

Messy Mangers, Misunderstandings & Movements



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Anyone who has been involved in church-planting movements knows these two truths: Church-planting movements are messy, and they can be easily misunderstood and thereby missed altogether. The first of these truths the church planter can do very little to prevent, but can take comfort in when his or her ministry proves to be a messy one. Proverbs 14:4 makes it clear that, “Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox” (NASB). When training church planting partners (kingdom oxen) to produce exponentially reproducing healthy churches (kingdom revenue), you can count on a messy manger.

So we shouldn’t be alarmed when disappointments, failures, and surprises (both pleasant and unpleasant) befall our work; it is inherent to the church-planting movement process. The second truth, on the other hand, that CPMs are easily misunderstood and too often missed because of this misunderstanding, presents a challenge that we have the potential to *collectively* mitigate.

We begin with the theological foundation that the Great Commission is not an individual mandate, it is a corporate one. Christ gave the Great Commission to his body, the church. Furthermore, Christ promised to accompany and equip his body to accomplish the Commission he had given them. More often than not, our failure to realize this great truth comes when we launch

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out to achieve it alone. Ironically, it is the very strength of the body of Christ today, with its 40,000 denominations, that threatens to be its weakness. Insights and breakthroughs in one corner of the world, could be vitally needed yet remain unknown to the other side of the world. Learning from one another is not simply pooling our collective human understanding, it is learning from the body of Christ. For Christians, it is not a luxury, or even an option; it is imperative.

Nowhere is this issue more pressing than for those who work in the 10/40 Window, where the bulk of the world’s least evangelized peoples still await the good news of salvation. Some of the brightest lights in the body of Christ are serving across this dark span of the earth, and yet time and time again as these lights, burning in isolation, eventually flicker and die. Providing these frontier workers with new insights, encouraging stories of breakthroughs and even cautionary tales of fruitless experiments is like pumping oxygen into their flame; it fuels their faith and enhances their prospects for completing the unfinished task among their people.

If the Great Commission truly is the Lord’s work, then no single church planter can lay claim to complete understanding of the church-planting process. If the battle for lost souls is to be won, then we will need the wisdom of the whole body of Christ to accomplish it. Proverbs 20:18 states, “Prepare plans by consultation, And make war by wise guidance” (NASB). Similarly Proverbs 24:6 assures us, “For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory” (NASB). God never intended for His church to storm the gates of Hades as individuals alone. Victory is found in the *abundance* of *wise* counselors.

Messiness and misunderstanding are unshakeable companions to church-planting movements.

But with wise counsel we can grow in our



understanding of God's ways to reach the lost world. Fortunately most church planting practitioners do seek wise counsel and freely share what they learn through experience with others. Most recognize that the task is simply too big to tackle alone and willingly submit to one another in unity toward common purpose in Christ. Increasingly both church planting experts and practitioners have been freely sharing biblical best practices in church planting with others. As a result, effective biblical methods that move the body toward healthy church planting are spreading.

Such was the impetus behind the development of the Church Planting Movements website (www.churchplantingmovements.com). Church-planting practitioners and experts around the world who saw the need for a shared forum for best practices in church planting, have created the site to be a hub where church planting questions and ideas are freely shared and exchanged. As such, any fellow practitioner can

freely register and join the site as a CPM insider. Articles and best practices in church planting are added regularly for review and comment, and tools and case studies are freely available for download. There is also an insider forum where any practitioner can ask questions of other practitioners or simply post their own best practices for discussion and critique. Ultimately, however, the site depends on fellow practitioners in church planting to make it a useful tool for others.

Churchplantingmovements.com exists to link or feature best practices in church planting materials from any Christian source. Know a good book or tool from which other practitioners might benefit? Post it to a forum for others. The church-planting task is large, and much kingdom growth still needs to take place. Today God is moving among His people like never before to will and to work for His own glory. Let us join together under Christ to advance his kingdom, making His glory known among the nations.