

MISSIONTM FRONTIERS

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Movements Everywhere:
Why So Few In the West?



707

KNOWN
KINGDOM
MOVEMENTS

A Bible for Those Who Can't Read

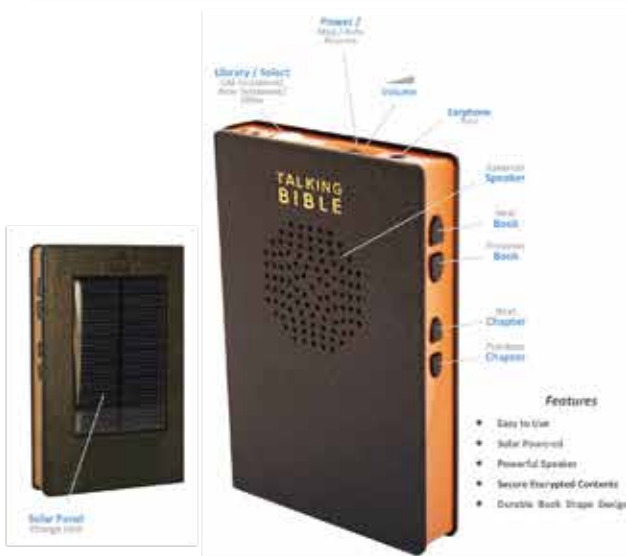


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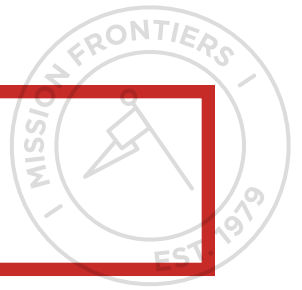
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MOVEMENTS: DO WE WANT THEM BADLY ENOUGH TO CHANGE?



BY **RICK WOOD**
EDITOR OF *MF*

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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.

« 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. »


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. 



Unleashing the Kingdom

Unleashing the Kingdom on Toxic Worldviews and Declining Churches

In the 1990s, intrepid Baptist missionaries were discovering biblical values and processes that consistently catalyzed the kind of outcomes that Donald McGavran once called “people movements.”

In 2004 David Garrison published *Church Planting Movements* that shared what the IMB was learning about movements, and momentum and excitement began to build.

Regular readers of *Mission Frontiers* know that over the last 25 years, and especially the last 15, the Holy Spirit has birthed hundreds of these Disciple Making Movements/Church Planting Movements among Muslim, Hindu, Chinese, and Buddhist populations—historically resistant peoples that have become Christ followers in unprecedented numbers.

At the end of 2018 there were more than 660 such movements. The sheer numbers of movements happening in this century reveals that God is very much moving in the world today. But although dispersed pockets of momentum and some genuine movements do exist in North America, Europe, and Oceania (i.e. the Global North), the vast majority of the movements are in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (i.e. the Global South).

Why is that?

This article is based on four years of research by the authors of *The Kingdom Unleashed* to attempt to answer that question.

« The sheer numbers of movements happening in this century reveals that God is very much moving in the world today. But although dispersed pockets of momentum and some genuine movements do exist in North America, Europe, and Oceania (i.e. the Global North), the vast majority of the movements are in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (i.e. the Global South). »

BY **JERRY TROUSDALE**
AND **GLENN SUNSHINE**

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Co-authors of *The Kingdom Unleashed: How Jesus' 1st-Century Kingdom Values are Transforming Thousands of Cultures and Awakening His Church*.

Jerry Trousdale is Director of International Ministries for New Generations (formerly Cityteam International), an organization he joined in 2005. Jerry co-founded Final Command Ministries, an organization dedicated to establishing disciple-making movements among Muslim people groups. Over the years, Jerry has served as a church planter among Muslims in West Africa, in Christian publishing, and as a pastor of mission sending churches in California and Tennessee. In 2015 he published *Miraculous Movements* which became a best-selling title.

Glenn Sunshine, Ph.D., is a professor of history at Central Connecticut State University, a senior fellow of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview and the president and founder of Every Square Inch Ministries. An award-winning author, Glenn has published books, articles, and essays on history, theology and worldview and has spoken for churches, ministries, and conferences around the U.S., Europe and Asia.

Question: *How do you inoculate someone against a disease?*

Answer: *You give them a weakened or dying version of it.*

Question: *How do you inoculate a culture against Christianity?*

Answer: ?

The Church in the Global North has slowly absorbed a dangerous level of humanistic ideas into our worldviews over the last 100 years. These ideas have resulted in a weakened version of Christianity that is powerless to transform communities and culture. For purposes of this article, we will focus on two interrelated categories of unbiblical thinking that have infected many Global North churches: secularization and anti-supernaturalism.

(1) THE SECULARIZATION OF THE GLOBAL NORTH CHURCH

Although evangelicals would reject the idea that they have been secularized, the evidence is clear that many have adopted not only secular approaches to evangelism but even a secularized gospel.

« The Church in the Global North has slowly absorbed a dangerous level of humanistic ideas into our worldviews over the last 100 years. These ideas have resulted in a weakened version of Christianity that is powerless to transform communities and culture. »

To understand this, we need a definition of secularism. In the strictest sense, secularism is the idea that religion and government should not interfere with each other. From there, it is a small step to say that religion should play no role in public life—if Christians want to believe and practice their religion in private, that's fine, but keep it out of the public square.

If you ask an evangelical what Christianity is about, the response will typically be that it's about a personal journey with Jesus, that it's a relationship, not a religion. This view is highly individualistic: each person individually and independently must make the decision for Jesus. Family and social relationships may help a bit with evangelism, but it's ultimately an individual decision.

Beyond this, some people will tell you that Christianity also involves personal morality, but not much beyond that. In other words, evangelicals see Christianity as a privatized religion, one that involves “me and Jesus” but does not have much to say to the world except perhaps concerning a few hot-button issues like abortion.

What evangelicals fail to realize is that by viewing Christianity this way, they hold an essentially secularized vision of the gospel. It is highly personal, private, and internal, and thus is irrelevant to most of the questions facing society today.

Secularization is the Antithesis of the Gospel of the Kingdom

In contrast to this, the gospel Jesus taught would be more accurately described as the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus' message centered on the fact that in Him, the kingdom of God had broken into the world and that God was taking back His proper authority over a world in rebellion against Him. That is why Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom included a call to repent: since we are in rebellion against our rightful King, the only proper response is to turn from our rebellion and give Him our undivided allegiance.

This message is inescapably public and political: the most basic confession of Christianity is “Jesus is Lord,” with the unspoken implication that “Caesar is not.” Caesar claimed authority over all areas of life; Christianity said no—Caesar had legitimate authority in some areas but not in others. God and God alone has authority over everything, including conscience, and that authority resides in the person of Jesus, who alone is Lord of all.

Because Jesus is Lord of all, the gospel must touch all of life. It isn't only about personal salvation but about every aspect of who we are and how we live in the world. It includes not just forgiveness of sins and personal morality, but all areas of life—relationships, politics, society, work, recreation, *all*.

That means our presentation of the gospel must include not only the message of forgiveness of sins, but also a ministry of compassion. It must show in practice, through the power of the Spirit, what the kingdom looks like by working to fix what is broken in society and in people's lives.

Global South Movements Advance the Gospel of the Kingdom

Accordingly, two of the most unique elements of Disciple Making Movements are their holistic nature and the dramatic transformation of cultures.

Almost all movements lead with compassionate engagements within a community. These engagements are an expression of Christ's care for people's needs and a living example of the kingdom. As people see this, it opens the door to discipling them to Christ, with a focus on self-discovered obedience to God's Word; this brings the community into greater alignment with God's will revealed in Scripture, which leads to replicating cultural transformation.

(2) CHOOSING KINGDOM VALUES, NOT SECULAR VALUES

Another way secularism has infected the church in the Global North is through the use of secularized approaches to measuring success. Our metrics are often based on the ABCs—Attendance, Buildings, and Cash—rather than on Christ-followers growing in spiritual depth and obedience, disciples making other disciples, or churches planting churches. Our primary goal must be to build the kingdom, not to build our local church—and they are not the same thing.

We must not confuse the kingdom and the Church, especially not the visible Church. If they were the same, the gospel would only apply to Sunday mornings when the Church is gathered; it wouldn't apply to us when we're at work or on vacation or even at home with our family.

The kingdom extends into all these areas because the Lordship of Christ reaches every area of life. The Church exists to build the kingdom, not to build itself. The Church may in fact grow in numbers, but unless that growth is anchored in building the kingdom first, it will never be the kind of growth that engenders movements.

The kingdom of God is not something ethereal. It is a reality, not a metaphor for the Church. Christ followers in the Global South live lives of abundant joy and faith that they carry into all their relationships, all their activities, all their interactions with others. This highlights why Jesus said over and over: "Sell whatever has to be sold to get the kingdom, and make whatever sacrifices are required, to be part of the eternal kingdom of God."

"Seek first the kingdom, and all these other things will be added to you."

"Pray like this:

May the glory of God in heaven be manifested where I live, even as it is in heaven,

May Your kingdom be manifested where I live, even as it is in heaven,

May Your will be manifested in my life and where I live, even as it is in heaven."

(3) ANTI-SUPERNATURALISM BREEDS PRAYERLESSNESS IN THE CHURCH

Secularism strikes at the heart of the gospel Jesus proclaimed, and in the Global North it is combined with its close cousin, anti-supernaturalism.

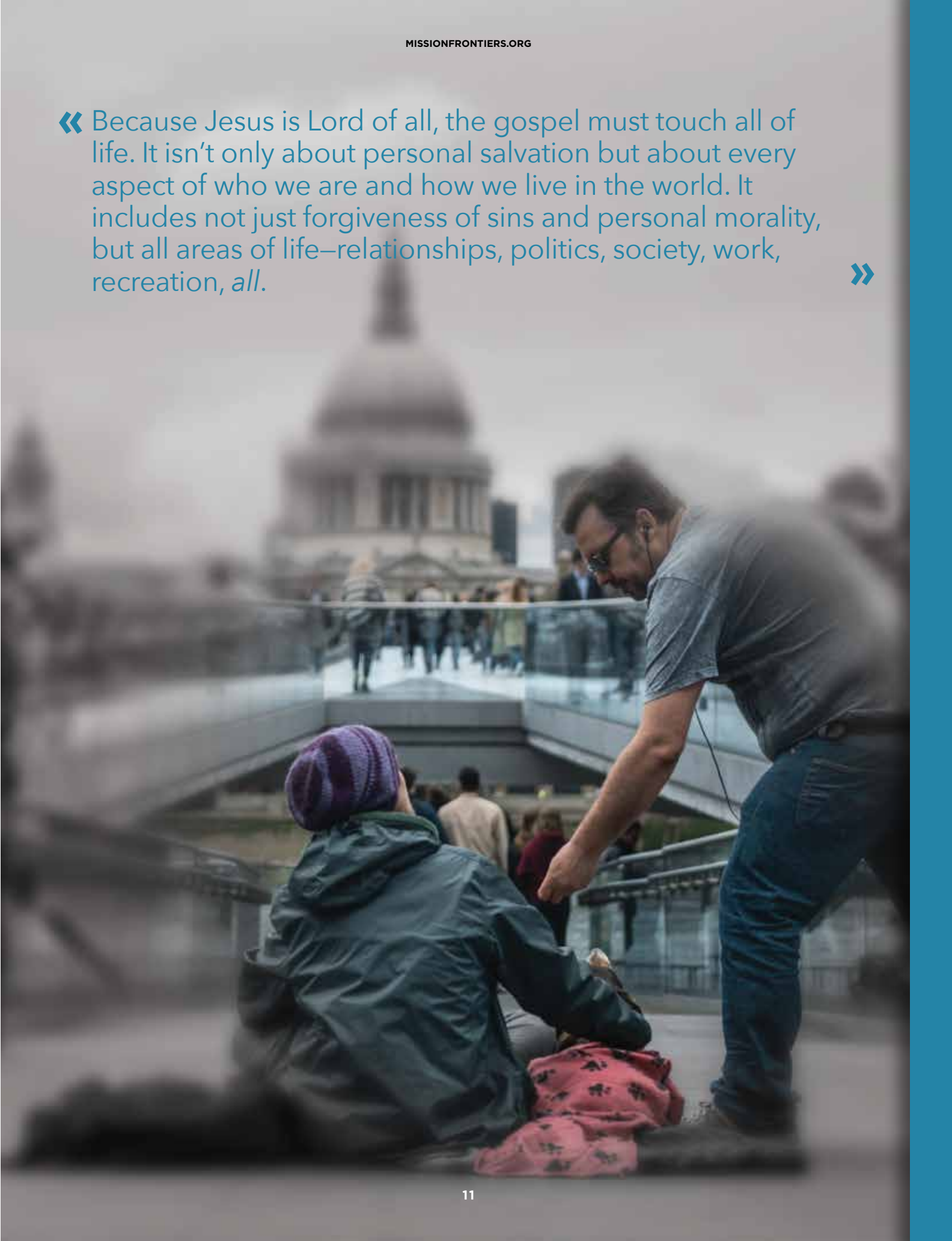
If the idea that many Global North evangelicals have secularized the gospel is difficult to accept, most Christians would reject out of hand the idea that they have an anti-supernatural worldview. After all, they believe in God! But our real worldview is revealed not by what we say, or even by what we think, but by what we do by default. And many Christians and churches in the Global North act by default as if this world is all there is.

Probably the clearest example of this is our prayer life.

Our theology says that through prayer, we have the privilege of connecting with almighty God and that through our prayers we participate with God in governing the universe. Yet according to some surveys, the average American Christian prays four to six minutes per day, including grace at meals.

« Another way secularism has infected the church in the Global North is through the use of secularized approaches to measuring success. Our metrics are often based on the ABCs—Attendance, Buildings, and Cash—rather than on Christ-followers growing in spiritual depth and obedience, disciples making other disciples, or churches planting churches. Our primary goal must be to build the kingdom, not to build our local church—and they are not the same thing. »

« Because Jesus is Lord of all, the gospel must touch all of life. It isn't only about personal salvation but about every aspect of who we are and how we live in the world. It includes not just forgiveness of sins and personal morality, but all areas of life—relationships, politics, society, work, recreation, *all*. »



Yet in Jesus' farewell discourse, He tells us that He would be with us through the Holy Spirit who would guide and empower our ministry; He even went further by telling us that apart from Him, we could do nothing. (John 15:15b) The question is, given what we see about prayer habits in the Global North, how much are Christians actually relying on the power and presence of the Spirit? Or are we instead trying to accomplish God's purposes on our own, effectively doing them apart from Jesus?

Regular disciplines of abundant corporate fasting and prayer that are the norm in Global South movements are, unfortunately, rare in the Global North.

If you ask almost any veteran of kingdom movements, "How do you start a movement?" they will all say something like: every movement is birthed with much prayer and fasting, and must be sustained also with much prayer and fasting. Every movement is different, but they all have the same fingerprints, and they are the fingerprints of God—definitely not of humans. They all reveal the miraculous in abundance.

So movements frequently launch with intercessors inconspicuously walking and praying through the community to be engaged, and for the team that will engage them. And as new churches are birthed, they are born with a DNA of much prayer.

Some DMM churches have up to 80 days a year of corporate fasting and prayer followed by evenings of breaking the fast together and praying. Often everyone prays out loud at the same time, as passionate prayer and joyful worship is intertwined. These kinds of disciplines are central in the life of movements.

And as a result, miracles of healing, deliverance, and provision are the norm. There is a sense that God is very close, very dependable and abundant in provision. He is the God of the impossible!

