

PRAISE FOR *BREAKTHROUGH LEADERSHIP*

Victor and his team know how to develop and multiply leaders. I know this personally because I'm one of them. Victor has spent hours with me and our team over the years. He's answered questions, helped us navigate challenges, and cheered us on along the way—qualities of a great leader. Then, to top it off, he surprised me by traveling across the world to come to our church's 10-year anniversary. He sat on the second row as I cast vision to our church to pursue multiplying movements—the very Book of Acts works of God he had been telling us about for years. Victor is a great friend, mentor, and leader. I highly recommend this book and the leadership wisdom it contains. May God do through your ministry what he's done through Victor's!

CHRIS GALANOS

Pastor, Experience Life;

Author, *From Megachurch to Multiplication*

Breakthrough Leadership by Victor John and Dave Coles is an essential resource for church planters and spiritual leaders navigating the challenges of contextualized ministry. This book provides a powerful framework for addressing cultural, social, and spiritual challenges while emphasizing the simplistic reproducibility of indigenous leaders. As a church planting practitioner, professor, and director of spiritual formation, I deeply appreciate its focus on multiplying disciples and cultivating catalytic leaders in culturally relevant ways. John and Coles equip readers with practical tools and biblical insights to sustain dynamic movements that transform entire communities. A must-read for those unafraid of taking risks and embracing a larger vision for the Kingdom of God.

REV. MATT FRETWELL, D.MIN.

Adjunct Professor, Regent University School of Divinity

Few people have influenced my view on leadership and discipleship as much as Victor John. In this book, Victor opens up his rich archive of experiences, lessons, and discoveries from a lifetime of leadership. His ability to weave together research, real-world examples, and personal wisdom makes *Breakthrough Leadership* a standout contribution to leadership literature.

What sets this book apart is that Victor doesn't just teach these principles, he lives them. Having witnessed firsthand how he embodies the values he writes about, I can say with confidence that *Breakthrough Leadership* is more than just theory; it is a reflection of a life dedicated to servant-hearted, Christlike leadership. This book is an invitation to lead as Christ did—with love, courage, and a deep commitment to others.

ELLEN HEMSTRÖM

Lead pastor at Filadelfiakyrkan Örebro, Sweden

Victor John powerfully articulates the heart of Christian leadership: “As leaders we look forward to the day when we can say to those our ministry has touched, ‘I fought for you: first on my knees, and then with all I had, to bring you into the fullness of life in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.’” This profound statement reflects the very lifestyle Victor and his co-leaders have sacrificially embodied for years in challenging, unreached areas. Their deep experience infuses *Breakthrough Leadership* with a blend of biblical truth, strategic wisdom, and realistic practicality. If you're serious about growing as a leader and developing other impactful leaders, I wholeheartedly recommend this book.

STAN PARKS, PHD

24:14 Global Facilitation Team, BEYOND VP of Global Strategies

Having had the privilege of knowing Victor John since 1976, I have seen his unwavering commitment to nurturing leaders through simple, reproducible Disciple-Making Movement (DMM) strategies within the Bhojpuri context. His latest work, *Breakthrough Leadership*, co-authored with Dave Coles, encapsulates his profound insights into leadership that is both biblically grounded and practically effective.

This book serves as an essential resource for anyone seeking to comprehend and implement leadership principles that help ordinary believers to become disciple-makers and church planters, even in the most challenging environments. Victor's approach transcends traditional paradigms, focusing on servanthood, integrity, and the holistic transformation of communities through the multiplication of leaders.

MIKE HEY

Missions Mentor, Operation Mobilisation

Good leaders turn weaknesses into strengths and obstacles into opportunities. They know where they are going. They influence and inspire others to join the journey. We have too few leaders of this type in the West. But help is on the way—this time from India.

Victor John has been used of God to lead a movement in northern India that has grown to over 12 million believers in 80,000 churches. He says that good “leadership is like a door on its hinges. People don’t pay attention to the hinges; they just notice the door.” He models that example. In the movement he leads, other leaders are identified by influence not office, obedience not knowledge, Christlike character not pulpit eloquence, fruitfulness not academic attainment. “Intimacy with God is essential for Biblical leadership,” he claims.

