

Kingdom Kernels: The Oikos Hammer— You & Your Household

by Steve Smith

Two very important Biblical factors propel the expansion of Church-Planting Movements (CPMs). The first enables a breakthrough into new arenas. The second enables expansion within that arena. Every movement is a continual balance of these two.

Both principles were taught by Jesus to His disciples (Matt. 10, Luke 10) about how to reach a new place. That first principle involves finding Persons of Peace or, as some have referred to them, Fourth-Soil People, that bear fruit 30, 60 or 100 times. Person of Peace searches have become the default strategy from most CPM strategists. Persons of Peace are the God-prepared doorways into new communities. Their hearts have been prepared for 1) the missionary, 2) the message, and 3) the mission to reach their household or circle of influence (Gk. *oikos*.)

Unfortunately, we can emphasize *part* of the Person of Peace model to the detriment of the second highly-integrated principle of Matthew 10 and Luke 10. If Persons of Peace (POPs) are the gateways, then the second principle is that movements expand as those POPs and the evangelists who reach them take the gospel to their households. Biblically, these households can include people from their biological, geographical, vocational and volitional worlds. The term the New Testament uses for this is *oikos*.

This article is not an attempt to argue for the validity of oikos evangelism. Rather it is to advocate for the

importance of believers having faith in the vision that God wants their entire household saved.

The Problem: Incomplete Oikos Harvesting

« If this pattern of failing to harvest an oikos continues long enough, gateway people stop being gateways, and we only reap one or two converts in various places. No churches are formed around these Persons of Peace and the expansion of the movement remains anemic. »

Recently, I have noticed some CPM strategists under-emphasize the second principle: harvesting the oikos. The most amazing thing that can happen is when a whole household believes at once. But if it doesn't, unbelief can easily set in: "God will not save my oikos, so I need to

BY **STEVE SMITH**

Twitter: @kingreigncome | Facebook: Kingdom Kernels | Blog: kingdomkernels.com

Steve Smith (Th.D.) was part of a church planting movement in Asia. He currently leads a global effort to catalyze biblical church planting movements in every unreached people group and place by 2025. He is the author of *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* with Ying Kai (WigTake Resources, 2011) and *Hastening and Rebirth* in the "No Place Left" saga (2014 Ventures, 2015 & 2016). Steve serves as VP of Multiplication for East-West Ministries and Global Movement Catalyst for Beyond.org.

evangelize elsewhere.” When the household does not come to faith immediately, discouragement or disillusionment can set in and an unhealthy pattern emerges: the evangelist takes the POP with him to begin looking for new POPs. A new person gets saved but perhaps the new oikos remains unharvested as well. If this pattern of failing to harvest an oikos continues long enough, gateway people (POPs) stop being gateways, and we only reap one or two converts in various places. No churches are formed around these Persons of Peace and the expansion of the movement remains anemic.

Whether in communal or individualistic societies, God’s intentions from the beginning was that the whole household would be reached with the gospel—whether at once or over time. Without vision and faith for the household to be saved, POPs will not become gateways through which movements expand. The Oikos Hammer below is a tool that can restore this vision and faith with every believer.

The Pattern and Promise: the Oikos Hammer

From Creation to Consummation, God’s promise and pattern is this: you will be saved, you and all your household. God’s promise to His faithful servants is that He will bring in most or all of those who belong to them. The Oikos Hammer just follows that pattern throughout the pages of Scripture. It is called a hammer because it keeps pounding on your thinking as you read the multiplicity of texts describing and promising this.

◀ From Creation to Consummation, God’s promise and pattern is this: you will be saved, you and all your household.

The Oikos Hammer is a tool that can restore this vision and faith with every believer. ▶

I encourage you to work through the Oikos Hammer yourself, and then learn to share this vision with the believers that you disciple. What follows is by necessity simple and easy to share. It can be shared in 10 to 15

minutes. The power is in the repetition of God doing similar things over and over in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. NOAH

(Gen. 6:8-10, 18; 7:1)

Because of Noah’s righteousness and faithfulness, God promised to save not only him, but also his household. The salvation of the household was dependent upon the righteousness of the man which God found. When God enables us to find prepared people, we should expect Him to save not only them, but those who belong to them.

Oikos sphere: biological (family)

2. ABRAHAM

(Gen. 18:17-19)

We are familiar with the Abrahamic covenant that through him the Messiah would come and all of the nations would be blessed. It is very clear in Gen. 18:17-19 that the pathway and pattern through which God would bring blessing upon the nations was as Abraham worked through the salvation in the upbringing of his household. The blessing came as God brought about the salvation of Abraham’s household. Abraham gave attention to the right things (his oikos), and God brought about the more extended promises because of his faithfulness. *Oikos sphere: biological and vocational (his hired men)*

3. LOT

(Gen. 19:12-15)

Though Lot lived in a wicked city, God’s intention was to save everyone who belonged to him: literally “everyone you have in the city.” Lot tried to save his sons-in-law who thought he was simply jesting. Even so, God, in his goodness, still saved Lot and his daughters. This passage indicates that oikos is much more than simply blood relationships; it seems to imply everyone who belongs to us. *Oikos sphere: biological, volitional and geographical relationships.*

4. JOSEPH

(Gen. 45:5-11; 50:20)

The salvation of Joseph’s household took many years. God does not always promise the salvation of our household immediately, but the promise is still there. It’s a promise that calls us to persist in our witness to those who belong to us. Early in Joseph’s life, God gave him dreams which envisioned the salvation of his household. *Joseph never gave up hope, and neither should we.* Through many travails God provided for the salvation of many. *Oikos sphere: biological (extended family)*