And there is some very good news! Many thousands of intercessors in the Global South are praying specifically for the Global North Church, that the blessings brought to their people group by missionaries who came to their countries in the previous centuries, will be reciprocated by their 21st century prayers.

(4) KEEPING ORDINARY PEOPLE ORDINARY

Another way in which anti-supernaturalism and secularism combine is in the tendency of believers to rely on professionals to handle "religious" matters. For example, when they find someone who is spiritually open, their goal is to get the person to come to church so the professional in the pulpit can seal the deal and bring them to Christ.

Similarly, too many families subcontract the spiritual development of their children to the youth pastor rather than performing their God-ordained responsibility to disciple their children themselves. Adult discipleship programs are built around having an expert teach us information rather than personally discovering what God's Word is calling us to do by Spirit-led study of Scripture.

Yet the pattern Paul gives us in Ephesians 4 is that the various leaders in the Church—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—are to equip ordinary Christ Followers to carry out the work of ministry. The job of the pastor is not to do the ministry—it is to equip believers to do ministry by teaching, modeling, coaching, and training them.

« The question is, given what we see about prayer habits in the Global North, how much are Christians actually relying on the power and presence of the Spirit? Or are we instead trying to accomplish God's purposes on our own, effectively doing them apart from Jesus?

Regular disciplines of abundant corporate fasting and prayer that are the norm in Global South movements are, unfortunately, rare in the Global North. »

This is exactly the approach we see at work in Kingdom Movements in the Global South. Just as Jesus chose ordinary people to be world changers, so today unnumbered disciples are ministering powerfully across the Global South—empowered to do the impossible in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- A grandmother who never learned to read, memorized much of the Bible and became the leader of a huge intercessory prayer network.
- Many thousands of other oral learners have become effective disciple makers and often powerful leaders by using oral Bible resources in Discovery Bible Studies.

- Many ministries have learned how to creatively train blind people, amputees, and others to become productive disciple makers, church planters, and gifted leaders and coaches.
- A carpenter/handyman/farmer, who is also a former Muslim, has used his crafts to enter communities and plant more than 100 churches within 12 years.
- A sports ministry in one African country planted more churches in 2018 than any other service ministry, while on another continent a sports ministry is planting hundreds of churches in restricted access countries every year.
- Many thousands of former sheiks and imams, along with some former jihadists, have become highly effective Disciple Making Movement leaders and coaches. Military and police officers have become church planters.
- Street children are making disciples.
- Everyday business people in restricted access countries have become “invisible” disciple-makers.
- Untold thousands of former Muslims have become passionate and devoted intercessors when they were born again.

(5) USING SECULAR STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE SPIRITUAL OUTCOMES

Another way secularism and anti-supernaturalism show up is in reliance on techniques drawn from the secular, corporate world. Management, marketing, and media consultants tell churches how to organize and run their ministries, how to do outreach, how to target a niche market, and so on, and many churches seek out their advice rather than looking to Scripture to see how Jesus told us to do it. And once again there is often little reliance on prayer: planning meetings begin with a short invocation and continue with a long discussion, a vote, and a short prayer asking God to bless the decision the committee just made.

In contrast, where we see movements happening, decisions are made after long periods of prayer and study of the Scriptures, focusing on Spirit-led consensus and much prayer rather than adopting models, advice and paradigms from the secular world.

To help you see this in specific terms we have included a few excerpts from Chapter 17 of *The Kingdom Unleashed*, “Paradigms That Can Multiply.”

I believe the traditionally conceived forms of ministry cannot move us beyond the current impasse because they have led to the structures that currently exist—and they

continue to sustain them.... We cannot solve the problems of the Church by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created those problems in the first place.... We must thoroughly reconceive how we understand and practice ministry and leadership if we wish to truly be a movement.

—Alan Hirsch, *Serving a Movement*

Jesus’ descriptions of the kingdom of God include images of abundance and fruitfulness, such as catches of fish that break nets and soils, seeds, and plants that bear fruitful harvests. Jesus spoke of yeast’s power to be a medium of transformation and expansion. And He told His disciples that bringing a harvest from every people group into his kingdom would be their kingdom responsibility. He warned His disciples to never bury the resources that they had been given but to multiply them according to their capacities.

When we look at the Church in the book of Acts, we see rapid expansion through families and social networks, extending into new, unevangelized areas—exactly the kind of expansion that we see in the Global South today. To recover that kind of growth, the Church in the Global North will need to change its entire approach to ministry and even its vision of what the Church is about.

The structural problems that hinder movements in the Global North begin with **un-biblical worldviews** that are tainted by latent secularism and anti-supernaturalism. These worldviews have consequences because they lead to **ministry paradigms that do not achieve God’s intended outcomes**.

« The job of the pastor is not to do the ministry—it is to equip believers to do ministry by teaching, modeling, coaching, and training them. »

The following chart contrasts typical Global North churches and ministries with Kingdom Movements in terms of:

- **the worldview assumptions** as related to biblical values and teachings
- **the ministry paradigms** that flow from worldview assumptions, and
- **the kinds of outcomes** that flow from the different paradigms.

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

Traditional Ministry Assumptions	Kingdom Movement Assumptions
In some traditions, the kingdom of God is primarily a future, eschatological event, and the object of evangelism is to make converts, who over time become faithful disciples.	The kingdom of God is the present and observable manifestation of Jesus' reign on earth. The object of evangelism is to advance the kingdom of God by training disciple makers who will establish new churches.
Traditional Ministry Paradigms	Kingdom Movement Paradigms
<p>People generally become a Christian by exposure to biblical teaching and lifestyles in a home, or exposure to professional pastors and leaders at a church.</p> <p>Grow the church centrally and incrementally through programs, winsome facilities and a welcoming spirit. Church planting is typically one-by-one.</p> <p>Churches celebrate milestones of growth and decisions for Christ.</p>	<p>God raises up ordinary people who become disciples of Christ primarily in relational contexts with a lifestyle of consistent obedience to God's Word as the key objective.</p> <p>Grows in the overall community by strategic multiplication: making disciples who make disciples and planting churches that plant other churches as a normal progression of the Spirit-filled life.</p> <p>Churches celebrate spiritual and social transformations, which power multiplication in places of former spiritual poverty.</p>
Expected Outcomes	Expected Outcomes
Add new members to our church. Maximize the natural appeal to the demographic profile of the local church.	The result of disciple-making is multiplying disciples. The priority is planting new Discovery Groups that become churches among the social segments or places where the gospel has never gone or thrived.

ABUNDANT PRAYER


Traditional Ministry Assumptions	Kingdom Movement Assumptions
<p>Most traditions believe that God can and does perform miracles, but expectations tend to set limits on how to pray and what is considered possible.</p> <p>Prayer styles and liturgies often represent the culture of the denomination and the traditions that are to be preserved. For many traditions, prayer is for miraculous interventions that facilitate spiritual transformation, and rapid replication is not an expectation.</p>	<p>Prayer is both petition and proclamation which declares that Jesus' authority is more powerful than the gates of Hell. Prayer, by definition, is inviting the supernatural to earth.</p> <p>Rapid reproduction based on prayer and discovering and obeying the Bible is common but does not typically replicate any single organization's traditions. Local churches are free to identify as the Holy Spirit leads them.</p>
Traditional Ministry Paradigms	Kingdom Movement Paradigms
<p>It is risky to pray publicly for things that can only happen if God obviously intervenes.</p> <p>Strategic planning meetings and prayer meetings are separate events.</p> <p>Calls for corporate fasting and prayer are rare.</p>	<p>Prayer for things that only God can do is the norm.</p> <p>Prayer informs strategy, and strategy shapes more prayer.</p> <p>Each year, dozens of days of corporate prayer and fasting are common. Regular prayer meetings are often celebrations of kingdom advances, healings, and deliverances.</p>
Expected Outcomes	Expected Outcomes
<p>Ministry outcomes are created by great knowledge, great leadership, great funding, and great execution of programs. Prayer may also be helpful.</p> <p>Churches are unlikely to take risks that would obviously require divine intervention lest it discourage people if it does not happen.</p>	<p>Ministry outcomes are primarily created by abundant prayer that results in mobilizing and empowering Christians to fulfill all of the functions of the Church.</p> <p>There is a direct relationship between taking risks in prayer, and the process of growing in faith and experiencing the fullness of God's Spirit. All Kingdom Movements report abundant healings, deliverances and signs and wonders.</p>

MAKING DISCIPLES

Traditional Ministry Assumptions	Kingdom Movement Assumptions
Discipleship is knowledge-based. Obedience is assumed to follow.	Disciples discover God in His Word and choose to obey Him out of deep love of Christ.
People come to Jesus as individuals, not as part of larger social networks.	Disciples are intertwined within families and networks and are typically not extracted unless they are in danger. Even then, with prayer, God sometimes redeems the situation for the family to become disciples.
The gospel is typically presented by one outsider to many strangers.	The gospel flows relationally from one family member to friends, family, and networks. Everyone is expected to present the process of becoming a follower of Christ.
Gospel presentations are driven by a range of informational and preaching models by an expert to a group of seekers.	Discovery of God's Word is achieved by interactive group processes with group accountability for sharing what they learn (and experience) with lost people.
High control: Outsiders orchestrating things themselves.	Disciple-making by a cultural insider results in high trust. Leaders allow others to be catalysts rather than trying to control the movement.
Goal: good church members.	Goal: transformation and fruitfulness
Traditional Ministry Paradigms	Kingdom Movement Paradigms
Outsiders use personal evangelism or crusade evangelism leading to individual decisions.	Evangelism is a process whereby an unbeliever discovers God and shifts allegiance to Christ in the context of Discovery Groups that become self-replicating churches.
Convert, then disciple	Disciple to conversion
Churches make disciples through preaching, education, and training.	Disciples are made in spiritual relationships through ongoing Discovery Groups, mentoring, coaching and making other disciples.
Expected Outcomes	Expected Outcomes
Orthodoxy and Christian character.	Obedience, transformation, and fruitfulness
Start the way you want to finish. Bring people to church to convert them, then disciple them in church as well.	Start the way you want to finish. If seekers see themselves as disciple-makers and church-planters, they naturally replicate what was done with them.

HOLISTIC KINGDOM MINISTRY

Traditional Ministry Assumptions	Kingdom Movement Assumptions
Focus on evangelism OR compassion is common. Some churches or ministries attempt both, but few are great at both.	Holistic focus on both evangelism AND compassion is normal.
Church members are encouraged to be involved in approved church ministries.	Every local church and Christ follower is responsible to serve both of Jesus' kingdom mandates: (1) compassionate service and prayers for God's healing, and (2) being a transformed disciple and discipling others.
Traditional Ministry Paradigms	Kingdom Movement Paradigms
A relatively small percentage of compassion ministries consistently leverage the good will they create to make disciples and plant churches. A relatively small percentage of proclamation ministries lead with healing or compassion ministries.	Evangelism, disciple-making, healing, and compassion are so deeply intertwined that they cannot be separated.
Expected Outcomes	Expected Outcomes
Compassion ministries will help alleviate some problems in the community. Proclamation ministries will result in some people coming to Christ as a result.	Holistic transformation of individuals and communities is the natural result of disciple-making.



The above are only a few of the worldview issues that we discuss in *The Kingdom Unleashed*, but they set up a critical question: Which of the above models seems to be the most faithful to Scripture? Which ones result in more glory given to God?

These *different worldviews* lead to *divergent ministry paradigms* that in turn lead to *polar opposite outcomes*. And in this case the Global North Church struggles under the crushing disadvantage of secular and anti-supernatural worldviews.

Certainly, the kingdom values Jesus taught were counter-cultural when He spoke them in the first century. And they are wonderfully counter-intuitive still. But they have always been true.

WE CHANGE OUR WORLDVIEW AS WE CHANGE OUR ACTIONS

While there are many other elements of the worldview that could be addressed, secularism and anti-supernaturalism are good places to start. So what can be done about them?

As noted above, worldviews are revealed by what we do by default. It is counter-intuitive in many ways, but the way to change your worldview is to change your default actions, and the only way to do that is to act consciously and intentionally rather than falling back into habitual responses.

As a starting point, we suggest four places to begin, ideally in a context of discovery and accountability with a couple of other people.

First, put far more emphasis on prayer. Take more time to pray on a personal level and find like-minded Christ followers and meet together to pray. Use Scripture as a guide: that's one of the purposes of the Lord's Prayer, and the great prayer warriors throughout history have used Psalms to give them words and thoughts to express worship, thanksgiving, confession and requests to God. Consider committing yourself to disciplines of fasting and prayer for God to use to advance His kingdom.

« We cannot solve the problems of the Church by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created those problems in the first place.... We must thoroughly reconceive how we understand and practice ministry and leadership if we wish to truly be a movement. »

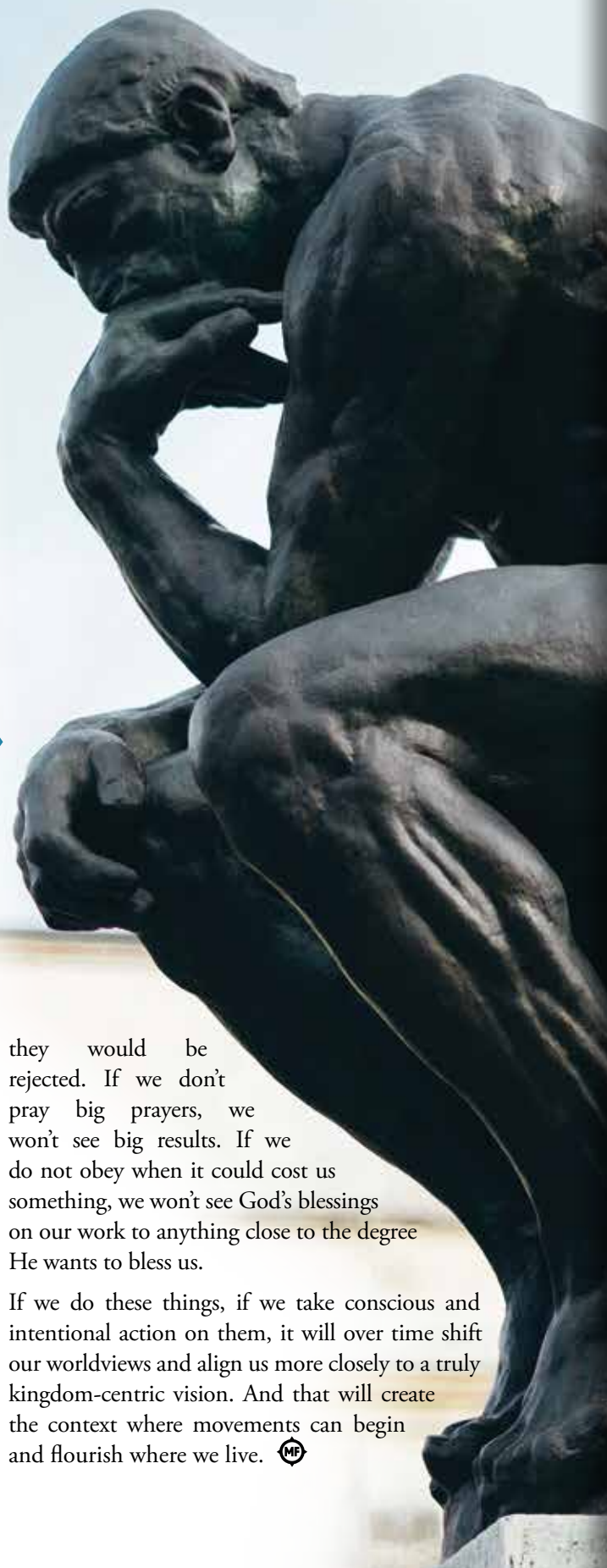
Second, when you spend time in Scripture, put more emphasis on hearing what God is asking you to do through the passage than on simply learning it. Scripturally, discipleship is based on obedience, not knowledge (though knowledge certainly has its place). In some cases, this may be a result of obeying something explicitly taught in Scripture, though in others you may have to rely on the still, small voice of the Spirit in your heart nudging you in a particular direction. Whatever it is, do it quickly: Indonesian Christians talk about a 48-hour rule, which says that if you do not obey what you've heard within 48 hours, you will lose whatever insight and growth you might have gained from your study.

