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SIMPLE, COMMON-SENSE SOLUTIONS TO WORLD EVANGELIZATION



RICK WOOD
/ EDITOR, MISSION
FRONTIERS

Do 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.”¹

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.”² 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
3. Edward VII, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII



+ FEATURE



simple churches

dramatic transformations, rapid replication.



JERRY TROUSDALE

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For more information email questions@cityteam.org

*Our goal is not only the multiplication of churches or numbers of believers; our goal is to **see transformation**.* —Habib, Senior disciple-making trainer.

Maysa was a very ordinary person living in Africa. She and her husband owned livestock, and they traveled about the countryside with groups of other nomads looking for grazing areas for the animals. The couple were both Christians, alone in an area where everyone else was Muslim, and they had no church or Bible study to join. Maysa realized that since none of the other people in her nomadic community could read, she had to be the one to bring the life-giving story of the gospel to her people.

So Maysa attended a training seminar offered by a missions organization, in which she learned how to tell stories from the Bible, beginning at creation and moving forward chronologically toward Christ. As soon as she rejoined her family, Maysa began sharing these stories with other nomadic women. In her village, the men would go out every day with the animals to find grazing, while the women stayed behind to care for their children. Maysa used this time as an opportunity to tell many women about God. She told them how God created the entire world in just six days, and how a man named Adam had disobeyed God's command and brought sin and death into the world—a world that had previously been perfect and free from suffering and death. She told them about the great Flood and the man named Noah who obeyed God, and she told them how God had repeatedly made Himself known to men like Abraham and Moses so that mankind could live according to His will. And after every story, the women would discuss what the stories meant and, if they were true, how their lives must change to obey the God of Truth. The most important thing that the women learned was this: don't just hear God's Word; obey it!

Within a few weeks, more than forty women had accepted God's gift of salvation and eternal life through His Son Jesus. Those women began to change as God's Spirit moved in their lives, and their husbands were quick to notice. Now, the people of this village did more than travel about with their livestock; the men were raiders, marauders who would periodically attack other villages and steal their livestock. These attacks were a matter of both livelihood and pride in this culture; a successful raider could boast that he had fought and won. But the men became puzzled by the changes they saw in their wives, and they knew that Maysa's stories were responsible in some way, so they began asking her husband probing questions while they were out grazing their livestock, and he was privileged to lead many of the men to Christ. After this, the men stopped their while they were out grazing their livestock, and he was privileged to lead many of the men to Christ. After this, the men stopped their raiding and began instead to take the good news of God's Word to other nomadic groups of Muslims.

When Muslims discover the truth of Christ, they almost always begin to share with their families or close friends about God's free gift of eternal life. About one year after Maysa began telling Bible stories to the people in her village, two men named Ahmed and Mechela were driving through the desert, on their way to visit some Christ followers in a distant region. Ahmed's missions team had trained Maysa how to make obedient disciples using a chronological Bible storytelling format, and they were presently traveling around to visit with other Christ followers whom they had trained. They were about two hundred kilometers from the region where Maysa lived.



Maysa teaches the Muslim women God's stories. These women go on to share them with others including their husbands.

As they bumped along the rutted dirt track, they came upon two elderly men walking with large burdens wrapped in blankets on their shoulders. The men had heard them coming and were waving them down, asking for a ride. In this region, a person can walk the entire day without seeing more than a few vehicles, and one does not waste any opportunity to catch a lift.

But Ahmed didn't slow down; in fact, he stepped on the accelerator, hard. This region was frequented by bandits, and he was very suspicious of the blanketed goods these men were carrying. It was not uncommon to be waylaid by criminals brandishing AK-47s, and Ahmed was in no mood to take any chances. The two Christians roared past the elderly men in a cloud of dust, but after a moment,

the Holy Spirit pressed Ahmed as hard as he had pressed the gas pedal. "Why did you leave them?" his conscience said, "You have space in your car." Ahmed felt instantly convicted that he had made a poor choice, and he found himself easing off the gas and stepping on the brake. In a moment that paralleled his own inner conflict, he threw the car into reverse, grinding the gears, and began the run back toward the hitchhikers.

As Ahmed glanced in the rearview mirror, he saw the elderly men running toward him, their burdens bouncing on their shoulders and their faces alight with relief. They clambered into the backseat, bowing and grinning to the Christians in the front as they dumped their burdens, from which no firearms appeared, onto the floor. Mechela breathed a sigh of relief to see nothing more dangerous than brightly colored scarves within the bundles.

"We are taking a dowry gift to a young man in a distant village," one of the hitchhikers explained "We would have been walking all day if you had not come past."

Mechela asked a few polite questions about the engaged couple, then suddenly asked, "Do you know God?" He bit his tongue the instant the words were out, darting a guilty look toward Ahmed. This was not the right question to ask new Muslim acquaintances. Ahmed gave him a quick disapproving scowl. The young man had probably offended his new guests by implying that they might not be good Muslims.

But the passengers surprised the Christians by throwing their heads back in laughter. "Of course we know God," one of the men replied. "Who do you think made you stop and give us a lift? You didn't want to. You had already dusted us up pretty good. But who made you back up?"

The ensuing laughter broke down all barriers between the men, and soon they were chatting together like old friends. After a while, Mechela decided to try his hand at conversation a second time, "Would you like to hear a story?" he asked. There were no radio stations in the desert, and storytelling was a good way to pass the time, so the men readily agreed, "Well" continued Mechela, getting comfortable in his reversed position on the front seat, 'do you know where the whole world came from? It was like this: in the beginning...' He had not gotten more than a minute into his story when he was abruptly interrupted. "Oh, we already know that story!" cried the hitchhikers in unison.

Poor Mechela was taken aback once again. He stared at his new friends with open mouth, too surprised to speak, so Ahmed rescued him by asking the men to tell their own



Ahmed felt sure they must be dangerous bandits and stepped on the gas until the Spirit told him to stop.

story of creation. And they proceeded to recite it verbatim according to the way his missions team taught the Scriptures to those who could not read. As the men began to tell Mechela and Ahnied the story of Noah, Ahmed asked them, “Excuse me, but where did you learn these stories?”

“Last rainy season,” the men answered, “a man moved to our village and taught us these stories and many others. Let us tell you about the great Flood... and we have many other stories that we would like to tell you.”

It took the remainder of the trip, but Ahmed and Mechela eventually were able to piece things together. They traced the source of the Bible stories that the men had learned all the way back to Maysa and her husband, who had led others to become disciples of Christ, who in turn had gone to distant villages and shared the gospel with more nomads. These two elderly men, hitchhiking their way through the desert, were the fifth generation of Christ followers growing out of Maysa’s efforts, and they were on their way to share the gospel with a young couple who would soon be married and would carry it on to others. And all this took place in the space of one year!

This spreading of the gospel through the desert, one person sharing Scripture stories with another outside of any formal setting, is what Ahmed and his team call “the church on the camel’s path.”

SIMPLE CHURCHES LEAD TO RAPID REPLICATION

When the vast majority of American Christians talk about “church,” we have a fairly common idea of what we mean. Our idea of church usually focuses on facilities, leaders, and programs, and the more of each, the better. The challenge for most Christian leaders is that, regardless of the size of their church, the perceived minimum elements needed to sustain that church are often greater than the existing budget and staff can sustain. It is very tough to lead a traditional church today. Pastors need much prayer and support.

We often talk about two kinds of churches:

- *Elephant churches* have lots of programs, activities, and people. We need churches like this, but they are very slow to multiply, just like two elephants that take two years to produce offspring.
- *Rabbit churches* are small, able to hide in plain sight, and multiply very quickly. Two rabbits can theoretically produce more than one hundred million rabbits in three years.

ONLY A RABBIT CHURCH HAS THE ABILITY TO REPRODUCE RAPIDLY, THRIVE IN A DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT, AND NATURALLY FACILITATE OBEDIENCE-BASED DISCIPLESHIP WITHIN EVERY MEMBER.

God bless elephant churches; they serve wonderful functions. But from every strategic perspective, megachurches and even average-sized churches will never fulfill the Great Commission without a goal and plan to launch thousands of rabbit churches. Only a rabbit church has the ability to reproduce rapidly, thrive in a dangerous environment, and naturally facilitate obedience-based discipleship within every member, as evidenced by Disciple Making Movements taking place among Muslims.

In our studies of Muslim church-planting outcomes for more than seven years, in more than six thousand new Muslim-background churches in eighteen countries, including seventy different Muslim people groups, we have found that “church” is being done this way:

- The average church size is 31.2 Christians per church (approximately 15 Christians per church in extremely high-risk areas),

+ FEATURE

- Every member is expected to participate in ongoing Discovery Bible Studies in which people together learn how to obey God and help one another grow in faithfulness to Him.
- The leadership of the church is somewhat collective, but typically includes a facilitator, leader, or pastor who is receiving ongoing biblical training. These leaders will typically serve the church and also support themselves financially.
- As noted before, many churches set aside special times every week for prayer and fasting.
- Between 60 and 70 percent of the churches report that, within the first few months of the first Discovery Bible Study, they experience a dramatic healing or deliverance that usually causes the church to suddenly accelerate in growth. Among the most radical Muslim communities, that number is closer to 50 percent.
- The tithes of the church are spent on things like meeting needs of people inside the church, doing acts of kindness for the larger community, and sometimes supporting some members to pioneer the gospel in new Muslim communities.
- The meetings of the church are very simple Discovery Bible Studies, with frequent prayer meetings to pray for the lost and for needs in the local community.
- More than half of the Muslim-background churches are planted among people who are considered totally unengaged by the gospel, or where there is no viable “Jesus option.” In these cases, persecution is very common, and church buildings only increase that risk.
- About one quarter of these churches are in “Muslim dominant” regions where there may or may not be heavy persecution. In some areas, the sheer number of churches that are planted in a region changes the spiritual environment, which in turn gives Christians much greater freedom.
- The remaining 25 percent of the churches are planted in areas that might be considered dominated by “Folk Islam,” a syncretistic mixing of traditional religions and Islam. While serious persecution occasionally happens in these areas, there is typically more freedom, and sometimes small churches will expand rapidly to one hundred or more members and have the freedom to build an inexpensive structure to facilitate larger meetings.
- Leaders in these churches are typically trained two to four times a year, without extracting them to other regions, through the use of more experienced Christian

leaders cycling through pioneer areas training, coaching, and mentoring new leaders. Some are mentored in the meantime by cell phone.

- Disciples reproduce disciples, and churches reproduce churches in ways that are biblically informed and culturally appropriate.

Did you notice that everything these churches do tends to fulfill a function of reproducing obedient disciples of Jesus?

There are not many programs, but quite a lot of genuine transformation of individuals, families, and whole communities.

SIMPLE CHURCHES LEAD TO TRANSFORMATION

Let's return to Ahmed and Mechela, the men who picked up the hitchhikers in the desert. Sometime after that encounter, they were once again bumping over a desert road—hitting potholes, slogging through muddy ruts, choking on dust—when the check engine light came on. On an American highway, this means getting off at the next exit to find a gas station, or calling the auto club on one's cell phone. But in an African desert, it can mean real trouble. Ahmed did not have the tools or spare parts needed to repair his old Land Cruiser, for money and resources were tight for these two men, and they could only observe with dismay as the engine died and the vehicle rolled to a stop.

Fortunately, they were less than three kilometers from a small village where there was a Christian colleague, Waseem, whom Ahmed had trained in making disciples. Unfortunately, they knew that it would take a minimum of three days for a truck to arrive with the spare parts they needed. So Ahmed and Mechela left the vehicle and walked the remaining distance to Waseem's home.

That evening, after milking his cows, Waseem invited the two men to join him for his Discovery Bible Study at a nearby home. He didn't actually say “nearby,” but he did not correct the misunderstanding of his guests, either. Ahmed and Mechela readily agreed, picturing a short walk to a peaceful round hut with thatched roof, owned by a quiet family in the village. Waseem smiled innocently, then led his friends on a long, arduous trek under the desert stars. After several hours, Ahmed saw a large hut in the distance. It was indeed round with a thatched roof, and things were certainly quiet, but perhaps too quiet. The three men entered the hut and Ahmed stopped dead in his tracks.

Huddled inside was a group of some thirty men. All were dressed in desert camouflage, and all were heavily armed.



"You don't have to be afraid my friends. You are in the safest place in the region. Our friend Waseem has been reading God's Word to us and it has changed our lives."

