

# CPMS: THE COUNTER-INTUITIVE WAYS OF GROWING GOD'S KINGDOM

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The King's ways in this world are counterintuitive. Intuitively we think His kingdom should follow a certain path or principles natural to us, but we find that it is quite the opposite. The primary way to discover the counterintuitive ways of the kingdom is to meditate on the Word of the King—Scripture. We think we should curse our enemy, but King Jesus says bless (Luke 6:27-28). We think that by elevating ourselves we will succeed, but the King says to humble ourselves (1 Peter 5:5-6). We think that resources, education and connections are the paths to breakthrough, but the King tells us that the weak, the have-nots and the are-nots will find the ultimate victory in this world (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Perhaps it is in this last reference that we as a North American church are challenged most. We are so accustomed to the power of education, resources and fortitude to change the world that we've become much too self-reliant and too little God-reliant. If we ask ourselves the question, "Am I doing anything right now that absolutely requires faith in the Spirit to sustain me as opposed to my own personal abilities?" we often find ourselves at a loss.

I recall a group of twelve East Asian believers I worked with in a Church-

Planting Movement. Their people group, on many economic scales, was classified as the poorest group in the country. Many individuals had one, perhaps two sets of clothes. Most had little, if any, money. The average educational level ranged between third and sixth grade. Illiteracy was at 86%. Drunkenness was rampant. They brought *nothing* to the table in their effort to reach their people group with the gospel—no resources, no education, no connections. And this brought great despair in a society in which connections were everything.

When I first saw them, clothes ragged, hair disheveled, teeth missing, I almost lost hope that God could do much with them. But then God gave me these counterintuitive promises for these precious new believers:

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor. 1:26-29 ESV)

I told them: "You're the poorest tribe in this country!" Their shoulders slumped. "You're the most despised in this country!" Their eyes looked down at their toes in realization.

Then I told them "So rejoice! That is why God is going to use you to win the world! You are in these verses. You are the weak, the poor, the despised to whom God will give grace. God gives grace to the humble and there is no group more humbled than you! Take up your calling."

At that a deep, Spirit-prompted identity rose up in the hearts of this "insignificant" band as they laid hold of that promise. These were their verses. God had shown them their place in the cosmic plan for the redemption of this world. They took up this mantle and began to spread the kingdom of God from village to village and from valley to valley.

The counterintuitive nature of the kingdom joyfully catches us by surprise.

## THE MUSTARD SEED OF KINGDOM GROWTH

CPMs are kingdom movements that operate in the power of the Spirit on kingdom principles. Because we don't naturally or intuitively understand kingdom ways, Jesus painted many word pictures of the kingdom in the form of parables, starting most of them with "the kingdom of God is like..." Each is a kernel of truth about the overall mystery of the King's reign.

Jesus answered [His disciples], "To you it has been granted to know the **mysteries of the kingdom of**

heaven, but to them it has not been granted. . . . But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. (Matt. 13:11, 16, NASB, emphasis added)

Parables are a mystery to those outside, but to those who come like little children, God will disclose the mysterious nature of the kingdom. Surrender your pre-conceived ideas to Him and ask Him to speak afresh to you. We must be very purposeful if we would live King-centered rather than human-centered ways of ministry.

A foundational kingdom kernel is the mustard seed.

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." (Matt. 13:31-32 ESV)

What is more insignificant than a mustard seed? What was more insignificant than this little band of barely-literate ignored believers in East Asia who sought to change the world?

The parable teaches us that large movements start from small beginnings. In this manner God most fully receives the glory. Powerful transformation comes through those we would deem weak. It is not the resources, education and connections that enable us to succeed but rather the recognition of our spiritual bankruptcy and absolute need for Jesus every day.<sup>1</sup>

What transformed that humble band of twelve East Asian believers, like the early apostles, was their recognition of their insignificance and their utter dependence on nothing but the Spirit of God. They had no other options. Like Peter, they could say "Silver and

gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee."

**The CPMs around the world have nothing to do with earthly socio-economic status and everything to do with spiritual socio-economic status.**

This bursts a common myth about CPMs: that they only occur in poor societies. They more often occur in poor societies, perhaps because their physical poverty helps them recognize spiritual poverty. But CPMs are also taking place in educated communities and professional arenas. The key is not economic status but status of the heart.