Third, study carefully Jesus' instructions to the Twelve and the Seventy-Two before he sent them out. Be sure to look at the context as well (e.g. Matt. 9:35-38) and consider what it means for our own attitude and preparation as disciple makers. Think carefully through how you might be able to apply what He is telling you in your own context.

Lastly, take risks. If we are not willing to risk rejection, we can't follow Jesus' instructions because He told His followers

they would be rejected. If we don't pray big prayers, we won't see big results. If we do not obey when it could cost us something, we won't see God's blessings on our work to anything close to the degree He wants to bless us.

If we do these things, if we take conscious and intentional action on them, it will over time shift our worldviews and align us more closely to a truly kingdom-centric vision. And that will create the context where movements can begin and flourish where we live. MF



Getting Kingdom Right To Get Church Right

What comes to your mind when you hear about a movement of God in which almost 200 churches were started within three years in a remote people group?

What comes to your mind when you hear about a movement of God in which 150,000 urban and rural churches were started in a ten-year span?¹

Incredulity may be your first response, perhaps followed by suspicion or excitement. Yet Church Planting Movements (CPMs) like these are spreading around the world in all types of cultures and religious worldviews. In these movements, successive generations of disciples and churches move consistently past the 4thth generation in a short duration of time.

These movements sound foreign to many of us who have lived in more traditional churches where the kingdom has been established for centuries. But CPM-like movements are not simply a modern phenomenon. They have characterized the kingdom of God from Acts onward throughout church history.

Both Scripture and church history demonstrate that our Father wants such movements to be the norm when the Lord's Prayer is fulfilled: "May your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven!"

Get Kingdom Right to get Church Right

As disciples throughout history have made it their priority to see the kingdom explode among lost populations, they have often seen churches multiply rapidly generation by generation through ordinary new believers. Unfortunately, as churches become established, a tendency emerges to consolidate efforts and focus more on the church development than on kingdom expansion. Which priority is right? Kingdom first or church first? Both are important, but to get church right, we must get kingdom right.

Gospels: The Priority of the Kingdom

Jesus' entire ministry was focused on initiating the kingdom of God. He used the word "kingdom" over 100 times, while He used the word "church" only twice. His first words in Mark were about the kingdom:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15, NASB)

« CPM-like movements are not simply a modern phenomenon. They have characterized the kingdom of God from Acts onward throughout church history. »

The word "repent" means to change your whole way of thinking. The present tense signifies a continuous action—"keep on changing your whole way of thinking." Jesus was launching a kingdom so radical in nature that we must realign our whole concept of what God wants to do in and through us, especially in how He will do it. This includes how we live as Church.

Jesus' central prayer was about the kingdom:

"Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:9-10, NASB)

Jesus taught us to pray that our city, neighborhood, nation or people group will so reflect His glory and reign that it is like heaven on earth. *Does Jesus ask us to pray for something*

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that He doesn't intend to fulfill? God is not satisfied with a handful of believers, small groups or churches in a people group or city. *His* vision is for a *multitude* of people worshipping Him from every people group.

Jesus' central mission was about the kingdom:

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matt. 24:14, NASB)

Everything in history is moving toward this final destination.

His final teaching in Acts was about the kingdom:

"To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3, NASB)

Jesus' first, central and last words were about establishing the reign of the King. They summed up His life mission. His mission must be our mission.

Acts: Establishing the Kingdom Through the Church

In Acts, the word "church" is used twice as much as the word "kingdom." The next progression in Jesus' strategy to establish His kingdom on earth was taking place—planting multiplying churches as agents of His kingdom coming on earth.

But clear in the thinking of the early disciples was the priority of establishing the kingdom through the church. Their priority was still the King and reaching the lost through expanding His kingdom. For example:

And he [Paul] entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. . . . He withdrew from [the synagogue] and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19:8-10 NASB)

The result was that many churches were established as the kingdom was established. In the one movement above in Acts 19, most likely dozens of churches or more were started in this Roman province called Asia—churches that matured deeply and spread rapidly. Most scholars agree that in this two-year span of time the seven churches of Revelation were started by new disciples like Epaphras in Colossae (Col. 1:7).

Even the closing words of Acts are about the kingdom:

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30-31, NASB)

From the beginning to the end of Jesus' ministry His focus, both personally and through His disciples, was on the King's reign.

Jesus knew that if we could get the kingdom (King-reign) right, we would get church right.

Romans to Revelation: A Balanced Approach and a Caution

The word "church" is used more in Romans to Revelation, almost three times as much as the word "kingdom." Yet we continue to get a balance of expanding the kingdom while establishing the church. The vision of the Lord's Prayer continues to imbue the New Testament church and the paradigms of church are subjected to the needs of the kingdom. In Revelation one church is praised that its latter works exceeded its first (Rev. 2:19), while others are chastised for losing their vision and love for the King (Rev. 2:4). This latter church was the Ephesian church which saw such explosive growth decades earlier in Acts 19 cited above.

« It is easy for churches to subtly shift their focus from the King and His kingdom, often becoming obsessed with themselves and their own successes, structures or traditions. The church then and today is in danger of repeating the mistakes that Jesus chastised the Jewish leaders for. »

There is a lesson here for us: It is easy for churches to subtly shift their focus from the King and His kingdom, often becoming obsessed with themselves and their own successes, structures or traditions. The church then and today is in danger of repeating the mistakes that Jesus chastised the Jewish leaders for:

“And he said to them, ‘You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!’” (Mark 7:9 ESV)

How easy it is for us to elevate the church along with our structures, programs and traditions above the vision of knowing the King and establishing His kingdom. We easily lose sight of the end-vision. When we focus on church first, we get kingdom wrong.

Why Church?

Yet make no mistake: Church is at the heart of God’s kingdom plan! It is not either church or kingdom. It is both. When the Church submits herself to the King and His kingdom ways, then the Church emerges in all her intended glory!

God’s plan from the beginning was to sum up everything in heaven under His son Jesus:

« It is not either church or kingdom. It is both. When the Church submits herself to the King and His kingdom ways, then the Church emerges in all her intended glory! »

God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. (Eph. 1:9-10 NLT)

Yet God’s plan has always been to fill the universe with His glory through the church, the bride of Christ and body of Christ:

And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:22-23 ESV)

The Church was meant to be the agent of filling the whole earth with the glory of God—His King-reign—as the body. The Church was meant to be the eternal companion of the Son as the bride. Ephesians 5 and Revelation 19-21 present a glorious picture of the Church being presented to the Son spotless and radiant. All of history is moving toward the preparation and presentation of this bride to the Son.

This is why we focus unquestionably on *Church Planting Movements*, not simply people movements. We don’t start churches because this is the most pragmatic way to reach people. We start churches because this is God’s plan in His eternal kingdom.

In fact, starting churches is intensely pragmatic, but that is the beauty of God’s design in establishing the church as a visible expression and means of His kingdom. It is easy for new believers to lose headway in their spiritual growth if they are not incorporated as a part of the precious body of Christ locally.

What Will it Take to Reach All of the Lost? Church Planting Movements

The history of the church from Acts to the present is replete with new movements of multiplying disciples and churches. Throughout history, men and women, burdened with the question, “What will it take to reach all of the lost?” have subjected their preferences, traditions and paradigms to the vision of kingdom expansion.

In an age in which the evangelism of most established churches and denominations lag far behind population growth, fresh examination is required to answer that simple question: “*What will it take to reach all of the lost in our generation?*” Believers from all traditions must cry out to the Heavenly Father with the same humble desperation of that first prayer: “Father, cause your kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven!”

There are places in the world in which the numbers of new disciples and churches are growing faster than the pace of local population, or showing signs of moving in that direction. These Church Planting Movements in their varicolored hues recall to us the vision of kingdom come and the spirit of Acts. They hearken back to historical movements such as the Wesleyan movement or early Baptist church-planting. Only through movements in which, through the priesthood of the believer, each disciple carries the DNA and authority to pass on what he or she has learned and can train others to do the same, will we see the lost reached in our generation.

Sacrificing Paradigms of Church for the Kingdom

Yet in all movements, questions arise about the new forms, the new church paradigms, the new methods, the new ways. Whether the Apostle Paul or John Wesley, these

paradigms are initially derided by the established Church. But through sheer endurance and lasting fruit, many of these paradigms eventually become the norm. *Too often what is radical today is commonplace tomorrow.*

Historically, the leaders of these movements have sacrificed their expectations, paradigms and structures for the good of the kingdom. Their desire to see the kingdom come and the Word obeyed has challenged them to surrender their ways of doing things to the Spirit's leadership. They have been more preoccupied with building the kingdom than on perpetuating a particular model of doing church. Their goal has not been a perfect model of church but a perfect spread of the kingdom.


« We are always in the same danger that the religious leaders of Jesus' day faced, of hardening our methods and structures against the Spirit. »

There is no uniform biblical model of what a church must be. We see numerous examples of culturally adapted models in the Scriptures. *There is room for a number of types of churches fulfilling unique roles in each society.*

In pursuing the vision of the Lord's Prayer, however, for the sake of reaching all of the lost, we often advocate reproducible churches that can spread endlessly through a society by the hands of ordinary believers led by the Spirit.

The Spirit is moving in powerful ways around the world. We are always in the same danger that the religious leaders of Jesus' day faced, of hardening our methods and structures against the Spirit:

"Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." (Matt. 9:17 ESV)

The church is in ferment around the world because the wine of the Spirit is in ferment. Our first desire must be the Spirit of the King and His kingdom come. Let us adjust our structures to what He directs by the Word in each new community. Let us not become hardened, self-focused and brittle. Rather let us be inspired in these pages to sacrifice our paradigms to the spread of His kingdom in every people! 

An Obituary for the American Church



From time to time I will have the people I'm discipling write out their own pastoral obituary. I ask them to write out how our enemy would take them out, rendering them unable to serve their family and communities. As you can imagine, the answers vary, but it always serves as a really helpful exercise as they are forced to confront issues of character, etc.

Taking this same exercise I've used with pastors, for the past year I've been thinking how the enemy would/might be trying to take down the American church. Now what I've noticed is that the original temptations Jesus faced (which can best be boiled down to Affirmation, Appetite and Ambition) are somehow warped and insinuated into the culture. As each culture is distinct and different, a smart enemy would come at each culture in subtle ways, tempting them in ways they don't see or expect, and with things that would look different from culture to culture.

For instance, the issues the European church deals with are actually quite different than the ones the American church is dealing with...even though often times they are put under the same broad umbrella of "Western Church." Sure, there are some similarities, but the attack is different. More nuanced.

But those original temptations of Affirmation, Appetite and Ambition are slowly insinuating themselves into everything we call CHURCH. We just often don't recognize it or see it.

This is how, if our enemy gets his way, the American church could be taken out:

A culture of CELEBRITY (affirmation)

A culture of CONSUMERISM (appetite)

A culture of COMPETITION (ambition)

CELEBRITY

The idea of celebrity is deeply woven into American culture and values. All you have to do is look at the ridiculous nature of reality TV and you see how Americans are constantly craving celebrity (either to be a celebrity or to find the next celebrity and stalk their every move). Now there is nothing dark or sinister about "celebrity" in and of itself. You can't find an argument that says Jesus wasn't a huge celebrity in His day.

« Though Jesus was a celebrity in His day, He was willing to say things that ran people off in droves. In fact, the book of Mark chronicles the way (from about the mid-point of the book on) people left Jesus to where, at the end, virtually no one was left. »

However, there is a difference between being famous and being significant. If Jesus was famous, it's because He was doing something significant. The problem with many pastors is they make decisions, develop personas and define success from the lens of what will make them a celebrity/famous (even if they don't know it or see that they are doing this). In American church culture, it's pretty easy to become a celebrity: grow a HUGE church. Now all in all, it's not terribly difficult to grow to be a giant church if you have the right tools at your disposal...but that doesn't mean the ends justify the means of getting there.

BY **MIKE BREEN**

blog: <http://mikebreen.wordpress.com/>

Mike Breen was the Senior Rector at St. Thomas Sheffield, where he pioneered some very different ways of being the church and when he left it was the largest church in England. He currently leads 3DM, the global home for an organic movement of biblical discipleship and missional church that is centered in the United States.

For instance, though Jesus was a celebrity in His day, He was willing to say things that ran people off in droves. In fact, the book of Mark chronicles the way (from about the mid-point of the book on) people left Jesus to where, at the end, virtually no one was left. NO ONE wants to be associated with him for fear of the consequences. That's not something you see too often in American churches.

I suspect it's because driven deeply into the American psyche is the desire to be a celebrity. And American pastors are very susceptible to this. Many subtle things happen in people who desire this kind of celebrity status:

- They can disengage from the community and isolate themselves, setting themselves up for moral failure.
- They can make decisions that are numbers driven and not always kingdom driven.
- They can skew to a shallow understanding of the gospel as opposed to a holistic one that leads people to discipleship.
- They can put the good of their church (their personal kingdom) over the good of God's Kingdom.

Question: In what ways are your decisions made by a subtle undercurrent of ambition and a hope for celebrity?

CONSUMERISM

We live in a culture that revolves around consuming. Every TV commercial, every store, every credit card company, every bank, every TV show or movie, every piece of clothing, car or product, every website, every restaurant...everything is tailored to fit your desires, needs or personal preference. We are easily infuriated when things don't happen exactly as we want them. We exist in a place that implicitly says this: "We are here to serve you and meet your every whim and desire. Let us take care of you." What's more, it's never enough.

Eventually the house or the car get older and we want new ones. The clothes aren't as fashionable and we want something more in style. That restaurant is getting boring, we must find another. Our favorite TV show is wearing thin, so the search begins for the next favorite. And on and on and on. This is how we are wired to think in the United States and it is all backed up by this rationale: you're worth it. You deserve to have what you want, how you want it, when you want it. And for the most part, the church plays the exact same game.

« The only thing that Jesus is counting is disciples. That's it. He doesn't seem to care too much about converts, attendance, budgets or buildings. It's about disciples. And, by nature, disciples are producers, not consumers. Yet most of our churches are built around feeding consumers. »

We do the best we can to provide as comfortable an experience as humanly possible, using every means at our disposal to attract them in (and then keep them in). We tailor what we do around their wants and desires. That's Marketing 101, right? The problem is at the end of the day, the only thing that Jesus is counting is disciples. That's it. He doesn't seem to care too much about converts, attendance, budgets or buildings. It's about disciples. And, by nature, disciples are producers, not consumers.

Yet most of our churches are built around feeding consumers. I'd argue 90% of the Church's time, energy and resources are linked to this. But the issue is this: the means you use to attract people to you are usually the means you must use to keep them. In other words, if you use consumerism to attract them to your church, it often means you must continue using it to keep them...or else they will find another church who will meet their "needs." And yet, that consumer mentality is antithetical to the gospel and to the call of discipleship.

Disciples aren't consumers, they are producers. Jesus cared about disciples more than anything else.

Question: In what ways is your church community using consumerism as the means to draw people to a gospel that is, in and of itself, anti-consumerism?

