

Why Some See Movements and Others Don't

I was at a meeting with him in a large city in India. We were gathered for an organizational event that would start at 9 am. Waking early, as was my habit, I went into the hallway to get some filtered water. I heard a strange noise coming from down the corridor. It was still early, only 5 am. Who was making noise down there?

Curious, I wandered down the hall. There he was, sitting on the couch, a light blanket covering his head. His eyes were closed. He sat with head bowed, rocking back and forth a bit. I listened in and heard him calling out the names of people in his congregation. He was thanking God for them in his indigenous language. I wondered how long he had been there and how long he would stay.

« There is a difference between doing things we don't value because we must, and doing what we know is important because we want to. »

A few hours later, yet another need propelled me back into the hallway. I could still hear him, seeking God, interceding on behalf of his people. Each day that week, it was always the same. This brother was there praying. His normal habit was to start his day with several hours of intercession. It didn't matter where he was. There was never a change.

Since then, I've been with this man in many contexts. There has never been a day I didn't see him practicing this same rhythm in his life. Perhaps that is why his movement is exploding. Maybe that is why some of their streams now have more than eight generations.

One Thing Isn't Flexible

There are many things about starting a Disciple Making Movement that are adaptable and flexible. We have overarching principles to be followed for sure. There is a lot of room, though, to adapt things to your particular people group or context. In fact, this is quite important to do.

But there are also a few "foundation stones" of starting movements. These are things that absolutely have to be present for a movement to take place. One of these stones is an apostolic leader who has a genuine, regular and deep prayer habit.

Give Attention to Prayer

In the book of Acts, we read of the apostles getting busy as the Church began to grow. There was much work to be done. The needs of the poor were great. Discipleship demands were pressing. One on one meetings with various key leaders were necessary. There were conflicts to resolve and widows to feed. Finally, they arrived on the strategic decision to appoint deacons. Their stated reason was this.

"We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word" Acts 6:4 NIV (italics added).

Movement leaders and those who want to launch them, *give attention* to prayer. It is not a side activity or something they occasionally emphasize. It is a primary part of their lives.

BY C. ANDERSON

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Ministry of the Word doesn't usually go by the way-side. Most of us are preachers by trade. Prayer, however, can.

Lessons from a Modern-Day Apostle

Let me tell another story. We were leading our first ever conference with Ying and Grace Kai, the creators of Training 4 Trainers or T4T. I was excited to sit at their feet and learn from them. They had seen thousands of churches planted where they worked. Since then, they had trained and equipped many others to do the same. It was a great opportunity to rub shoulders with these legendary, modern-day apostles. I felt very privileged.

What would I learn? What key would I pick up from them that I could take to our own ministry among the unreached forward?

As is typical in the country we were in, there were last minute changes. Our prior plans for the day after their arrival had to be altered. I wondered how we could best bless and host our speakers well. Maybe we could take them sightseeing in our city? Or out to a nice restaurant? I didn't want them to feel bad that we now had nothing specific for them to do that particular morning.

I explained the situation to them and offered some suggestions. "It's no problem," they said. "We will pray."

They spent those hours and much of that day seeking the Father. This was much more productive and important to them than sightseeing, though they had never before visited our country. Hour after hour, they lifted the names of those they would be training before the Lord.

It was one of the greatest lessons I learned from being with them. People who want to see movements default to prayer as their most critical activity.

Prayer in the Earliest Disciple-Making Movements

This should be no surprise, for it is indeed the pattern we see in the book of Acts. The apostles had developed solid prayer habits in their lives. They instilled these habits in those who they trained.

Here is a quick overview:

Acts 1:14—The apostles "joined together constantly" in *prayer*.

Acts 2:42—The new believers "devoted themselves" to *prayer*.

Acts 3:1—Peter and John did a miracle as they were on their way to an afternoon *prayer* meeting in the temple.

Acts 4:24—When faced with challenges and threats, the believers *prayed*.

Acts 6:4—The apostles appointed deacons so they could be free to give attention to *prayer*.

Acts 10—God responded to Cornelius, a God-fearing man, who regularly *prayed*.

Acts 14—Paul and Barnabas spent time in *prayer* as they chose and appointed elders in each new church.

Acts 16—Paul frequented places of *prayer*.

Acts 28—Paul *prayed* and believed God for miracles. And they happened!

Many more references could be explored. Prayer was so clearly a major part of the first Disciple-Making Movements that rapidly grew.

Both the apostolic leaders and the new believers embraced prayer as their *default mode*. Troubles...pray. Persecution...pray. Too much work to do...pray. Need miracles...pray.

Yet for many of us, prayer is our secondary option. We often look first to strategy, mentors or our experience to solve problems. When faced with obstacles, like not being able to find a Person of Peace in our area, we search for answers. Nothing wrong with that, as long as we know that the real source of those solutions is God himself. He holds the keys in His hands to unlock our region for gospel advance. Who are the receptive people there? God knows them by name. He also knows how to put you in touch with them. As we pray, He will transform the hearts of those who seem so hard to reach today.

It seems an obvious point. It bears repeating. If we want to see a Disciple-Making Movement happen, we absolutely must adopt radically committed prayer habits. The same is true if we want to grow and sustain the movement that is starting to take off.

To be clear, I am not advocating for legalism. There is a difference between doing things we don't value because we *must*, and doing what we know is important because we *want to*.

Vital Prayer Habit—It's Our Choice

Do you struggle to make prayer a vital habit in your life? Has your prayer life gone cold and dry? Go to the Master disciple-maker and ask for help. Find another church planter or friend to hold you accountable.

Our habits shape our ultimate outcomes. This is true of prayer and many other areas too. The unreached need our outcome to be the release of a movement. Let's pray! 