

24:14 Goal



Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (50 months)

Launching Movements among Muslims:

Case Studies of Best Practices—Antioch Family of Churches

BY **WILLIAM J. DUBOIS**

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I'm the co-leader of the Antioch Family of Churches, a global alliance of indigenous Church Planting Movements. For the last 30 years, we have focused on building the leadership capacity of first-generation Christians who live in closed countries and helping them learn to multiply house churches. In this article I will focus on launching movements among Muslim peoples.

For the first 20 years of our work, many of our efforts were filled with missteps, mistakes and failures. However, it was through a personal crisis in my own life that we learned to make adjustments that would lead to breakthroughs. In 2004, I was helping underground house church leaders from Iran learn and understand 2 Timothy. After this training was completed, I was poisoned by an Al-Qaeda operative and nearly died. A lot of people were praying for me, and after two and a half months of doctors and hospital visits trying to determine what had happened, I was miraculously healed. I'm very grateful for that!

But the power of the story came later—years later, as a matter of fact. I was co-hosting a Church Planting Movement training for leaders from Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, and at the beginning of our time together we were introducing ourselves. I found out that one of our church-planters there was the man who had commissioned my poisoning!

At that moment I began to understand that multiplying movements requires much more than cross-cultural language and culture ability. The power of incarnation begins with learning about the soul of people, and in this case, developing a deep understanding of those who were radicalized for evil. The Lord put me on a journey to begin to understand the heart of what it would take to start movements among Muslims.

Today that same Antioch Family of Churches has 1,225 movement engagements in 748 languages in 157 countries. There are 2.3 million house churches with 42

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million adults. What God has started, in and among us, began with our brokenness, our missteps and our misunderstandings. But after the Lord graciously allowed us to learn some powerful tools and effective principles, exponential breakthrough has taken place.

We focus on three priorities. The first one is rescuing people from slavery into sonship. That slavery may be human trafficking, but it's always the slavery of sin. And it's a life filled with discrimination, pain and heartache. But when these people enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, they become sons and daughters of the living God, and co-heirs. So our relationship, even with new believers, is not hierarchical. It's like a family because we're asking them to be baptized into Jesus, and then into the Church, and then into the world. We never ask anyone to join our culture before they find our Savior. We make sure they meet our Savior first. Then together we discover what church would look like in their own culture. So, the first priority is to rescue from slavery into sonship.

The second one is to empower people to bring others to Christ. You may have heard the term "seeking out a man of peace." In our model, we seek out a man or woman of *influence*. We call it the Cornelius Model, from Acts 10. We ask the Lord to show us people who have incredible influence in their village or their community or their country. By bringing the gospel to them, they in turn have the ability to spread that good news to all the people in their social network. Then, just like the Apostle Paul asked Titus

to establish elders in every church, we ask these Corneliuses to help raise up leaders and establish elders in every house church. Our ministry then, is from church to church: not organization to church, but a local church partnering with another indigenous house church to ask God what needs to be done and then work on it together.

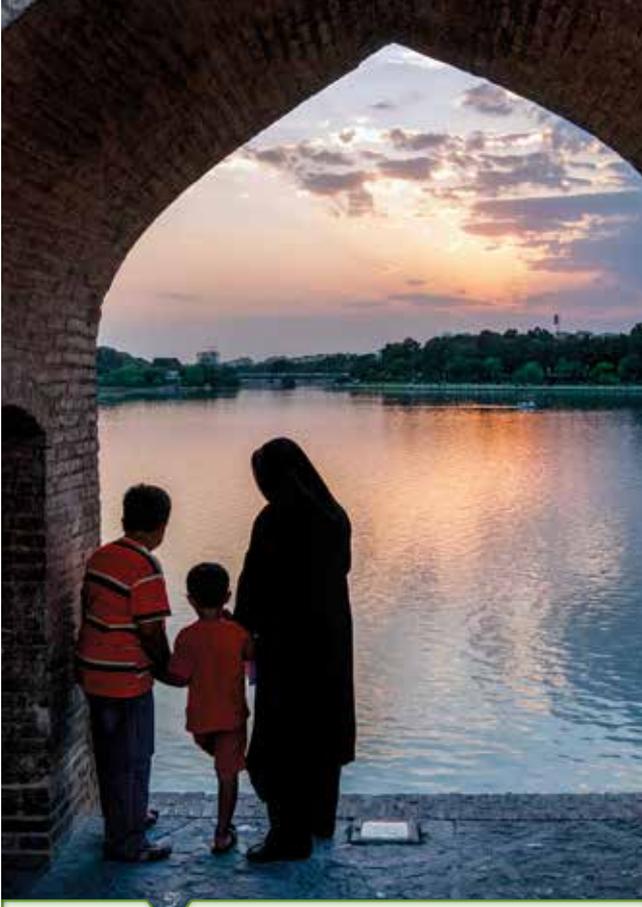
Then comes our third priority, which is *multiply*. 2 Timothy 2:2 says that the things we have heard from reliable people, we are to pass on to those who can share it with others. It's three-generation multiplication. We've found that if we focus on growing generations of leaders, we can multiply movements. Our leadership training is based on obedience, not knowledge. I'll give you an example. Several years ago, we opened up a new ministry in a major city, and we found someone interested in spiritual things. One of our workers began having a conversation with this person, and soon there were questions about Jesus. But before explaining the depth of the kingdom, we asked that person to go find five friends.

The goal was not to bring these five friends together into a house church meeting, but rather, have each one of them be mentored by this "Cornelius." These five would begin immediately sharing with five of their friends, and those five friends would find five of their own friends. So from the very beginning, multiplication was embedded into the whole ministry.