COMPETITION

You will never find a more hyper-competitive culture than you do in the United States. As a foreigner living in this land, I can attest to that with the utmost respect. Americans love to win, they love the struggle of the journey and love holding up the gold medal of victory. Now don't hear me wrong, there's nothing wrong with being competitive, it's just how competition has become warped and twisted within our culture. And it's that, at least in the Church, where we are competitive about the wrong things.

« 96% of church growth is due to transfer growth and not churches striking into the heart of our enemy's territory. We'll consider it a win because we have the new service or program that is growing, but that growth is mainly from people coming from other churches. That's not a win! That's a staggering loss. »

Much of the American church finds itself competing with the church down the road. "Are we bigger than them? Do we have more influence than them? Do we have the best/biggest youth group in town? Do people like to get married in our church building? Do people like our church better than theirs?" The fact of the matter is that there is a battle, we do have an enemy and we should be competitive...but against our enemy! What we haven't seen is how crafty he is. This seems to be the alliance he has struck with the American church: "I'll let a good chunk of your churches grow...just not at the expense of my territory."

What happens? 96% of church growth is due to transfer growth and not churches striking into the heart of our enemy's territory. We'll consider it a win because we have the new service or program that is growing, but that growth is mainly from people coming from other churches. That's not a

win! That's a staggering loss. Furthermore, for many pastors, we don't think we've won until we've won AND someone else has lost. Seriously?! For sure, we have an enemy and we should be competitive, but we should be competing against our enemy, knowing that the final battle has already been won, and not competing against our own team members. So gifted and skilled is our enemy, so conniving is he, that he has convinced us that beating the people on our own team is victory while he stands back and laughs, rarely having to ever engage in conflict, protecting his territory. He is beating us with a slight of hand, with a clever distraction, turning us against ourselves.


Question: In what ways are you competing (both in actuality or simply in your mind) against people who are on your own team?

In all honesty, it isn't that the American church will ever truly die or cease to exist. It will always be there. But it is entirely possible that if these three critical issues aren't addressed and dealt with, it will be a hollow shell that is spiritually listless.

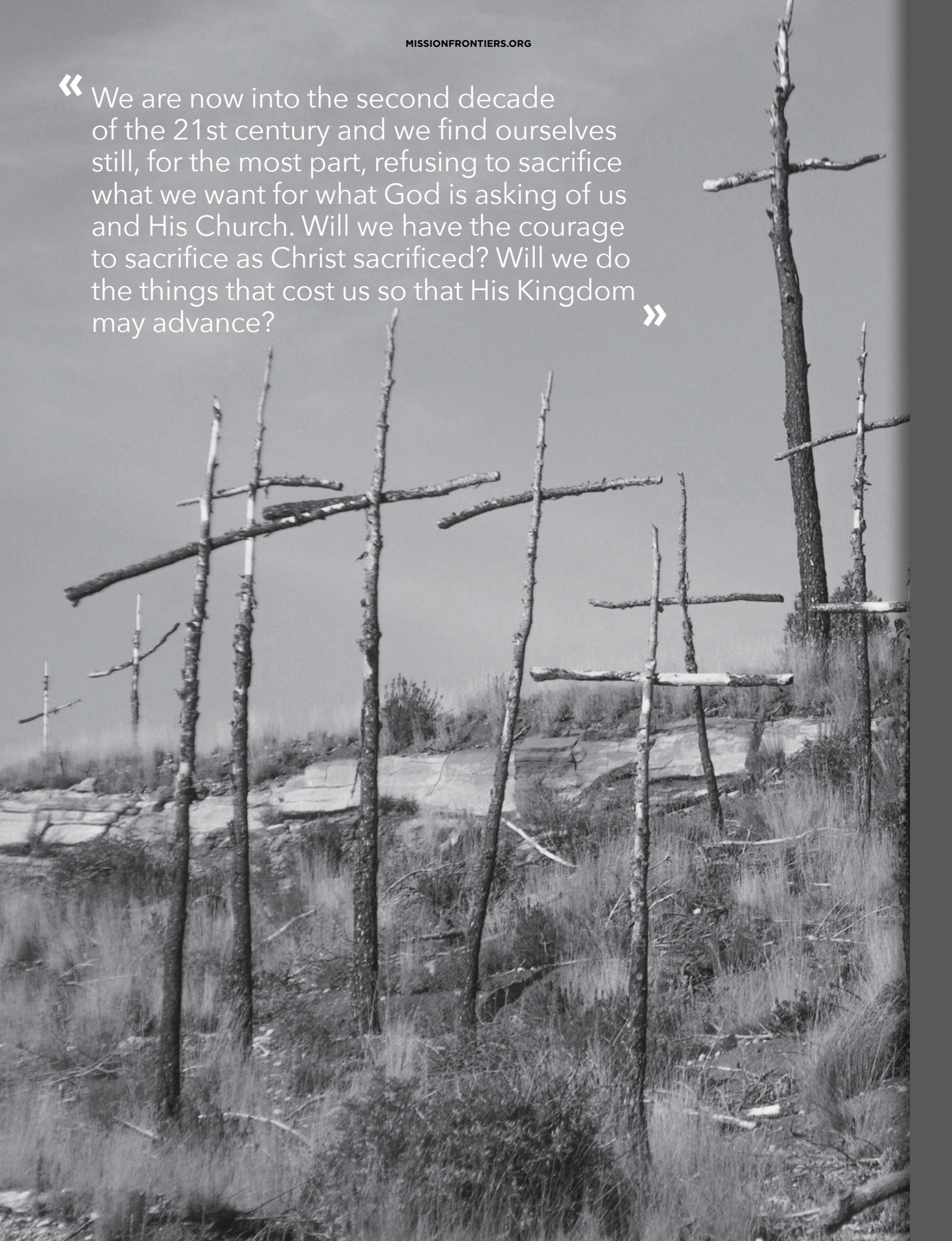
If we think through Celebrity, Consumerism and Competition, the anti-body against all of these is sacrifice. Learning to lay down what builds us up and giving to others instead. Learning to serve, rather than to be served. Looking for anonymity rather than celebrity. To build a culture of producers rather than one of consumers. To live in a vibrant, sacrificial community fighting a real enemy rather than competing against the same community God has given us to fight WITH rather than AGAINST. It's about sacrificing what we want for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom, regardless of our advancement or desires.

Clearly this is what Paul was getting after in Philippians 2:6-11 when describing the attitude of Jesus as taking on the attitude of a servant, willing to sacrifice all acclaim and equality with God. It was a willingness to set aside and sacrifice celebrity, consumerism and competition at the altar of the incarnation.

Fifty years ago, as these three subtle threads were being woven into the American church, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. serving as a prophetic voice, said this:

If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. 

« We are now into the second decade of the 21st century and we find ourselves still, for the most part, refusing to sacrifice what we want for what God is asking of us and His Church. Will we have the courage to sacrifice as Christ sacrificed? Will we do the things that cost us so that His Kingdom may advance? »



The Genius of Wrong

Building the Right Church Depends on Using All the Wrong People

I was sitting at a table with an old friend who leads a large and thriving church. “We try to make everything easy for the members of our church,” he said to me. “We encourage them to get to know people in our community, whether in their neighborhood or office or anywhere else. Then all they have to do is invite those people to church. At church, those people will hear relevant, gifted communicators in a warm, attractive, and appealing environment where their children can be a part of top-of-the-line programs.”

He concluded, “If our members will just invite their friends to the environment we create, then we can take care of the rest.”

Then he asked me what we do at Brook Hills. Hesitantly, I said, “We actually do the exact opposite.” “Oh really,” he said. “What do you mean?”

“Well, when we gather as the Church, our main focus is on the Church. In other words, we organize our worship environment around believers, not unbelievers.”

He looked confused. “Why would you do that?” he asked. “If your worship environment on Sunday is not appealing to non-Christians, then how is your church going to intentionally lead unbelievers in Birmingham to Christ?”

“We’re going to equip our people every Sunday to lead unbelievers in Birmingham to Christ all week long,” I said.

“Your members are going to lead them to Christ?”

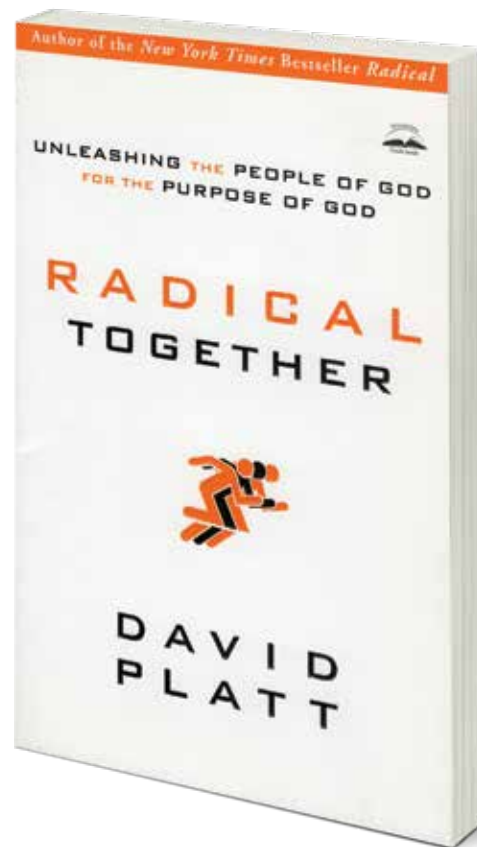
“That’s our plan.”

“Well,” he said, “once those unbelievers become believers, how are they going to grow in Christ?”

“Our people are going to be equipped to show new believers how to live as followers of Christ,” I said. “I want people in the church to be able to fulfill the purpose for which they were created without being dependent on gifted preachers, nice buildings, and great programs to do it for them.”

Looking puzzled, he said, “Well, that’s a new approach.”

Now, again, I am a young pastor, and I have a lot to learn, particularly from pastors like this one, whom I respect greatly. But I don’t think I’m coming up with something new here.



BY **DAVID PLATT**

This article is an excerpt from the book *Radical Together* by David Platt and used by permission of Multnomah Press.

« “Our people are going to be equipped to show new believers how to live as followers of Christ,” I said. “I want people in the church to be able to fulfill the purpose for which they were created without being dependent on gifted preachers, nice buildings, and great programs to do it for them.” »

I believe in the people of God. Or more specifically, I believe in the work of God’s Spirit through God’s Word in God’s people. The last thing I want to do is rob Christians of the joy of making disciples by telling them that I or anyone or anything else can take care of that for them.

Someone might ask, “But if a church has a gifted communicator or a gifted leader, wouldn’t we want as many people as possible to hear that person?”

The answer is “not necessarily.” The goal of the church is never for one person to be equipped and empowered to lead as many people as possible to Christ. The goal is always for all of God’s people to be equipped and empowered to lead as many people as possible to Christ.

I also believe in the plan of God. In Jesus’ simple command to “make disciples,” He has invited every one of His followers to share the life of Christ with others in a sacrificial, intentional, global effort to multiply the gospel of Christ through others. He never intended to limit this invitation to the most effective communicators, the most brilliant organizers, or the most talented leaders and artists—all the allegedly right people that you and I are prone to exalt in the church. Instead, the Spirit of God has empowered every follower of Christ to accomplish the purpose of God for the glory of God in the world. This includes the so-called wrong people: those who are the least

effective, least brilliant, or least talented in the church.

Building the right church, then, is dependent on using all the wrong people.

Manufactured Elements

At one point in *Radical*, I described the various elements that we in America have manufactured for growing a church.¹ I want to revisit the discussion I began there and take it further so we can better explore what a church might look like if it properly valued the wrong people.

It’s commonly assumed that if you and I want to be a part of a growing church today, we need a few simple elements.

First, we need a good performance. In an entertainment-driven culture, we need someone who can captivate the crowds. If we don’t have a charismatic communicator, we’re sunk from the start. Even if we have to show him on video, we get a good speaker. And for a bonus, we surround the speaker with quality music and arts.

Next, we need a place to hold the crowds who will come. This usually means investing hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars in a facility to house the performance. The more attractive the environment, the better.

Then once the crowds get there, we need something to keep them coming back. So we start programs—first-class, top-of-the-line programs—for kids, youth, and families, for every age and stage. And in order to have those programs, we need professionals to run them. That way parents can drop their kids off at the door and the professionals can handle ministry for them. We don’t want people trying this at home.

There it is: a performance at a place filled with programs run by professionals. The problem, though, is the one **p** we have left out of the equation: the people of God.

People, Not Performances

What if growing the church was never intended to depend on creating a good performance with all the right people on the stage? Where did we get the idea that this was necessary? Certainly Scripture instructs us to gather for worship.² This is nonnegotiable—but not necessarily in the way we usually think about it.

Imagine being in a church on the other side of the world where it is illegal for the church even to exist. You wait until

midnight, when everyone else in the village is asleep, to quietly leave your house. Under the cover of darkness, you sneak down winding roads and past silent houses, looking around every corner to make sure no one is following you. You know that if you or anyone else from your church is caught, you may never see your home again. For that matter, you may never see the light of day again.

Yet you continue on until you round a bend, and there you see a small house with a faint light emanating from it. Checking one last time to make sure you have not been tailed, you slip inside. There you are greeted by a small band of brothers and sisters who have made the same long trek. As you look at their weary but expectant faces, you realize something: not one of them has come because a great communicator has been scheduled to speak. Not one is present because a cool band is scheduled to play. No, all are there simply because they desire to gather with the people of God, and they are willing to risk their lives to be together.

Performance has nothing to do with it. People have everything to do with it.

Whenever I am in churches overseas like the one just depicted, I am reminded of how much we have filled our contemporary worship environments with performance elements such as elaborate stage sets, state-of-the-art sound systems, and high-definition video screens. I am also struck by our reliance upon having just the right speaker and just the right musician who can attract the most people to a worship service. But what if the church itself—the people of God gathered in one place—is intended to be the attraction, regardless of who is teaching or singing that day? This is enough for our brothers and sisters around the world. But is it enough for us?

I am haunted by this question on Sundays as I stand in a nice auditorium with a quality sound system and large video screens on the wall, all designed to spotlight select people on stage. It's not that everything in this scene is necessarily wrong, but I do wonder what in this scene is biblically best and practically healthy for the people of God. I have more questions than I have answers on this issue, and I am grateful for leaders in our worship ministry who are willing to ask the questions with me.

I mentioned earlier that we recently cut 83 percent of our worship budget. We did this not only to free up resources for urgent needs around the world but also to scale back our emphasis on nonessential elements of corporate worship. We

want to focus on ways we can cultivate the best people: a people who love to pray together, fast together, confess sin together, sing together, and study together; a people who depend more on the Word that is spoken than on the one who speaks it; a people who are gripped in music more by the content of the song than by the appeal of the singer; and a people who define worship less by the quality of a slick performance and more by the commitment of a humble people who gather week after week simply to behold the glory of God as they surrender their lives to Him.

Where Will Our Lives Count?

Isn't this the model of Jesus? During His ministry on earth, He spent more time with twelve men than with everyone else put together. In John 17, where He recounts His ministry before going to the cross, He doesn't mention the multitudes He preached to or the miracles He performed. As spectacular as those events were, they were not His primary focus. Instead, forty times Jesus speaks to and about the men in whom He had invested His life. They were His focus.

« And He had given them one command as their commission: make disciples. Do with others what I have done with you, Jesus had said. Don't sit in a classroom; share your lives. Don't build extravagant places; build extraordinary people. Make disciples who will make disciples, and together multiply this gospel to all peoples. »

When He came to His ascension, Jesus had no buildings or programs to point to and no crowds to boast of. Indeed, most of the crowds had walked away. Just 120 unschooled, ordinary people were gathered—a small group with a small band of leaders.