Several of the men had automatic rifles in their hands or within reach. Most had ammo belts draped across a shoulder, and all had unwelcoming eyes focused toward the strangers. Ahmed recognized the men as a group of rebels, whom the Western press would term "freedom fighters," but whom most Africans know as dangerous brigands. Had Ahmed known in advance that these men would be here, he would never have agreed to come. But Waseem simply beamed his smile once more, then sat down next to the rebel leader as the leader opened his Bible.

"You have heard that it was said," the rebel leader read, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away." Then the leader asked, "What did Isa say here, in your own words?"

For the next hour, the thirty men discussed the words of Jesus, considering His commands that were so radically opposed to their own traditions, and wrestling with their conviction that they must begin to obey them. Ahmed and Mechela sat silently in a corner, gazing with amazement as many of the men, including the leader himself, wept openly over their sinful condition, These rebels, and many others

like them, cloaked their crimes under the guise of fighting for independence, but they supported their "initiatives" by old-fashioned highway robbery. Indeed, these were the very types of men that Ahmed had feared when he passed the elderly hitchhikers some weeks earlier, knowing that they habitually hijacked cars and trucks in the desert, frequently murdering the passengers under the old adage "dead men tell no tales."

The rebel leader blinked through his tears at Ahmed, then started to laugh. "You don't have to be afraid, my friends," he said, gesturing toward the fearful countenances of the two church planters. "You are in the safest place in the region!" The entire band broke into laughter as Waseem translated, many nodding in agreement as they hefted their loaded weapons. Ahmed smiled politely, but his eyes measured the distance to the door.

"My brother," the rebel leader said in a serious tone, "our friend [pointing to Waseem] has been reading God's Word to us, and it has changed our lives," He glanced around the hut at his comrades. "We have been changed. We used to do all the stealing and... and other things... but now, now we are children of God!" As Waseem translated these words, a few men at the rear of the group scowled and exchanged glances,

"PLEASE," THEY SAID, "WE HAVE NOT COME TO HARM YOU. BUT WE HAVE A REQUEST: PLEASE SEND US THE STORYTELLERS!"

but many others nodded with smiles or tears; a few cried "praise God!" in their native tongue. Many of the rebels had already given their lives to Christ, and the group had slowly been diminishing as, one by one, the new believers returned to their homes to share the Word of God with their families. Some were still hardened in their ways of wickedness, but God had not finished yet. It was for that very reason that the leader himself yet remained, working to obey God's commands by urging his men to continue following him into eternal life through Jesus Christ.

The next morning, the rebel leader sent several men with donkeys to tow the Land Cruiser back to the rebel hideout. "It will be quite safe here," he joked. Ahmed and Mechela remained with the band for several days, until the spare parts arrived, and in spending time with these men, whom they had once feared, their understanding of God's Word was transformed.

"These men were my brothers," Ahmed explained later. "What I learned was that people don't need to fight such

men to disarm them; the Word of God can easily disarm. I realized how obeying the Scriptures can change lives, even for people that I think are the most dangerous people. Just obeying the Word of God!

“It is not about condemning them for what they do, though what they [have done] might have been very violent in the past. It is not about telling them, ‘this is the wrong thing’ or ‘that is the right thing.’ It is about sharing the Word of God with them, letting them discover God. And once they want to obey it, they have no choice. It is the true freedom of God; it is the whole freedom. Just obeying Christ is the whole freedom, because you don’t struggle with ‘do this, don’t do that.’ You just teach people to obey Him, and they will then make their choices.

“These men taught me. They stopped doing what they used to do because they wanted to obey Christ, not because they wanted to be religious people.”

And that is the very definition of transformation.

DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION: THE KEY TO RAPID MULTIPLICATION OF CHURCHES AMONG MUSLIMS

By 2007, CityTeam had been catalyzing disciple-making and church-planting movements in Africa for only a couple of years. That year, a group of senior staff were gathered for a strategy meeting in a mountainous retreat, when a call came from the field with a remarkable story. Several Muslim leaders had surrounded the leaders of one of our key ministry partners while they were having midday prayers. That team had been seeing breathtaking breakthroughs among highly resistant Muslim peoples, so they had anticipated that something like this might happen. The team was justifiably fearful, but they kept praying. Surprisingly, the Muslims just stood around them observing the proceedings and making no signs of hostile intentions.

When the Christian leaders finished praying, the group surrounding them approached. They turned out to be a delegation of Muslim civic leaders from a distant region, and they had come with their imam and with a request. “Please,” they said, “we have not come to harm you. But we have a request: please send us the storytellers!”

The Muslim leaders from this community had observed other communities in their area that had become Christian, and they had noticed a dramatic change in people’s lives—broken families now in unity, a sense of love and compassion among the people, and a breaking of old hostilities and vendettas—and they wanted the same thing in their community. The Christians told the imam, however, that they were already overstretched and understaffed, and

they did not have a single disciple maker or chronological storyteller to spare.

The imam came close to the head of the ministry and spoke in an urgent tone, “Please, sir, we are begging you to help us. We are needing to have a storyteller to come stay with us.”

After some rearranging of schedules and responsibilities, the ministry was able to send out a team of storytellers to the distant village. Nobody imagined at the time that events like these would be repeated again and again, or that we would see entire mosques come to faith in Christ, en masse! It was never part of our strategic planning to make Muslims jealous to have the gospel because their neighbors had been blessed by it, yet that, in a nutshell, is just what continues to happen. Indeed, Paul wrote, “to provoke them [Israel] to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:11).

We can say categorically that the powerful testimony of transformation so resonates with the discouragement and disillusionment inside Islam that it is the single most significant reason for rapid multiplication of churches among Muslims today. When Muslims observe the types of dramatic transformation that only the gospel can bring in individuals, families, and whole communities, they are often jealous to experience that same transformation.

Over the course of interviews for this book, we discovered a very long list of what transformation looks like among Muslim-background disciples. When transformation happens, there is always evidence. These are some of the most common changes seen among Muslim individuals and communities who accept Christ:

- *Healed Families.* In families where women and children have been treated almost as slaves, wife beating becomes no longer acceptable, and love begins to heal broken marriages. Children are given permission to attend schools and are treated with new appreciation. Fighting between parents and children diminishes. Polygamy is no longer the choice of Christian men, and prostitution dies out.
- *A Spirit of Freedom.* When people discover freedom, it affects everything in their lives. They find release from fatalism, they are willing to try new things, and they expect God to bless their lives.
- *A Spirit of Love.* Many Muslim people report that God puts love in their hearts for the first time. In many cases, they have a new compassion for fellow Muslims who are still in the mosque.
- *Diminished Violence.* There have been instances in which, upon becoming Christians, former Muslims refuse to

participate in ongoing ethnic warfare. In one case, when the Christian men were called to account for why they no longer “supported the tribe,” they shared the message of Jesus. This caused tribal elders to rethink their reasons for fighting, and the fighting stopped. Today, the two men who stood up for their convictions are church planters.

- *Less Addiction.* The levels of addiction to alcohol, khat, and other things that consume people’s lives are greatly diminished as these people receive prayer for deliverance.
- *Redemption and Hope.* Historically, when lost people become obedient disciples of Jesus, they typically exchange fatalism for optimism, have new energy and initiative, and become more productive people. In addition, they abandon expensive addictions, and they see the tangible blessings of God on their family situation,
- *Evidences of Divine Favor.* Many new Christians share with joy how, after they became followers of Jesus, and during a time of prolonged drought, the Lord caused it to rain on their farms or on the pasture where their livestock was, but not on their neighbors’ land. And it became so obvious that the Muslim neighbors came to them to find out why these Christians had such favor. Farmers in every region that we have interviewed report that, since they have become Christians, they have begun praying over their fields and have ceased using Muslim

or spiritist blessings on their land, and their harvests have dramatically increased.

- *Grace in Persecution.* Many new Christians in Muslim areas face harsh persecution. But these believers, though persecuted in cruel ways, have been transformed so deeply that they find the courage to speak a blessing on their persecutors. This forgiveness in the face of persecution can, over time, be the way that God gets into a persecutor’s heart to transform it as well. Numerous Muslims who formerly persecuted the Muslim-background Christians in their areas have come to faith as a result of those whom they persecuted responding with grace and kindness to the evil things done to them.
- *Freedom from Demonic Oppression.* Many Muslims have experienced years of torment from demonic powers. But when they repent of sins and receive Jesus as Lord, those spirits are successfully cast out. These deliverances are very tangible witnesses of the power of the gospel in Muslim families.
- *The Power of Individual Prayer.* Common people discover that they can pray and God moves. Even the Muslims see this and thank God for the changes in the communities, as many who used to disturb them are now peaceful Christians. MF

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY (DBS)

The challenge in making obedient disciples is to teach obedience. In the context of Disciple Making Movements, we have seen that the best tool to teach obedience is Discovery Bible Study (DBS). Do not teach or preach; instead, facilitate discovery and obedience.

When people are simply exposed to the Scriptures, God will reveal the truth to them. Abdul Nut and his team have seen exciting things happen through the Discovery Bible Studies in homes:

We have the Discovery Bible Studies in our house-to-house programs, and we study different books of the Bible. When we study a certain book of the Bible, we prepare questions that will help participants understand the verses and messages. People love the Discovery Bible Studies and usually read more than the weekly assigned readings. We make sure that the people understand the passages through the questions, and we continue to read the passages if the people don’t understand what they’ve read. We have leaders lead the DBS and that is how they make disciples. We encourage the believers to translate what they’ve learned to applications in their lives.

The Discovery Bible Study uses the inductive method of

Bible study. Its purpose is not to build knowledge, even though people do develop their understandings of biblical teachings as they develop sound doctrine. Rather, it is a careful analysis of the Word of God in order to discover what are the principles of life for a disciple, for a Christian leader, and for the church. As people discover these principles, they align their lives to them. So the primary purpose of the DBS is to help people (nonbelievers and believers) discover and understand the teachings of Jesus in a way that leads them to obedience (2 Timothy 3:15-41).

In the context of Disciple Making Movements, the DBS is a group meeting. It introduces and develops from the beginning the core values of discipleship, leadership, and church. The DBS is designed in such a way that the different parts of a session develop the DNA of church in the group, (When we refer to “the DNA” of a church, we mean that habits learned early—obedience to God’s Word, prayer, worship, and so forth—will remain habits when a person accepts Christ. Those habits become part of the new believer’s daily life, simply because they were implanted as “DNA” previously.) By so doing, when the group members accept Christ, they will discover that they have already been “doing church” from the first days.

unsuspecting people as kingdom agents

LARRY GROVES
Over the last five years, Larry Groves has served as a Field Leader for Greater Europe Mission (GEM). Larry and his family are currently on home assignment where Larry is now filling his new role as CPM Trainer and Senior Joshua Strategist for GEM's Immigrant Ministry.

I met Vladimir in October 2010 at a men's spiritual retreat in a central European country. Vladimir is a university professor who came to saving faith through Jesus Christ some 20 years ago with a group of young people shortly after the fall of Communism. Vladimir revealed that he has struggled in his walk with God over the years and was now truly seeking genuine gospel community.

After a retreat, I met weekly with Vladimir spending time in the Word and prayer. We talked a lot about the Father's heart and his end vision for his country. Our discussions led me to introduce him to Training for Trainers (T4T), which is an ongoing disciple-making process that reaches successive generations of believers (2 Tim. 2:2). The goal is to train believers who can train others in a very simple yet effective method of evangelism and discipleship. The foundation of T4T comes directly from the word of God and aims to develop a biblical worldview that leads to a dynamic, life-on-life, loving process of following Jesus and fishing for the lost (Mk. 1:17).

We soon realized that a disciple-making movement reaching generation after generation of new believers would only take place in this country in cooperation with the Spirit and when believers begin to make disciples in the course of everyday life. Unity of purpose comes when we fight for the growth of the gospel in us and around us.

Our team put together a Church-Planting Movement (CPM) plan at the end of 2010. Our God-sized vision is to reach the 7.3 million people in this country who have not heard the gospel or had an opportunity to respond by the end of 2015.

Our plan called for ten discipleship groups and sixty new believers.

The goal was to find where the Spirit is at work in this country and join Him there. Our CPM plan helped us see God's end vision and work backwards. This helped us focus our efforts, generate activity, and keep us accountable. We spent much of our time in the fall sharing that God's heart is for bringing in a harvest and that He is looking for willing workers (Mt. 9:37-38). We also devoted much time in prayer and set up prayer networks outside the country and with national believers inside. Additionally, we had T4T resources translated into the native language to facilitate rapid uptake and multiplication.

