

A regular column featuring lessons from Church-Planting Movements around the world



THE PRAYER LIFE OF A MOVEMENT CATALYST

/ Steve Smith works with the International Mission Board (SBC) globally to catalyze learning lessons from and training for biblical Church-Planting Movements. He is the author of the book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* with Ying Kai (WigTake Resources 2011). You can follow Steve's musings from his devotional thoughts and kingdom ministry on Twitter @kingreigncome and Kingdom Kernels on Facebook.

Every Church-Planting Movement (CPM) and Discipleship-Multiplication Movement is also fundamentally a prayer movement. Fervently calling upon God in faith is foundational to the miraculous move of God's Spirit. Of course, CPMs do not occur only through prayer; reproducing evangelism, discipleship, church planting and leadership development are all essential. But without a move of the Spirit, and thrusting ourselves upon Him in prayer, these latter elements are mere mechanics.

What does the prayer life of men and women in the center of movements look like? Let me describe common characteristics, and especially take you in for a closer look at the prayer life of Ying and Grace Kai who were for many years used by God in catalyzing a church planting movement in Asia—over 1.7 million baptisms and 158,000 new churches.

PERSON NOT JUST PRINCIPLES, MAN NOT JUST METHODS

CPM methodologies and processes are essential in helping us raise our ministry sails to catch the wind of the Spirit and move as he is moving. However, the closer we look at CPMs, the more obvious it becomes that God uses men not simply methods, persons not just principles or programs.

A colleague who tracks CPMs around the world co-trained with Ying Kai for six days, watching him interact with people. Listen to his observation:

The person, Ying, is successful, not the program. The man is the key to the results, not the method that is being used. We had numerous comments during the week indicating that his particular lessons were nothing special What did become evident is that the person God uses, Ying, exemplifies, models and lives out what it is he is teaching.

In other words, the quality of spiritual integrity and seeking God's leading at every juncture were more important than the reproducible methods he was using successfully. The Spirit was empowering the reproducible processes to produce life. We cannot say that if you are more spiritually mature, you will have a greater movement of God. What we can say is that no movement will occur if we are not spiritually in-tuned people.

TIME IN PRAYER DAILY

This begins in seeking God deeply in prayer. Fervent, faith-filled intercession is the spiritual climate of every movement. Since a movement is, by definition, a move of God's Spirit, we must beseech the Father to act powerfully in bringing his kingdom and redeeming the lost.

Movement catalysts each have different patterns for their daily prayer life. But Ying and Grace's prayer life serves as a helpful model. Again listen to my colleague's observations from that six-day trip:

When various participants asked Ying further about the practicality of always praying in advance [before every ministry encounter], he described his DAILY practice of rising early and often praying one to two hours for his ministry every single day. He insists that those he trains [his main leaders] must become persons of prayer, and he communicates to them that it would be best if they pray at least two hours every morning prior to going out to begin their other ministries.

Ying and Grace rise early each day to pray through every name of every person they will encounter that day. Ying trains his trainers that their witnessing will have much more effect if they pray for God to open the hearts of the lost before they themselves open their mouths.

It is not coincidental that the breakthrough for a CPM in our own work in East Asia came when we as a local team and our global partners seriously began to humble ourselves in intercession through weekly prayer and fasting.

LED BY THE SPIRIT

Starting the day in prayer is just the prelude to walking in the Spirit throughout the day, following his promptings. How easy it is for us to begin the day in prayer and the Word, asking to be filled with the Spirit, only to walk in our own leading when we get off our knees and into the streets! Abiding in Christ (Joh 15) is much more than a quiet time. Rather it is a posture of reliance upon God, following the leading of his Spirit. It is praying without ceasing (1 Thes 5:17)—staying in connection with the Father. It is how Jesus lived his life:

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. (Joh 5:19, ESV)

In their days while working in East Asia, there was a remarkable focus, even “narrowness,” to what Ying and Grace were about. Daily they tried to do three things well: 1) pray, 2) witness, 3) train. Everything else took a back seat. They prayed before they left their home and then prayed throughout the day. If they met lost people, they witnessed to them. If

they led them to faith, or met an existing believer, they offered to train them. Prayer guided each encounter.

PRAYER WITH THE LOST, PRAYER WITH THE SAVED, PRAYER ON EVERY OCCASION

A common factor in every CPM is that God is demonstrating Himself in miraculous ways. This is often in direct response to disciples praying

HOW EASY IT IS FOR
US TO BEGIN THE
DAY IN PRAYER AND
THE WORD, ONLY TO
WALK IN OUR OWN
LEADING WHEN WE
GET OFF OUR KNEES
INTO THE STREETS

aloud to the Provider for the needs of lost people in their presence. It is reminiscent of Jesus’ instructions to the 70 disciples He sent out:

“Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” (Luk 10:9, ESV)

Similar things are occurring in various gatherings of faith-filled believers who, like the church in Acts, are amazed at the wonders of God:

