



# MOVEMENTS: DO WE WANT THEM BADLY ENOUGH TO CHANGE?



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Do you want a movement of disciple-making and church-planting to take place in your city, where disciples make disciples and churches plant churches faster than the growth in population? How badly do you want it? Do you want it badly enough to change the way you have always done church or lived your own personal spiritual life? Because if you live in the West or employ Western practices of doing church, then you will most likely need to reconsider your ministry practices if you want any hope of seeing a movement develop in your area.

The good news is that Kingdom Movements are taking place all over the world with 707 now counted. The bad news is that only seven movements, yes just seven, are taking place in Western Europe, North America and South America combined. That is barely one percent of the total. This issue answers the question of what we must do to change this situation because what we are currently doing is not working. As Jerry Trousdale and Glenn Sunshine point out in our lead article starting on page 8, the West or Global North has gotten seriously off track from what we need to do in order to see an abundance of movements in our midst.

The “technology” of how movements start and grow is not new. Movements

were the norm in the New Testament period when the book of Acts recorded the amazing spread of the gospel after Jesus’ resurrection. There have been movements throughout church history such as the Wesleyan movement in Britain. The global Church in our day is beginning to rediscover the lost understanding of how we can help foster movements. Unfortunately, the church in the West is still largely oblivious to what God is doing through the 707 Known Kingdom Movements, not knowing that the principles of how movements start and grow can be applied to their local contexts.

## THE MOVEMENT KILLERS

The church in the West has developed a way of doing business that kills movements before they ever get started. The charts on pages 14–15 provide a great comparison between the way we typically do ministry in the West and what is typical of how movements work. Study these charts carefully to see where you may need to make changes in the way you think about doing ministry.

In order to see an abundance of movements in the West we will need to rid ourselves of the following movement killers.

**Prayerlessness.** Our desire to see movements to Christ can be measured by how much we pray

and fast to see a movement develop. There are certainly exceptional churches and individuals who are real prayer warriors, but we need far more than we have right now. In order for massive prayer and fasting for movements to take place, we will need to have a vision for movements in the first place. When prayer does happen in the church, it is largely focused on the personal needs of the individuals in the church, not on the bigger picture of expanding God’s kingdom through movements in every people and place. We should not neglect the real needs of believers, but in order to foster movements we must be praying fervently for them to develop. Additional prayer will be difficult for most of us but it is a sacrifice that will pay far more dividends than our currently feeble efforts done in our own strength.

**Passivity/Dependency.** For most of us in the West, our spiritual lives are centered upon the church we attend. We spend most of our time listening to our pastor or other church leaders. We become passive audience members with virtually no accountability for application of what is being taught. Instead, the church must become a training center where believers are equipped to carry the gospel to our individual contexts of friends, family and coworkers, not depending on the pastor to do the work of ministry for us. God has called all of us to go and make disciples—becoming entrepreneurs of ministry. David Platt makes this change in ministry mindset clear in his wonderful article starting on page 26.

**Our Unbiblical Traditions.** Over the centuries many ways of doing things have developed in the various churches and denominations. In many cases these traditions have become wonderful ways of helping people learn biblical truth. But other times these traditions or ways of doing things get in the way of applying biblical truth and obeying what Jesus has asked us to do. Obedience to Jesus and his Word must be central to what we do. We must not allow our comfortable ways of doing things to get in the way of seeing movements develop. We face the same danger as the Jewish leaders in Jesus' day when Jesus said to them in Mark 7:9 (ESV) "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!" Learn the biblical practices that characterize movements and eliminate those practices or traditions that prevent movements from starting.

**Building Our Own Kingdom.** The article by Michael Breen, *An Obituary for the American Church* starting on page 22 points out three devastating problems plaguing the American or Western church. These plagues are celebrity, consumerism and competition. Each of these maladies focuses our attention on building our local church kingdom at the expense of the overall kingdom of God. It is a sad reality that there is virtually no church growth in America today. We are not gaining ground on the overall culture and society. Virtually all church growth in the U.S. is transfer growth where the growing churches are doing so at the expense of other churches. Are new people getting saved each year? Absolutely! But while new people are coming in the front door others are leaving out the back. If we are to see movements to Christ

in the West, there will need to be a new spirit of cooperation between churches—where pastors and their church members care more about the growth of Christ's kingdom than their own. This is a tall order in a society that is so competitive, but as long as the measures of church/pastoral success are the size of the facility, the budget and the church attendance, movements will be few and far between.

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### THE DAUNTING OBSTACLES AHEAD

As we seek to foster movements in every people and place, including the West, we face some unprecedented challenges.

**A Culture in Crisis.** The Bible and biblical values were the foundation upon which all of Western civilization was established. It used to be that the Judeo-Christian value system was generally accepted and supported by the culture—not any more. The cultural hostility towards biblical values and beliefs is no longer subtle, but open and blatant. Whether in the realms of politics, entertainment, media or academia—biblical values—

and those that hold to them, are greeted by open hostility and derision if not outright persecution. The result of this widespread rejection of biblical truth is a Western culture in crisis and decline.

**A Church Unprepared.** While the Western culture is in crisis, the Western church is struggling to cope with unprecedented challenges. You do not have to look very far to see abundant evidence that the church in the West is fighting to remain relevant to a surrounding culture that is increasingly looking elsewhere for the answers to life. A 2015 Pew Research study shows an Evangelical church that is barely holding its own with a slight decline while Mainline Protestant and Catholic churches are experiencing a major drop-off in adherents. The fastest growing group is the "Nones"—those people who claim no religious faith at all. The one bright spot in this picture is that as the cultural support for the church wanes so also does the number of cultural or nominal believers. When faced with increased cultural opposition, nominal believers are increasingly placing themselves in the "None" category. What remains is a purer Church with more true believers willing to pay the price for their allegiance to Jesus. This can be the basis from which the Western church can foster growing movements to Christ, but we will need to change the way we do ministry.

Movements in the West are possible, but we must be courageous enough to recognize where we have fallen short and to embrace the biblical, book of Acts like practices that make movements possible. 