Vladimir was one of a handful of believers that God spoke to and called out in late 2010 to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and to carry the mission of God into every area of his life.

FIRST SIX MONTHS

We started in 2011 with four discipleship groups. Vladimir started one group in his hometown and another with his friends in another town. We met bi-weekly with each group, giving each of us time to share our story and Jesus' story with our lost friends and family and cast vision to believers for future training.

Vladimir's hometown group was made up of the friends that all came to faith together many years ago. It was difficult for them

to share their story and Jesus' story in a meaningful way. Most of them shared their testimony but never bridged to the gospel. We

helped them create a one-to-two minute testimony of what they were like before Jesus, how they met Jesus, and what they are like now.

We used Creation to Christ (C2C) to tell Jesus' story.

As a group, we spent time every week practicing our story and Jesus' story. The first lesson you teach a new believer is on Assurance of Salvation. We used the first lesson to share Jesus' story with others. Everyone was convinced that they all needed to share the gospel with their friends and family. I asked them to go back and use the first lesson with the same people. We also discussed how to get into spiritual conversations and invite others to go through the first lesson together. We set weekly goals and prayed for those divine appointments and opportunities.

The breakthrough came by our fourth meeting. Using lesson one, Yordan led his wife's mother and brother-in-law to the Lord. Yordan now had a small group to train. Vladimir and two others also led their friends to the Lord telling their story and using lesson one. Two weeks earlier, the group was very skeptical and did not believe people would come to faith using lesson one. They no longer had any doubt. They experienced the presence and power of God. They went from not only "saying yes" to Jesus but also "doing yes."

Not everyone in the group shared his or her faith immediately. In fact, Georgi took over seven months to share his story and Jesus' story and lead his father and

uncle to Christ. He sent us an email to describe what took place:

Clearly this is not about a model or magic formula, but for God's action in the hearts of these people and in my heart, calmly and clearly, to set out the plan of salvation. I'm so glad for the T4T training and lesson one. Until this training I thought it was enough to tell them—I now know I need to ask them to commit to Jesus Christ. Before T4T, I was worried to share all the details because I did not know what to say or do,—especially if they say 'yes.' But now I was confident what to do based on our training and time together. If they are lost, I share my story and Jesus' story. If they come to faith in Jesus Christ, I teach lesson one immediately. Praise the Lord for saving my father and uncle.

IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO SHARE THEIR STORY AND JESUS' STORY IN A MEANINGFUL WAY...

In our first six months, we started eight groups in which group members led 20 people to Christ. Throughout this time, we continued casting vision to

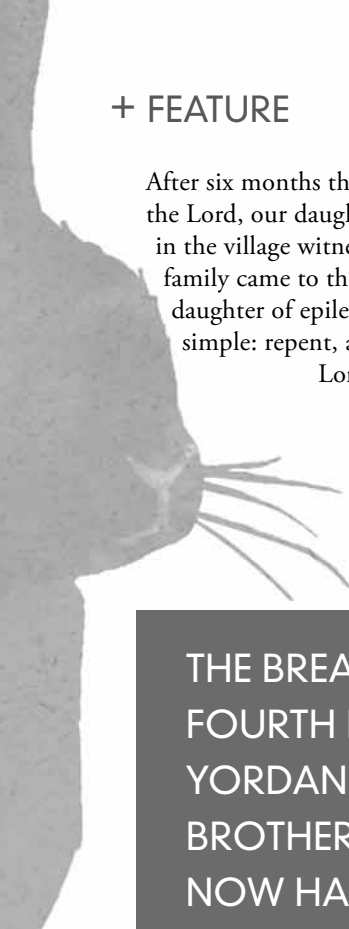
current believers and church leaders asking the Lord for more workers for and from the harvest. The heart of our activity was constant, fervent prayer as well as networking among believers in order to train everyone.

SECOND SIX MONTHS

I met Nikolai and Galya through work in my non-profit organization. We hosted a US team for three weeks to do agricultural research. Through a mutual contact, Nikolai and Galya helped us meet and survey small farmers in the southern part of the country. Nikolai and Galya are artists and have pastored a church in this area for 20 years. The Lord had already given them the vision to share the gospel with the 250,000 people in their region.

It didn't take long to see that Nikolai was not only a pastor/missionary but an evangelist too. During our first meeting together, Nikolai shared with me that there is a ready harvest among Muslims in his region:

A Muslim family brought their very sick daughter to us at the church and asked us to pray for her. We prayed together and then asked the family to read the Bible (the gospels) regularly, to pray daily for the healing of their daughter, and to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They repented and confessed Jesus as their Lord. After two months, they returned to tell us their daughter is better but not completely healed. We told them to continue to pray, sing songs to worship God and continue reading the Bible together as a family.



After six months the father called me and said, praise the Lord, our daughter is totally healed. When others in the village witnessed God's healing of the girl, a family came to them and asked if God could heal their daughter of epilepsy. The father told them, 'It's very simple: repent, and believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord.' They prayed together and he gave them a Bible and told them to go home and read it together and pray everyday. From that initial meeting, his daughter never had epileptic seizures again.

THE BREAKTHROUGH CAME BY OUR FOURTH MEETING. USING LESSON ONE, YORDAN LED HIS WIFE'S MOTHER AND BROTHER-IN-LAW TO THE LORD. YORDAN NOW HAD A SMALL GROUP TO TRAIN... TWO WEEKS EARLIER, THE GROUP WAS VERY SKEPTICAL AND DID NOT BELIEVE PEOPLE WOULD COME TO FAITH USING LESSON ONE. THEY NO LONGER HAD ANY DOUBT.

I believe that if God sends you somewhere, people will wait for you. Most of the time, I don't even know where I'm going, but God knows. I pray for the Spirit to lead me to those people God is preparing to be saved. If I don't go, no one will hear from the Lord.

Nikolai was very receptive to T4T. He understood that T4T is a process and not a set of lessons. Thus, T4T is very different from approaches that focus more on sowing and developing relationships so the gospel can be eventually shared and received. In contrast, T4T has the potential to fuel a much more rapid rate of evangelism and church planting. In the end, both sowing and reaping are necessary, but T4T is especially designed for rapid reaping and multiplication.

I remember the first day we launched T4T together. Nikolai wanted to spiritually map some villages in his region. Spiritual mapping has been likened to taking a walk with God to catch a glimpse of how He sees

the area around us. The purpose is, in a small way, to advance the Kingdom of God in an area through prayer, observation, conversation, and service. The goals are to gain a better understanding of the flow of life in an area and hopefully identify some of the spiritual open doors.

We prayed together in the van, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and show us where to go. We prayed that our hearts would be aligned with the Father's heart, and that our words for the day would be His words. We also prayed that we could be a blessing to the people we would encounter today.

After our time of prayer, we went to our first village and stopped at the local spring. We asked for a drink of water and struck up a normal conversation with a farm owner. It didn't take long to share our stories and bridge to Jesus' story. The Spirit was truly at work (Jn. 16:8). After Nikolai shared his story and Jesus' story, this man's demeanor changed. He turned red and got very serious. He then told us that he had an extramarital affair only thirty minutes ago.

Nikolai told him not to worry. "God can forgive you. He sent us to you today because He knows what you are doing." We prayed together for God to forgive him and that it is the Holy Spirit convicting him of this sin.

Nikolai let him know that Jesus is knocking at the door and this is the time to respond. He repented and believed on the spot. His wife was working in the adjacent tobacco field while we met at the spring. We praised God for intersecting our paths and prayed for his family and crops. Nikolai set up a time the following week to return to meet with him and his family.

We traveled to the next village stopping at the first tobacco field we saw people working in. We got out of the van and approached them. They were very friendly and willing to take a break to talk. Nikolai always offered up chewing gum to everyone working in the field. It was a great way to break the ice. He quickly told them he is a man of God and asked them if we could pray for them and their field. They said yes and were very happy to let us pray. We did not get to share the gospel but we did get invited back to their house on another visit.

As we traveled from village to village, we prayed continuously. That day the Spirit led us to fifteen adults and children. We learned a lot about each village and their respective inhabitants. We shared our stories (how we became followers of Jesus Christ) and Jesus' story over and over. The Lord led us to three people of peace who responded positively to the gospel and confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior (Lk. 10:5-7). We were invited back to two households and began many new relationships. Our day ended late in the evening.

Over the next six months, we saw substantial fruit working in tandem with the Holy Spirit focusing on disciple making that leads to reproducing groups and churches across relational networks. We ended the year with 25 active discipleship groups, seven second-generation groups, over 160 new believers and over 70 baptisms. Nikolai also cast vision to over 600 hundred believers and church leaders sharing the T4T process and challenging them to follow and fish. The Lord continued to call out new workers for the harvest including Vladimir for future missions in Eurasia.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

In addition to experiencing God's power, presence and substantial fruit in 2011, we also encountered spiritual warfare. We spent most of 2011 on edge, not knowing if or when we would have to suddenly leave the country.

We knew something was wrong when we did not get a response to our visa applications ninety days after our due date. This meant that our personal identification cards had expired. Our lawyers assured us that everything was ok.

After a seven-month delay, the Ministry of Justice rejected our visa applications through our non-profit organization. In disbelief, our lawyers tried an unofficial appeal that was denied as well. Even though we submitted an appeal to the courts, we had to leave the country as soon as possible. In just three weeks, we closed out our office, sold our car, took care of various legal issues, and made temporary arrangements for our apartments.

We left sad, angry and confused. We didn't understand why the Lord would have us leave during these days of substantial fruit. It took a few months in the States for the Lord to show us the ripple effects of 2011. As we followed up with Nikolai and Vladimir, we discovered the Spirit continued to work through people in and out of the country expanding a network of disciplers and new leaders. The movement was still alive!


Nikolai became the Strategy Coordinator (SC) for the country. He put together and trained a small team of like-minded Christ followers focused on reaching the lost and training obedient believers to become a witness and disciple maker of others.

THIRD SIX MONTHS

In the first half of 2012, they started 15 new discipleship groups, helped two additional groups go to second generation, one group go to third generation, one group get to fourth generation disciple making, and three groups become churches. These new groups have led over 190 people to Christ, and baptized 80.

OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, WE SAW SUBSTANTIAL FRUIT WORKING IN TANDEM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT FOCUSING ON DISCIPLE MAKING THAT LEADS TO REPRODUCING GROUPS AND CHURCHES ACROSS RELATIONAL NETWORKS.

Nikolai and his team led six three-day discipleship multiplication seminars to over 400 believers in six cities. They and other trainers are working across six denominations including the national church. They have also contacted others outside of the country making it possible for disciple-making to cross borders and expand the network.

A new day is dawning in Europe. Believers are catching the vision for a multigenerational discipleship and church planting movement which has the potential to transform this entire country because of its focus on making disciples who can make disciples, not just on getting people into church on Sunday. 



breakthroughs

in discipleship in hardened europe

Editor's Note: The principles of multigenerational disciple-making and the rapid replication of churches contained in strategies like the T4T Process and the Discovery Bible Study method are being applied in real life contexts in various places in Europe—one of the toughest mission fields—with great results. Here are a few stories of how this new approach to church planting is turning believers, both young and old into disciple-makers and church planters.

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDIES TURN AVERAGE BELIEVERS INTO DISCIPLE-MAKERS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC / NATHAN BECK

I ran across the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) materials a couple years ago and decided to experiment with it to see how it would work in the Czech Republic. I found a group of non-believers along with Betty, a local Czech national who has a heart for evangelism. Soon, we were very pleased to see God transforming the lives of these non-believers.

For example, during one of the study times, someone began to argue quite forcibly that another non-believer in the group needed to obey the Bible in everything. I stepped in to say, “You don’t need to be so strong in trying to convince this person to obey the Bible. They’re not a believer.”

This person quickly replied, “I’m not either. I just know that every time I put what I learn from the Bible into practice, it is right.”

A few months later, Betty was looking to expand the experiment with DBS into other circles. A big part of correctly using DBS involves looking for communities of non-believers that God is opening doors into for the studies. Betty asked me to hold her accountable every week while she looked for these people, also known as People of Peace. Together, we looked at a number of Biblical examples of People of Peace, including Cornelius, the Samaritan woman, Lydia, and the Philippian jailer. Then, every week, I began asking Betty what she was doing to find these people and

how things were going as she prayed for God to reveal them. Every week for several months in a row the answer was the same: “No, I haven’t found any people of peace this week.” Everything else seemed to be in place, so we kept praying and waiting for God’s timing to reveal one of these people.