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. (Acts 2:43, ESV)

In CPMs believers are calling out for God to act as He has always acted in His Word and then trusting Him for results. This can be a bit challenging for many of us who are concerned that God’s reputation is on the line

when we pray in this manner. But listen to this insight:

When Ying was asked about praying for others, he indicated that he always prays for others when asked. When the subject of healings and such came up, he indicated that he would ask God in advance what to pray for people, and he would pray what God communicated to him was God’s intention for that situation. Ying has no reluctance whatsoever in following this pattern to pray for healing, pray for deliverance, pray for freedom from sinful habits, pray for the restoration of relationships, and pray for a myriad of other results. It is because he always prays first to ask God what to pray that he has no reluctance to publicly or privately “put God on the spot” and to pray for dramatic results.

FOUR AREAS TO PRAY DAILY

Let’s zero in on four areas that Ying and Grace pray for daily, and teach to all their trainers, so that they may walk in the power of the Spirit.

1. Jesus’ blood to protect us

Just as Jesus taught us in the model prayer to beseech the Father to “protect us from the evil one.” (Mat 6:13), so also Ying and Grace pray this daily. As the enemy sets his sights on the faithful, we must cry out to God for His protection from these fiery darts. The battle is real but the blood of Jesus conquers.

It was interesting to me how many times in teaching a variety of subjects Ying referred to the blood of Christ. He referred to his daily practice, during personal devotions requesting Jesus to cover him with the blood of Christ as a protection against various obstructions and intrusions from the evil one. He often referred to praying that the blood of Christ would cover the

groups he is training and protect them from the evil one's attacks. He often referred to the blood of Christ when he presented an evangelistic message and dealt with the cross. He has memorized a number of scriptures that deal with the blood of Christ and frequently quotes them in his teaching and his personal interaction with others. It struck me how infrequently I pray for the protection of the blood of Christ, or make reference to the blood of Christ in my witnessing or daily conversations.

2. Putting on the whole armor of God in prayer – piece by piece

We are commanded in Ephesians 6:10-20 to put on the whole armor of God for the spiritual battle. One way that Ying and Grace do this, and train others to do it, is to put on each piece—one at a time—in prayer. They make a conscious effort to go through the entire list and, in faith, dress themselves in spiritual armor.

3. Ask for whatever gift you need in order to serve God

Ying frequently exhorts his trainers to ask the Holy Spirit to give them whatever gifts they need to serve God. Don't think spiritual gifts, as we commonly think, but rather, any ability they need. If a trainer needs the gift of speaking better, giving more generously or serving more lovingly, then he is encouraged to ask God for this ability, and then to take active steps to learn how to do that. Our Father is ready to give good gifts to His children. He wants us to ask (Mat 7:11).

4. Give thanks in and for everything

One of the greatest acts of faith is to give God thanks not only in every circumstance (1 Thes. 5:18), but for every circumstance. But Paul makes it clear that this is a fruit of being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:20). Ying and Grace encourage their trainers to thank and praise God for all things. It is often in thanking God for the difficult things that they actually see spiritual breakthrough.

Ying Kai credits God freeing him from a life-long anger problem to his giving thanks for this problem:

PRAYER IS
THE SPIRITUAL
CLIMATE OF EVERY
MOVEMENT OF GOD.
THE PERSONAL
PRAYER LIFE OF
EACH MOVEMENT
CATALYST IS
A PRECIOUS
TREASURE TO
THE FATHER


For me it was very strange. I did not really believe yet, but I prayed to God. "God, I know it's very strange but I'll try to give thanks to you because You created me. My attitude has been bad and I always lose my temper but I give thanks to you because I belong to you. I know in myself I cannot change or heal myself so I pray to you. Today let

me know that I am nothing; only You can help me." I tried to just give thanks to the Lord and praise him. So I praised and sang and praised and sang. Every day I did this.

One day my wife told me to come and look at the calendar. Every day since we were married she had marked each day when I lost my temper. Some days it was three times, some days five times. Then she said, "How many days do you think it has been since you lost your temper and fought with me? Six months!"

I had prayed for 26 years and many other people prayed for me. I asked, asked, asked but now I only sang to the Lord and praised the Lord. God changed my mind; He changed my attitude. So when you praise the Lord he'll change everything. Grace said, "When you praise the Lord, that means you honor God and his power."

Prayer is the spiritual climate of every movement of God. The personal prayer life of each movement catalyst is a precious treasure to the Father. It is this interaction with God that sets the foundation for a movement:

My bottom line summation is that it is not the tools that are the key. It is the modeling, holy life, intense focus on heaven, hell, judgment, and the need for salvation which are some of the keys to Ying's effectiveness. All this is to say that those who "catch his spirit" and model it in front of new believers are more likely to see the same type of results than those who came, copied the lessons, and plan to go back and just repeat the methodology. 

¹ Bill S. in an unpublished email "Why T4T is Successful", 2004. Identity is obscured for protection. All quotes come from this report.