And He had given them one command as their commission: make disciples. Do with others what I have done with you, Jesus had said. Don't sit in a classroom; share your lives. Don't build extravagant places; build extraordinary people. Make

disciples who will make disciples who will make disciples, and together multiply this gospel to all peoples. This is the simple command that was to drive the Church. And this is the simple command that is to drive each of our lives.

I don't want this command to be treated as optional in my life or in anyone else's life in the church I pastor. Personally, I have an intentional disciple-making plan that involves sharing life with and multiplying the gospel through my family, a small group of men within our church, and church planters we are sending out from our church. I don't want to imply that this plan is always smooth in practice or easy to implement. Like you, I am constantly beset by the busyness of life and the responsibilities of leadership, and if I am not careful, disciple-making fades into the background. As a result, I want to act intentionally, for if I forsake the priority of people then I will miss the purpose of God.

Every one of our pastors and church staff has designed similar disciple-making plans. In addition, we help all new members in our church to outline their plans for how they will be involved in making disciples of all nations.³ The key for all of us is an intense desire and intentional effort to make every one of our lives count for the multiplication of the gospel in the world.

Regardless of your place in the Church, remember that you are not intended to be sidelined in the kingdom of God. You may at times feel like the wrong person, thinking you are not gifted enough, smart enough, talented enough, or qualified enough to engage in effective ministry. This is simply not true. You have the Word of God before you, the Spirit of God in you, and the command of God to you: make disciples of all nations. Whether you are a businessman or a businesswoman, a lawyer or a doctor, a consultant or a construction worker, a teacher or a student, an on-the-go professional or an on-the-go stay-at-home mom, I implore you to ask God to make your life count where you live for the spread of the gospel and the declaration of His glory to the ends of the earth.

A Better Way


A house church leader in Asia once wrote how persecution in his country had stripped his church of its resources. Yet, in his mind, this had been a good thing. "We soon found that rather than being weakened by the removal of all external props, we were actually much stronger because our faith in God was purer," he wrote. "We didn't have any opportunity to love the 'things' of God, so we just learned

to love God! We had no plans or programs to keep running, so we just sought the face of Jesus! We don't believe the world needs another single church building. They need Jesus, and they need to worship and grow in God's grace with other believers... according to the pattern of the first Church in the New Testament." Then this house church leader concluded, "When we finally reach the end of all our useless programs and give up in desperation, Jesus will always be there to show us a better way—His way."⁴

This is the beauty of the plan of God, particularly when we contrast it with the plans we create that are dependent on performances, places, programs, and professionals. If the spread of the gospel is dependent on these things, we will never reach the ends of the earth. We will never have enough resources, staff, buildings, events, or activities to reach all the people in our community, much less all the peoples in the world.

But we will always have enough people. Even if they seem like the wrong people.

If eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee were enough to launch the gospel to the ends of the earth, then a church with a handful of members can spread the gospel in and beyond a community, regardless of the amount of material resources it has. The plan of God is certainly not confined to large churches or gifted leaders. The plan of God is for every person among the people of God to count for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

What if each of us were actually making disciples who were making disciples? Is it too idealistic to dream that the church of God, unleashed for the purpose of God, might actually reach the ends of the earth with the gospel? Is that realistic? You bet it is. In fact, it's guaranteed. Jesus has promised that every nation, tribe, tongue, and people are going to hear the gospel, and it is going to happen through all of us.⁵ 

Endnotes

- 1 David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2010), 48–50.
- 2 Hebrews 10:24–25.
- 3 You can find a template for our new member disciple-making plans on our church's website. Go to <http://www.brookhills.org/new/impact.html> and click on "Homework Assignment #3."
- 4 Quoted in Brother Yun, Peter Xu Yongze, and Enoch Wang with Paul Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem* (Waynesboro: Gabriel, 2003), 64, 108, 133–4.
- 5 Matthew 24:14; Revelation 7:9–10; Romans 10:13–15.

An Army of Disciple Makers From the Rainforests of Central Africa



Ndinga

Pastor Ndinga often wakes up very early, because he has a busy schedule. First he goes to check the traps that he expertly sets in several places in the forest, usually a couple of kilometers from his village. Like most Pygmies, from his childhood, he learned how to hunt all kinds of rain forest animals, setting traps on their pathways. Harvesting and resetting traps usually takes him about three hours.

After coming back with the day's prey, he will change clothes, grab his Bible, collect one of his disciples, and they will both spend the next five hours visiting a village church, its leaders and members. He uses these moments to coach and encourage the leaders and the Christ followers who are growing in their faith. Often he will conduct a Discovery Bible Study or two, to help people understand the process.

On their way back home, he may have short visits with other villages for which he and his church have been

praying. He looks forward to finding a Person of Peace, and seeing the launch of Discovery Bible Studies soon. This is Ndinga's life, and what he wants to continue to do until every community in the area has been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will be back home by 4:00 pm and devote the rest of the day to gathering food in the forest.

This pastor knows where to look for abundant fruit, both sweet food for his family to eat, and the fruit of the Spirit in changing lives and communities in his part of the rain forest.

How Disciples Become Leaders

Ndinga is a Baka Pygmy from the Central Africa Republic. Two years before, a pastor named Bonane came into his village to distribute clothes and food and to talk to the villagers about the need for their children to have a school to attend. He had a plan to help the village meet a huge need that it had. Ndinga had never imagined that someone would come to his remote village to do something kind like that for their children.



BY **YOUNOUSSA DJAO**

email: ydjao@newgenerations.org

Younoussa Djao is the African Director of New Generations. He is a Muslim background Christ Follower who dreams of seeing Muslims find Jesus and fall in love with Him.

Ndinga approached Pastor Bonane and started asking questions about why he was doing what he was doing. Bonane's answer was that God loves the Pygmies and wants them to have all these things because He wants what is good for them. So Pastor Bonane was willing to help bring God's blessings to their village. Ndinga knew that this kind of thing just did not happen in Pygmy villages.

He decided to learn more about the God Pastor Bonane was talking about, and he asked many kinds of questions that Bonane patiently answered. One week later, Bonane showed Ndinga and others how to experience a Discovery Bible Study in Ndinga's village. For several weeks, they had meetings during which the villagers heard many stories from the Bible, asked a lot of questions, and shared what they discovered in the Bible with each other.



In a few weeks, eight people in the group became disciples of Jesus. But several refused, saying that the God Pastor Bonane is talking about is a foreign God. Ndinga and seven others were baptized and continued meeting, hearing more stories, discussing and learning more about the God of the Bible.

Ndinga always tried to find time with Pastor Bonane. He had so many questions! He wanted to learn everything very quickly. And he started sharing what he learned with others in the village, and also in other villages.

During one of the meetings in his village, he told Pastor Bonane that the day before he had shared some of the stories in another village and someone wanted to meet with him to ask more questions. Pastor Bonane coached him how to help a group of nine people start gathering to hear more stories and ask more questions. Ndinga started

facilitating the group discussion under the supervision of Pastor Bonane.



The reality is that Ndinga has never stopped helping people grow as disciples of Jesus, and continues coaching them to reach out to other villages.

The Pygmies of Africa

The term "Pygmy" is used to describe those people groups where the average height of the male adult is less than 150 centimeters (4'11"). The term Pygmy is considered pejorative and so many of them prefer to be identified by their ethnicity such as Twa, Baka etc.



Most Pygmies are like Ndinga, tropical-forest foragers, and the food they find they consume themselves or trade to neighboring farmers in exchange for cultivated foods. They are scattered in more than 14 countries in Africa, but most of the 984,000 Pygmies live in six Central African countries.

There is so much diversity among these groups that it is impossible to describe a "Pygmy" culture, but historically

the Pygmies have been marginalized by national governments and in most cases mistreated by neighboring people groups. At the national governmental level Pygmies are sometimes not considered citizens. They are denied identity cards, get evicted from their land and are not entitled to proper health care and education.

Their neighboring tribes typically consider them inferior. In some places, they have a sort of indentured relationship with their neighbors; you can find the Pygmies serving their masters with manual labor, game, honey and other natural resources from the forest. They are often cheated by not being paid for their labor.

In addition to the above marginalization and mistreatment, many Pygmy communities were exposed to racial extermination during the Rwanda genocide and in the Congo civil war. In these two instances it is estimated more than twenty thousand Pygmies were killed.

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As hunter/gatherers, the forest is very important to their culture and livelihood. Unfortunately, this fundamental element of their identity and sustenance is being destroyed now by farmers and forest exploitation for wood.

According to Musolo W’isuka Kamuha¹, Pygmies are a challenge to Christian missions because the church (Musola was writing of the church of DRC) has a problem in accepting the Pygmies as fully human beings worthy to be included in the agenda of mission outreach. Thus they have generally remained unreached and unchurched.



According to peoplegroups.org, the Pygmies include 26 unique people groups with a total population of 984,100. They represent 17 UPGs totaling 788,700 people and three UUPGs totaling 22,400 people.

How it Started

In 2005 Final Command and New Generations teams had a season of prayer that resulted in a list of 18 difficult and large Muslim people groups to engage in Africa. Later in 2007 one of the leaders insisted on including the Pygmies across Africa in this priority list.

As a result of that commitment, in 2008 a five-day DMM training was done in Bangui where Thierry, one of the trainees, decided to engage the Pygmies with his disciple-making team. He recruited two denominations that had also planned to engage this people group and trained their evangelists in the processes. Pastor Bonane was one of those evangelists. What was birthed by Thierry’s resolve and brother Bonane’s passion has been miraculously blessed by God’s favor.

In the last 11 years Thierry’s Pygmy engagements have expanded to six African countries where 2,816 churches have been planted, to the 10th generation of churches

¹ http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/11863/thesis_kamuha_mwp.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

planting churches, and 145,755 Christ followers through September 2018. That number is still growing rapidly, and now almost 15% of the total African Pygmy population are Christ followers.

Kanyabikingi and Nana

Kanyabikingi (pseudonym) is a Pygmy who lives in one of the big towns in East Africa. He once described himself as an atheist who embraced the ideology while attending college in a communist country.

He worked for an organization that tries to encourage Pygmy communities to send their children to school. The Pygmy communities in that part of the country, unlike most Pygmies who are hunters and gatherers, make their livelihood by making pottery. Therefore, they prefer their children to help them in making pots instead of sending them to school.

Kanyabikingi's job has been to go to these communities and encourage the parents to send their children to school. He does his job with passion because he wants to see his people improve their livelihood through education.

In 2014, in one of the Pygmy communities he frequently visits, Kanyabikingi met a lady named Nana (pseudonym) who was in her mid-fifties. Nana was a Christ follower who had been encouraged by her ministry to make disciples among the Pygmies. She was well-liked by the community because Nana regularly prayed for the sick and helped the poor. People invited her frequently to their homes because when she prays for them they consistently get solutions for many of their problems.

Kanyabikingi observed what Nana was doing and her love for the Pygmies. He wanted to know more about what she was doing and asked to meet her. So Nana invited Kanyabikingi to attend the Discovery Bible Group that was meeting in her house. Kanyabikingi became a regular member of the DBS group. He had many questions, and Nana coached him how to find the answers in the Bible. Eventually, Kanyabikingi became a follower of Jesus, and then began to use his frequent visits to peoples' houses as an opportunity to share stories from the Bible. Pygmies began to respond to him, and started their own Discovery Bible Groups.

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After one year, 14 churches, three generations and 25 Discovery Bible Studies had been formed in two different Pygmy communities. More than 270 Pygmies had become followers of Christ. »

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By the end of 2015, the movement that had started in these two communities had already spread to one more Pygmy community and other people groups, resulting in the planting of an additional 58 churches with nine generations, and more than 600 Christ followers. God used a former atheist, a compassionate woman who prayed for people, and two Pygmy communities to catalyze multi-streamed and multi-ethnic spiritual momentum.



« The very people who have been marginalized in African societies have become agents of the kingdom of God. These people whom some did not accept as truly human have become agents of God's dramatic transformation. MF »



What Harm Could Come

From Purchasing Just One Airline Ticket?

My friend Emmanuel,* a local Haitian Christian leader, had held two conferences at a local Haitian church. On both occasions, Pastor Evens* readily covered the costs for Emmanuel's travel, food, and service. It made complete sense to Pastor Emmanuel that a local Haitian church should use their own resources to cover expenses for services offered by one of their own.

In the mix of these healthy Haitian relationships and local ministries, a Canadian Christian organization invited Emmanuel to come to Canada for a one-week international mission conference. They offered to pay his flight, ground transportation, and the conference expenses. Emmanuel agreed to honor the invitation. Emmanuel borrowed money from others in Haiti to pay for incidentals and food outside of the conference.

Eventually, Emmanuel returned from the conference and all seemed well—that is until he was ready to serve in pastor Evens' church again. Listen in on the conversation between Evens and Emmanuel:

Evangelist Emmanuel: *"Hello, Pastor Evens! I am about to board a bus to come to your church. I will need to be reimbursed for my travel expenses since I have no money on hand at this time."*

Pastor Evens: *"I don't understand. You just returned from a conference in Canada based on an invitation by a large mission organization. It cost a lot of money for you to go there. How could you not have any money?"*

Ouch! The unintended consequences of injecting seemingly harmless foreign resources surfaced fast and furious. The ironic thing is that Emmanuel was actually in debt from his trip to Canada because he had to borrow money for incidentals.

In conversation, Emmanuel expressed to me that saying "yes" to one subsidized international airline ticket caused his peers to perceive him as an outsider rather than a credible insider. And others now counted him among those who

had a foreign patron and his new link to Western funding should somehow trickle down to them.

Emmanuel now realized he needed to use caution when accepting offers from international Christians, churches and organizations. Unfortunately, he had to learn the hard way.

Western mission and church organizations love to invite church leaders from developing countries to come to their homelands to participate in conferences, fundraising campaigns, special trainings, fellowship and even rest and recreation. They see it as a way to honor their so-called global mission partners with an opportunity to participate in something they hope will be special for everyone. As illustrated by the account of Emmanuel and Evens, there is a thorny side to these invitations and charitable gifts that make it all happen.

Jean Johnson, in her book *Standing On Our Own Feet Workbook*, shares about twelve types of giving that can easily destroy dignity. One of those types of giving is:

Giving that creates division: This form of giving sows jealousy and competition among local churches and people that would not have been there without artificial infection of money and influence from the outside.

I am fairly sure the organization that invited Emmanuel to Canada will never even hear about how their invitation and subsidy made Emmanuel and Evens stumble in disillusionment, nor about other thorny repercussions.

The apostle John wrote, "Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble." (1 John 2:10) The most loving action we can give those around the world is to discover ways to allow leaders to be firmly planted in their own nations—making room for them to mobilize local resources, create indigenous ways to meet and train and support one another.

Notes: *Not their real names. Jean Johnson, *Standing On Our Own Feet Workbook* (Xulon Press: Maitland, FL, 2018), 78. 

BY **DAN CARL**

Dan Carl (BPS, Bellevue University, Bellevue, NE) is co-founder of International Living Stone Ministries and presently lives in Haiti with his wife. He serves as an international pastor and as a coach with Five Stones Global. Five Stones Global (fivestonesglobal.org) exists to come alongside the global community to create a culture of dignity, sustainability, and multiplication in Great Commission efforts.

Remembering Don Richardson

June 23, 1935–December 23, 2018

Tribute to a Pioneer Missionary, Author & Great Commission Statesman

A runner all his life, missionary influencer and pace-setter Don Richardson completed his life's race in Orlando, Florida, ten months after his diagnosis with brain cancer.