Last December, Betty answered as usual, “No, I haven’t found any people of peace this week.” We were about to move on in the conversation, but Betty brought it back to this topic. She said, “I haven’t found any people of peace this week, but my friend Maruska introduced me to her entire extended family: parents, grandparents, brothers & sisters. I don’t exactly have a person of peace, but I’ve been talking with them about the group that we’re leading, and they are really interested. They’d like to start a DBS. Would it be acceptable to start a DBS with them even if we don’t have a person of peace?”

Pulling my hair out, I answered, “Betty, Maruska IS your person of peace! Of course you’re supposed to start a DBS with that family!”

Betty’s eyes opened wide, “So that’s what a person of peace looks like. In that case I know LOTS of people of peace!” Within six weeks she had started nine new DBS groups with non-believers across the community.

It quickly became apparent in her church that Betty’s

“experiment” was succeeding. In great faith the local church remodeled their sanctuary to seat 60 people last summer, which was exactly 50% more than they currently had attending that church. Early this year they have experienced many worship services where there was standing room only. During this process, Betty once told me, “Thank you for teaching me about DBS. I’ve been praying for something that can reach the Czech people for two years now, and I believe that this is the answer to my prayers.”

The denominational leadership noticed this “problem”, and quickly hunted down Betty to ask her if they could hire her to reproduce what she was doing. As part of the preparation process, they asked Betty to write a 10-year plan. Betty carefully wrote a plan to lead every person from the two denominational churches that she had significant contacts with to actively lead DBS with their non-believing friends, families, and colleagues.

Betty presented her plan to her denominational leaders in Prague. They carefully listened to the entire plan, then promptly told her, “This is an excellent way of winning people to Christ. But your plan is too small. Please re-work your plan so that we can use this across the entire denomination in the country.”

Overwhelmed by the project, Betty replied, “But I can’t do that! Please let me get it up and running over in my corner of the country, then we’ll be able to spread it across the country.”

They answered, “That’s not an option. Please re-work the plan so that we can use this across the denomination and reach this entire country. You have a couple weeks before you start the process.”

A second part of my initial experiment started with a person named John. He and a local pastor came to me with a problem and said they wanted my opinion about it. A couple days before, two teenagers who grew up in our church came to the elders and told them that the church needed a youth group. The elders told them that they were the only youth in the church, so they could not have a youth group. The two weren’t going to take “No” for an answer, and said that the church needed to create a youth group. The elders finally gave in and made the agreement: If these two teenagers found enough youth, they could have a church youth group. So they went out, found 20 of their non-Christian friends, and brought them to church. They told the elders that they had the teenagers, so they could have the youth group! It was at this point that John came and asked what I would suggest with this “youth group” made up of 20 non-Christians and two Christians.

Since I was already starting to see very early positive growth with DBS, I suggested modifying the DBS to use with the youth group and holding three simultaneous groups in parallel each Friday evening, in addition to other youth group activities (singing, campfires, etc.). Within a few months, about 80% of the young people in the group became Christians. Since then, many of these teens have gone on to start their own DBS groups with other friends throughout the week.

Recently, John leaned back during the regular DBS in the youth group to reflect on how far these youth had come. A couple years ago they were not believers, and now we were asking them weekly, “What have you learned from the Bible in your personal study this past week and what have you done to put what you have learned into practice?” Every one of the kids is able to quickly respond and also express how they’re doing in leading other DBS groups.

John was recently watching these developments and wondered if the same changes would happen through DBS with adult parents, not realizing that Bobbie was already leading other groups which were primarily adults and college students. John decided to start an experiment with the first non-believing family that would allow him. John’s job allows him a lot of access to local schools, and he quickly found a family through one of his students. He is now training this group of people to lead others in their extended family.

All this time, several others in the youth group have quietly been doing the same... leading the new believers from the youth group to start DBS with their families and friends. In the past couple weeks John came up to tell me that he wanted to arrange to train his sister’s church halfway across the country how to use DBS to reach out to their city. We’re still in the planning stages of creating a weekend trip to visit John’s sister and train them, but this group of youth has a lot to share in reaching a remarkable number of people in a short amount time.

As remarkable as the numbers are, they still do not come anywhere close to reaching the people that Betty and John would like to reach. Betty would like to see her city and her country reached with the gospel. John would like to see every youth in this city and the family of every youth reached. Please pray that God would raise up more harvesters and that HE would bring in the harvest! (MF)

Names have been changed for security reasons.



A COMMITMENT TO DISCIPLESHIP LEADS TO A GROWING MOVEMENT IN STOCKHOLM / ANDREW BECK

Andrew Beck is a young man seeking passionately after Jesus. He started Discipleship Training School with Youth With A Mission and worked with missionaries in China, India, Thailand and Turkey. Most recently, he went to Poland for mentoring with Greater Europe Mission missionaries where he has found deep discipleship, training and accountability. Andrew is finishing his undergraduate degree in International Business at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX.

subway stops, they can simply grab a cup of coffee or tea with some continuing on with their day and some stopping for conversation. The ministry creates an array of opportunities and has had great impact on these communities. One church planter, Andreas, says, "Of course you know we want to be able to share the gospel and have people become disciples of Jesus, but we also want to have an impact on the community for the Kingdom of God and the coffee ministry greatly allows for both."

While serving coffee, workers come across a wide range of different people living in greater Stockholm. Many of the subway communities have a very high percentage of immigrants, and on an average day, workers come across people from Iraq, Afghanistan, Ghana, Gambia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Armenia, Syria, Nigeria, Morocco and Ethiopia to name a few. The large number of immigrants leads to a natural diversification in one's conversations. With all the different backgrounds, people receive the message of the gospel very differently; thus, to each person the presentation of the gospel must be brought about in a unique way. People are responding dynamically to the gospel, coming to know Christ and moving into discipleship.


Workers are using discipleship multiplication training (DMT) methods to train new believers. Weekly meetings between the

workers and new believers consist of several different parts. The series begins with a reflection consisting of pastoral care, worship, and accountability of obedience and witnessing; vision casting for upcoming days is included as well. The studies then move into a new lesson including instruction on discipleship and self-feeding Bible studies. The meetings end with practicing the lessons learned, setting goals and praying for one another. The meetings appear to be working with believers growing spiritually as well as boldly sharing their newfound faith. This setup is by no means perfect and has its own frustrations just as with any cutting edge movement ministry. People occasionally miss meetings and some believers are timid about sharing their faith.

One worker says, "You know we're learning we have to be patient; it's not that the new believers don't want to share their faith....they want to! They just need to gain confidence in doing it and that takes time." It is a learning process as this movement multiplies and transitions.

Another church planter, Forrest Hendrix, says, "The hardest thing is consistency. Remembering to do all the details, paper work, which lesson each group is on, or calling each person to confirm they will be able to make the meeting." As the learning process continues, the Lord faithfully works in each of the lives of the groups as well as in the lives of the church planters.

This committed group of bold believers requests prayer support for this movement of God. Pray specifically for those sharing Christ at the subway stops and people of peace in each subway community. The movement is up to 17 groups with each group ranging anywhere from one to about four people. Many of the new believers and disciples also help out with the coffee ministry: Mikael, Elias, Toni, and Jude. These disciples continue to grow and gain confidence as they share. Mikke says, "In the beginning it was a bit hard for me to share my faith, but with time and practice I am gaining a lot of confidence."

By resolutely sharing their faith, these new disciples have led to the inception of third generation groups. While the groups continue to multiply and grow as disciples and new believers set weekly goals to share their faith, it is not without struggle; some groups cease to continue. Yet, the multiplication and growth is well founded. The hearts of many remain encouraged. Progress continues in seeing God's kingdom on this earth through this expanding network of reproducing disciples and discipleship groups. 

PURSuing DISCIPLESHIP MULTIPLICATION IN ROMANIA

/ DWIGHT POGGEMILLER


Dwight Poggemiller is currently Co-Leader for the East Region with Greater Europe Mission. Together with his wife, Melissa, and their three children they have served in Romania since 2001. They are called by the Lord to encourage discipleship multiplication with national partners.

Dani is a friend of ours who's been involved in church planting and youth camps for the past 20 years in Western Romania. Despite this area having one of the highest percentages of Evangelicals in all of Europe, there are still thousands who need Christ, especially among the professional and business classes. As Dani and I have reflected and prayed on the situation in the region the last couple of years, we have both agreed that a new vision for the multiplication of disciples is needed.

At my invitation, Dani came with me to the discipleship multiplication training organized by GEM in Dublin. Throughout the week, Dani was

encouraged by the things that he and his team are already doing in terms of broad sowing of the gospel. He noted, however, that there were some critical things that were not happening, like accountability, casting vision for multiplication of disciples, and encouragement to daily discipleship of new believers. Since returning to Romania, he has begun putting many of these ideas into practice. He has used the discipleship multiplication materials in his personal evangelism and discipleship training events. He has also cast vision to his local fellowship to begin using key elements of accountability, vision casting, and practice towards sharing the gospel.

During a recent evangelism training camp, a team of some 20-30 young people shared the gospel personally in seven communities with some 500 individuals during the week. Of those, 60 prayed to receive Christ! Dani and his team are following up on these new believers, but not without some opposition. Dani realizes that when the Spirit is at work, attacks from the enemy are to be expected.

Things are at the very beginning of a new work the Lord is leading Dani and others in here in western Romania. Like other places in Europe, we are seeing the Lord move in ways that we have not seen in at least a generation. 

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*mobilizing, training,
multiplying*

the bare essentials of helping groups become churches:

four helps in church planting movements

STEVE SMITH

Steve Smith oversees the work of the International Mission Board (SBC) for Southeast Asia and coaches churches and organizations on moving toward biblical church planting movements. He is the author of the book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* with Ying Kai (WigTake Resources 2011). You may contact Steve at: T4T@pobox.com

This article is the first of a two part series. Please look for Part 2 in the Nov.-Dec. 2012 issue under the title, Generational Mapping.

I was training a group of missionaries in Southeast Asia when we came to the subject of helping small groups (e.g. Bible study groups) actually become churches. The missionaries in this context were struggling to get churches started, not to mention the larger goal of a Church-Planting Movement (CPM). I took them through a set of four helps in the church-planting process—really a rather simple, but purposeful exercise in birthing authentic communities of faith.

Help #4 was an exercise to diagram a group using a process called church health mapping, or “church circles,” for short. To illustrate this diagnostic process, I called one of the longer-tenured missionaries to the white board. I asked him to describe one small group of believers to the class. As he described this Bible study group, I represented it with a dotted-line circle on the board. Going through Acts 2:37–47, I asked him to assess which of the elements of the early Acts church were happening regularly in this small group. If an element was in practice, we drew a symbol representing it inside the circle. If it was missing, we drew it outside the circle.

As we all stepped back to assess the status of this group becoming church, the diagram showed a couple of clear deficiencies. The group was not practicing the Lord’s Supper nor were they giving to meet needs. The symbols for these two elements were drawn outside the dotted-line circle. I drew an arrow from Lord’s Supper to the inside of the circle and asked my colleague: “What would it take for this group to start practicing the Lord’s Supper?” The missionary thought for a moment and then explained that when he returned to his place of service, he could easily coach the group leader how to implement the Lord’s Supper the following week. As the colleague gave his answers, I summarized them along the arrow as action plans.

I did the same with giving, drawing an arrow to the inside of the circle. Once we had brainstormed on action plans to put that into practice, I wrote these action plans on the arrow also.

Finally, I got to the core question: “Does this small group see itself as a church?” After some thought, the colleague decided that they did not. I suggested that if the group could commit to being church, they would have an identity as church and truly become a church. If that happened, then we would color in the dotted circle as a solid-line circle. I asked the missionary what it would take to help the group take that step. He felt that taking them through a study of Acts 2:37–47 and helping them make a firm covenant to God and each other would finalize their transition from an outreach group to a genuine church. I wrote this action plan on the dotted-line circle representing the group.

With excitement the missionary and the group eyed the three major action plans on the white board. All were thoroughly achievable. In fact, the missionary planned to implement these the next week with two virtually identical small groups. This missionary, working in a remote location, trembled with anticipation. For over seven long years, he and his family had toiled to share the gospel widely, train national partners, and disciple new believers into groups. All the while they had been longing for the first churches ever to be started among this people group. Now through a simple, yet focused and purposeful step they were going to witness the birth of the first churches!

I saw this missionary again last week, just over a year after that training event. Not only have these groups become churches, but they are now helping other new groups they have started walk through the same process of becoming churches.