The King's ways are to take the spiritually bankrupt when they rely on Him and His Word in absolute dependence and use them to spread throughout the world as His change agents. In the West, we find it hard to imagine that a small group of poverty-stricken or poorly-educated believers and churches could grow like a mustard tree and become the largest tree in the garden. We find the speed of Church-planting Movements of the world unbelievable precisely because we forget how the kingdom operates. It does not depend on human resources or engineering.

**And that's what I love about CPMs: God taking bedraggled have-nots and shaming the haves.**

**That's our King!** If we plant the right DNA of the kingdom in the right types of individuals, the growth of the kingdom is inevitable. It is critical that we get the beginnings right! We must start with the counterintuitive ways of the King.

What follows are two examples of how that is happening: the percentage growth of believers in societies and the transformation of cultures in which they live.

*CPMs—in which ordinary believers and churches are envisioned, equipped and empowered to complete the task of world evangelization—offer a fresh arena in which the percentages of disciples of Jesus in a lost society are significantly increasing. Stan Parks, a CPM Trainer with Mission to Unreached Peoples, speaks about this below. He may be contacted at sbp@gcnow.org.*

## CHANGING THE PERCENTAGES

by Stan Parks

In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commands us as His disciples to make disciples of all ethne. The Great Commission was given to the entire Body of Christ; all of us have a part to play in reaching the world. So how are we doing?

According to the Joshua Project, there are currently 16,598 ethne in the world and 7,165 are unreached constituting 41.5% of all people. In 1900 the world was 34.5% Christian and now we are 33% Christian. The global annual growth rate of Christianity is 1.2% and the global annual growth rate of Great Commission Christians is 1.2%. Ironically, these both match the world population annual growth rate of 1.2%. This implies that our Christian growth rates are merely biological and not spiritual. As a global Body of Christ, we are not doing a very good job of obeying the Great Commission.

We MUST change our Great Commission efforts if we are going to see the world reached! Missions as usual will continue to lose ground and leave millions and billions without even the first opportunity to hear the gospel. We must be willing to make radical changes and be open to new approaches.

Church-Planting Movements (CPMs) are the main way we are seeing God change these heart-breaking percentages among the unreached. CPMs are rapidly<sup>2</sup> multiplying indigenous churches planting new churches within a population segment. This is happening because all new believers are being taught to obey Christ's commands, and as a result they expect every believer and every church to take responsibility for reaching those next door and at the ends of the earth. CPMs are not a new fad, but rather a modern example of what God has always done in history: bringing individuals, families and groups into relationship with Him in a powerful way which makes these new communities of faith want to serve those around them and reach more people with the Good News.

In recent years, God has delighted in starting CPMs in some of the most unreached areas of the world. In North India, sometimes called the "Graveyard of Modern Missions" because of 200 years of largely fruitless efforts, God has birthed a movement among the Bhojpuri of India that has grown to over 80,000 churches and four million baptized believers in 20 years. This movement has started CPMs in four nearby groups and has sent missionaries to South America and the South Pacific. Another CPM in China has seen over 150,000 churches established and two million people baptized in the last twelve years. Over 6,000 new churches have been planted among Muslims in eighteen different countries in Africa over the last seven years. Around the world, there are over 90 CPMs that are seeing consistent 4th generation or beyond reproduction of churches. And God is starting these movements in every region: Africa,

Asia, South America, North America, Europe, the Middle East.

What are we willing to do to support and catalyze these new movements? Are we willing to change anything and everything to better cooperate with God's movements? May it be so!

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*Not only is the percentage of believers growing in these people groups and countries, but they are also actively transforming their communities. Here's a testimony from Nathan Shank who works with several CPMs in South Asia. He may be contacted through [www.movements.net](http://www.movements.net).*

## A BREAKTHROUGH IN HOLISTIC MINISTRY

by Nathan Shank

I am proud to say, "Our ministry has started thousands of localized, strategic community transformation centers (or co-ops)."

