



STEPPING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Q & A with Marv Newell

Marv Newell is the Executive Director of CrossGlobal Link, an association of mission agencies, formerly known as the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (IFMA). He served as a missionary for 15 years in Papua, Indonesia, where he was involved in theological education. He then served six years as area director for East Asia with The Evangelical Alliance Mission. Following that he taught missions and intercultural studies for seven years at Moody Graduate School before assuming the directorship of CrossGlobal Link three years ago.

Q. Marv, you are in the process of writing a book on the Great Commission passages of Scripture. What are you learning from this as it relates to discipleship?

A. Making disciples is an integral part of the Great Commission. Jesus gave the Great Commission to the disciples five different times over a period of forty days following His resurrection. In John 20, the first one, He gave the model for mission; He says to model Him when doing mission. Then a week later in Mark 16:15, He mentions the magnitude of the task,

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and He says specifically there we are to evangelize the whole world. But next, in Matthew 28, He commanded that we “make disciples”; making disciples is the methodology He has given us for world evangelization.

And He said make disciples of *all* the nations, so we know how far we are to do this.

There are three processes in making disciples. There’s the going out (“go”)—that’s the initial reaching others aspect. There’s the bringing in (“baptizing”), which is initiation of new converts as they identify with the Church through their baptism. Then there’s the changing over (“teaching them to observe everything I’ve commanded you”) or the al-



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tering of lives through transformational teaching—teaching that actually positively impacts peoples’ worldview and moral conduct—the growing in maturity in Christ. So Jesus made it very clear that making disciples is an integral part in what we do in world evangelization.

Q. How do you think we are doing today in terms of both the Church and the missions movement in fulfilling the Great Commission?

A. Jesus gave three metrics to employ when measuring how far along the task has progressed before it can be considered completed: the *individual metric*: the gospel proclaimed until every human being has had an opportunity to clearly hear its presentation (Mk. 16:15 “all creatures”), the *ethnic metric*: the gospel penetrating into every distinct ethnic group found on earth (Mt. 28:19, Lk. 26:47 “all peoples”), and the *geographical metric*: the gospel proclaimed from Jerusalem until it reaches the remotest parts of the earth (Acts 1:8, Mk 16:15 “all the world”).

I would say that we’ve done a commendable job geographically, getting the gospel globally positioned around the world into every country and geographical region we know about. That’s unquestionably the best success we’ve had. However, that’s just one metric we’re to use. The second metric is reaching into all

have good outreaches going on that make wonderful reports and exciting stories, but we’re not then making the effort to stay long enough and dig deep enough into a culture, to learn the worldview and the mindset of these newly reached people. We need to inculcate Scriptural principles so deeply that their new faith is not just a veneer over their old beliefs, but becomes the rooted belief that makes up the warp and woof of their entire life. And that to me is the weakest component in reaching peoples who are then transformed, not simply evangelized.

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Q. What would you like to see happen at Tokyo 2010 to move the Church forward in this area?

A. We are going to have people at Tokyo 2010 from all over the globe, which demonstrates the fruit of the Church being globally successful in propagation. We’re go-

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the people groups. And we know presently that of the 24,000 people groups, about 8,000 or so still need to be reached. So we still have a lot of work to do in this regard. And we know that if we reach the people groups we’re able in turn to reach the individuals that are within them. That’s the individual metric of “all creatures.” So we’ve done well as far as geographical penetration is concerned, but in actually making disciples where there are genuine transformed lives in those regions, that’s the part we seem to be lacking the most.

Q. Why is that? Is there a lack of emphasis on discipleship in our missionary training programs?

A. I don’t think there is a lack of emphasis, so much as a lack of implementation. I’m wondering if those who are taught the principles of doing that very thing, themselves don’t make it a priority, and therefore it just doesn’t get passed along. And so we

ing to have representatives there from every continent and from many countries and cultures. What we need to do is impress on every attendee that the task is far from complete. The reaching into people groups is vitally important, but then to go the next step, which is usually the harder step, of digging into cultures and building long-term relationships so that transformational teaching not only takes place but is evidenced by changed lives. That’s the weak link that needs more emphasis in our mission.

Q. In terms of closure, what are some of the cautions to watch for as we pursue pioneering the gospel in unreached peoples?

A. I believe Ralph Winter had it absolutely right when he helped us to understand that we need to be reaching into every ethnic group. However, I think that we now need to take a step beyond that, and make sure we have enough momentum within those groups that will help the transformational disciple-

ship process be nurtured along within them.

Many times, in order to justify focusing solely on the least-reached groups, some have complained that we have too many Christian workers and missionaries in the already reached areas of the world. But the reason there are those workers in those places is to make sure transformational discipleship is taking place. So we need to bring a balance to those two polar positions, and I'm hoping that the Tokyo 2010 meeting will help bring that about.



Q. You gather North American mission leaders together

each year with CrossGlobal Link. Why is it important to do this, and why are global consultations of mission leaders needed every now and then?

A. I've discovered in my role as a director of a missions association that many mission leaders (CEOs) are not trained in missions. Many come from a business background or the pastorate, with very little orientation to the field of missions. These are in a learning curve and they need the exposure we have to offer. For others that are trained in mis-

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sions, they need to be continually sharpening their thinking to be able to competently stay on the cutting edge. As iron sharpens iron, every mission leader needs to be hearing what's being discussed and then be able to channel those

discussions back into their organizations, so they're tracking and keeping pace with the general over-all missions movement.

I just conducted a survey of some of my mission leaders to ask them what they value most about being part of an association like CrossGlobal Link. What rises to the top every time is that they appreciate the opportunity to meet together, to fellowship, to talk about ideas, for mutuality, for prayer and discussion. It's a high value, and I believe we're providing just that at Tokyo 2010. Here's another forum for this to take place on the global level.

Q. How can Western missions partner more effectively with non-Western missions?

A. We need to meet and participate with them as equals, and be willing to listen to their ideas and

concerns better than we have in the past. I think we will be more respected and have better acceptance, and we will find ourselves actually doing more worthy things by being willing to interface with that attitude, rather than from a sense of superiority that we mistakenly think we have, based on more education, more experience, or more money.

Q. Do non-Western missions have anything to teach us?

A. They sure do! They have a lot to teach us when it comes to patience, when it comes to seeing the bigger global picture, when it comes to relationship building on a level of trust that is long term—and not just employing business models that come and go as fads, when it comes to an innocent dependency on the Holy Spirit, and not always being in a rush. There is much that comes from their perspectives and worldviews that we can learn from.

Q. What do you see as the role of Western missions today?

A. Our role has changed to some degree because we in the West have changed. We are quick to send out workers whose roles are primarily that of consultants or theological educators—in other words to help overseas churches with things that they indeed need. But this puts us more in a specialty area, and I have noticed that we are getting away from fielding church planters and church planting teams in the numbers we had in the past. I think part of this trend is the Western mentality today that is more short-term oriented. The mindset is that I will give six or eight years to missions before getting on with the rest of my life. However, in church planting where workers must acquire cultural competencies, gain language proficiently and build meaningful relationships, they know it is long-term—fifteen, twenty, thirty years. Additionally, we have limited ourselves because of our orientation now to doing things quickly, in short segments, and then moving on to new priorities. This makes it difficult for the rest of the world to trust us for long-term engagements.

Q. Any final comments?

A. I'm excited about the Tokyo 2010 gathering and I hope that many other mission leaders see the unique value of it. All who attend will benefit by rubbing shoulders with those who are specifically positioned in "mission structures" (as Ralph Winter called them), which are still driving missions today. Of the various global forums slated for 2010, there will be none better that affords global mission leadership interaction. f