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With these three things—rescue, empower and multiply—we discovered that we can learn so much from people who are just coming to Christ. So instead of us teaching them with declarative statements, we begin by asking powerful questions. Here are the three questions that we ask. We ask, "*Who is spiritually hungry? When are they spiritually seeking? And where are they spiritually attentive?*" We try to find the cultural and spiritual rhythms of those to which we are ministering.

For instance, Easter weekend isn't going to be a high holy day for a Muslim because they don't know Jesus yet. We found, actually, that Ramadan is the most important calendar moment when we can share the good news with Muslims. Why? Because that's the month when they're



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seeking God. Granted, it's not the same God. They're not seeking after Jesus the Son of God; they're just trying to find a way to earn enough credit that God might accept them. So instead of introducing them to our holidays first, we've decided to come alongside them, understand their spiritual rhythms, and pray for those who are spiritually hungry. We find where they're hungry and what they're attentive to. Then through spiritual conversations, we can find a Cornelius. We ask him to find his friends and the multiplication process begins.

We have equipped our leaders with a translation of Scriptures or key verses. We often provide them Wi-Fi boxes, so that with the push of a button they can spread the JESUS Film or portions of the New Testament, at least in trade languages. If the people group is unengaged, we provide our teams mobile backpacks, so that if they're in villages they can show the JESUS Film to as many as 300 people. And we give them a lot of training in how to start spiritual conversations with people—so that people *want* to know the God who can rescue them, empower them and multiply their influence. They can meet God, Jesus, who can forgive them of their sins.

In the midst of all of this, we found that if we come together and pray, if we build teams to intercede, there's tremendous opportunity in these moments. There's one special day, toward the end of Ramadan (the 27th day), called the Night of Power. On that single night, many Muslims all over the world believe that their prayers carry a thousand times the weight of other days. And on that night, they ask God for a revelation of who he is. They ask God for forgiveness of their sins, and they ask for dreams and visions. So we send our people in to mingle with those seeking a God they don't know, so we can share about the God that we *do* know.

On May 19th, 2020, more than one billion Muslims gathered together in homes to fast and pray. For the first time since 622AD, the mosques were closed because of the coronavirus. They prayed on this "Night of Power" for a special revelation from "Allah" and for forgiveness of their sins. At the same time, more than 38 million Jesus followers from 157 nations—all former Muslims—lifted their voices in prayer asking the one true and living God to reveal Himself through signs, wonders, dreams and visions to the Muslims around the world. They prayed that for the first time, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Muslims would understand the mercy, love and forgiveness found only in Jesus Christ. And on this "One Miracle Night" God heard those prayers.

When we agree together in prayer and go to the throne room of heaven, we ask Jesus to intercede on our behalf—so we're going to have spiritual conversations at the right time in the right place. We can expect miraculous things to happen. This year, during the month of Ramadan, we sent teams from village to village, asking the Lord to give us open doors and open hearts. One team went to a country and visited a village where no one received them. No one showed hospitality; no one even opened their door.

By the end of the day, the team was very discouraged. They went outside the village and all sat under a tree and built a campfire so they would be warm for the night. They began to pray and ask the Lord what to do, asking for a way to have a breakthrough in this village. As the night went on they fell asleep. Soon they were awakened and one of the leaders saw a blazing fire coming their way. It turned out to be 274 people with fire torches in their hands, walking toward them. The team was initially filled with fear until one of them said, "Hey, we prayed that

we'd have an opportunity to go to this village and share Jesus. Now the village is coming to us!"

Just before they met these people, one of the 274 men stepped forward and said, "We don't know who you are, we don't know where you're from, and we didn't open our homes to you when you were in our village today. But tonight, every single one of us has had the exact same dream. And in that dream an angel appeared to us and said, *"These people who came to your village are the ones who have the truth. You should go and ask them, and follow what they say."*

That was the moment: spiritual conversations with the right people, at the right time, in the right place occurred. And before the night was over, 274 leaders of homes all made professions of faith and left their religion to walk in *relationship* with Jesus. That's the power of prayer and having spiritual conversations in the right place.

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I want to leave you with a story about launching movements among Muslim peoples. It comes not from the idea that the worker or the missionary is the one who's supposed to do this. It's about equipping and building a leader, a Cornelius, who will multiply the work. Several months ago, leaders came to me and said, "You know, we haven't been able to reach certain villages and there's no way to get to them using regular means. So we prayed, and we feel the Holy Spirit has asked us to set aside teams

of people who will go across the desert and make sure that all of the unengaged people, all of those who are unreached and untouched, would hear the Good News."

You and I have an opportunity to launch movements among Muslim peoples. It begins when we train local people who are living nearby and are near-culture. We find a Cornelius, we invest in that person, and he helps us understand how to mobilize his friends to tell their friends. It can be as far away as the deserts of the Middle East on camels. If we empower local churches to take on the responsibilities God has given them instead of us being at the front, we become the Barnabas who supports these apostles and people who are sending. I would say that our responsibility is to equip people with training and tools and to build trust. They appoint leaders and they send church-planters to multiply other people who will then share the Good News.

In summary, I think we can look at launching movements among Muslim peoples in this way. First, a book of Acts culture can produce a book of Acts breakthrough. Second, we launch movements among Muslim peoples by adjusting our conversations, so the conversations are spiritually led with the right people, at the right time, in the right place.

We ask people to be baptized into Jesus, then help them discover what their church looks like, rather than asking people to find their way in the culture of our church. We need to also ask God for a Cornelius, a man or a woman of influence, who will use their influence to multiply the kingdom among the relationships they already have. I want to encourage you as you consider launching movements among Muslim peoples, to look for tools, to find quality training and to build trust. Come together as one church, connecting with the nearby and near-culture church, so that together you can go to unengaged, unreached peoples, and see a Cornelius multiply the kingdom in partnership with you. 

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