This book developed from living through the messy complexity of constant growth and change, warts and all, tears and laughter, failure and victory. If you are ready to release all control to let God birth something extraordinary through you, this book will help it happen.

DR. STUART ROBINSON

Founding Pastor, Crossway Baptist Church, Melbourne, Australia

Breakthrough Leadership addresses the broad contours of how to think about leadership in large Kingdom movements. It is not a how-to manual or toolkit but rather an examination of some key aspects of leadership. There aren’t many other books that address this topic, and almost none are written by someone with firsthand experience leading large movements rather than observing them from the outside. This is a rare look inside the thinking of a key leader.

CURTIS SERGEANT

Disciple

After decades of ministry as a missionary leader in Scandinavia I thought there wasn’t much more I could learn about leadership. I was wrong. Victor John’s humble description of apostolic leadership that leads to movement opened my eyes to areas of leadership that I was not aware of. The simplicity of Jesus centeredness and practical reliance on the Holy Spirit in the formation of disciples that become leaders who multiply disciples, churches and networks is both refreshing and freeing. The supra-cultural biblical principles, when appropriately contextualized, are sustainable and reproducible in every people group in every nation. This book passes on the leadership legacy of a seasoned veteran to future generations of disciples and leaders.

CHARLES KRIDIOTIS

Author, Network Mentor, and Co-founder of
Katalysator Sverige (Catalyst Sweden)

Breakthrough Leadership is practical and insightful, especially for anyone attempting to multiply disciples or launch movements in an Asian context. Identifying and developing leaders is critical for the ongoing growth and sustainability of movements. In this volume, Victor shares simple yet profoundly helpful insights from his breadth of experience.

CYNTHIA ANDERSON

Host of the *Dare to Multiply* Podcast

Author of *The Multiplier's Mindset: Thinking Differently about Discipleship*

Very few leadership books interest me since I studied a ton for my doctorate in leadership. This one did! Why? The greatest leadership thinkers are successful leaders who have deeply reflected on their own leadership. Victor embodies all three: as a fruitful movement leader he has walked the talk for decades; as a radical learner he has constantly reflected and evaluated his leadership; and as a result, he has emerged as an outstanding leadership thinker. In *Breakthrough Leadership*, he distills his leadership wisdom, accessible to all of us. What I love most about the book is that it builds a leader's ministry life on the foundation of their personal life, highlighting the power of the leader's example. Victor's life is exemplary in many ways, but what stands out to me is his rare and deep love. Many leaders may write about leadership in terms of "Our DNA is 'the love of Jesus for all,'" but few radiate that love as deeply as Victor does. As you read, be inspired by a breakthrough leadership model.

DR. EMANUEL PRINZ

Author of *What Actually Starts Movements*

Movement Catalysts blogger at www.catalyticleadership.info

Victor John's *Breakthrough Leadership* is a significant contribution to the literature on multiplying leadership within Church Planting Movements. Rooted in biblical principles and enriched by extensive field experience, this book offers numerous insights into leadership development for dynamic Disciple-Making Movements. John's emphasis on simplicity, character formation, and apostolic vision challenges traditional institutional models and provides a refreshing framework for leaders committed to gospel advance in frontier contexts. This work is essential reading for practitioners and scholars alike who seek a deeper understanding of leadership that catalyzes sustainable, reproducing movements of disciples.

WES WATKINS

Facilitator of the *Motus Dei* Network

Adjunct Professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

When I visited Victor 13 years ago to see his work in India, I grasped three keys for missionary progress in Japan. That is, decontextualizing Western Christian culture (contextualization), changing the rigid polarization of the teaching congregation and utilizing the laity (the priesthood of all believers), and simply trusting in the word of God (biblical faith).

What I learned even more deeply, while reading this book, was the emphasis on prayer to interface with the abundant work of the Holy Spirit. To listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and to live and evangelize according to his guidance. In every chapter, you address the challenges that leaders face and tell us how to develop those leaders. You tirelessly put yourself in a catalytic position as a movement led by the Spirit of God. I would like to introduce this book widely to my colleagues in Japan.

