his area told me that he has

more unbelievers who want Bible studies in their homes than he has believers willing to lead them. We must *go to them*, not expect them to come to us in our churches.

### *When someone comes to faith in Christ, how should we begin to disciple them?*

Simple solution: As soon as someone puts their trust in Christ, train them to share their testimony and a simple presentation of the Gospel. Have them practice it until they feel comfortable doing it. Then ask them to share their faith with the unbelievers they know. As you train these new believers to study Scripture, pray and obey the Word, encourage them and hold them accountable to do the same with those they have led to Christ as part of an ongoing group discipleship process. Discipleship must be an intentional life on life relationship interacting with the Word of God, not a one way communication of information in a sermon. When someone gets saved put them into a group where they will learn to be a disciple-maker. Don't just put them into a pew to listen to sermons.


### *How can we plant churches that reproduce themselves?*

Simple Solution: As you disciple someone, start with the goal in mind of training them to start new groups/churches. Train your disciples to replicate everything you teach them with their new people as they start new groups. In this way you will establish the DNA of a multigenerational Church-Planting Movement. Not every disciple will start a new group/church, but you will see new groups started if reproducing churches is your goal to begin with rather than the typical focus on growing your church attendance. See page 19 for Steve Smith's article on how to turn groups into churches.

### *How do you know who will be a good disciple-maker or church planter?*

Simple Solution: Let God decide. Our tendency is to judge people based on outward appearances, whereas God looks at the heart. When we attempt to pick and choose, we often get it wrong. We must assume that the Holy Spirit is always at work in the lives of people. All we have to do is to find out who is responsive to the workings of the Spirit. The way we do that is by giving people the opportunity to obey in response to biblical truth and the opportunity to serve. The more a disciple obeys, the more mature and useful in God's service he or she becomes. As we give people the opportunity to make disciples and plant churches, people will self select their role based on their response and clearly demonstrate whether they are effective disciple makers or church planters. Our job is to train everyone and let God make the choice.

## AN UNBEATABLE COMBINATION

The Word of God is the power of God for salvation and the transformation of all who will obey the truths contained in it. The people of God are a powerhouse of enormous potential in the work of world evangelization if we will only train and release them to do the work of ministry rather than relying only on the pastors to do it for them. The stories in this issue clearly demonstrate that it is possible for ordinary believers to change the world when they are properly equipped and released to make disciples who can make disciples. The Word of God and equipped disciple-makers; sounds like an unbeatable, “common sense” solution to world evangelization. 

*As you probably have noticed MF has taken on a new look with the current issue. Let us know what you think.*

1. Millard, Candice, 2011, *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President*, Doubleday, a division of Random House, Pp. 184-186.
2. Lister, Joseph, Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Lister,\\_1st\\_Baron\\_Lister](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Lister,_1st_Baron_Lister)
3. Edward VII, Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII)