

Key insights in enabling movements among the Hindu and Muslim peoples

Today, we live in a very exciting time when millions of people from the Hindu and Muslim peoples are coming to faith. Isaiah talked about a new thing in Isa. 43:18-19 when he said:

“forget the former things: do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness (new pathways in the Scriptures) And rivers in the desert”

The Holy Spirit (rivers of living water, John 7:37-39) is revealing new insights for reaching the non-Christian mainstreams in the spiritual deserts of the world.

From our experience, there are at least seven key insights that we have found helpful in reaching Hindu and Muslim peoples with the Good News of the Kingdom. They are:

1. Rediscovering the gospel

The gospel is not a religion but a relationship. A relationship with the living God. As the Lord Jesus Christ comes into our lives, we become the expression of the gospel. 2 Cor. 3:2-3 (The Message) tells us, *“your very lives are a letter that anyone can read by just looking at you. Christ himself wrote it, not with ink, but with God’s living Spirit.”*

As people journey in the Scriptures and continually observe our lives, they start to understand who this Jesus is and that He came to this earth to reveal the living God. God wants to bless us and change us and remove the mess in our lives. In due course the Holy Spirit helps the person to understand that God is inviting us into a wonderful relationship with Him that will cause us to become like Him and give us eternal life. This is good

news to a Hindu or a Muslim who has no awareness that this is even possible.

Most Hindus and Muslims respect a believer who lives like Christ but assume that they have to change their religion rather than understanding that the Good News is discovering how to have a personal relationship with the living God. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 2:2, *“I decided to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*

« The kingdom is primarily relational and not organizational as we examine the parables. »

2. Rediscovering the Kingdom

As we read the four gospels, we are amazed to learn that the kingdom is mentioned more than 100 times. It was His message (Matt. 4:23). It was His life purpose (Luke 4:43). It was His focus from the very start of his ministry (Matt. 4:17,23). It was the theme of the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3,10). It was the center of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:19-20). It was the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:10). It was His command to us to make it first priority in our lives (Matt. 6:33). In the N.T.Wright translation, Matt. 6:33 is put this way, *“Instead make your top priority God’s kingdom and his way of life, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

The kingdom is primarily relational and not organizational as we examine the parables. It is invisible,

BY JOHN RIDGWAY

blog: <http://mikebreen.wordpress.com/>

Dr. John Ridgway and his wife **Ruth** resided for 18 years in India where John was teaching and undertaking research Bangalore. During this time he led a team of 50 expats who were committed to reaching the Hindu mainstreams with the Good News. Subsequently, John and his family worked in Singapore for two years and in Malaysia for seven years whilst focusing on Buddhist and Muslim mainstreams and guiding frontier ministries in 18 countries in Asia. John’s focus over the last 45 years has been on the unreached religious mainstreams in Asia and today he continues in the Navigator context to coach apostolic leaders around the world.

not seen. It is spiritual, not physical and it is eternal, not time bound. It is a mystery.

Yet, it is the framework that Jesus spoke about. It embraces all the religions of the world including Hinduism and Islam. Anybody from any religion can become a citizen of the kingdom. If we use a Christian framework, we are limited to reaching nominal Christians and proselytes.

And when believers live out the kingdom values, they are very attractive to non-believers.

3. Reaffirming our First and Second Birth

Every believer has two births. The first birth is a physical birth that takes place at a certain time and place and is defined by our culture, our religion, the language we speak and our unique personality, physical features, skin color and family history. All this is from God. Acts 17:26 tells us, “*God determined the **times** (history) set for them and the **exact places** (geography) where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him.*”

But the tendency is for missionaries and others to denigrate the first birth and especially that of Hindus and Muslims.

Jesus always respected the person’s first birth and this is beautifully illustrated by the way He related to the Samaritans who were regarded distastefully by the Jews. He went to one of the Samaritan towns and stayed in that place for two days. However, the Samaritans in that place believed on Him and saw Him as not just a Jewish prophet but as the Savior of the world (John 4:42) in part because He lived and ate with them. No Jew would normally do this.

Paul respected the first birth of the Corinthians and encouraged them to remain in their context (1 Cor. 7:17-24), despite the fact that context involved pagan temples, pagan worship and sexually degrading practices.

Our second birth is from above and is spiritual. The first birth enables the mobility of the gospel. The second birth enables the purity of the gospel.

4. Recognizing that Relationships Define the Church

The family is central to the gospel. Gen. 12:1-3 is the first record of the gospel in the Bible according to Gal. 3:8 and it states that through Abraham “*all the families of the earth would be blessed.*”

The Greek word for *household* in the New Testament is *oikos* and this word occurs at least 114 times and in 1 Tim. 3:15 we read that the household of God is the church of the living God.

Rom. 16:5 tells us, “greet the church in their house” (ESV,KJV,NASB) referring to the relationships in that household. The NIV inserts the word “meets” into the text, implying a meeting, but that word is not in the Greek text.

Even the Greek word “ecclesia,” usually translated as “church,” never refers to a building or a meeting but always refers to the people of God in relationship to each other.

« Anybody from any religion can become a citizen of the kingdom. »

A great example of *oikos* is Cornelius’ household in Acts 10-11.

We see seven natural networks included in his household:

- His immediate family
- His relatives
- His close friends (Acts 10:24)
- His work colleagues: those who worked with him (soldiers)
- His work colleagues: those who worked for him (servants)
- His neighbors (“respected by all the Jewish people” Acts 10:22)
- Those in need (“always helping people in need” Acts 10:2)

Every person belongs to a natural *oikos* and as the gospel enters that *oikos*, it can be transformed into a spiritual *oikos* and in essence becomes church in that context.

