

# FOSTERING MULTIGENERATIONAL MOVEMENTS BY EQUIPPING BELIEVER-PRIESTS



## MIKE SHIPMAN

Mike Shipman is a Church Planting Movement training specialist who lives with his wife and children in Asia. Having experienced firsthand a multiplying movement of new believers and churches among his Muslim unreached people group, Mike trains others to implement productive, field-proven methods. Mike's greatest joy is seeing those he trains experience increased fruitfulness as they abide in Christ and do His works (John 14:12).

*In Jul/Aug 2013 MF reported on the Any-3 model of evangelism adapted for Muslim contexts from Jesus' example in John 4. What follows is a complementary insight from this same movement among Muslims.*

I moved from traditional church ministry to pursuing a generational church movement in Jan. 2005. A desire to reach the lost and an honest look at how the first-century world was discipled in reproducing churches inspired us to “Re-en-ACT” our approach to the Great Commission. As a result we’ve had approximately 1000 generational groups and churches started in our people group, and by our friends using basically the same approach we’re using.

We live outside our people group, but I have personally led two to faith who have started generational church streams. Also, a volunteer team I was with led another person to faith who started a large generational stream. As a result, my primary role shifted from evangelism to training.

Discipling these new believers as partner-priests rather than students has fostered generational growth. A 2010 study of our movement showed that more than one third of all groups and churches were G4 and beyond (four or more generations beyond the church planting team). The percentage of G4+ groups and churches has probably increased since that time. At least one church is G10.

We focus on training disciples to abide in Christ in order to disciple the world through reproducing churches. In everything we model, we assist the new local believers to begin doing themselves as soon as possible.

While abiding in Christ, we boldly and relationally seek to lead people to faith using the Any-3 (Anyone, Anywhere, Any Time) approach.<sup>1</sup> We teach them obedience in immediate baptism, following the pattern in Acts. And we teach them obedience in multiplying while they are being discipled. This results in groups started and temporarily led by the new believer until the churches appoint leaders (Titus 1:5). Most groups efficiently become churches.

Routine worship occurs at least weekly in the 3/3rds process of T4T.<sup>2</sup> This encourages believers in obeying all of Christ’s commands and becoming complete in Christ. Discipleship naturally occurs as believers study and apply the Word together, with goals and accountability for obedience. Once churches form, our attention is given to developing the churches and equipping the leaders in a reproducing way.

Leaders of churches receive on the job training through bi-weekly meetings, led by teachers from the local networks.<sup>3</sup> These meetings focus on accountability (going) and a deeper lesson (growing). Leadership training is the key to sustaining multi-generational growth and going deeper in the Word. Going further and growing

deeper must be accomplished simultaneously in leadership development to insure a healthy growing movement.

The key to multi-generational growth is simple obedience to the Great Commission. Treat every new believer as a 100% priest, who has Christ's authority and presence for the three tasks of the Great Commission—going (proclaiming the gospel), baptizing, and teaching them to obey all of Christ's commands (beginning with the Great Commission itself).

Every believer is a priest, who does every one of these tasks in order to disciple and plant churches among every kind of people. The key to generational growth is training the new believer as a priest, rather than as a student.

As long as believers are discipled as 100% priests and they obey the Great Commission, generations of new believers and churches can follow indefinitely. Except for Christ's Second Coming, only two realities stop the Great Commission: 1) The new believer doesn't obey it, or 2) The person who led them to Christ doesn't train and send them to obey it.


Training the new believer-priest to abide in Christ and His Word while obeying the Great Commission connects the branch intimately to the Vine, guaranteeing increasing fruitfulness (Jn 15:1–8).

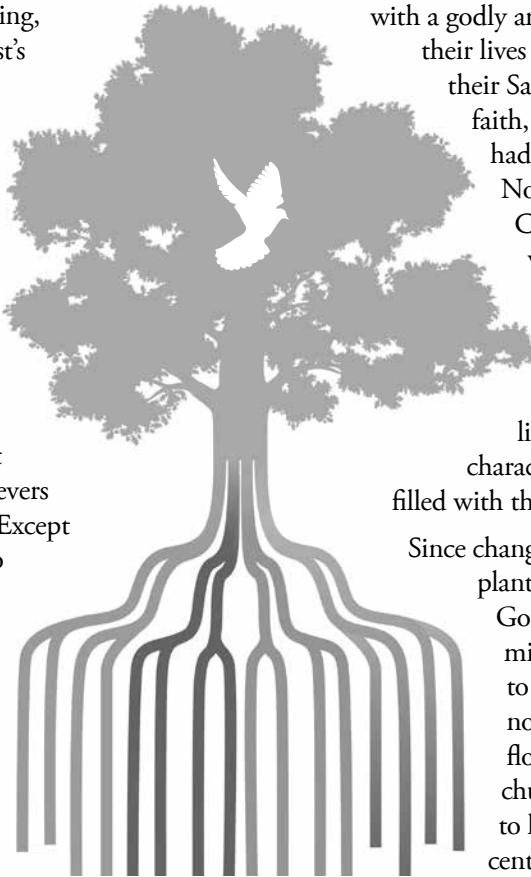
Abiding in Christ through prayer, His Word and His works empowers the new believer to experience Christ intimately and powerfully as He accomplishes His work through them. One of the greatest joys of experiencing an Acts-type generational church movement is seeing ordinary new

believers become apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11–12) as they grow in grace and come to maturity.

I smile as I recall the faces of ordinary people who have become outstanding believer-priests since surrendering themselves to Christ. I know several octogenarians with a godly ambition to live the remainder of their lives in holiness, with great zeal to see their Savior glorified. When they came to faith, they were stained by past sins and had wasted the majority of their lives. Now, they live with relentless zeal for Christ and the spread of the gospel, willing to die for Him if called upon to do so. They have started house church networks which are leading hundreds of others to Christ. Their lives and the lives of their families reflect Christ's character, and when they speak they are filled with the wisdom of God.

Since changing to an Acts-type church planting paradigm, we have experienced God's power in many Acts-type miracles. But the believers are quick to remind us, "It's about the gospel, not the miracles." Seeing the gospel flow from person to person, and churches multiplying from house to house, glorifies Christ in the 21st century in the same way that the

works of Acts glorified Him in the 1st century. 



**SINCE CHANGING TO AN ACTS-TYPE CHURCH PLANTING PARADIGM, WE HAVE EXPERIENCED GOD'S POWER IN MANY ACTS-TYPE MIRACLES. BUT THE BELIEVERS ARE QUICK TO REMIND US, "IT'S ABOUT THE GOSPEL, NOT THE MIRACLES."**

<sup>1</sup> Shipman, Mike. *Anyone, Anywhere, Any Time: Lead Muslims to Christ Now!* WIGtake Resources, 2013. (See summary in the in the Jul/Aug 2013 issue of *Mission Frontiers*.)

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Steve and Kai, Yang. *T4T: A Discipleship Re Revolution*. WIGtake Resources, 2011. (Using the 3/3rds process of T4T instills multiplication in the new believers' and churches' DNA from the beginning. We now have more than 10,000 professing believers, some of whom are likely G15+.)

<sup>3</sup> Network teachers are selected from each network of churches, who are trained centrally by leaders from the movement.