GOING FROM GROUP TO CHURCH

In Church-Planting Movements, we devote much time to finding persons of peace, winning them and their household, grouping them and discipling them. The most common method many of us use is the Training for Trainers process (T4T).¹

ANY CPM APPROACH SHOULD PURPOSEFULLY FORM GROUPS INTO CHURCHES AT A KEY STAGE IN THE EARLY DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS. GETTING TO CHURCH IS A CRITICAL MILESTONE IN THE CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENT PROCESS.

But where do churches fit into this mix? When do these groups become churches, if ever?

New believers must be gathered into churches. This is God's design from the beginning of history. Living in community as church is the King's way to equip His people to be what they were designed to be and do what they were called to do.

Any CPM approach should purposefully form groups into churches at a key stage in the early discipleship process. Getting to church is a critical milestone in the Church-Planting Movement process.

Not all groups (even T4T groups) become churches. Sometimes they become home-based cells of a larger church but still carry out the functions

of the Body of Christ. The essential point is to help the new believers become a part of the Body of Christ in a reproducible form that is adapted to their community.

There are two guidelines that govern CPM churches:

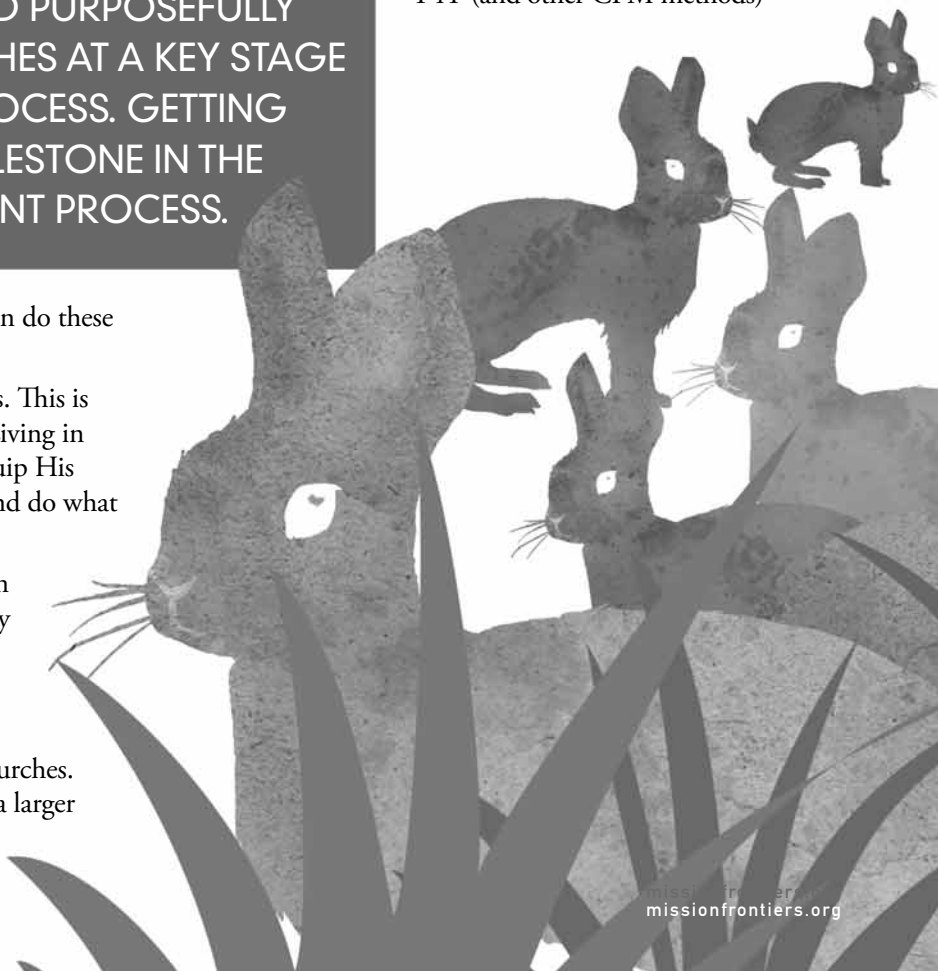
- **BIBLICAL: Is this model and/or each aspect of church consistent with the Scripture?**

There is no uniform biblical model of what a church must be. We see numerous examples of culturally-adapted models in the Scripture. In CPMs we do not propose only one model of church as THE biblical model. Many models of church can be biblical. So the question is: "Is this model (and its elements) consistent with scriptural teaching?"

- **CULTURALLY REPRODUCIBLE: Is this model of church something an average new believer can start and organize?**

Since many models of church can faithfully serve the scriptural teaching, the secondary question becomes: "Which one is most culturally appropriate and reproducible in our community?" The general guideline is this: "Could an average young believer start and organize such a church?" Otherwise, church planting will be relegated to a few highly trained individuals.

With these two guidelines in mind, T4T (and other CPM methods)



+ FEATURE

helps believers start simple types of churches that enable disciples to faithfully follow Jesus as the body of Christ. When initiating CPMs, for the sake of reaching all of the lost, we advocate CPM churches that are relevant and reproducible. That type of church will need to emphasize smaller church meetings in locations that are easy to find such as homes, offices, coffee shops and parks rather than in locations that are costly to purchase or build.

THE EASIEST WAY TO TRANSITION A NEW SMALL GROUP INTO A CHURCH IS TO START LIVING AS CHURCH AND MODELING CHURCH FROM THE VERY FIRST MEETING.

FOUR HELPS IN GETTING TO CHURCH

It is not difficult to start reproducible churches if you have a clear process in your evangelism and discipleship to help groups become churches. Purposefulness is critical. You must have a clear lesson(s) in your early discipleship at which you help a group of believers consciously become a church. To establish churches that will start new churches, there are four practices that we have found especially helpful.

1. **Know what you are trying to achieve: a CLEAR DEFINITION of when a group becomes a church.**

It is difficult to start a church if you do not have a clear idea in mind of when a group moves from being a cell group or Bible study to a church.

Scenario: A group has been meeting independent of any church for three months. They have great worship times and deeply moving Bible studies. They listen to the Word and try to obey whatever it says. They are making plans to visit a nursing home to minister to the needs of people there. Are they a church?

There's probably not enough information there for you to make a call. Is it a church or a great Bible study group? If your definition of when a group becomes church is not clear, you might be tempted to call this group a church. The first step in starting churches is establishing a clear definition of what a church is—the basic essentials of a church. *We start small training groups that have the intention to become church from the beginning.*

Acts provides a concrete example that can be helpful here:

Activity: Read Acts 2:36-47. Try not to make things too complicated. Boiled down, what made this group a church? Write down your answer.

Here is an example of a definition of church created from the Acts 2 passage. It emphasizes the ten elements of the 3 Cs of church: Covenant, Characteristics, and Caring leaders.

- **Covenant(1):** a group of **baptized (2)** believers [Mt.18:20; Acts 2:41] who recognize themselves as Christ's body and are committed to meeting together regularly [Acts 2:46]
- **Characteristics:** they regularly **abide** in Christ through the characteristics of church:
- **Word (3):** Studying and obeying the Scripture as authoritative
- **The Lord's Supper or Communion (4)**
- **Fellowship (5):** loving care for one another
 - **Including giving offerings (6)** to meet needs and **minister** to others
- **Prayer (7)**
- **Praise (8):** whether spoken or sung
- They live out a commitment to **share the gospel (evangelism) (9)**
- **Caring Leaders (10):** As the church develops, leaders are appointed according to biblical standards (Titus 1:5-9) and exercise mutual accountability, including church discipline.

For the sake of church planting, the 3Cs are in order of priority. The most important C is "*Covenant.*" The group sees itself as church (identity) and has made a commitment (covenant) to follow Jesus together. Do not read into this that they must have a written covenant. They have simply made a conscious step to become church. Many times a church will give itself a name to signify this step.

The second part of the definition is "*Characteristics.*" A group may call itself a church, but if it repeatedly lacks the basic characteristics of a church, it is not really a church. If an animal barks, wags its tail and walks on all fours, you may call it a duck, but it is really a dog.

Finally, a healthy church will quickly develop indigenous "*Caring Leaders.*" It is possible to have a church before these leaders develop. A good example of this is at the end of Paul's first journey. In Acts 14:21-23, Paul and Barnabas visited the churches they had just planted in the previous weeks and months and appointed elders for them at this point. For the sake of the long-term health of the churches, caring leaders should be raised up from within.

The first step in starting churches is: *Know what you are trying to achieve and have a clear definition of when a group becomes a church.*

2. From the beginning when you start a training group, MODEL the parts of church life mentioned above.

A church planter was having a hard time helping the groups he was training to become churches. As he described to me his training groups, the process sounded like a sterile classroom experience. As the group worked through the lessons, it was very cerebral but not very warm. In this classroom environment he was teaching them to start something *different* in their homes. There was a disconnect between what he was modeling and what he was teaching them to do. By changing his training meetings into a format similar to what he would want the churches to look like, it would be much easier to help these groups actually become churches.

The easiest way to transition a new small group into a church is to start living as church and modeling church from the very first meeting. That way, when you get to the discipleship lesson on church, it is what you have already been living out together. For example, in each meeting starting the first week, T4T employs a three-thirds discipleship process of looking back to evaluate the previous week, looking up to receive more from God, and looking ahead in order to obey and serve Him faithfully. These three-thirds incorporate the basic elements of church such as worship, prayer, Word, fellowship, evangelism, ministry, etc.

Do your best from the first small group meeting to model what you will eventually want this new church to look like. The lesson on church should come as no surprise. You don't want to spend 4-5 weeks together as a "class" and then announce: "Today we will have the lesson on church and become a church" and completely change your manner of meeting. *Becoming a church should be a natural next step in the progression of meeting together.*

3. Make sure you have a SPECIFIC LESSON (OR LESSONS) ON CHURCH and its ordinances in your early discipleship.

If you have a clear biblical definition of church and are modeling church-like meetings each small group meeting, then it is easy to help the group become a church when you go through the "church" lesson in your short-term discipleship. If you want groups that become churches and plant churches, then include one or two lessons on becoming a church by about session four or five that group members can obey and pass on to groups they start.

Have a specific goal in mind when you go through the

church lesson: *This week we will commit to becoming a church and will add in any missing characteristics of a church.*

For example, when a T4T group goes through the lesson(s) on church, one of two things usually happens:

1 Step: A group recognizes that it is a church and is practicing the characteristics of church. At this point it takes the final step by committing to being a church together (gains identity and covenant).

2 Steps: More often, a group recognizes that it is deficient in some of the characteristics of church. It takes two conscious steps forward to 1) add in those characteristics (e.g. Lord's Supper, offerings) and then 2) commit to becoming church together (covenant).

4. Use CHURCH HEALTH MAPPING to help a group evaluate if they have all the elements of church life.

A great diagnostic tool called Church Health Mapping (or Church Circles) can be used with a group, or the leaders of a group or network of groups, to help them determine

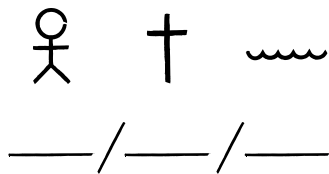
THINK ABOUT HOW EXHILARATING IT IS WHEN SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS OF BELIEVERS ARE FORMING THEIR GROUPS OF NEW BELIEVERS IN THEIR CIRCLES OF RELATIONSHIPS INTO CHURCHES AT ABOUT THE FOURTH OR FIFTH MEETING!

if the group is a church. (For a fuller discussion of this, see Part Two of this article, Generational Mapping by Nathan Shank, in the upcoming Nov.-Dec. 2012 issue of *MF*.) The tool helps them spot deficiencies and correct these. It also helps them see which groups may not be church yet.

A common way this is implemented in CPMs is to make church circles the lesson on church. After a small group identifies the basic elements of a church from Acts 2 (they usually come up with around ten), they draw icons for them and diagnose whether or not their group is practicing them.²

The church lesson makes the following application:

As a group, on a blank paper, draw a dotted line circle representing your own group. Above it, list 3 numbers: the number regularly attending (stick figure), the number believing in Jesus (cross) and the number baptized after believing (water).



If your group has committed to being a church, make the dotted line circle solid³. Then put an icon representing each of the remaining elements inside or outside the circle. If the group is regularly practicing the element itself, put it inside. If the group is not, or waits for an outsider to come do it, put it outside the circle.

