

Kingdom Kernels: Quick Guide to Solving Generational Hurdles

One of the tragedies of civilizations is when they degenerate in ways that forget and lose the skills of art forms and technologies of previous civilization. The Dark Ages are called “dark” in one sense because of the loss of many of skill sets intrinsic to the glories of Rome. While decaying arches, aqueducts, roads and marble buildings reminded the average person in Europe of a more “golden age,” the political and social environment was such that little time could be given to recovering lost art forms. Many were just trying to make it day to day.

One of the great joys of a civilization is rediscovering these lost art forms and their skill sets. In fact, as skill sets are recovered, fine artisans throughout history have tried to not only learn from previous masters, but even improve on their styles. The Renaissance certainly was a time of both recovering lost art forms as well as surpassing them in many arenas.

Our generation has forgotten a spiritual skill set of the New Testament generation. Like the decaying aqueducts and vine covered marble buildings for Europeans, the book of Acts reminds *us* that, spiritually, things were not always as they are today. Acts points toward a “golden age”

of miraculous movements in which disciples exhibited a spiritual skill set of being led by the Spirit to fulfill the vision of Acts 1:8. When we read how God acted so powerfully in Acts, we often long that He might do such things again in our generation.

Yet, Acts *is* coming alive again today all over the world, and in many ways expanding beyond the numbers and scope of the New Testament. There is increased momentum today to not only finish the Great Commission, but to make sure we do serve through *kingdom movements* that multiply disciples, churches, and leaders throughout a people group or geographical area. One example is the 24:14 Movement (www.2414now.net) which is a global coalition of movement practitioners praying and collaborating together to engage every unreached people group and place with a Church-Planting Movement (CPM) strategy by the year 2025. Movements are emerging as CPM practitioners recover New Testament skill sets forgotten by previous generations. In the book of Acts, believers lived with the expectation and ability that ordinary disciples and churches multiply. The spiritual skill set for multiplication was known in

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that early church and second nature to many. Multiplying disciples knew how to push through hurdles and challenges that came as one generation reached another which reached another.

In the intervening centuries, these spiritual skill sets have not always been remembered. Multiplying movements are so foreign to us that it takes very proactive retooling of our expectations and skills to walk in step with the Spirit toward generational multiplication.

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In my previous article in the Nov-Dec. 2018 edition, I discussed three broad areas that must be in place for generational multiplication not to get bogged down. Only when generations exceed the fourth generation of new churches consistently in multiple locales has a movement really begun. Unfortunately, many CPM practitioners get stuck at hurdles between the first four generations and *the ministry never becomes a movement*. If we can solve the hurdles of the first four generations, then movements typically will naturally progress from there.

What follows is a very succinct set of solutions (skill sets) collected from around the world that CPM practitioners have found to overcome hurdles found in the first four generations.¹ As a reference point, we will call pre-existing believers the foundational generation or Generation 0 (zero). Generation 1 is the first generation of *new* believers and new churches. Generation 2 is defined as being started primarily by Gen 1, and Gen 3 as primarily started by Gen 2, etc.

The following bullet points serve as a quick guide that practitioners can use to troubleshoot where they are stuck. The value of this quick guide is having them **all** in one place rather than long explanations of a **few** solutions. This article assumes that practitioners understand the spiritual dynamics outlined in my previous article. *Please do not proceed until you have read that article.*

Quick Guide to Solving Generational Hurdles:

[Reminder: Make sure the three basic arenas of CPMs are active and in balance: 1) Spiritual **Posture**, 2) Simple **Path**, 3) Reproducing Discipleship **Process**. See previous article.]