YUSAKU OTA

General Director of Japan Antioch Mission

Breakthrough Leadership isn't a treatise proposed by an armchair strategist. It's a "lessons learned" book. It's as if Victor and Dave stopped by your house for dinner and you have just three hours to pump them for everything they're learning about leadership in the microcosm of their own experience (in catalyzing a movement that has now grown to millions of people). Two things are for sure: you'll get your money's worth but you'll be left hoping they write more books. Anyone seeking to catalyze a Disciple-Making Movement will want to memorize all the life lessons in this book.

DOUG LUCAS

Author of *More Disciples*

President of Team Expansion and Founder/Co-Editor of Brigada



BREAK- THROUGH LEADERSHIP



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Insights from an
Asian Movement Leader

VICTOR JOHN
WITH DAVE COLES

Breakthrough Leadership

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DEDICATION

To all the visionary leaders who dare to challenge the status quo and inspire others to reach their fullest potential by surrendering to the cross.

To all who suffer for following Christ, who are obedient to his commands; take heart knowing your names are in the Book of Life. Your faith shines amid confusion and chaos, especially when facing arrest and humiliation, and reveals the essence of the Kingdom.

Your courage and commitment to innovation lights up the path for future generations. May this book serve as a guide and source of inspiration on your journey toward breakthrough leadership.



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FOREWORD

BREAKTHROUGH LEADERSHIP IS A PROFOUND AND thorough examination of how to lead and multiply new leaders. It is deeply biblical, very practical, powerfully spiritual, and based on years of actual leadership multiplication. Its principles are constantly being used to train new leaders.

While this book covers numerous leadership topics well, its strongest lesson is the essential nature of a simple approach that can quickly reproduce leaders. As Victor comments, “I hope this book strikes you as quite simple. If I offered something complicated, it would only hinder the reproduction of your ministry.”

In 2022, I saw firsthand evidence of this leadership reproduction. I went as part of a small team invited to interview leaders from various streams of churches within the Bhojpuri movement. The movement’s leaders hoped to hear outside perspectives on strengths and weaknesses of these leaders of streams.

As I finished interviewing two of those leaders, a plain-looking man entered and sat quietly awaiting his turn. When I began interviewing him, I asked how many churches he had helped start in his fifteen years of serving Jesus. After a pause, he said, “About seventy.” He continued that he was still helping all these churches’ leaders. I asked how many of those leaders had started multiple churches. Apparently surprised by my seemingly obvious question, he answered immediately, “All of them!”

Such fruitfulness arises from leadership strategies such as these applied in the movement:

1. Leaders must be able to make disciples (do the basics) before they can lead others.
2. Leaders see potential leaders in those who radiate excitement and eagerness to be mentored.
3. Leaders help mentees become confident in the Lord and self-correcting and build their capacity.
4. Leaders apply God's authority over challenges and by changing a situation's spiritual atmosphere.
5. Leaders don't rely on distinctions of ordination, paid staff, religious titles, or positions.
6. Leaders can serve effectively whether they are literate or oral learners.

Victor provides in-depth biblical examination and multiple testimonies for six key personal journeys of faith an effective leader must undertake. These include expressing and increasing our faith in (1) prayer; (2) character growth; (3) handling money with integrity; (4) persecution; (5) facing power encounters, social evils, and criticism; and (6) facing betrayal or failure of other leaders.

One of my favorite contributions is Victor's discussion of the essential apostolic role in Church Planting Movements (CPMs). Apostolically gifted leaders feel deeply dissatisfied that so many have never heard about Jesus. They ask God to give them *his* view of any situation. They receive his vision and passion, which both sustains them and makes them willing to take unthinkable risks.

Apostolic leaders have an infectious ability to help others see God's plan and join the effort. They raise up empowering leaders who raise up new leaders by telling them, "You can do it. There's no limit to learning

and expanding.” As Victor says, “The bigger our vision, the greater the scope of our leadership.”

As I read *Breakthrough Leadership*, I found myself energized and strengthened by the excellent biblical insights as well as encouraged by the very practical steps and testimonies. I am confident you will also find a new or deeper leadership understanding, which will help you be and reproduce more effective leaders.