ICONS:

1. Covenant – solid line instead of dotted line
2. Baptism – water
3. Word – book
4. Lord's Supper or Communion – a cup
5. Fellowship – heart
6. Giving & Ministry – money sign
7. Prayer – praying hands
8. Praise – upraised hands
9. Evangelism – one friend holding hands with a friend he led to faith
10. Leaders – two smiley faces

Finally, you can give your church a name. This helps you establish an identity as a church in your community. Remember that your goal is to develop a multi-generational Church-Planting Movement to the 4th generation and beyond so including the generation number helps you see where you are in seeing God start a movement in your community.

At this point, it is relatively easy to see what is blocking the group from really becoming a church. Though they may be deficient, you now see a way to transform this group into a church, and they see it too! It is a wonderfully empowering, practical process to let the group prayerfully brainstorm about how to add each of the elements into the circle. These become clear action plans for the group.

GENERATIONS OF CHURCHES


You must train the disciples you are training to purposefully help groups become churches at a key stage in the short-term discipleship process by having a specific lesson(s) on becoming church. Church health mapping can also help you in that process. Then getting to church will be a natural step in the progression of discipleship.

And you will have passed a major milestone toward a Church-Planting Movement. Think about how exhilarating it is when successive generations of believers are forming their groups of new believers in their circles of relationships into churches at about the fourth or fifth meeting! When this happens over four generations of new churches, Church-Planting Movements emerge!

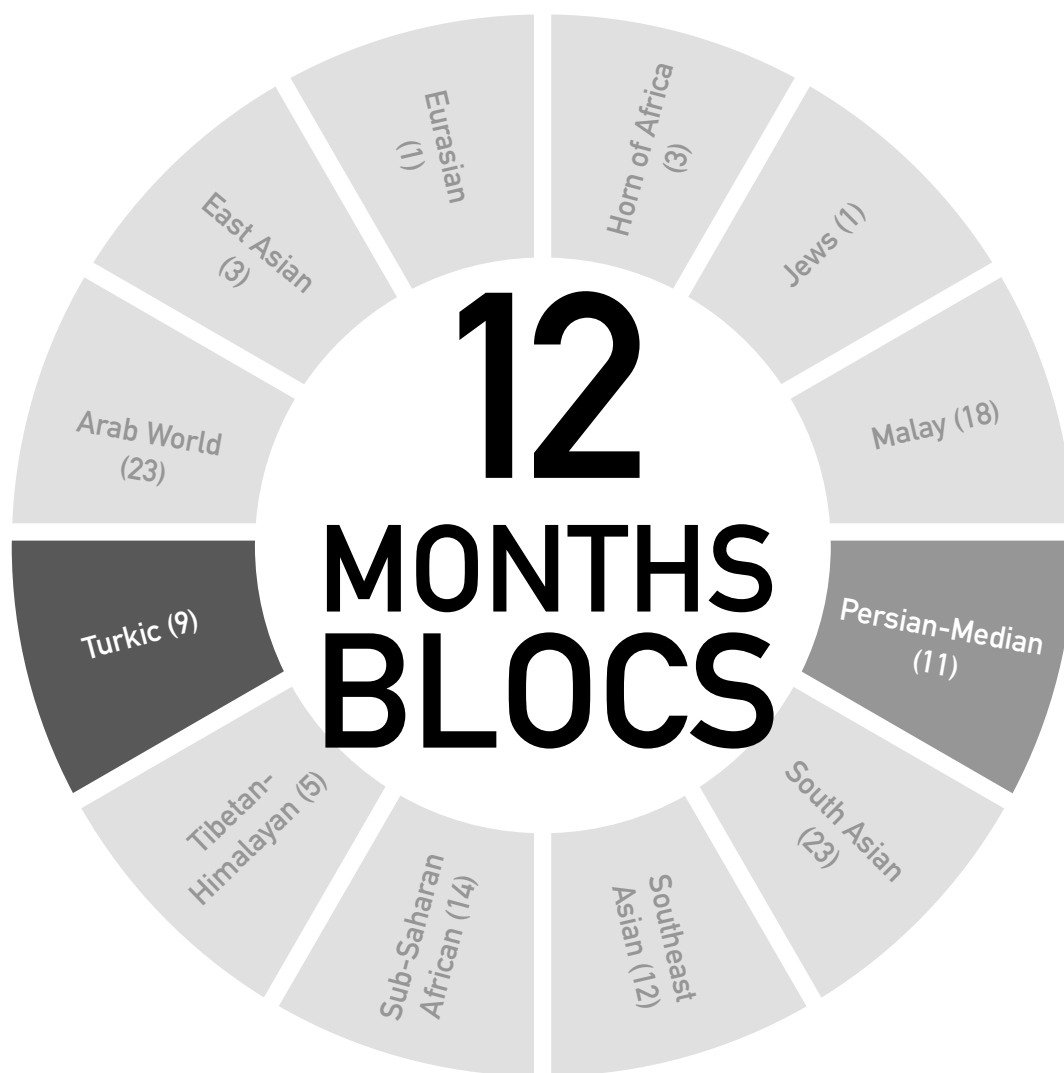
If you have no church lesson or purposeful reproducible process of transforming a group into church, then expect very few new churches!

If you include a simple church-planting process with a church lesson early on, then you can expect new generations of churches!

This may not be a process you are familiar with yet. It may challenge your ministry paradigms, but let's not be afraid to sacrifice our paradigms for the sake of seeing God's kingdom come! It is a helpful process to help us return to the original discipleship revolution of the Book of Acts. It is a helpful process to help us return to some of the more explosive movements in history. It is a process to help us more fully cooperate with the Spirit of God.

The very simplicity and purposefulness of this process means that any believer, empowered by the Spirit, can become a church planter. Churches are not meant to multiply only across the landscape of the mission field. They should be and are multiplying in homes, community centers, schools, parks and coffee shops across North America. May His kingdom come! 

1. See *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* by Steve Smith with Ying Kai, WIGTake Resources, 2011. Part of this article is adapted from chapter 16 of that book. It is available at www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com and on Amazon's Kindle.
 2. Keeping the icons simple and crude (not polished) keeps this process reproducible for all non-artists! The icons are easy to adapt for your context.
 3. We make this line solid even if they don't have all of the characteristics yet because it connotes intent.



Darrell Dorr

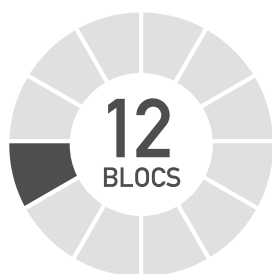
Darrell Dorr is an Associate Editor of the *Atlas of Global Christianity* and Contributing Editor of *Mission Frontiers*.

In this issue of Mission Frontiers we inaugurate a new series of articles, providing updates on least-reached People Clusters. Building on the work of Patrick Johnstone and Joshua Project, we estimate that more than 80% of the world's unreached peoples are found in 117 least-reached People Clusters, with these 117 clusters grouped into 12 Affinity Blocs. The paradigm of Affinity Blocs and People Clusters is an attempt to build upon the strategic connections within and between peoples, not only in their homelands but also their diaspora populations.

In September 2012 the spotlight falls on the peoples of the Turkic Affinity Bloc, with emphasis this month on the Azerbaijani People Cluster. In October 2012 the spotlight shifts to the peoples of the Persian-Median Affinity Bloc (see the following article). Turkic and Persian peoples dominate the Central Asian homelands and diaspora populations and are the focus of the North American Central Asia Forum slated for October (www.nacaf.net).

Our hope is that this new series will enable Mission Frontiers readers to better understand least-reached People Clusters and to discover new ways to faithfully represent Christ among them. We welcome your comments and questions so that we might learn and grow together.

– Darrell Dorr, Contributing Editor



Spotlight for September 2012

TURKIC PEOPLES

WITH EMPHASIS ON THE AZERBAIJANI PEOPLE CLUSTER



CHRIS JONES

Chris Jones is Executive Director of the North American Azerbaijani Network (azerbaijanipartnership.org). Contact him at chris@azerbaijanipartnership.org.

The Azerbaijanis are among the few peoples who span different countries and different cultural basins. The small number of Azerbaijanis in the Republic of Azerbaijan (eight million), their recent claim to statehood, and their low profile on the world stage have misled many into overlooking the Azerbaijani people cluster as insignificant. However, they are increasingly recognized as unique in their potential impact as a strategic bridge to other peoples.

The exact number of Azerbaijanis worldwide is not known, but estimates range from 30 to 50 million, depending on whose statistics you lean upon. The largest number of Azerbaijanis can be found in Iran, where population estimates range from 18 to 30 million, with government statistics on the lower end of the range. It is notable but little-known that the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, is Azerbaijani; despite that fact, the Azerbaijanis of Iran have found it difficult to express their ethnic voice and have gone through many challenging phases. The northern border

with Azerbaijan has been opened in recent years, leading to increased transit of people and goods.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century the Azerbaijani homelands were part of the Persian Empire. Then a succession of wars and treaties with Russia led Persian authorities to cede to Russia what is now known as Azerbaijan along with some of the present Russian Federation territory that includes significant Azerbaijani populations, for example, the city of Derbent. At the beginning of the twentieth century many Azerbaijanis fled from the Red Army and resettled in the eastern provinces of Turkey, especially in the city of Kars. Over time they have dispersed west, leading some observers to estimate the present population of Azerbaijanis in Turkey at 500,000-600,000.

In certain areas of Georgia significant numbers of Azerbaijanis can trace their presence to long-ago incursions by the Persian Empire; estimates of their numbers today range from 240,000 to 500,000. Add the large number of migrant workers living

in Russia and spread through the former Soviet Union, and you can accurately regard the Azerbaijani as one of the most dispersed and significant minorities in many countries. Furthermore, northern Iraq is home to a people called the Turcoman, who speak Azerbaijani rather than Turkish and are estimated at 2.5 million. Thus the Azerbaijani also provide a cultural bridge into the Arabic and Kurdish worlds.

The Azerbaijani of the dispersion speak Azerbaijani, Farsi, Turkish, Russian, Arabic and many other minority languages. Although the boundaries between countries present significant challenges to Western workers, these boundaries are not so significant to Azerbaijani believers—something for us to carefully note in our praying and planning. Azerbaijanis from Azerbaijan regularly go to Iran and can readily and naturally share the Good News of Jesus. Azerbaijani pastors from Baku can go to northern Iraq, speak with Turkmen people in their own language and be welcomed as dear brothers rather than foreign infiltrators. Azerbaijanis from Baku who want to share their faith in Georgia have freedom to do so without fear of government intervention in the Azerbaijani sectors of Georgia. Farsi-speaking Azerbaijanis can reach out to the Persian majority and the minority peoples of Iran, or can speak Dari in Afghanistan, or can go further south to master Persian-based Urdu in far less time and with far less stigma than Western workers.

What about Azerbaijani Turcoman crossing into Arabic-speaking cultures in North Africa and the Middle East, or using their Turkic roots to quickly master Turkish or Uzbek or Turkmen and move through Central Asia, occasionally using their Russian? The possibilities are delightful, but one problem

affects the glowing potential: the Azerbaijanis are themselves a least-reached people cluster. Estimates of the number of Azerbaijani believers worldwide range from 7,000 to 14,000, though accurate numbers are hard to ascertain.

In recent years a significant number of Azerbaijanis have come to Christ, and particularly in Azerbaijan we have seen steady outreach and growth with an understanding among believers of the unique role they can play to reach their own and other peoples. Yet recent events in the past 1-2 years have presented new challenges and diminished the free flow of people and ideas: renewed persecution in Iran, regional fears and insecurities prompted by the Arab Spring, unfavorable news reports of unjust policies of Azerbaijan's leaders, and the threat of renewed hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. An increasing focus on national pride has led governing authorities in Azerbaijan to adopt legislation and business policies that have prompted some expatriate workers to leave. Add to this an increasingly strict law in Azerbaijan on permissible religious thought and practice, and you have a context in which sharing your faith has become increasingly costly.

Nevertheless, we are seeing growth in the Azerbaijani church, increased maturity and an increase of faith. This year, despite the closing of one major congregation in Baku, another has won its case for registration after many difficult legal battles. The Evangelical Alliance has continued to develop and seeks to unite the local churches in their corporate commitment to serving the kingdom of God in Azerbaijan. In Iran significant numbers of people have come to Christ despite unremitting difficulties

and severe persecution, and many are counting the cost as worthwhile to be able to follow the Lord.

