



REDISCOVERING THE BIBLICAL CHURCH THAT CAN REACH EVERY PEOPLE



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EDITORIAL

HOW DO YOU GO about making disciples among a people who are regularly on the move and do not show up for meetings at regular times? What does a church look like and act like when a people is never in one place for very long? Nomadic peoples present the worldwide missionary enterprise with one of its greatest challenges as we seek to foster movements of discipleship and church planting among them. These nomadic peoples live in some of the harshest areas of the world—from baking deserts to frozen tundras. Those who would seek to reach them have a daunting task ahead of them. Yet, we know the promise of Scripture says that there will be people present before the throne of God from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. This promise was made to Abraham, who was a nomad. God loves nomads like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, etc. Somehow God managed to establish biblical faith and worship within these nomadic people. We must learn to

do the same, not only in nomadic peoples, but in people groups all over the world, who likewise have unique challenges to establishing movements of discipleship among them.

The harsh reality of the difficulty of reaching nomadic peoples forces us to face the key challenge that the way we do church and mission must change in order to have any hope of reaching all people groups and making the gospel available to every person. The simple reality is that our typical Western way of doing church will not work in reaching nomads and the many other types of unreached peoples. It is also clear that the model of doing church that is so familiar to us in the West is not even effective in reaching our own Western culture. In general, we are not equipping disciples to make more disciples generation after generation. Our churches are not reproducing themselves either. We have inherited many traditional church practices, started centuries ago, which are unbiblical and ineffective in making disciples who go on to make more disciples and plant new churches. This must change in order to reach the unreached peoples.

So what would a biblical church look like in the various unreached

peoples? It will vary from one people to another based on individual needs and circumstances, but one thing is certain; it will not look like the church you go to, nor should it. As Ralph Winter said, “Most of those yet to follow Christ will not fit readily into the kinds of churches we now have.”

So What Should a Biblical Church-Planting Movement in Every People Look Like?

Every Church-Planting Movement that is established within each people should practice these biblical principles. The methods that are developed in order to fulfill these principles will vary depending on the people group that someone is trying to reach and the specific cultural context within which you are working. But the foundational biblical principles should not change.

1. Churches with healthy disciples will spring up in all sorts of places—homes, workplaces, parks, perhaps even on the backs of camels in the case of Nomads. You do not need a specifically dedicated building. Church planting is not about how many people we can get into a building for an event on

- Sunday. It is about how many disciple makers we can equip and send out to make more disciples and start new churches.
2. Disciple making must come first as our highest priority. Healthy disciples will go on to form healthy churches. But if we go out to first start a church or preaching point then healthy disciples will not necessarily develop.
 3. Every professed Jesus follower who is willing should be equipped, trained and apprenticed for the work of ministry as a disciple maker and church planter. This is based on the methods that Jesus modeled and the Apostle Paul followed. This training should include being able to share their testimony of faith and the gospel in an effective way for the context in which they are living. This is a deliberate, intentional and well-thought-out process of equipping and training.
 4. Every church member should be able to train others in like manner to be disciple makers who are capable of leading others to discover truth from the Bible and lead them to maturity in Christ.
 5. The “Great Commission” should be continually taught to every Jesus follower. Every believer should have their identity as people living on mission with God as outlined in Matt. 28:18-20. This should be one of the first things taught to new believers. Every believer should also understand the global implications of Matt. 28:18-20 in reaching the unreached peoples.
 6. Pastors should not be largely “preachers of sermons” but equippers of willing believers. Pastors should not just teach people what to believe but to facilitate the discovery of truth by each member.
 7. As quickly as possible each faithful and willing church member should be given responsibility to actively participate in the training of new disciples.
 8. Obedience to revealed truth from the Bible must be the foundation of all training. We must be doers of the Word and not just hearers. Maturity comes by way of obedience to the truth.


Is there a principle that you would add?

If every church were to practice these basic principles in their ministry efforts then we would likely see thousands of Church-Planting Movements develop all over the world until every people group is reached.

It's the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Is God Birthing Another One?

Welcome to the new year of 2017. October 31st of this year will officially mark the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther nailed his “95 Theses” to the door of the Wittenberg Church in Germany. The process of bringing forth a biblical understanding of Christ, Scripture, grace, faith and the glory of God was, unfortunately, a tumultuous and bloody affair. But in the end, it brought forth many blessings which all of us as believers enjoy today. How precious it is that a majority of people in this world have the Bible in their own language.

It was a scary thing for the church and political leaders of Luther's day to think of putting the Holy Bible and its interpretation into the hands of average people. It meant a loss of control over the people in the church. Yet, doing so has literally changed the world and the lives of millions of lost souls.

Today, we are faced with a similarly biblical but “scary” opportunity of putting the ministry of the church into the hands of average believers. It again means a loss of control for church leaders, but the potential blessings for the growth of the church in every tribe and tongue is wondrous to imagine. This kind of “reformation” in the way we do church is already under way in around 150 peoples or places around the world. We call them Church-Planting Movements or Disciple-Making Movements and they really aren't “scary.” They are a return to the model of ministry that Jesus gave us and Paul employed to great effect until there was “no place left” for him to work. Churches and mission agencies around the world are embracing this biblical means of growing God's kingdom. Movements are becoming the new “yardstick” by which the global church is measuring progress in world evangelization. May we all embrace this latest “reformation” that God is bringing and work together to learn how to make disciples who disciple others even within the toughest peoples to reach, like the nomads. 

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