We have gone about a systematic campaign against alcoholism among men in hundreds of communities. This has happened through ongoing teaching related to being filled with the Spirit rather than the things of this world. As a result, hundreds of men have put down the bottle and stopped beating their wives. With the money no longer given to liquor stores, children are sent to school with books, materials and appropriate dress. Sobriety offers these families new hope through a model of fatherhood focused on the needs of the family rather than daily appetites.

We have fostered an unprecedented literacy campaign across hundreds of communities. We have discovered a breakthrough in the major barrier to education across the fields we target. Countless families have emerged from isolation into the light of education

for their children offering a bright future of progress and economic development. The breakthrough was intrinsic motivation. By instilling the motive for literacy we have seen families emerge from the grinding legacy of the caste system and its oppressive outlook of fatalism.<sup>3</sup>

To varying degrees each of the co-ops participates in regular benevolence projects determined locally for the betterment of their community.<sup>4</sup> Further, they provide ongoing support and subsidy generated from local sources for widows, orphans and the oppressed. Many expressions of care for the sick, dying and hospitalized have been received.

We have mobilized hundreds of indigenous volunteer workers to advocate, support and adopt the victims of sex trafficking, domestic violence and infant exposure. We have received dozens of reports of infant girls rescued from exposure, as well as orphans and abandoned children placed into protective custody led by Christian families. We have seen dozens of volunteer kingdom agents compelled by the teaching of the Word and the Spirit of God to engage the local sex industry in their cities with the light of the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

We have catalyzed citizenship across the nation through the same localized co-operatives by introducing biblical teaching on submission to authority, prayer for one's masters and the value of quiet productive lives. We have heard numerous reports of lives and families reformed of law-breaking. We have heard the testimonies of reformed smugglers, prostitutes, murderers and child molesters. We believe teaching through these co-operatives was the central catalyst for these reforms.

Finally, we have seen countless lives oppressed by sin released from a



lifestyle of despair and transformed to productivity. It has been based on an outlook of hope in a just Judge capable of righting wrongs for eternity.


For those interested in holistic ministry we offer you our best practice. All these things have been accomplished through the establishment of localized community-oriented transformation co-operatives. We believe the Holy Spirit inspired these co-operatives and laid out patterns in Scripture for our systematic pursuit of their establishment.

For more information on joining the Spirit and the Kingdom in transformational, holistic ministry please begin your search here:

Matthew 16:18—“... I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not stand against it.”

As you can see, local churches that are part of CPMs are demonstrating the ability to transform their communities as a result of life transformation and obedience to the admonitions of Scripture. Rather than transform society first then redeem individuals second, in CPMs it is normally reversed: redeem individuals first and then help these Spirit-led believers and churches transform their communities.

It's counterintuitive, and that's one thing that is so delightful about God—He's the King and we are not. It's about His ways, not our ways. Mustard seeds are being planted around the world, and the trees of the kingdom growing and spreading their branches are glorious!

*How will you and your church apply this kernel of truth about the kingdom? Whom do you know that appears insignificant but is hungry for God and His Word?* 

## FOLLOW-UP:

To send examples of what you are learning in CPMs to be featured in future issues, write us at [KingdomKernels@onepost.net](mailto:KingdomKernels@onepost.net).

*Kingdom Kernels is a regular column featuring lessons from Church-Planting Movements around the world.*

<sup>1</sup> The “poor in spirit” of Matthew 5:3 literally means to be “bankrupt”—no resources left.

<sup>2</sup> The average church in a CPM plants and disciples 1 new church a year.

<sup>3</sup> Between 2006–2010 we distributed more than 85,000 books in local languages. In most cases these books were accepted as the first written material owned in the household.

<sup>4</sup> A survey of more than 300 groups conducted in 2010 showed 75% of the groups surveyed were active in benevolent ministries outside their membership. If weekly collections and monthly distributions averaged just \$10 per month across 1800 active groups an average of \$18,000 is distributed monthly to local needs.

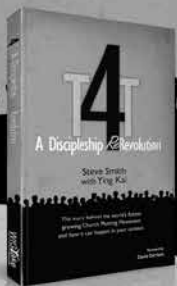
<sup>5</sup> One such effort has mobilized members of nine different “co-ops” into weekly prayer meetings and evangelistic encounters within the red light districts of their city.

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By Steve Smith with Ying Kai



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