The oldest of four boys, Don spent his early years in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. His father moved the family to Victoria, British Columbia, in the hopes of securing a more promising future for them, before his own death to Hodgkin's disease when Don was 11. Don's life direction was set as a teen when he gave his life to Christ at a 1952 Youth for Christ rally. He subsequently met Carol Joy Soderstrom while training for ministry at Prairie Bible Institute in Alberta. They were lovingly married for 43 years until her death in 2004.

In 1962, Don and Carol embarked with six-month-old Stephen on a missionary career in Netherlands New Guinea (now Papua, Indonesia) under the sponsorship of Regions Beyond Missionary Union (now World Team). They served for 15 years among the Sawi, a stone-age tribe of cannibal-headhunters who idealized treachery. Don and Carol planted churches, designed an alphabet, taught the Sawi to read, and translated the New Testament into their native tongue. In time, and with the involvement of several missionary co-workers, many of the Sawi came to Christ. The gospel replaced warring and headhunting with peace and good will.

In the early 1970s, Dr. Ralph Winter, then a professor at Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission, heard Don speak at a church service. "You've got to write a book," Ralph urged Don afterward. "I'll contact a publisher for you!"

Back in the jungles of Papua, Don documented the Gospel's breakthrough among the Sawi people in his first book *Peace Child* (Regal Books, 1974). Selected as a *Reader's Digest* condensed book upon publication, *Peace Child* immediately became a best seller. A similarly named companion film featuring Don and Carol quickly became a staple at mission conferences across North America.

Don's second book, *Lords of the Earth* (Regal Books, 1977), recounted the martyrdom of two missionary co-workers, a dramatic plane crash, and the discovery of yet another "redemptive analogy" – stone-encircled "places of refuge" – among the war-like Yali tribe.

Don's third book, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, documented how the concept of a supreme God has existed for centuries in hundreds of cultures around the world. The book soon became "required reading" in seminaries and Bible colleges. Christians worldwide were inspired afresh by the notion that God has "prepared the gospel for the world," and "the world for the gospel."

In 1977 Don began serving as World Team's minister-at-large, speaking at dozens of events each year in North America and worldwide. The Richardsons moved to Pasadena, CA, joining Ralph and Roberta Winter to assist in the founding of the U.S. Center for World Mission. With the emergence of the "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement" course, Don became a frequent contributing lecturer, a role he relished for 40 years.

Don was an ordained pastor and held an honorary doctorate of literature from Biola University. After Carol Joy's passing in 2004, Don eventually met and married Carol Joyce Abraham, with whom he moved to Orlando and enjoyed ongoing fruitful ministry.

Don's books and teachings have helped to shape missions discourse and influence two generations toward whole-hearted engagement in the Great Commission. Don's subsequent titles, including *Secrets of the Koran*, *Heaven Wins*, and *A Man from Another World* explore other arenas of theological and cosmological interest. A short inspirational film called *Never the Same* explores the ongoing impact of the gospel 50 years after Don and Carol's arrival among the Sawi people.

In addition to his public ministry, Don enjoyed painting scenes of tribal life in New Guinea, tournament chess, running, summiting 33 "fourteeners" (peaks rising above 14,000 feet), and spending time with his beloved family. Don's four children have also been involved in missions, three of them in Indonesia. Don's son Steve serves as President of Orlando-based Pioneers.

Don's memorial service, a memorial fund benefitting the next generation of Papuan church leaders and missionaries, and a fascinating trove of historical photos and tribal paintings can be viewed at a website provided by the family: peacechildlegacy.com.

I received my call to missions at Urbana '79, but it was the books and messages of Don Richardson that fanned the flames of my growing mission vision over the 10 years between my call and the start of my missions career with Frontier Ventures. His books fed and nurtured my understanding of the missionary task. Whenever I read Gen. 12:1-3, I think of Don and the wonderfully engaging way he had of connecting people to that promise made to Abraham and our responsibility today to bring the blessings of God to all peoples. No one this side of heaven can measure the tremendous impact that Don had in helping to launch and foster the frontier mission movement. He will be greatly missed.

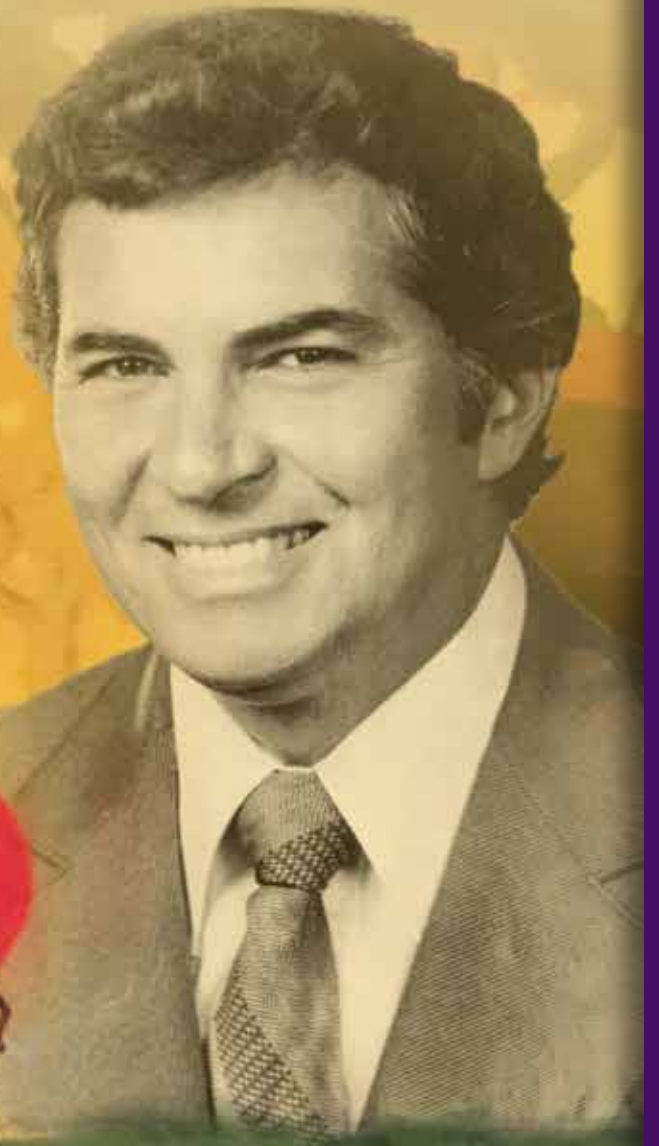
—Rick Wood, Editor, *Mission Frontiers*

“I remember reading ‘*Eternity in Their Hearts*’ somewhere before we went to work in the Muslim world. Don’s approach to looking for what I would later call the fingerprints of God in other cultures was, for me, profoundly world-view altering. I know in his later years our views of how God might work among Muslims differed, but I remain deeply indebted and grateful to Don for many of my own missiological instincts. He shaped my ministry.”

—Dr. Kevin Higgins

General Director, Frontier Ventures 

« I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:7 »



24:14 Goal



Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (82 months)

Leadership Lessons: Movement Wisdom from an Asian CPM Leader

Sam* is the national leader of a large six-year-old Church Planting Movement in South Asia. He shared with me a summary of lessons they have learned and applied in their ministry. When he finished, I asked him, “Are these lessons about movement leadership too difficult for less educated people to really grasp?” He responded, “No, actually I learned all these things from the ground level leaders (M, J, R, and others who *can’t read*!)”

The Lord loves to bless those who speak and act in humble faith (as we see in Acts 4:13). Here are highlights of this movement’s leadership principles.

1. Be very clear about **money** matters. Be *honest and transparent* about this with leadership. It’s such an important issue.
2. All leaders must **love** each other. This is the Lord’s command. (John 15:17) When leaders meet together they must show love to one another, no matter how much or little fruit they are seeing. We are all on the same team and should not compare results. Mutual encouragement happens when you celebrate *everyone’s* successes, primarily led by top leadership and modeled that way.
3. When leadership groups meet, we ask about their **challenges**. Sometimes they say: “Everything is good; really no challenges.” If a leader is not sharing their troubles, they are confused about what is success and what is not. A good leader will share both successes and challenges. This shows trustworthiness.
4. When you think the ministry is growing, you should **distribute more responsibility** to leaders. Some leaders won’t distribute responsibility and this is a great hindrance to the kind of growth and multiplication the Lord wants to bring. It shows too high a view of oneself and too low a view of others.
5. In the past, we did 1.5 day **trainings** and one day trainings, always attended by Gen 0 and Gen 1 leaders but never by younger leaders. Now we only do three-to-five-hour trainings in one day in smaller groups, and people are sent home the same day. Gatherings of small groups not staying overnight receive much less attention. This helps with security concerns and allows us to connect to the deeper generational leaders.
6. When we are starting something new, we are thinking about the **end vision**. We make decisions in light of our goal (end vision). It keeps us on track. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “Run in such a way as to get the prize....we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly.” (1 Cor. 9:24-26; see also Heb. 12:2; 2 Tim. 2:4-6)
7. We teach our leaders that things will never stay the same. **Changes** will be needed; flexibility is required. We don’t need to change movement principles but we need to adjust applications along the way because nothing stays the same. We need to listen to what the Father is saying and follow it as Jesus did. (John 5:19; 17:4; 20:21) Listening to the Lord will guide us through any needed changes.
8. We don’t always need to find good people. Sometimes we need to connect with **bad people** too. I cannot find the same person as I am. Each person who becomes a leader will be different from me. It’s my responsibility to help them become mature as a disciple-maker. It’s not essential that every believer be a good leader.


BY **ANDY WALKER***


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The “Walker” family began cross-cultural work in 2001. In 2006, they joined Beyond (www.beyond.org) and in 2011 started applying CPM principles. The Walkers moved countries in 2016, and have been supporting the movements from a distance.

If we spend time with them, they can become a good man or woman in the Lord. As Paul wrote, “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly.” (1 Tim. 1:13-14a, see also through v. 16)

9. A mentor should **believe in his disciple**. I have to trust my disciple. We see this in the ministries of Jesus (Luke 10:1; John 4:2; Luke 22:31-32), Barnabas (Acts 9:26-28) and Paul (1 Tim. 1:18, 2 Tim. 2:2, 1 Cor. 4:17). This is part of leading lovingly: to always protect, trust, hope, and persevere. (1 Cor. 13:7)
10. If I have a **bad experience** with someone, I need to come out from under that and not get stuck in it. Get out of the situation and let it go. Leave that place and that person and tell them, “I am trusting you to Jesus.” Pray for them, but know when it’s time to move on. Both Jesus (Matt. 10:14) and Paul (Titus 3:10-11) warn us not to get stuck in unfruitful relationships.
11. I can’t let my disciple lean on me too much, but instead I help him to **lean on Jesus**. I don’t need all the answers. Jesus has all the answers. Jesus is the only rock on which we build. (Matt. 7:24-27) As He said, “They will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me.” (John 6:45) I mustn’t aim to build my empire, only God’s kingdom. This is not about me. It’s not about my glory. I am to do the task God has given me; it’s God’s job to make things grow. (1 Cor. 3:1-7) I aim to make disciples of Jesus (Matt 28:19), not disciples of myself.
12. Every mentor should be teaching **the Bible, not personal ideas** about the Bible (as the Pharisees did—Matt. 15:1-9). The Scripture itself is the tool God intends to use. (Heb. 4:12) It is useful to thoroughly equip God’s servants for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17) We see this pattern modeled for us in Paul’s mentoring of Timothy. (1 Tim. 4: 1-16)
13. God chose us for this work, so we must hear from Him about doing this work wherever He sends us. (Eph. 2:10) I must **listen and obey** Him. I must apply first before I can share with others. (James 1:22-25)
14. Don’t try to be part of a big crowd. The **crowd is not important**. Never try to win a crowd; try to win one family or one house church. Then they will become a crowd one day by reaching many other families.
15. Treat **time** as important; invest your time wisely. The psalmist calls us to “number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Ps. 90:12) The teacher informs us that, “There is a time for everything.” (Eccl. 3:1-8) Jesus says we must work while there is daylight. (John 9:4) And the apostle Paul commands all believers. “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5:15-16)
16. A movement must touch every group. If we are not reaching a particular people group in our sphere of influence, we must pray about that and ask God what He wants us to do. He will give us a way to reach them. His care for **all peoples** is mentioned throughout Scripture, for example in Ps. 22:27; 47:1; 72:11; Matt. 24:14; 28:19; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 1 Tim. 2:1-6 and Rev. 15:4.
17. When we have God’s **strategy**, no one can stop it. Use the wisdom He has given and follow His commands. The Bible teaches us this over and over. For example, in Josh. 1:7-9; Ps. 37:4-6; Prov. 3:5-6; 14:12, John 5:19-20 and James 1:5.
18. Sometimes we get proud of what we’ve been doing. Pride is a dangerous thing. I don’t need to be proud about my work or what I’ve done. Leaders must **remain humble** and always be teachable. This is proverbial wisdom, the command and example of Jesus and the teaching of the apostles. (Prov. 13:10; John 15:5; 13:3-17; 1 Cor. 3:5-8; 2 Cor. 3:5; Phil 2:3-11; James 4:6-16)
19. You have to **respect** yourself, respect your family and respect others. Sometimes leaders only focus on the ministry but not the family. Those folks will get stopped along the way and will not be healthy. Personal and family health are very important for truly succeeding in ministry. This can be seen in biblical commands for the household (Deut. 6:4-7; 1 Tim. 5:8) and the criteria given for choosing leaders. (Titus 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 3:4-5).

* pseudonym 



Celebrating Small Wins Will Get You to the End Game

“I haven’t started a DMM yet, so I am not qualified to teach about this,” she said. My friend saw herself as someone who had not yet “arrived” in the world of Disciple Making Movements. The group of house churches this amazing missionary started only reached the third generation. She was an effective disciple-maker. Her disciples were certainly making other disciples. She embodied both the DNA and the vision to see movements launched.

“Is the bar too high?” I wondered after hearing her say this. “After all, there are less than 700 movements in the world. Those movement leaders are busy training leaders within their movement’s streams. Somebody has to teach about the multiplication of disciples and DMMs!” Why not her?

I understand my friend’s logic. I am a believer in the principle “Do First - Then Teach.” There are other factors to consider though. The indicators we have created for measuring a Disciple Making Movement’s growth are not the only ways to measure success.

“It has to have reached the fourth generation,” we say.

“They should multiply 100 groups within three years” is another one. These are important factors to track and measure. No argument there. The question remains. Are they truly what we should be looking at as we measure success in moving toward a Disciple Making Movement?

Be Careful of Unhealthy Legalism

Fixation on benchmarks like these can cause an unhealthy legalism. It throws us into the “shoulds.” Instead of enjoying the divine process of multiplication as it unfolds, we feel stressed. We may even experience a sense of hopelessness after years of effort. It’s likely we may question whether a Disciple Making Movement can ever happen through us. At times, these DMM benchmarks feel quite burdensome.

It is easy to focus on what is not happening, failing to celebrate what is. This is not God’s design for us as DMM practitioners. In pursuing the multiplication of churches

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among the unreached, we must learn to celebrate small but significant wins. At the same time, we constantly pursue the God-sized goal of launching something that becomes a multi-generational movement of disciples, one that is absolutely unstoppable.

A DMM “Failure” in the Slums of India

We lived in a small city in India. It was small by Indian standards at least. The population was around a million people. Our city contained many slum communities. The desperately poor built makeshift homes beside railroad tracks and rivers. It was there that land was available and they constructed makeshift homes. Their need for physical help was desperate. Even greater was the tremendous spiritual need. They were lost and dying, having never heard about the love of their Creator.