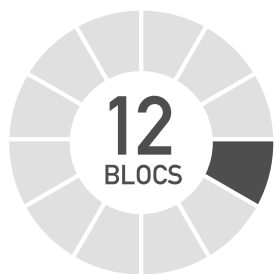
So what does the future hold for the peoples of the Azerbaijani cluster? Will they pursue a calling to transform the nations around them for Christ, or not live up to their potential as regional change agents? One thing is sure: the Azerbaijani present one of the most exciting opportunities for gospel expansion, as a cluster of peoples to widely receive the Good News themselves and to cross many cultural and linguistic boundaries to bring blessing to others.

To learn more, go to:

www.azerbajianpartnership.org and talk with me about how you might participate in the North American Azerbaijani Forum in September 2012 and the North American Central Asia Forum (**nacaf.net**) in October 2012.

*To learn more about the Azerbaijani and eight other least-reached, Turkic people clusters, see **www.ow.ly/cMxTP** and pages 220-223 in Patrick Johnstone's The Future of the Global Church (available at **missionbooks.org**).*





Spotlight for October 2012

PERSIAN-MEDIAN PEOPLES WITH EMPHASIS ON THE PEOPLES OF IRAN



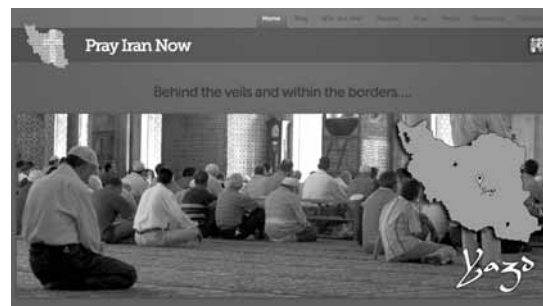
DARRELL DORR

Darrell Dorr is an Associate Editor of the *Atlas of Global Christianity* and Contributing Editor of *Mission Frontiers*.

Iran is much in the headlines these days, largely because of concerns over Iran's influence in the Middle East and because of economic sanctions imposed on Iran to curtail its nuclear programs. But the parallel narrative amidst much persecution is the astonishing growth of the Church among the Persian majority and a quiet, persistent outreach to Iran's minority peoples. As *Operation World* reminds us, Iran is home to some of the world's largest unreached peoples, including the Luri-Bakhtiari of the Zagros Mountains, the Baloch of the southeast and Kurdish peoples in the northwest and northeast.

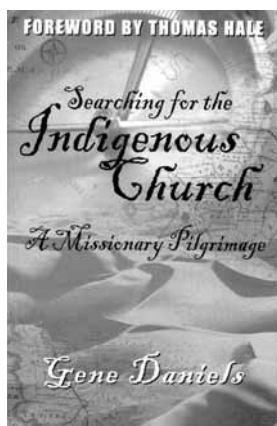
In recent months a number of mission agencies and other ministries have teamed up to develop a new, collaborative website, **www.prayirannow.com**. On this site you'll find stories and ways to pray for the peoples of Iran.

To learn more about the peoples of Iran, and other peoples and people clusters in the Persian-Median Affinity Bloc, see **www.ow.ly/cMy8i** and pages 202-205 in Patrick Johnstone's *The Future of the Global Church* (available at **www.missionbooks.org**).





A TIME FOR EVERYTHING



GENE DANIELS

This article is excerpted from chapter 14 of the book by Gene Daniels, *Searching for the Indigenous Church: A Missionary Pilgrimage*. Copyright 2005, William Carey Library. Used by permission.

I went to see Talgat mainly because that is what friends do in Central Asia—spend time together. He is not a ministry project, but a friend whose company I enjoy. Nevertheless, I also wanted to see him because I knew Talgat was struggling with problems in his ministry, and I thought that he might need someone to talk to. Little did I know that what he needed to say was exactly what I needed to hear.

My friend Talgat is a typical Central Asian man—extremely loyal to his family, generally likeable, and not given to a lot of words. In other ways though, he is most extraordinary. For a start, he has been a follower of Isa for more than seven years. Few of his people fit that description. Not only that, but he has exercised authentic Christian leadership for most of that time. He doesn't carry a title like "Pastor" or "Reverend," but he is the sort of man Paul wrote about in his first letter to the young Timothy:

The overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

In Talgat's world, these qualities speak far louder than the seminary degree others aspire to. Maybe that is the way it should be.

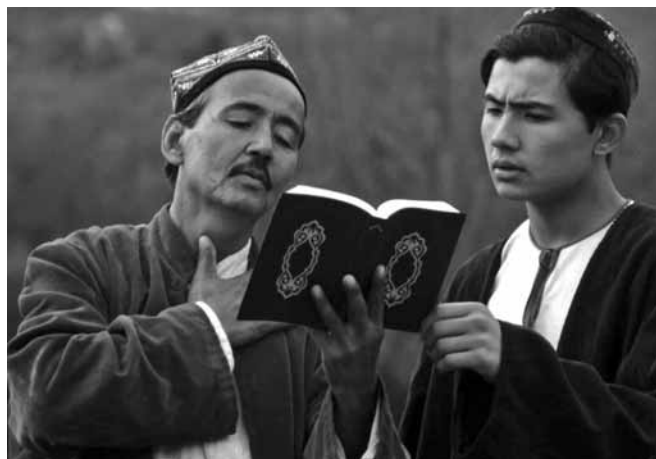
As with every other significant conversation I've had in Central Asia, this one began and ended over a cup of tea, with a meal somewhere in between. Nothing is done or said in a hurry. All those who would take a pilgrimage into this land of Bactrian camels and Oriental carpets should remember that the nasty American habit of quickly getting down to business feels very rude in this part of the world.

Talgat and I sat in the living room where we ate and talked alone. For the most part, his wife Dilbahar kept to the kitchen. It was not for lack of something relevant to say, for at key moments she would briefly join us and share what was on her mind. But mixed company at a meal does not sit well with my friend, so one stern look was usually enough to return her to the kitchen.

Please don't judge him too harshly in this. Remember, we are the foreigners in his house. This is also a good reminder that Central Asia is an altogether different place from the West.

After the meal I tried to draw Talgat out, but to do so I would have to carefully watch my natural tendency toward directness. If I wanted to know what was going on inside this man, I would have to be discreet and indirect—an art I have yet to master.

I decided to begin by asking his thoughts on a couple of general ministry questions. I was certainly interested in the ideas of one who could rightly be called "a pillar of the



church” in Central Asia. But more than that, I hoped my questions might start him talking about the more troubling things on his mind.

Talgat gave me a vague answer to the effect that they had “made good progress” over the past five or six years. There was still “much to do,” but the groundwork had been done. Then, from out of nowhere, he asked me an odd, leading question: “How do you understand your work here? How do you define your role as a missionary?”

Remember, this question was coming from a man who had been a follower of Isa longer than I had lived in Central Asia. He had probably known as many missionaries as I have. Something important was lurking under the surface of his query.

Talgat must have noticed a puzzled look on my face, so he tried to clarify by saying that he had “never really understood Westerners,” and wanted a clearer picture of how we think.

Since I had been trying to develop the art of being indirect, I decided not to give him a straight answer. I simply asked him to read some words from one of my favorite missionary thinkers:

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. Each one should be careful how he builds.

After reading this passage, Talgat spent a few minutes in thought. Then he replied, “I think I’m getting a revelation of something here.”

Looking back on the moment, I believe he had already given a great deal of thought to what he was about to say. He had meditated, if not specifically on this verse, certainly on the subject in general. Nevertheless, what followed was certainly a revelation for one person in the room.

“Paul was an apostle,” said Talgat slowly, “which means he was a ‘sent one.’ He went around starting churches. So what he describes here is the way apostles, or ‘sent ones,’ are supposed to start churches. I’ve never seen this before, but it makes sense because Paul was explaining something that is normal in our culture.”

I had to think quick. I had looked at the back pages of a Bible a lot during my Sunday School days, but I never saw a Journeys of Saint Paul map that included Central Asia. So how is it that Paul intersected with Central Asian culture? Talgat certainly had my attention.

“In traditional culture,” he continued, “when someone wants to build a house, they invite all their friends and family to come help. On the appointed day, everyone comes ready to work—and work hard. They all know that with enough men, and one hard day’s work, the foundation of a new house can be laid. So that is the focus. They do not worry about doing other things, the foundation is what they came to build. While the men are working, the women prepare a huge, traditional meal. But even though there is much to be done, it is much more

AS WITH EVERY OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONVERSATION I’VE HAD IN CENTRAL ASIA, THIS ONE BEGAN AND ENDED OVER A CUP OF TEA, WITH A MEAL SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN. NOTHING IS DONE OR SAID IN A HURRY.

than work. It’s a celebration. A new house is going up.”

As Talgat talked, I could picture the preparations I’ve watched many times for other big events like weddings or funerals. The men would be occupied with whatever needed to be done outside, while the women washed and cooked the rice, cut piles of carrots, and prepared the meat. It is the same at all big parties.

He continued painting his picture for me. “By late afternoon, the foundation is finished. Some of the men start cleaning up, while others quickly assemble a sort of long table for the feast. Soon there will be lots of eating, laughing, and drinking tea.” As he was speaking I could see the men in my mind’s eye, sweaty and bone-tired, but glowing with a sense of accomplishment from the day’s labors.

“Later that night, when the eating, music, and dancing are over,” continued Talgat, “the owner of the house stands up

to profusely thank all who answered his call for help. He freely admits that he could never have done it without them, and ends by telling them that he is forever in their debt. They were there the day the foundation was laid.”

Then in an unexpected anticlimax, Talgat finished his story. “And then everyone goes home.”

I sat there startled; it seemed too abrupt. There had to be more to it, but when I pressed him on this point, Talgat’s

“IS THAT HOW IT WORKS?” HE PRESSED. “WILL ALL THE MISSIONARIES LEAVE SOON SO WE CAN BUILD THE CHURCH TO LOOK LIKE WE WANT?”

rationale went something like this: “The people came to do one thing—to lay the foundation. They did what could not have been done without their help. When that is finished, it is the owner’s business to finish his own house.” As much as I wanted something more, I could see the logic.

But this was not all. My friend was on a roll and he continued to expound his thoughts. “And just like Paul, you foreign missionaries are the helpers in our tradition. God called you from all over the world to come to Central Asia and help us lay the foundation. We never could have done it without you. But now that part is soon to be finished. It is almost time for us to prepare a great feast and tell you how much we appreciate all your hard work and sacrifice for our people.”

My thoughts drifted back to the Apostle Paul’s words, trying hard to apply them to Talgat’s story and to the missionary practice I have seen in Central Asia. Then it dawned on me why Paul the church-planter did not stick around to finish the house. Why? *Because it is the owner’s job to do so.*

Who better to decide where to put windows, or how many bedrooms are needed? Is it not the one who will live in it? Paul tells us that there is only one foundation that can be laid—Christ Jesus. But could many floor plans be built on this one foundation?

My mind was pulled back to the present by Talgat’s voice. “And then you will all leave.”

His directness caught me off-guard and I was silent for a moment.

“Is that how it works?” he pressed. “Will all the missionaries leave soon so we can build the church to look like we want?”

What could I say? How could I tell him that there is a


right and proper way for some pilgrims to stay on past the foundation stage? Would he even consider that our partnership could be helpful long into the future? How might I explain the ideal scenario in which we foreigners move to the background while the “owners of the house” take the lead?

Indeed, how could I enlighten my friend to such idealistic church-planting theory when his experience had painted a much different picture? Missionaries fading into the background is a model he has seldom seen. Most missionaries can talk at length about such ideas as theory. Yet few church-planters are ready, in practice, to act like the Apostle Paul, truly risking the leadership of a new church into the hands of local believers.

However, I didn’t need to tell my friend all this. He already knew. He had known for years. In fact, as I pondered on this issue, I realized that watching foreigners lord it over the local church has probably been the bitter root feeding most of Talgat’s thorny ministry problems over the years. Could it be that this story was his polite, Central Asian way of telling me so?

For some strange reason, we foreign missionaries seem to forget that we are the pilgrims, the temporary ones. This land through which we sojourn, no matter how much we come to love it, is not our home. Our new brothers and sisters are the ones destined to live in the house. They, and their children after them, will have to deal with what we do, both good and bad. And because of our convenient memory lapses, we somehow believe that it is our right to perpetually stay on and supervise.

We would probably still be welcomed as helpers, but not as overlords. And that is precisely where the problem arises. Many missionaries have the hardest time moving out of the limelight and off to stage left. It’s as if we don’t really believe that God will work through our local brothers and sisters with the same power that He works through us. Could it be that sometimes our faith is in ourselves rather than in the Spirit of God?

