

The Long Wait is Over



BY RICK WOOD | Editor of *Mission Frontiers* | rick.wood@frontierventures.org

How many parts can you remove from your car's engine before it stops working? One? Two? Most likely, it would not be very many. Virtually all the parts of a car's engine are *essential* for its operation. The same is true with Kingdom Movements. There are certain essential elements that enable movements to move. If you remove those elements, movements simply do not happen. In this issue of *MF* we present a number of these essential elements. But even with all the essential elements in place, God still needs to show up in power for a movement to emerge. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as just: if we do all the right things a movement has to take place. There is still an element of mystery and God's timing in all of this. But experience has shown us that without the essential elements, movements will not happen.

In this issue we want to give you the foundational basics of what make movements possible so you can go and do likewise. According to the latest count listed on our cover, there are at least 1,491 Kingdom Movements currently taking place around the world. We would like to see a whole lot more of these. But for that to happen, we will need to change the way we have traditionally thought about doing the mission of the Church and implement the essential elements of movements.

Movements: The Lost Art of Multiplication

In the book of Acts, God shows us how to grow the gospel through movements, often in the face of fierce opposition and persecution. The gospel grew exponentially from home to home as people were led by the Holy Spirit to share their faith in Jesus with others. The apostles Peter and Paul proclaimed the gospel and equipped others to do the same. The gospel spread virally throughout the Roman Empire so that at one point Paul proclaims in Romans 15:23 that there was "no place left for me to work in these regions." He had finished his work in these areas and could leave the remaining work to others. The only way he could say this is if he were employing

multiplication principles where one disciple makes a disciple who disciples others, one generation after another. We can see that multiplication was indeed his strategy when he tells his friend Timothy to employ it in 2 Tim. 2:2. The only way for Paul to reach the vast number of people in the regions in which he worked was to train people to reach people who would then go and reach others.

The parables of Jesus show us that Jesus intends for us and His kingdom to multiply exponentially; 30, 60, 100-fold. All of nature is designed to multiply exponentially and Jesus expects that same multiplication to take place spiritually as well. In the parable of the talents Jesus condemns the wicked servant who did nothing to gain an increase for his master. Jesus praises the servants who worked and doubled what had been given to them. Jesus' purpose in sharing these parables is for His disciples, you and me, to go and do likewise in gaining an increase for the growth of His kingdom. This is exactly what the early Church did. They used multiplication principles to grow Jesus' kingdom and the results were amazing. But as Dr. Steve Smith pointed out in his article, *Four Stages of Movements*, in the March April 2020 issue of *MF*, movements eventually reach the "Institutional Phase," where the vitality and growth of earlier stages is lost. This apparently happened to the movements of the early Church in the fourth century, but it can also happen much quicker than this. Take a look at Smith's article on our website at www.missionfrontiers.org.

The Institutionalized Church

With the arrival of Roman Emperor Constantine and his endorsement of Christianity, the early Church entered the fourth stage of movements—the institutionalization of the western Roman Church. Instead of the priesthood of all believers where the average believer brought the gospel to their network of friends and family as seen in multiplying movements, the institutionalized Church created a religious system of professional priests where the

average believer became dependent upon these newly official priests for their spiritual growth. The average Jesus follower was no longer equipped to feed himself spiritually nor to disciple others. The natural multiplication of disciples common to the early Church largely came to an end. This institutionalized Church became the status quo for over 1,000 years.

Then came an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Luther was a professor of theology at Wittenberg University in Germany. He was an avid student of the New Testament. Luther stood out in this way because those who studied the New Testament were a rare group of people in Luther's day. Astoundingly, according to the wonderful biography on Luther by Eric Metaxas, the study of Aristotle was more common in the Roman Catholic Church of Luther's day than was the New Testament. Luther did so much to get the Church back into the Bible and to establish a biblical foundation for our understanding of the saving work of Christ. While Luther made many innovations to Christian worship and church practice, our experience of church today still carries with it many vestiges from our roots in the Catholic Church. Like our Catholic ancestors, we are still largely dependent upon our professional church leaders/pastors for our spiritual nourishment. We still meet in specialized buildings for worship instead of homes. Most professional clergy still do not equip church members for multiplication. Church leaders still feel threatened by spiritual activities outside of their control. Most church endeavors of our day have the characteristics of an institutionalized church. It is a rare thing to see anyone in our traditional churches actually equipping disciples to make more disciples one generation after another.

A God Given Second Chance

It has been a long time in coming, but in our day, God is restoring the book of Acts like movement practices of the early Church. Beginning in the 1980s researchers started to recognize and study the practices of Church Planting Movements. In the March April 2000 issue of *MF*, I included Dr. David Garrison's booklet on Church Planting Movements which described the movements Garrison was studying and the basic principles and practices that were common to these amazing movements. There

was just a handful of these movements back in 2000. Now there is over 1,491 of them. Over the last 20 years, we have learned so much more about what makes these movements work and what are their essential elements. The good news is that we are getting better at fostering movements all the time as we learn from the growing number of movement catalysts now fostering movements all over the world. For over 1600 years the essential elements of the movements of the early Church were lost in the wake of the dominance of the institutionalized Catholic and Protestant churches. Now that God has miraculously revealed the secrets of these movements to our generation, we now have the responsibility to employ these principles in reaching all of the unreached peoples. To not do so would be rank disobedience to Jesus' command to make disciples of all peoples in Matt. 28:18-20. We dare not lose this opportunity in our day after waiting 1,600 years for it to finally be revealed. Learn from the experienced authors in this issue and let us put these essential movement principles into action. The impact of employing movement principles in our day could easily be far bigger than the impact of movements seen in the book of Acts. God has given us everything we need. The choice of obedience to His command to reach all peoples is now ours.

Support the Work of *Mission Frontiers*

As is the case with most publications, *Mission Frontiers* cannot cover its costs from subscriptions alone. We need additional funds from those who believe in this ministry and are willing to sacrifice to help us move forward in casting vision for Kingdom Movements in all peoples. Like most of the people who work for Frontier Ventures, my salary is supplied by the donations of churches and friends who believe in what I am doing. And also like many staff members at Frontier Ventures, there are many months when not enough comes in to fully cover our allotted salary. To donate to my ministry with *MF* go to www.frontierventures.org and click on the Donate button. Put MA 323 in the dialog box. If you would like to help *MF* cover its general expenses and expand its influence, go to the same web address, given above, click on the Donate button and put MA 030 in the dialog box. We greatly appreciate whatever you can do to help *Mission Frontiers*. 