I knew God was calling me to shine His light in those communities, to share His salvation. Being a DMM practitioner, my natural goal was to start a movement of fellowships in the slum neighborhoods. Radical multiplication of kingdom followers was what it would take to bring transformation to those dark parts of our city. Without genuine disciples being made, there was little hope that our community development efforts would bring lasting change. A movement was needed.

I will give you a spoiler alert. We didn’t start a movement that reached the fourth generation within three years. We saw those started elsewhere. They have taken off in a number of places where I trained and coached people. We’d seen it happen in Nepal. But a movement didn’t start in the slums. *Did that mean I was a failure as a DMM practitioner?* Was I still qualified to train, speak and write about Disciple Making Movements?

We saw many amazing things happen among the needy there. As our team prayed for the sick, people were healed. They gave their lives to Jesus. We started fellowships. People who had no prior knowledge of Jesus became faithful disciples. They shared Christ with their neighbors and relatives. We taught Bible parables and they learned those stories well. They passed them on to others.

Some of the disciples started new groups as brothers, uncles or sisters came to faith. Widows were fed and cared for by local believers. That had never happened before in their localities. Suicidal women in abusive marriages were

rescued and stopped from setting themselves on fire. People who were former Shiva worshipers fell in love with Jesus and began to write songs of worship to Him. Local leaders were trained and empowered. Contextual weddings took place. God definitely worked there. But we didn’t reach the fourth generation.

Was our effort a flop? I think not.

Though what we dreamed to see in that place has not yet happened, we learned to celebrate small victories. We came to understand that those “wins” mattered to both us and God. Evaluation never stopped. We never stopped pursuing the goal that one day the movement would take off into radical multiplication that swept through the city, taking it by storm. But we refused to measure ourselves only by superficial standards Jesus never created. Instead, we rejoiced in what God had miraculously done through us there. And in faith, we looked forward to what He was yet to do.

What Disciple Making Movement Success is Not

Success as a DMM practitioner is not about numbers. It is not about how many people you’ve baptized, how many churches you’ve started, or what generation you’ve reached. Success is not about making sure that you have ticked off the list of David Garrison’s Elements of a CPM. It is not about following all the Fruitful Practices the Vision 5:9 group came up with. Nor is it doing everything perfectly according to the T4T or DBS books. Formulas don’t start movements, God does.

He sees your heart and efforts to obey. God is pleased with your willingness to join Him in seeing His kingdom multiply. Many DMM practitioners are exceedingly hard on themselves. This doesn’t move us forward toward multiplying movements.

What Does a DMM “Win” Look Like?

How do we continue to pursue the vision of DMMs while relaxing and allowing God to do what we cannot? We learn to celebrate small victories, giving God praise for what He is doing. We focus on the good, proclaiming joyfully the testimonies of what God has done. Evaluation continues as we discern whether what we are doing is leading to multiplication. When it’s not, we make adjustments, or start afresh.

- Did a disciple who had never shared the gospel, learn to tell their story (testimony)? Did they share it boldly with their relatives for the first time? That is a big win!
- Did a new believer hear a Bible story, reflect on it and decide to obey God's Word? Did it lead to transformation as they began to love their neighbors when previously they had hated them? That is also a major win!
- Did a Hindu woman, who thought she had no value, become a confident daughter of the King? Has she started discipling others? Training them to make more disciples? Huge victory! Give God glory.
- Are you starting to see a new DNA in the disciples, where everyone participates in the church? Are they seeing themselves as royal priests rather than only looking to the pastor or leader to do the work of the ministry? That's amazing!
- Are new disciples developing a burden to pray for their lost relatives and neighbors? That is a big step forward!

The list could go on and on. Each of these are important steps forward in the journey toward launching a Disciple Making Movement. Each one is worthy of real celebration.

Holding on to the Long-range End Game

I want to be clear. I am not saying to throw out the goal of a rapidly multiplying, multi-generational movement of disciples who make disciples. Don't discard the vision of seeing a movement launched that will grow quickly and organically. And I'm not saying that reaching 4th generation is a bad measuring point.

There is definite validity to DMM targets and benchmarks. They have been determined by those analyzing the growth of numerous movements around the world. These things give us something to aim for. Regularly tracking our progress toward them is important. It makes us more likely to realize the vision of releasing new movements in unreached places.

But don't forget to rejoice over each step along the way. Don't belittle that progress, or consider it less valuable. Reaching the fourth generation, or the 100 group mark is only another notch on the measuring stick. It isn't the ruler itself.

Our ultimate goal is to see God's glory cover the earth.

- Is God being glorified in your disciple-making attempts? Then you are successful as a DMM practitioner.
- Is your heart still full of faith that the God who spoke to you to pursue a movement is able to bring that to pass? Then God is thrilled with your trust in Him. He rejoices over you.


Launching a movement is amazing. Seeing a massive number of people meet Jesus, introducing others to him in a natural, organic way...it brings deep joy to our hearts. When God inspires unreached people to reach their own people, we stand in awe. Our mouths agape, we watch Him transform whole communities. We are humbled that we got a chance to participate with Him in that incredible transformative work.

DMMs are worth pursuing. They are not an interesting option or faddish idea. Without them and the multiplication they create, we will not see the overall percentage of Jesus followers in the world increase. The 31 largest Frontier Groups will never be impacted without the release of many, many new Disciple Making Movements.

We cannot give up. Nor can we allow ourselves to become disillusioned when our efforts don't meet the criteria of what a DMM is...yet. We must press on, try again, learn, grow, and adapt what we are doing until we see His kingdom spread like wildfire among unreached regions and peoples.

Let's stay encouraged by learning to joyously celebrate the significant wins that come along the way.

Whether you are just beginning to pursue a movement or have already seen one take place, stop for a moment to celebrate what God has done. Take time to notice and give thanks. He has been at work, both in you and in those you are trying to reach. What has He done that you can rejoice about? Let gratefulness and joy fill your heart.

It may seem like such small progress, but it is forward movement nonetheless. If you can't see anything, then ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to perceive what He is doing under the surface. After giving thanks, boldly and courageously cry out to Him for more. He will answer our faith-filled prayers for greater fruit. It's His great delight to give us the nations He told us to ask for (Ps. 2:8). 

Kingdom Kernels: The Reality of Weeds



A number of years ago, I was working on a Church Planting Movement (CPM) assessment team that was evaluating the presence of a large CPM in South Asia among Muslim-background believers. Our team divided into pairs as sub-teams to head to various parts of the country to interview dozens of precious believers—some new in their faith and some leaders of churches or networks of churches.

« Those that went to the oldest areas of the movement had an amazingly uplifting time of testimony after testimony of God bringing salvation to places that had previously been **demonic** strongholds. These teams were elated to say the least. They had seen God's hand working in power. »

When the various sub-teams returned to the capital, a wide range of emotions was evident based on the findings the various pairs had turned up. Those that went to the oldest areas of the movement had an amazingly uplifting time of testimony after testimony of God bringing salvation to places that had previously been demonic strongholds. These teams were elated to say the least. They had seen God's hand working in power.

On the other hand, a couple of the sub-teams (mine included) visited areas that more recently had seen breakthrough and didn't have a very long track-record of church formation and leadership development. Personally, I went into my interviews full of faith and hope for what we were going to learn about what God was doing in this movement.

However, as the interviews progressed, it soon became apparent in one interview of two young "pastors," that instead of *pastors* we had *imposters*. As can happen so easily in this region, these young men thought there might be financial gain in visiting us posing as pastors. With our Muslim-background translator, we very quickly realized that they were not even believers.

The good news is that we were able that day to share the gospel with them and baptize both of them in front of the witnesses of their friends. We were thrilled about that, but I was still disturbed that we were not seeing what we had been led to think we would see—a movement raging through the neighborhoods and villages. Was there really a movement here? Even as an optimist, this was the question I kept coming back to. My teammate, who was naturally more skeptical, concluded that there was not.

So, when the sub-teams reassembled, the emotions were mixed. To compound the problem, the team leader asked *me* to lead the debrief the next day to discuss what we had learned in this CPM assessment. I felt the least qualified to lead this because I felt disillusioned from what I had seen. Nevertheless, I agreed.

After a lot of questionable village fare, the team went out that night in search of some Western food. Instead, I

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begged off. I needed time to fast and pray. My heart was not ready to lead a discussion the next day. I spent much of the night fasting, praying and searching the Scriptures. I needed a breakthrough from God in the midst of my disillusionment.

« ...we were not seeing what we had been led to think we would see—a movement raging through the neighborhoods and villages. Was there really a movement here? Even as an optimist, this was the question I kept coming back to. My teammate, who was naturally more *skeptical*, concluded that there was not. »

After some time, the Spirit led me to the *Parable of the Weeds* (or *tares*, found in Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43). For years leading up to this incident and in the years since, I have worked hard to let the parables of the kingdom define my understanding of the kingdom and *not* let my opinion about movements define my understanding of the parables. In other words, no matter how radical, I had to let the Word guide my understanding in all things.

Reading and meditating on the Parable of the Weeds completely cleared up the disillusionment I had been experiencing and enabled me to have a clear and neutral mind as we moved into the following day of evaluating what we were learning. What changed?

Perhaps first was that Jesus told this parable immediately *after* telling that magnificent Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23) and its lesson that even though we will encounter bad soil that bears no fruit, we will also encounter soil that is “movement soil” – multiplies 30, 60 or 100 times. Jesus taught us to expect movements when the kingdom comes to a place. In many CPMs, we have observed that the first Person of Peace often results in 100 other people coming to faith, sometimes 60 and sometimes 30. We have seen similar patterns where churches multiply many times over. As new believers are taught to become followers of Jesus and fishers of men by the power of the Spirit, Acts-like movements are reoccurring all over the world.

« Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. »

(Matt. 10:16-18, ESV) »

So why tell the Parable of the Weeds (which feels a bit like dumping water on the fires of our enthusiasm) after this “growth” parable? To compound the matter, Jesus then returns to two more growth parables which feel even more remarkable in their potential for expansion—the Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven (Acts 13:31-33). Both of these teach that great movements of the kingdom will start from small, humble beginnings.

So, again, why this sobering, somewhat discouraging parable in the midst of the others that center on growth and hope? Before I answer that question, it is critical that we remember a basic rule of interpretation when it comes to parables. We must let each parable stand on its own and let images (word pictures) be interpreted unique to that parable. In other words, sometimes the image of “seed” refers to the word of the kingdom (Matt. 13:19). However, in the Parable of the Weeds, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom (Christians) and the bad seeds are the sons of the evil one (non-Christians; Matt. 13:38). The Greek word used for “weeds” or “tares” refers to an imposter plant – one that resembled wheat for a while before becoming evident that it was not wheat. This sounded to me a lot like the “imposters” we had led to faith who were posing as pastors.

The sower in the Weeds Parable does not refer to us but to *Jesus* as the good sower (Matt. 13:37) and the *devil* as the evil sower (Matt. 13:39). The reaping in the Weeds Parable has nothing to do with the reaping of souls for Jesus as a result of salvation. Instead, it refers to the end of the age when the angels will reap the sons of the kingdom for heaven and the sons of the evil one for hell (Matt. 13:40-42).

Jesus is describing a different reality by changing the images He uses in the Parable of the Weeds from those He used in the Parable of the Sower. That’s why it is critical to let each parable stand on its own and contribute its unique message to the truths of what the kingdom is like.

« The presence of *weeds* (imposters; non-believers) does not invalidate the presence of *wheat* (real believers), nor does the presence of *weeds* invalidate the presence of a *movement*. »

Why tell this sobering parable in the midst of the growth parables? *A reality check, plain and simple.*

Jesus didn't want His disciples expecting trouble-free growth and expansion of the kingdom. But instead, as He has done before, He is giving the disciples a reality check. He issued other warnings to His disciples in other growth contexts. For instance, He clearly foretold difficulties and persecution for disciples as they pursued the mission:

¹⁶ Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. (Matt. 10:16-18, ESV)

As I sat upon my bed that night in South Asia, pondering the truths from the Parable of the Weeds, God seared this truth, or reality check, into my soul:

REALITY CHECK: The presence of *weeds* (imposters; non-believers) does not invalidate the presence of *wheat* (real believers), nor does the presence of weeds invalidate the presence of a *movement*.

Armed with this simple truth, I was able to lead the group through a healthy debrief the next day. We came to realize that imposters, posers, non-believers with duplicitous motives and other similar problems do not mean that a movement is not raging around us. In fact, at times, it almost seems to be more likely that we would have a movement accompanied by many weeds. It appears from the parable that the devil is actively trying to 1) attack movements of the kingdom and 2) disillusion us or cause us to become jaded when evaluating movements.

For some reason, we develop this false idea that a movement means an absence of problems. Nowhere is that implied in Scripture. Rather it is usually the opposite:

- Jesus puts this reality check parable second in the line-up of growth parables.
- The book of Acts, which describes movement after movement, shows the attacks, difficulties, disbelief and false prophets that go with that.
- The epistles are clear that false teachers will arise and scatter many of the sheep.
- For years, I had this verse taped to my desk where only I could see it:

Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.
(Prov. 14:4, ESV)

Production comes from having oxen, and with them comes a lot of poop in the manger!

Whenever there is life and growth, expect problems. Smile and remember that these problems *might* be a sign that a lot of good growth is emerging as well.

We must be pretty naïve to think that God will move in power but that the devil will not follow along on the heels working his own wiles. We have an active adversary and need to be on the alert at all times. At the same time,



the lesson of the parable seems to imply that we should not focus on pulling up all the weeds¹. That is ultimately God's work. Instead, we must not become distracted weed-pullers but rather avid wheat cultivators.

« Though we don't prefer to have problems, they don't invalidate the work we do. Keep your eyes focused on the wheat and cultivate a Church Planting Movement in the power of the Spirit. »

By the end of our debrief time in South Asia, I think that most of my colleagues had circled around to trust the truth of the reality check above. In God's providence, in the larger country-wide movement, some of us had seen more wheat and some of us had seen more weeds.

Frankly, weeds no longer bother me. I actually find their presence slightly reassuring that I am seeing a *real* movement. In fact, I almost entitled this article "The Reassuring Reality of Weeds."

However, let me highlight three more truths to remember from this parable. They are three more reality checks:

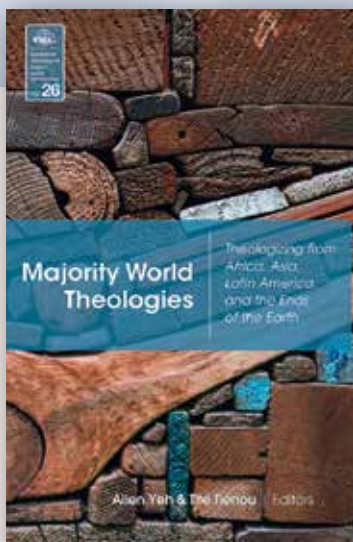
- **The presence of weeds is no guarantee of a CPM.** The most we can say from this parable is that they do not rule out its possibility. Remember that the enemy is at work in a variety of situations. I've seen imposter Christians planted in the deadest of churches.
- **The presence of weeds is no guarantee a great work is *about* to break out.** I've heard this one too many times, and this cannot be implied from this parable. We say, "Wow! The fact that the enemy is attacking must mean we are about to see a great breakthrough!" This is not necessarily true. The devil is no prophet. He does not foresee the future. He may just be attacking. Period.
- **The lack of weeds should make us a bit suspicious when a CPM case study is presented.** Movements have problems. There's no way around it. When presenting a case study of a movement, acknowledge those problems; if there are none, examine whether you really have a movement. If it sounds too good to be true, it may not be true. When I receive reports from those I disciple and train, I probe deeply to make sure that what we think is going on really is. I'm not worried about encountering problems along the way. They reassure me that we are dealing with the real world, a real enemy and a triumphant God!

