



GETTING TO NO PLACE LEFT: IT'S ALL ABOUT MOVEMENTS NOW



BY RICK WOOD
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I WANT TO GIVE A huge “Thank you” to Jeff Minard and Robby Butler for standing in for me over the last three issues. As they mentioned, I was busy rebuilding my house after a lightning strike and fire. At the same time I was recovering from a number of medical procedures. I became more familiar with the policies and procedures of insurance companies than I ever wanted to. I am very glad to be back with you again for this issue of *MF*.

AN HISTORIC STEP FORWARD TOWARDS FINISHING THE TASK

There are times in the history of the Church when God enables his people to take a major step forward in their understanding of what Jesus has asked us to do. These are dramatic shifts in direction. I think of the Protestant Reformation that put the Bible and biblical faith into the hands of average Jesus followers. The modern missionary movement that started with William Carey is another major landmark.

Now in our day we are experiencing another major breakthrough in our understanding of how to pursue world evangelization so the gospel is widely available and understandable to every person within every people.

The key to finishing the task of world evangelization is the *fostering of movements* to Christ within every people and region on earth until there is No Place Left where the gospel is not available. See the article starting on page 9. It is not enough just to go to every people group and plant a Western style church that does not make disciples and does not establish new churches. We must learn how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in order to see thousands of rapidly growing movements around the world. It is **the only way** that every person will be able to have access to the gospel.

Now researchers like Jim Haney of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) are recognizing this reality and are creating the means to track and measure these movements. See the article, “Hitting the Mark,” starting on page 15. Jim confirms what I just said above, “**Donald McGavran pointed out in 1982 that the common Western approach to ‘planting a church’ inhibits movements rather than encourages them.** It is not enough

to plant a church and hope God will initiate a movement. To collaborate with the Holy Spirit in launching movements, **we must pursue God for generations of reproducing disciples and churches and teach them to reproduce by obeying all that Jesus commanded.**”¹

Notice what Jim says here, “The common Western approach to ‘planting a church’ *inhibits movements*”—it actually stands in the way of completing world evangelization. This means our Western approach to growing the church is broken. We need a new approach in order to foster movements. Jim goes on to provide that new approach: “we must pursue God for **generations of reproducing disciples and churches.**” That is what makes a movement, a movement—rapidly reproducing disciples and churches, one generation after another. These disciples reproduce by means of “**obeying** all that Jesus commanded.” This includes Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples.” As Jim says in his article, “**Movements are how peoples both become and remain reached.**”

THE OLD IS NEW AGAIN

This new understanding is actually a return to what God had revealed to the early church. Jesus modeled the

most effective way to make disciples and his disciples ran with this method until Paul was able to say in Romans 15:17 and onward, “from *Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ*. But now that there is *no more place for me to work in these regions...*” Paul could say that there was no place left for him to work because he had been pursuing a model of ministry where he equipped others to make disciples who went on to make more disciples until there was indeed *no place left* where the gospel was not available. Paul and the other apostles were *fostering movements* that penetrated every people, region and level of society.

Paul’s goal of complete saturation of gospel availability is now the goal of a growing movement of disciple makers and church planters appropriately titled, No Place Left. We introduce this new coalition starting on page 9. But No Place Left is not the only network that is seeking to complete world evangelization by fostering these movements of discipleship. The Every Ethne network and their Ephesus Vision seeks to foster cascading “Ephesus Movements” of disciple making among the most neglected unreached peoples. They refer to “cascading movements” because you can see from the book of Acts that movements “cascade” beyond the limits of a people group or region into other people groups and regions. They have also seen this reality play out in present day movements around the world.

This new understanding that movements of discipleship and church planting are the essential key component for the completion of world evangelization will require us to change the way we think about the way we do church and


its mission. Some attitudes and ideas about ministry will have to change. Here are a few.

1. Church is not about attracting growing numbers of people to an event once a week for a lecture/sermon, but rather about being a training center where followers of Jesus are equipped to share their faith and the gospel with their relational network of family and friends. Each person should be equipped to lead people to Jesus and train them to go and do likewise. We are all to be a kingdom of priests who are actively living on mission with God.
2. It has been all too common for churches and ministries from the West to go around the world to “teach” people how to do ministry. Given the fact that our western methods of church planting have inhibited movements rather than fostering them, I suggest that those of us from the West begin to go as humble learners to see how these discipleship movements are actually fostered and developed.
3. It is likewise common for believers in the West to think that their donations of money can speed the spread of the gospel around the world. When it comes to fostering movements of discipleship among unreached peoples, outside money is more of a hindrance than a help. David Garrison, who literally wrote the book on Church Planting Movements, has stated in *MF* before that there is nothing that will kill a growing CPM faster than outside funds. We must understand that these movements grow as individuals obey Jesus in every aspect of their lives including sacrificial giving. Outside

funds short circuit this giving and is not a reproducible means of ministry from one generation of disciples to the next.

As the Body of Christ worldwide, we have a choice to make. We either continue to do ministry as usual, which hinders the development of movements, or we make it our goal to foster movements of discipleship until there is no place left.

A NEW LOOK FOR MISSION FRONTIERS

Some of our readers may be a little surprised at the new look and feel of our printed edition of *Mission Frontiers*. Yes, for the first time in our 38-year history *MF* is now being printed in full color throughout its 48 pages. We have also gone to a coated stock of paper that is a little lighter than in recent issues. We have decided to go this direction in order to improve the look and feel of the magazine for a wider potential audience. I do want to assure our subscribers that we are being good stewards of your subscription dollars as we make this change. This move to full color actually will cost us less than continuing with our previous format. Please let us know what you think of our new look. We hope you enjoy it. 

¹ Donald McGavran, 1997 *Mission Frontiers* Nov.-Dec., 13-16, “A Church for Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject.”

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