The household is central to evangelism as one family touches another and in turn disciples that family. The Shema (the Hebrew word for “hear” that literally means “hey listen up”) of the Old Testament (Deut. 6:4-9) describes how the Jewish nation were to love their God with all their heart and soul and strength and disciple their families and hence their nation. The 12 Jewish apostles would have understood that as they heard the Great Commission from Jesus to make disciples of the nations, just as they had discipled their own families and hence their own nation.

5. Rejoicing in the Holy Spirit

For the new believer, it is important that they learn to experience His presence, His power and His perfecting working their lives.

Prov. 3:6 (The Message) tells us, “*Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.*”

The new believers learn God’s ways especially through the Scriptures and His presence convicts them of sin and comforts them in difficult circumstances. In John 14:26 we are told by Jesus that “*the Holy Spirit will teach you all things.*”

And the new believers experience the power of the Holy Spirit in the area of prayer. Rom. 8:26 says, “*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know how to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express*” and again in James 5:16, “*Tremendous power is made available through a good man’s earnest prayer.*”

New believers learn to pray for their families, relatives, work colleagues, friends and neighbors. They begin to see healings and demons driven out through the power of prayer.

Then the new believers start to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and respond to His promptings in areas of life that need to be changed and relationships that need to be sorted out and attitudes that need correction.

As the new believers spend more and more time in His presence, their lives dramatically change and they become a wonderful influence in their communities. This change was evident in the lives of the early disciples “*when they (Jewish leaders) saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were ignorant, untrained laymen, they were astonished and recognized that they had been with Jesus.*” (Acts 4:13)

Matt. 3:11 (The Message) tells us, “*...the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house and make a clean sweep of your lives.*”

6. Realizing our Freedoms in the Gospel

The new believers experience freedom from the penalty of sin and also the power of sin as they rely on the Holy Spirit. They also experience freedom from systems, both religious and secular. Gal. 4:3 says, “*we were in slavery under the basic principles of this world*”. And in verse nine, “*weak and miserable principles.*”

Paul advised the Galatians who were Gentiles and were being pressured to fit into the Jewish system that “*it was for freedom that Christ has set us free.*” (Gal. 5:1)

Today many missionaries and Christians advise new believers from Muslim and Hindu backgrounds to convert to Christianity and as a result they are now under another system. This approach must be resisted.

« The household is central to evangelism as one family touches another and in turn disciples that family. »

But when these new believers realize that they are free of their own system, then they can live under that system as the system no longer controls them.

Paul was willing to fit into anybody’s system in order to reach those people with the Good News. 1 Cor. 9:19-23 explains this principle.

In fact, from a kingdom perspective, we view everything from a spiritual framework, not a physical framework, so this gives believers wisdom about being in the mosque or temple and the acts of worship that take place in these buildings. The Jews relied on “temple worship” (Rom. 9:4) but under the new covenant, our worship is spiritual (Rom. 12:1-2) and is a changed lifestyle.

7. Releasing the Gifts

When all the gifts are utilized, there is tremendous growth of the movements. This is especially true of the gifts of apostles, prophets and evangelists. The institutional church is primarily focused on the gift of teaching and also elevates the gift of pastor to a position of authority which often

stifles the growth. This practice explains why there is a proliferation of denominations.

Eph. 4:11-12 tells us that these equipping gifts are given to **equip all believers to do the work of ministry.**

You can go to www.theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx and for \$10 you will receive a comprehensive personal assessment of your gifting. You will be given details of your equipping gift profile that will help you recognize your role in an apostolic team.

« As the new believers spend more and more time in His presence, their lives dramatically change and they become a wonderful influence in their communities. »

Your next steps

- Start where you are and begin praying through all your family and relatives. Also pray for your close friends, work colleagues and neighbors and ask God about what your next steps are with each person. If they show some interest in spiritual things, you could ask them if they would be interested to start a journey of figuring out who Jesus is. I have found that everyone has respect for Jesus, including Hindus and Muslims. They usually respond by asking, “what do you mean?” Then I pull out John’s gospels in an easy to read version like the Message. I read page one and let them read page two and then I ask, “What did you think?” Initially there may not be much response but I do not argue with the person or correct them or explain things. Then I ask, “would you like to meet again next week over coffee and we can look at the next two pages?” This assumes that we are already good friends. Usually people are OK with this and now we have started the journey which will continue through the influence of the Holy Spirit for some time.
- You can shift to a part of the city where there are many Muslims or Hindus living and join their community. You could join a learner’s class at the local mosque or Hindu temple and learn about their religion and build friendships with the other new members. You could volunteer to teach English for members of the

community. You could make yourself available to teach people to drive, to help them with income tax or social security etc. You can be hospitable and slowly build relationships.

- You could consider taking a job and moving to India or a Muslim country and work there and be a natural influence in that community. You could be a part of a team that goes together and be a resource to each other.
- **BEGIN TO PRAY** and ask God to guide you in this exciting adventure of bringing the Good News of the Kingdom to the lost nations of the world wherever you are.

Resource books

Miraculous Movements by Jerry Trousdale, Nelson 2012

A Wind in the house of Islam by David Garrison, WIG 2014

Understanding Insider Movements edited by Harley Talman and John Jay Travis, William Carey Library, 2015

The Kingdom Unleashed by Jerry Trousdale and Glen Sunshine, DMM, 2018

Your Kingdom Come by John Ridgway, Tallgrass Media, 2018