Talgat was right. When the foundation is laid, this house, the indigenous church in Central Asia, should be finished by the ones who will live in it. Whatever continuing roles we foreigners may rightly fill, it is fundamentally different from that of local leadership. They must be the ones, led by the Holy Spirit, who frame the windows and decide what color to paint the walls. In fact, that is the only way the church will ever truly be indigenous. 

THE DEPENDENCY SYNDROME: PREVENTION AND EARLY DETECTION



GLENN SCHWARTZ

/ Glenn J. Schwartz is Executive Director of World Mission Associates in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and author of *When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement*. It is available through www.wmausa.org.

Those following medical reports these days are aware that several themes keep recurring. One is the importance of prevention of serious illness. Another theme is early detection. Of course, the third is radical surgery to correct that which has gone too far. Both prevention and early detection improve the health of a population. When done appropriately, those two can help to avoid radical surgery. No doubt about it.

I frequently get e-mails from missionaries or church planters who are struggling with a full-blown case of dependency which was neither prevented nor detected early. Recently a vivid example appeared in my inbox.

A congregation in the southern part of the United States decided to begin a separate service for people in the community who do not speak English as their first language. They are to be commended for wanting to see the gospel presented in the heart language of the people. Unfortunately they were not familiar with what it takes to avoid dependency in a newly planted church. Neither were they very good at early detection when the symptoms began to appear. Now they have a full-blown dependency problem.

In their desire to be helpful, they paid with outside funds the pastor who was assigned to preach for the new congregation. Unfortunately this gave the wrong impression from the beginning. The pastor was perceived as “owned” by the people who paid him. The people in the newly planted congregation were glad to let someone else pay their pastor.

Second, out of their compassion, the people planting the church gave the new

congregation free use of a building. Later on, another congregation in the area, without obligation, gave them a church building they no longer needed. The new congregation was enjoying a free pastor and a free building. Now the people who planted the church are wondering why the new congregation feels no responsibility for their pastor or building.

By the time things got this far, the people planting the church were wondering what they should do. Obviously it was too late for prevention or early detection. This would take radical measures—perhaps major surgery. Simple bandages would not be much help.

It does not mean that the situation is irreversible. However, someone will need to think and pray seriously about how to resolve the dependency mentality which developed. The following are a few suggestions.

First, the well-meaning church planters need to recognize that they gave the impression that a new congregation doesn’t need to contribute to the cost of running its own church. However compassionate they were, they gave new believers in a new congregation the impression that church is free.


Second, their biggest challenge might be with the pastor they “hired” to lead the new congregation. Neither he nor they realized that being a “paid professional” sent a powerful message to the new congregation. He might have become a tentmaker or at least been a bi-vocational pastor in the early days of this church planting. This would have sent a healthy message to the new congregation: “I am one of you; I also work for a living. Let’s

build this new congregation together. You are as important as I am.” Who will help him to become aware of the damage that has already been done? Not only that, who is bold enough to recognize the dependency mentality and suggest that something must be done?

Third, the congregation itself will need to be reprogrammed in their thinking about how churches develop. They were given the impression from the beginning that they were too poor to pay their pastor or to contribute toward their own church building. Being given the impression that new believers are too poor to give something back to God is a common symptom of the dependency syndrome. There are many examples—some in Scripture—where new believers gave to God out of their poverty, recognizing that in the Christian faith, giving is a greater blessing than receiving. In 2 Corinthians 8, for example, the Macedonians gave out of their extreme poverty and severe trial.

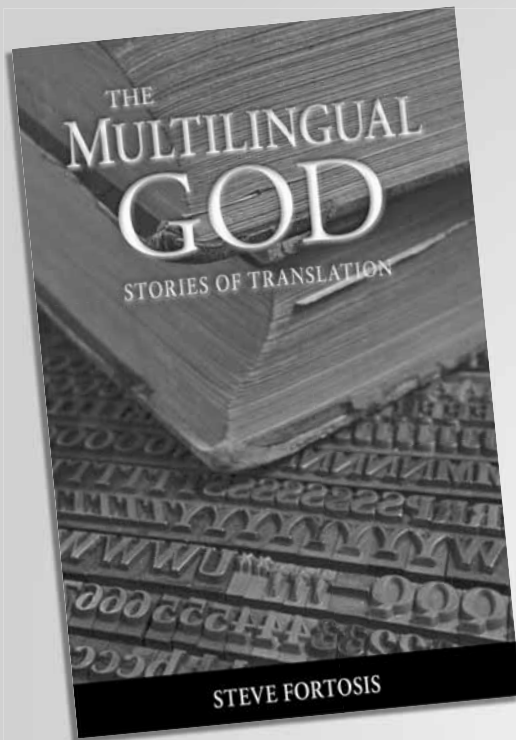
Fourth, getting out of this dilemma will take serious effort on the part of all who are involved: the well-meaning church planters, the subsidized pastor and the new congregation. Everyone will need to take a serious look at the meaning of the gospel. But most of all, they will need to abandon the idea that supporting the church they attend is not the responsibility of outsiders.

What does this salvation cost? We are fond of saying in our preaching that salvation is free. In one sense this is absolutely right. But the real cost of our salvation is that for the rest of our lives as believers, we will be asked to turn over to the God of heaven everything we previously considered our own.

Whenever people are given any other impression about the cost of becoming a believer, the seeds of the dependency syndrome might just be sown. And before long, it is too late for prevention or early detection. We might as well get an appointment with the surgeon. 

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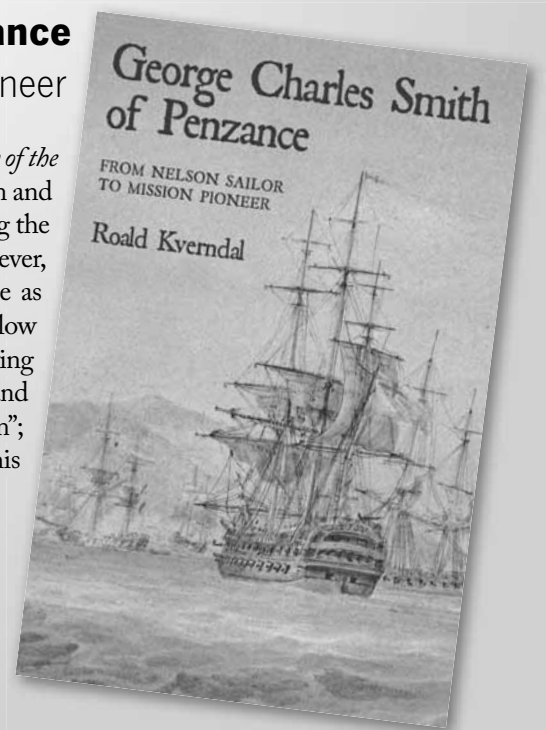
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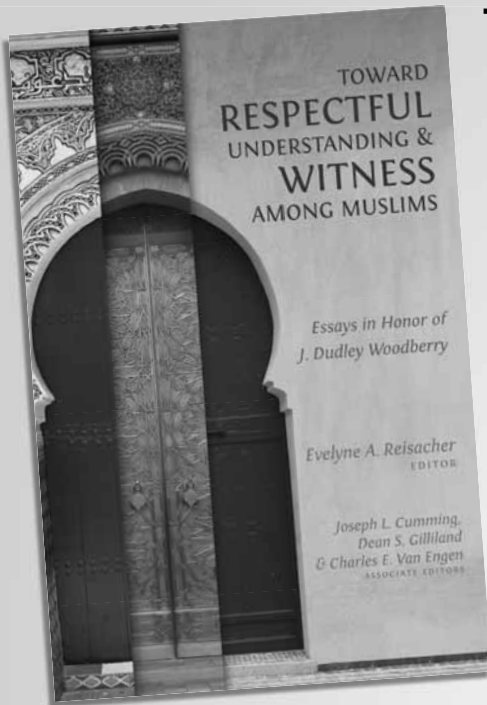
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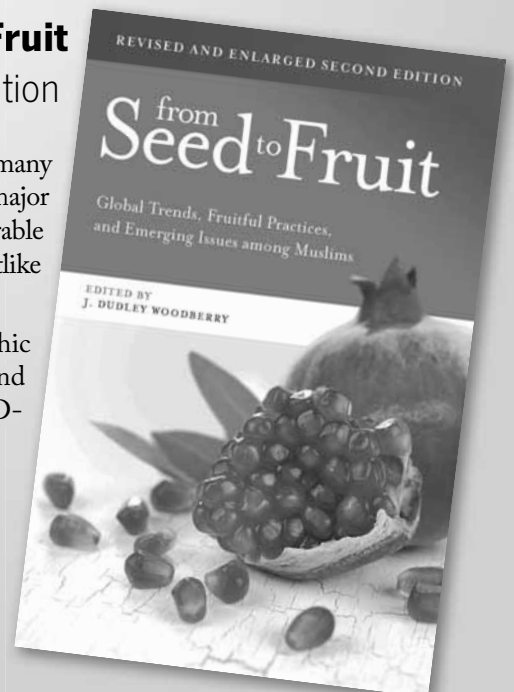
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CONQUEST: THE AMERICAN WAY ...BUT IS IT THE BEST PATH?



GREG PARSONS

/ GLOBAL DIRECTOR,
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Every two years I am reminded just how easy it is to fall into nationalistic triumphalism. Blame the Olympics. Here in the U.S. we generally think of the Games as friendly but serious competition—may the best man or woman win! The rest of the world, however, often sees America and

China, as unfairly fielding mostly professional athletes who are likely to win a medal in almost every event.

Followers of Christ sent into the world from more powerful nations face a bigger problem. Not only do others perceive in us an underlying mentality of conquest, their perceptions are largely true. Like it or not, perhaps without realizing it, we actually do think we are superior. As believers we try to combat such tendencies, but in the end we approach our global outreach both assured of the truth (which is good to a point) and expecting, if not demanding results. If we're honest, we in the English-speaking world feel particularly proud of the massive biblical resources available in our language, some of which is actually helpful. Add to this our emphasis on (and experience in) explaining the Bible and it's not surprising that people see us as *teachers* rather than *learners*. We have all the answers! The fact is that those we are going to "reach" and "serve" know full well that we haven't lived *our* faith out in *their* cultural context.

Our mobilization efforts feed this mentality. We preach, pray, and encourage young people to "get out there and make a difference with their lives." We tell them, "You can reach a group that has never had the gospel!" The truth behind this is lost if it reinforces our superiority complex instead of God's purposes in redemptive history.

Global workers who persevere through the difficult "stuff" of cultural adjustment know that they often have no idea what to do to make an impact. They work in the frustration of little visible fruit. Blame it on the training they didn't receive or the fact that they aren't using some favorite strategy of ours, the reality is that in most places in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist worlds, we are neither prepared by our cultural or church background, nor are we perceived as particularly helpful (other than as a source for money!).

Recently I heard another story from workers who, after sending people for ten years to India have yet to see the "breakthroughs" they have seen back in the States and expected in India. By now, they know that they have no idea what to do. Not only does the lack of any progress cause avoidable attrition, but more importantly they are making no visible progress for the gospel.

Yet even as I write about "visible progress," it sounds triumphalist. We don't even have the words to describe what we are trying to say without reinforcing the problem. And many of these words or illustrations are from the Bible. We use OT illustrations, such as Joshua, and talk about


conquering the enemies of the land. I've heard people fervently praying that the gospel would fall like *bombs* to the unreached peoples of the world!

I know what they mean, and I appreciate the heart that I hope is behind it. The scarier thing to me is what comes across to the non-believer: they see a "we know your problems... we have the answer! The trouble is that we often don't even know how to shape the question the same way they would.

I realize that all of this is not true of all of the workers we are mobilizing and sending out. While I am often discouraged by what I hear, I am often encouraged too. I see God sending out people who have a heart to serve, to learn, to grow in cultural understanding, and to trust Him for the impact. Despite the temptation of triumphalism, we should continue to pray big prayers and to prepare the next generation of workers with a big vision—one tempered by love, discipline, a servant's heart, dove-like innocence and snake-like wisdom (Matthew 10:16).

Let me close with a question. A mission leader who works with younger leaders around the world asked me the other day about characteristics of new workers that lead to effectiveness. We can continue to contribute to "fruitful practices." (See a great list to start with noted in several articles in the *IJFM*, issues 26 and 27. See: www.ijfm.org

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