So, let's press onward toward kingdom movements in every place. Let's do so with eyes wide open that the enemy is at work at the same time. Though we don't prefer to have problems, they don't invalidate the work we do. Keep your eyes focused on the wheat and cultivate a Church Planting Movement in the power of the Spirit.

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John. 4:4, ESV) 

¹ This does not mean that we ignore discipline which is a critical aspect of body life. However, we must not go on witch-hunts to root out all problems. If we do, the believers (wheat) get neglected in the process.

READER FAVORITES



Majority World Theologies

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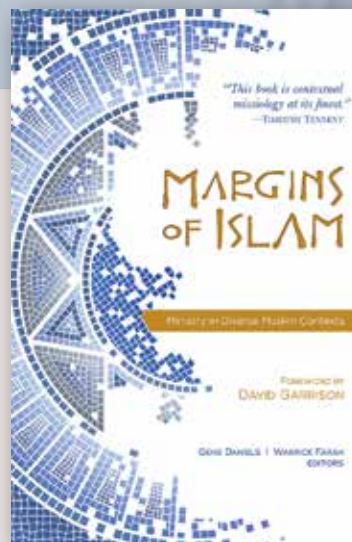
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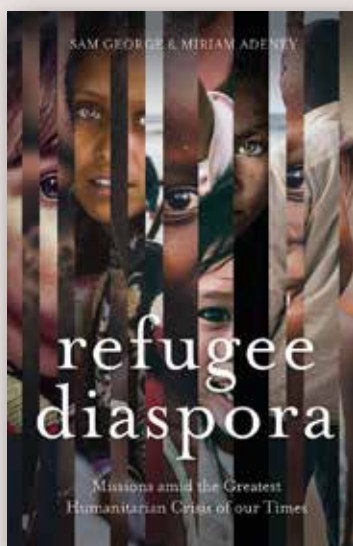
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Refugee Diaspora

Missions amid the Greatest Humanitarian Crisis of our Times

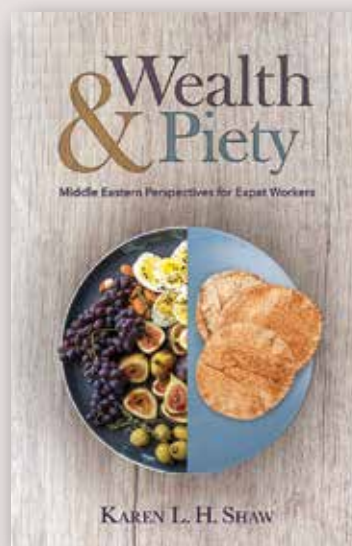
Sam George and Miriam Adeney (Editors)

Refugee Diaspora is a contemporary account of the global refugee situation and how the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ is shining brightly in the darkest corners of the greatest crisis on our planet. These hope-filled pages of refugees encountering Jesus Christ presents

models of Christian ministry from the front lines of the refugee crisis and the real challenges of ministering to today's refugees. It includes biblical, theological, and practical reflections on mission in diverse diaspora contexts from leading scholars as well as practitioners in all major regions of the world.

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Wealth and Piety

Middle Eastern Perspectives for Expat Workers

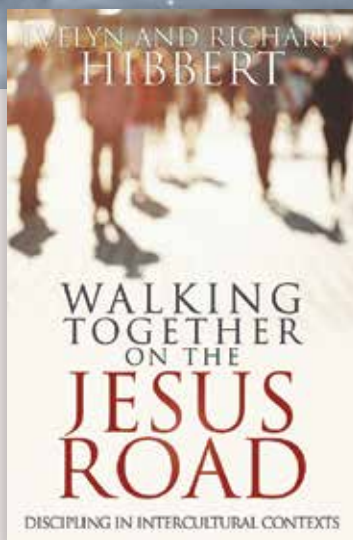
Karen L. H. Shaw (Author)

This book contains hundreds of verbatim observations about local and foreign wealth by thirty-five Middle Easterners from nine countries, representing all major religious groups. These comments are a mirror in which workers can see their own status and moral reputation as people of the region see them.

Combining biblical commentary, cultural analysis and practical advice for expats, *Wealth and Piety* is designed for both new and experienced workers, as well as mission leaders, administrators, supporters and donors. Although focused on the Middle East, much of the wisdom of this book is valuable for workers anywhere in the Muslim world or in societies characterized by patronage or an honor/shame orientation.

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Walking Together on the Jesus Road

*Discipling in Intercultural
Contexts*

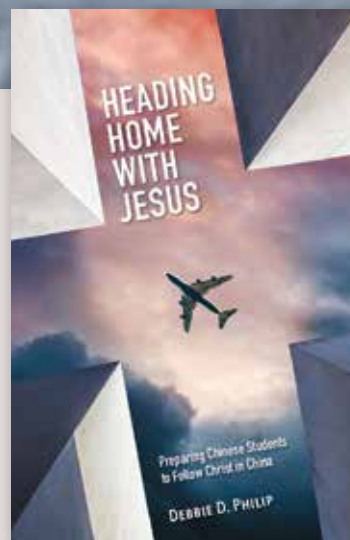
Evelyn and Richard Hibbert
(Authors)

Christians who serve Jesus among people from a different culture than their own often struggle to find a good way to disciple people. *Walking Together on the Jesus Road* addresses this need by guiding readers through three essential practices for making

disciples across cultures: listening to disciples to get to know them and their context, focusing on relationships with Christ, fellow disciples, and others, and enabling disciples to live out their faith in culturally relevant ways. These practices are the foundation for the long-term, intentional process of helping disciples from other cultures become more like Jesus. The book also engages with the practical challenges of enabling disciples to find and belong to a nurturing community of faith, and of contextualizing the way we teach the Bible.

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Heading Home With Jesus

*Preparing Chinese Students to
Follow Christ in China*

Debbie D. Philip (Author)

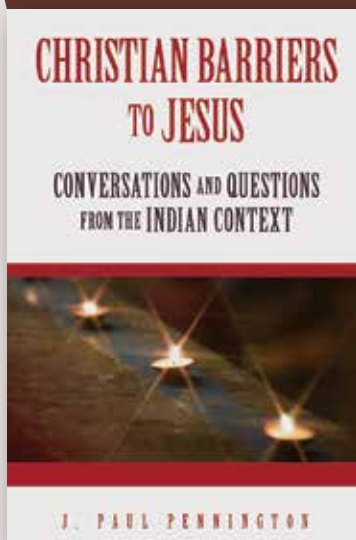
Thousands of Chinese students visit our churches and join Christian activities. Many even say they have become Christians while abroad. Some go on to make great contributions to Chinese church and society. Sadly, however, many fall away

after they return to China. Debbie Philip has visited hundreds of returnees. She offers a new perspective for understanding what happens when Chinese students encounter Christians abroad and what needs to happen if they are to continue following Christ after returning home. The life stories, illustrations, and suggestions in this book will help you understand and support Chinese returnees better as they prepare to go home.

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Readers' Choice Award from CatalystService.org



Christian Barriers to Jesus

*Conversations and Questions
from the Indian Context*

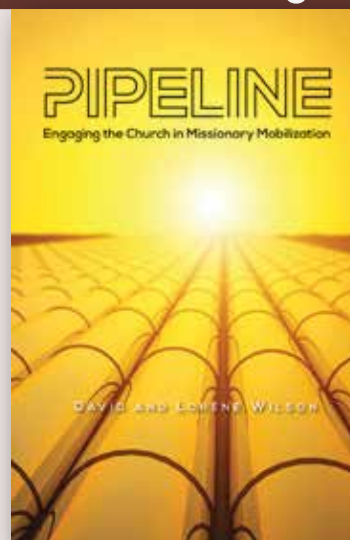
J. Paul Pennington (Author)

Hindus often have a high view of Jesus, but they struggle with traditions and customs around Christianity and church. *Christian Barriers to Jesus* uniquely challenges readers to examine nine barrier-producing Christian traditions.

This book suggests that we are not asking deep enough questions about what is essential for following Jesus and what is non-essential human invention. If we truly care about Jesus, we must honestly address where those non-essential traditions unnecessarily alienate millions of people from him.

List Price ~~\$22.99~~ • **Our Price \$18.39**

304 Pages | Paperback and eBook



PIPELINE

*Engaging the Church in
Missionary Mobilization*

David and Lorene Wilson
(Editors)

What would it look like if your church really took the last words of Jesus seriously? The Great Commission was not just a suggestion by our Lord, but an imperative mandate given to His followers. Missionary sending agencies are deploying workers to the field, but many of them come from disengaged churches that

are not producing well-equipped disciples. We need a fully integrated global supply chain—a pipeline—that has disciples as the precious commodity, as well as an effective infrastructure to distribute and replicate them around the globe. *Pipeline* seeks to re-engage the church in mobilizing the next generation of workers for the harvest. This is a collaboration of forty different authors from churches, agencies, and cross-cultural servants. As people in distant places wait for a messenger of hope and salvation, will your church venture into the pipeline?

List Price ~~\$19.99~~ • **Our Price \$15.99**

368 Pages | Paperback and eBook

Global Mission Work is Different for “Digital Natives”

BY **GREG PARSONS**
DIRECTOR OF
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
FRONTIER VENTURES

It is a privilege for me to be able to travel globally and connect with mission leaders. I have good friends all over the world. I often joke with conference organizers, “THANKS so much for organizing this event so I can meet some of my friends!”

One of the things that those leaders tell me is that they are concerned about some of the newer “digitally native” global workers. Many received their first smart phone as a child. This is different than my married son in his 30s—who is a native *computer* user—but he doesn’t mess much with a smart phone.

These new workers grew up with a phone in their hand. The vast majority of what they know—real or not—in the world has come through images in their hands. So, as they go, one concern is how they will adjust when “friends” are defined less by proximity and more by social media presence. That feeds into how and what they communicate from the field. In many ways, it redefines what “field” and “home” are—which can be good.

Many do a good job of posting photos of the culture and what it is like to live there, just like their peers back home. And, that can be helpful. But, after a while, it can look to their friends like they are merely on a continual “destination vacation”...so people may wonder “what are they actually *doing*?”

Some do not produce a regular communication about their work—

digital or paper. They don’t seem to share much in the way of prayer requests.

Of course, many agencies require communications and in security related locations, they are smart enough to know that they can’t even post anything on social media.

I’ve found the book, *12 Ways Your Smart Phone is Changing You* by Tony Reinke to be helpful. Tony doesn’t tell his readers what to decide, but merely points out the changes in the way we think and act. For example, he points out things like the “addiction to distraction.”

I wrote about the way smart phones are distracting us in our May-June 2017 issue of *MF*. This time, my focus is on how phones actually change the way we work, learn and adjust. They can impact in good and bad ways. Cultural adjustment is difficult from the start. Will you ever learn a language well if every time you make a mistake or feel embarrassed with a cultural miscue, you turn to Instagram or Facebook? Can you exercise diligent focus on something that is new and disruptive to you?

The social media platforms are specifically designed to keep you on them. High paid developers spend their lives keeping you on Facebook for five more minutes. They also tend to make people all look great. People don’t post photos when they are crying or suffering (usually). It seems like everyone is always having a *better* day than you—till it is your turn to post something.

One group trying to make a difference in training the next generation of workers is Radius International


(www.radiusinternational.org). They do intensive, immersive nine-month pre-field training for workers going to Unreached Groups around the world. Among many elements of their training, like living in tight quarters, they do not allow them to have a mobile phone—smart or otherwise—except for one call to their family on Sundays each week.

Some from this training have found it hugely beneficial in helping new younger workers “detox” from the constant distractions of smart phones. That learned ability to focus has helped several I am aware of learn language and culture better.

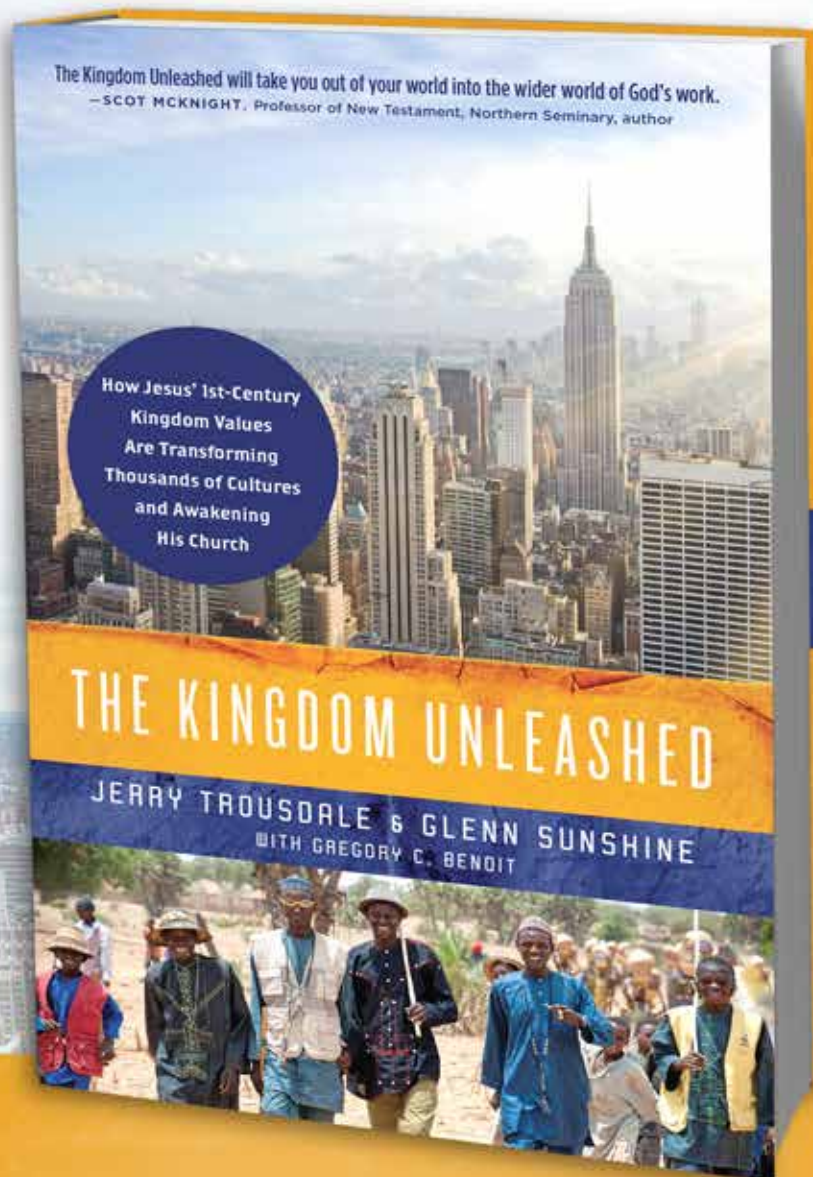
There is no question that it is more challenging and complicated for everyone engaged in any kind of mission work to communicate well to those who pray and give—partly because the prayers and givers are distracted too!

Think about this for yourself (as well as those you are mentoring/discipling):

- How much time do you spend on distractions (be careful as you define that)?
- How easily are you distracted? Do you (like me) often forget why you picked up your phone?
- Is it distracting you from time in the Word of God or in prayer? Do you spend more time playing games or on social media than in the disciplines of faith?

If you have a suggestion, we might use your ideas in our upcoming podcast—focused on various themes of interest to globally-minded servants around the world. 

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