5. RAHAB

(Josh. 2:18)

Through Rahab's righteous act to hide the spies of Israel, God promised to save her and all who belonged to her. The salvation of the household came through the daughter, but God promised salvation to the parents, the brothers and everyone who belonged to her father's household. We never know the avenue through which oikos will be saved, whether the head of a family or a child. *Oikos sphere: biological*

6. SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

(2 Kgs. 8:1)

A righteous woman who provided an upper room for the prophet Elisha reaped the oikos promise. God provided for the miraculous conception of a son and then the miraculous resuscitation when he died. Elisha informed her alone of all the Israelites that famine was coming to the land. God brought salvation to her and her household—in this case through the wife. *Oikos sphere: biological*

7. GERASENE DEMONIAK

(Mk. 5:1-20; 7:31, Mt. 15:29-31)

The demoniac is a marvelous example of God promising salvation not simply to one person, but a large group of people. Instead of allowing the demoniac to accompany Him, Jesus gave him a clear mission—his extensive oikos of friends in ten cities. His reputation was so large that he went throughout the area of the ten cities (Decapolis) and had a great impact. *Oikos sphere: volitional, geographical*

8. SAMARITAN WOMAN

(Jn. 4:7-42)

God prepared a woman who had a very tragic past to receive salvation and through her to bring salvation to an *entire town*. It is not only that God wanted to bring salvation to the man she was living with, but He wanted to bring salvation to an entire community of Sychar. *Oikos sphere: biological, geographical*

9. CANA OFFICIAL

(Jn 4:46-54)

In the town of Cana, an official's son was very sick and about to die. Jesus sent word to this man that He would heal the son. When this happened, the father and the entire household believed in Jesus. *Oikos sphere: biological*

10. DORCAS

(Acts 9:36-42)

In Joppa, the disciple Dorcas was full of merciful acts and her world was filled with many widows who loved her deeply. When God raised Dorcas from the dead these widows were amazed and many throughout the region believed in the Lord. *Oikos sphere: volitional (widows), geographical*

11. CORNELIUS

(Acts 10:1-48; 11:14)

When the angel spoke to Cornelius before he believed in Jesus, he gave Cornelius a clear vision: that not only would he be saved, but the promise was for his whole household (Acts 11:14). In this case the large group that Cornelius gathered together as his household were both family and friends (Acts 10:24). *Oikos sphere: biological, volitional, perhaps vocational (other soldiers)*

12. LYDIA

(Acts 16:13-15, 40)

Lydia, a woman who has been pursuing God, received salvation and immediately God saved her household. Her home apparently then became a meeting place for the church in Philippi. *Oikos sphere: biological, volitional (other women)*

13. THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

(Acts 16:23-34)

A man who had been opposed to Paul and Silas just hours before became open after an earthquake. Immediately God saved him. He was so eager for his family to believe that he woke them up from sleep and the whole family was baptized before dawn. *Oikos sphere: biological*

14. CRISPUS AND STEPHANAS

(Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 16:15)

We don't know much about these men except that their salvation was critical in the establishment of the Corinthian church. First, the household of Stephanas became the first converts in the whole province of Achaia. Second, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue that was opposing Paul, came to salvation and his entire household believed. What a blow that must have been to the persecutors! Households are the mechanisms God uses to unlock new areas for the kingdom. *Oikos sphere: biological*

15. JESUS

(Acts 1:14)

Of the many thousands of people that Jesus ministered to in Israel during His three years of ministry, He never neglected to reach His own household. Even though He was ridiculed by his brothers who did not believe in Him (Jn. 7:5), Jesus did not give up on them. When the early disciples gathered in the upper room to pray, who should be there but Mary, Jesus' mother, and *his brothers*? God worked complete salvation in that household. One of the brothers (James) would go on to lead the Jerusalem church and write the book of James. Another brother wrote the short book of Jude. *Oikos sphere: biological.*

Impart this vision and faith to others

◀ Peter declared the same promise on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 were saved:

“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” (Acts 2:39, ESV) ▶

These fifteen passages illustrate God's intention throughout history to save a person and through him or her an entire household: family, friends, neighbors and work/classmates. This should not surprise us because Peter declared the same promise on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 were saved. He not only called them to salvation (Acts 2:38) but imparted to them the vision of their households (three generations):

“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.”
(Acts 2:39, ESV)

The Oikos Hammer should reveal to us God's age-old pattern for kingdom expansion:

- **Household salvation:** We must no longer focus on just individuals coming to faith. Whether groups believe all at one time, or over a period of time, God's promise and intention is that Persons of Peace reach their whole households. Our focus from first to last must be on *households* with Persons of Peace as the gateways into them.
- **Expanded oikos definition:** Oikos seems to include all who belong to you: biological (family), geographical (neighbors), vocational (workmates/classmates) and volitional (those you share interests with).
- **Impart faith for household salvation:** We must balance reaching new Persons of Peace with helping them reach their oikos. It is never an either/or, but we must help Persons of Peace grow in faith and ability to win their whole household.
- **Intentional oikos harvests:** To help them reach their households, we may want to do an oikos harvest (or a “push”) with them—that is, create some events or opportunities to get the oikos together to hear the gospel from others (like Peter going to Cornelius), to study the Bible together, etc. If the oikos is slow in coming to salvation, plan events to harvest them with the Person of Peace.
- **When it slows down, find new Persons of Peace:** When an oikos is saturated or no progress is being made, we may need to spend more time looking for new Persons of Peace and helping the original Person of Peace learn to do the same with us.

Let this hammer serve you in imparting vision and faith to all believers that they will be channels of salvation to many. Our vision must not be simply Persons of Peace, but whole households of faith. 