Solutions to hurdles of going from Gen 0 (no new believers or no new churches) to Gen 1 churches:

- **Build a broader and bolder outreach:** Often evangelism efforts are not broad enough to actually find the persons God has prepared for salvation.
- **Prioritize developing local partners:** Expatriates trying to reach a people group face many challenges. Don't stop the personal evangelism, but DO spend a significant amount of time casting vision to and mobilizing same or near culture partners to go with you into the harvest. They are usually better equipped to reach that culture.
- **Model CPM skills for local partners:** National partners will find multiplying strategies a challenge, just as we do. Teaching them is not enough. You must go out into the harvest and model for them how to multiply disciples, even if you are still learning.
- **Issue a stronger call to commitment:** Evangelism efforts may be enough, but if you are not calling listeners to respond to God's voice and commit their lives to Jesus, you have not finished the evangelism process (e.g. Acts 2:40). Some people do not believe because they have not been asked.
- **Fast and pray through hurdles:** Many hurdles cannot be overcome without more fervent prayer and fasting. Whenever you are stuck and cannot find a solution, return to prayer and fasting to seek God's face (e.g. Mk. 9:29).
- **Have a clear church formation stage:** It is not uncommon for CPM workers to get new Gen 1 disciples and small groups, but churches remain elusive. Strong CPMs make

¹ Special thanks to Stan Parks and Curtis Sergeant who contributed to and refined this list.

the church formation process clear and simple for new disciples. Often there is a specific Bible lesson that calls them to move into church identity and function.

- **Find key strategic-level national co-laborers with vision:** For a movement to really take off, keep praying for and searching for local believers who can share the larger strategy-level vision with you (not just ground-level disciple-making). Better yet, find a national believer who already has such a big vision and partner together.

Solutions to hurdles of going from Gen 1 to Gen 2 churches consistently:

- **Simplify the basic CPM path:** (see article from previous edition): The CPM methods path toward finding hungry people (entry), evangelism, discipleship and church formation must be simple enough for Gen 1 believers to replicate. Beware of pre-existing Christian workers (Gen 0) assuming that a weeks-old believer can use tools and methods only a mature believer can use.
- **Ensure that all CPM path pieces are in place and one step leads to the next:** Don't assume that the steps leading for your entry, evangelism, discipleship and church formation methods/tools are all connected. Instead, intentionally form them into one seamless process. It is easy for new believers to off-ramp the CPM path (e.g. go to existing churches because church formation is not strong).
- **Strengthen the three-thirds process, especially accountability:** Reference the previous edition for more explanation of the three-thirds process. Frequently Gen 1 does not produce Gen 2 because they are simply passing on information (Bible Study) but not equipping them in a discipleship process that gives them confidence and competence to start Gen 3.
- **Find the God-prepared people who will launch a movement:** It may be that Gen 0 has done a good job of evangelism (G1 disciples) but just hasn't yet found a fourth-soil person that will be the seeds of a movement. Keep sharing the gospel expectant to find those persons who will boldly share with many.
- **Set the follow and fish DNA (Mark 1:17) within hours/days:** The first few hours in the life of disciples are when you set expectations. Training them to follow (obey all they hear from God) and fish (reach out to others) is a pattern and expectation that has to be started at new birth.

- **M.A.W.L. at every stage:** Every new generation needs the previous generation to Model, Assist, Watch and Leave them in a variety of skills and endeavors. Don't assume they can do it just by watching you or attending your training.
- **Intentionally reap the oikos at Gen 1:** It is not uncommon in the evangelism process to end up with just one new disciple. Without his or her *oikos* (circle of influence) members believing, the new disciple can feel very alone. Help him or her intentionally share with the *oikos* (including you sharing as well) in the first few days or weeks of salvation.

Solutions to hurdles of going from Gen 2 to Gen 3 churches consistently:

- **Maintain momentum toward grandchildren disciples and churches:**
 - Help every generation of disciples and churches aim for grandchildren disciples and churches.
 - Therefore, when a Gen 1 church starts, you must be planning how to get to Gen 3. The clock is ticking for how long that process will take.
 - Plan to have disciples publicly share breakthrough testimonies of getting to third generation.
- **Stay with Gen 0 or Gen 1 long enough to help them birth grandchildren churches:** It is not uncommon for CPM workers to fall into one of two traps: 1) doing training dumps where they download CPM principles over a weekend or two, or, 2) staying with their Gen 0 or Gen 1 group only long enough to get through their initial 8-10 discipleship lessons. If the generational rate is 3-6 months in your area, can you see that you need to spend 12-18 months with a group to help coach them toward birthing children and grandchildren churches?
- **Help new believers create maps of generational trees:** As they visualize and track the generations of disciples and churches, it makes them more conscious to pray and plan for progress. Generational maps provide visual representations that help them more easily spot and troubleshoot momentum problems.
- **Maintain all elements of the three-thirds process as**

