

What does Genesis 1-12 have to do with Movements?

BY KEVIN HIGGINS

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In this edition of *Mission Frontiers* you will read about a large church that decided to redeploy itself around multiplying disciples for movements. As you know, *disciples* and *movements* are both major topics in *MF* on a consistent basis, and the story of such a church is a fitting and noteworthy focus of our attention.

I want to connect that to Scripture, in a perhaps surprising section of the Bible, and also to the frontiers of mission.

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An Ear to the Edge

One of our core values in Frontier Ventures is to “live at the edges.” This can mean a variety of things, but one thing (at least) is that we want to listen to and learn from the men and women who are following Jesus at the edges of where the kingdom seems to be advancing among the least reached.

On a regular basis I have the privilege to sit with leaders of movements to Jesus which are growing among a number of Muslim people groups. The leaders themselves were all born Muslim and come from a variety of countries and contexts. Some of the movements are large and longstanding (one is now more than 40 years old, another more than 20), some much smaller and newer (one is perhaps two years since inception) and most of these movements are birthing or have birthed a number of other movements as well.

Each time we meet we select a “big chunk” of the Bible to study inductively together as a part of our mutual learning and encouragement. “Chunks” have included Nehemiah, Galatians, Luke (the whole book) and more.

A year ago we selected Genesis 1:1 to 12:3.

An Ear at the Edge, Listening to Genesis

Here is a sketch of some of the themes that we discovered, but greatly abbreviated:

In Chapter 1 we learn that people are made in the image of God, and then blessed to be fruitful, *multiply and fill the earth*. This implies a spreading out and movement, a dispersal that is actually tied to the original blessing,

In chapter 9 we are reminded that humans are made in the image of God, and again are blessed to be fruitful, *multiply and fill the earth*. That theme is repeated as God, in a very real sense, begins again.

Then in chapter 10 we see a description of the process that involved as a record of clans and languages and families are *actually* filling the lands and nations. Not just a promise and a blessing but a description of the fact: filling the earth in keeping with the blessing of God we have read about. It was promised before, now we see it unfolding.

But, chapter 11 opens a new twist in the story. The tower of Babel is an *opposition* to the plan of God to multiply and fill the earth. In the Babel story we find the desire of humans, in opposition to God, to consolidate, centralize, make a name and control.

All of this sets the stage for Genesis 12:1-3, where we find God restoring the blessing and the decentralizing we saw in the original promises. After listing all the nations in Genesis 10 and the dispersing of the peoples in Genesis 11, Genesis 12 clarifies that His purpose was the blessing of all the families of the earth.



So, Genesis and Movements?

This reading of Genesis seems to suggest that a decentralized approach to extending the blessing to all peoples is woven into the original plan. And that does, it seems to me, have implications for decisions about how we multiply disciples, including the strategic shift undertaken by the church described in this edition.

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Other Edges?


One of the ways Frontier Ventures is pressing our organizational ear to the edges is the formation of “Hubs” including one that will launch in Asia in January 2020. The purpose of such FV Hubs is to redistribute our classic functions of collaboration, mobilization, training, and innovation closer to the edges of where the kingdom is moving into new peoples.

An example of this, related to innovation, is the multiplication of transformation collaboratives, or what we call T. Co. Labs. This process involves intentionally connecting good strategic planning models, systems thinking, spiritual discernment and more in a collaborative process that brings together key leaders and thinkers from multiple organizations and disciplines around a “barrier.”

In December, 2019 we did a T. Co. Lab in South Asia with a number of movement leaders and adapted the process for a cross-cultural, multi-lingual context. It was another effort at getting our ear closer to the edges.

And a Quick Follow Up

I have mentioned in prior editions of *MF* that we are beginning to reconnect with the faithful partners who gave to the “Last Thousand Campaign” years ago (LTC). We have been cleaning up and integrating the older data (some of it still in paper form), and laying plans for a wider communication close to Thanksgiving (an appropriate season!).

Some of our LTC partners asked us when they sent their gifts if we would re-designate those to another ministry, of their choosing, once we reached our goal. As we are able to identify such requests we are fulfilling them. We sent the first such fulfillment several weeks ago. 

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