



LET'S FINISH THE RACE TO FOSTER MOVEMENTS IN ALL PEOPLES!



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

On very rare occasions we take the time in *MF* to honor a remarkable individual who has made a significant contribution to our understanding and pursuit of the ultimate goal of world evangelization—to provide access to the gospel to every person and to make disciples within all peoples so that God would receive the glory He deserves. (Rev. 5:9; 7:9) Dr. Steve Smith is just such a person. Through his books, *Kingdom Kernels* columns in *MF* and leadership of the marvelous 24:14 Coalition, Steve pointed the way forward to achieving the goal of movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025, thereby beginning the process of providing access to the gospel to every person.

Looking to the book of Acts for strategic inspiration, Steve took note of the movements to Christ that were occurring in abundance in the apostle Paul's day, and asked, "Why not in our day?" Indeed, why not? Through Steve's work and that of countless others, Kingdom Movements are now taking place all over the world, where disciples are making disciples and churches are planting churches faster than the growth in population.

Pioneering a "New Reality" in Missions

Steve was a pioneer in revealing to the rest of us this new reality in missions—it is possible to reach all

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peoples through movements; these movements are real and God is using them to transform the lives of millions around the world. Through his example of actually fostering a movement, he demonstrated that working with the Holy Spirit to foster movements is possible and no fluke. Through his writings, Steve helped to transform our understanding of how to successfully carry out God's mission in this world through Spirit-empowered movements.

The stark truth is that many mission practices, well intentioned as they are, simply do not lead to the development of movements, while the methods of mission Steve and others have highlighted, do. L.D. Waterman presents this simple choice in his article, *Daring to Succeed*, starting on page 24. We now know what works in fostering movements. It would seem to be a smart choice to choose those methods of mission that God is using and blessing to create movements versus those methods that cannot even keep up with population growth. But change is difficult for people, even when it is a smart choice.

A Passion for Urgency

Steve's great desire was to see Matthew 24:14 fulfilled in our generation. He wrote, "One generation will rise up to be the final generation that experiences these things and welcomes the Lord.

Will we aspire to that? Will we steel ourselves for what is required to get to no place left, and to perhaps welcome our Lord's return? Will we win for the Lamb the just reward of His suffering—a Bride from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation? We have the resources, but do we have the resolve? May we be found worthy!" Indeed.

You can see this same passion for sacrificial urgency in our lead article, starting on page 8, which includes an adapted excerpt from Steve's book, *Hastening*, the first book in his two part *No Place Left* saga. Then in the following article, "The War That Finally Ends," by Steve Smith and Stan Parks, we get practical about what you can do to help reach the 24:14 Coalition goal of movement engagements in every people and place by 2025. Please take note of the practical ways that you can be involved listed towards the end of that article.

It seems such a tragic loss to God's kingdom mission for Steve to have been taken at such a young age. But God and His mission in this world are bigger than just one person. Partly due to Steve and his mobilization efforts, there are many who have caught the vision of movements in every people and place and will now run with it. Steve faithfully ran the race God set before him. Steve's part in the race is over. He has passed the baton to us and it is now up to us to finish the race to foster movements in all peoples.

Kingdom Movements: 950 and Growing!

Notice the wonderful jump in the number of Kingdom Movements displayed on our cover. This number has gone from 708 to 950, a leap of 242 or 34%, just since our last issue. In less than two years the number of recorded Kingdom Movements has nearly doubled. There are currently over 3,000 movement engagements taking place around the world. The overall number of Kingdom Movements is rising and is likely to continue rising as a growing number of these movement engagements are passing the threshold of what it means to be considered a movement. See my editorial in the May-June 2019 issue for more on what is considered a movement and how this number is derived.

Do you sense it? Do you feel the momentum building as God is working sovereignly through these Kingdom Movements to bring millions of new believers into relationship with King Jesus? Just since January 2018, the number of people involved in these movements has grown from 49 million to 73.4 million. That is nearly a 50% increase in less than a year and a half. At this current rate the number of believers involved in these movements will double in less than every two years. What we are witnessing in our day through these book-of-Acts like movements is an exponential growth of the gospel. What seemed impossible in decades past—providing access to the gospel to every person within every people in our lifetime—is now an achievable reality because of these Kingdom Movements.

Can We Hasten the Return of Jesus?

Implicit in the title of Steve's book, *Hastening*, and the name of the

24:14 Coalition is the idea that what we do in relation to world evangelization can hasten the day when Jesus will return. God's covenant with Abraham was that "through you (Abraham) all the families on earth will be blessed." Gen. 12:3. We see the fulfillment of this promise in Rev. 5:9 and 7:9 with every tribe, tongue, people and nation worshipping Jesus. God's concern has always been that all the peoples on earth would receive the blessing of a new relationship with God through Jesus. Matt. 24:14 says that Jesus' return would be after all peoples have heard the gospel. So reaching all peoples is a condition of Jesus' return. Therefore, the sooner we reach all peoples, the sooner Jesus will return, i.e. we can hasten His return. But Steve himself believed that Jesus could come at any time, and so do I, even though from my human perspective I know there are still 7,000 unreached peoples left to reach. God alone knows when the promise to Abraham has been fulfilled and the conditions mentioned in Matt. 24:14 have been met. God has perfect knowledge of these things and we do not.

Even when the conditions of Matt. 24:14 have been met, there is nothing in the passage to indicate a precise time period between the condition being met and when Jesus will return. Our job has always been to go and make disciples of all peoples. One thing that we can hasten is the completion of the goal of fostering movements in all peoples. We should certainly hasten to do so out of obedience to what Jesus has asked us to do, for the sake of lost souls and for the glory of God.

In Pursuit of a New Type Church

The first issue of *Mission Frontiers* I ever worked on was the June-

October 1990 edition featuring "The Passing of a Giant," noting the passing of Dr. Donald McGavran at the age of 90. McGavran's work on understanding people movements and the dangers of extraction evangelism are vital to our understanding of how to do missions in our day. McGavran recognized that a change in our mission methods was essential. He pointed out in 1982 that "**the common Western approach to 'planting a church' inhibits movements rather than encourages them.**"

While McGavran likely envisioned "visible" churches in dedicated buildings, what we are seeing in these Kingdom Movements is a return to first-century, book-of-Acts like, family-based churches in homes. As you read through the book of Acts, you will notice that believers gathered together in homes as families which often included extended family members and servants, but no dedicated church buildings. The modern Kingdom Movements reflect this pattern as the gospel multiplies through disciples making disciples and home based churches multiplying as the gospel spreads from family to family. This is increasingly how the unreached peoples are being reached.

Taking a Break

For the next issue of *Mission Frontiers*, Sept./Oct. 2019, Rebecca Lewis, the daughter of our founder, Dr. Ralph Winter, will be taking over for me as a guest editor. She will be providing the editorial for that issue. I will be taking a short, one-issue sabbatical for some much needed rest and reflection. I will be back in the editor's chair for the Nov.-/Dec. 2019 issue. Have a great summer and I will see you back here in the fall. 