Gen 1 trains Gen 2: It is not uncommon for Gen 1 believers who learned in a three-thirds environment to revert to primarily passing on *lessons* to their Gen 2 believers. Their failure to use the same three-thirds process will mean that Gen 2 disciples are not really equipped to birth a third generation. The result is Gen 2 groups and churches that lack the three-thirds format.

- **Make sure the vision is inspiring and viral:** If the vision for a CPM is small, difficult to state or only in the hearts of Gen 0 and Gen 1 disciples, it will fail to be passed down to subsequent generations. The vision must be big enough to inspire new disciples to expand and to endure coming persecution.
- **Gen 1 must help Gen 2 find the God-prepared people who will launch a movement:** Yes, this is the same as in the section above. But it is essential for each new generation to reach out broadly enough to find new movement launchers. This injects fresh momentum into each generation's CPM efforts.
- **Instill boldness where fear has set in:** Fear of ridicule and persecution is contagious and will stop a movement. While fear is contagious, so is boldness and faith. Intentionally find ways to instill boldness through testimonies, Bible studies, Scripture memorization, counting the cost, etc.
- **Raise up shoulder-height national co-laborers with big vision:** This was mentioned in the first section, but at this point in a movement it is indispensable. Unless you have national co-laborers with the same or bigger vision on equal footing with you in decision making (their shoulder is the same height as yours!), the movement will falter around Gen 3 because that is as far as your personal influence can reach.
- **Implement effective leadership development:** At this point in a ministry, the focus must be on developing effective leaders, raising up Timothies who can be mentored and making sure this system is scalable—can expand with the movement. These leaders must be able to make their own decisions without going to the foreigners or Gen 0 national leaders for answers.

Efforts here should focus on two areas: 1) maintaining momentum toward generational multiplication and 2) creating long term sustainability and health in the movement.

- **Make the vision so sticky and compelling that it is owned by the movement and drives it through a limitless number of generations:** Beware of disciples in the first three generations hijacking the vision. For example, FROM multiplying to reach all of the lost TO preserving the health of the first three generations.
- **Develop consistent mid-level training that maintains momentum and health:** Mid-level training retreats enable top level national leaders to diagnose with their middle-level *fruitful* leaders problems in momentum or health, and offer them a context in which to solve them. Allowing *unfruitful* leaders to attend will dilute the solutions and weaken the movement's DNA.
- **Be sure to shift the effort of yourself and key leadership on the S.O.I.L.S. continuum:** (see *Mission Frontiers*, Nov-Dec 2014, pp. 38-41): You and your key leaders must walk through the progression of 1) evangelism and casting vision to nationals, to 2) training new believers, to 3) developing leaders, to 4) targeting new segments, while maintaining a strong prayer strategy throughout.
- **Be prepared for leadership turnover:** Losing one or two top-level national leaders can cripple a movement. Always have 1) multiple top-level leaders in mentorship as well as 2) Timothies that they are coaching. It is essential that you *personally know* many of these Timothies in case all of your top-level leaders are taken out at once.
- **Keep expanding the movement into new segments so that current believers do not run out of people to evangelize:** Without an intentional Acts 1:8 focus on reaching new areas, a movement can stagnate as its evangelism saturates its current *oikos* networks. 

Solutions to hurdles of going from Gen 3 to Gen 4++ churches consistently:

This is when a ministry truly becomes a movement. Streams of generation should regularly be exceeding 4th generation. 4th generation is simply a tipping point toward a movement.