S. Kent Parks, PhD

President and CEO of BEYOND



INTRODUCTION

IN OUR FIRST BOOK TOGETHER, *BHOJPURI BREAKTHROUGH: A Movement that Keeps Multiplying*, Victor John presented an overview of God's work in the Church Planting Movement among the Bhojpuri-speaking people of North India and some nearby language groups. That book recounted the significant advance of the gospel through 25 years of ministry, with millions of Hindus coming to saving faith in Jesus.

Bhojpuri Breakthrough illustrated the unique challenges in that part of India and trials faced in launching a ministry with a different approach than previous ministry attempts. It also described a variety of ministry practices that God has used to transform lives and communities in different North Indian contexts.

Breakthrough Leadership: Insights from an Asian Movement Leader looks *behind* the fruitful ministry patterns and practices described in our first book, to unveil the principles guiding Victor's leadership of the movement.

Countless books have already been written in English about leadership, but few have been written by leaders in the Majority World—Asia, Africa, and South America. Fewer still have been penned by an Asian leader deeply involved in a large Church Planting Movement.

Our friend Stan Parks has said, "A CPM is actually a movement of multiplying and developing church leaders." *Breakthrough Leadership* illustrates that truth in personal detail. It offers valuable insights for

anyone wanting to better understand the kind of leadership God is using—to launch and sustain movements for his glory.

Dave Coles

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INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP IS A KEY ISSUE IN ANY MOVEMENT. WE CAN have all the other ingredients for a movement, but if we don't have a leader to champion the cause, everything collapses. For that reason, in the Bhojpuri movement, we continue to train new leaders all the time.

I think God intends us to practice a fairly simple understanding of leadership. Too often Christian leadership takes on a corporate flavor—as if the best leader is a good CEO who also has some spiritual life. That flavor misses the simplicity and crux of biblical leadership. In the New Testament, ordinary people became leaders, and they didn't have a written New Testament to guide them! How did the early church survive and thrive? It had multiple types of leaders who sustained the movement of Jesus.

The question in our context is how to continue the flow and fruit God has given us. That means not creating specializations of pastoring and evangelism, as though only experts can pastor or evangelize. We need simple patterns for our generation and the generations to come. In the developing world, ordination with a title and an office is lucrative. To the extent we have inherited that mindset, we need to break out of it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

In 1 Corinthians 3, the apostle Paul compares Kingdom growth to plants growing and a building being built. In the process, he describes leaders like himself and Apollos as “co-workers in God’s service” (1 Cor. 3:9; “God’s fellow workers” [ESV]). Some have interpreted this phrase as describing a partnership between God and human leaders. That’s grammatically possible and very encouraging. But Paul more likely meant that he and Apollos (and by extension, any human leaders in God’s Kingdom) serve as *each other’s* co-workers, belonging to God who is the prime mover behind every good thing that happens. In either case, the text portrays clearly the roles both God and human leaders play in the expansion of God’s Kingdom.

God has chosen to work through those who plant, those who water, and those who harvest. For his glory, we aim for an abundant harvest; and the most abundant harvest is not a single event but a reproductive harvest. When the fruit from one harvest becomes the seed for the next planting, and that cycle continues, we have a generational harvest that far exceeds the harvest of any one season. That process requires planters, waterers, and harvesters for every new reproductive cycle, thus a need for ongoing leadership development. As our friend Stan Parks wrote:

In many ways, a CPM is actually a movement of multiplying and developing church leaders. What makes the difference between merely planting churches and seeing sustained movements of churches? Usually leadership development. No matter how many churches are planted, unless the cultural insiders become leaders, the churches will remain foreign. They will either reproduce slowly or stop growing when the initial leader(s) reach their limit.¹

1. Dave Coles and Stan Parks, eds., “A Church Planting Movement is a Leadership Movement,” in 24:14 – A Testimony to All Peoples (published by authors, 2019), 97.

We saw many years ago that aiming for the most abundant harvest requires a simple approach, creating a cycle that can reproduce leaders quickly. So, I hope this book strikes you as quite simple. If I offered something complicated, the reproduction of your ministry would be hindered. That's neither your goal nor mine.

IS EDUCATION ESSENTIAL?

A person doesn't have to be highly educated to do effective ministry. Leadership skill can be developed over time through observation and imitation. Academic education has value, but its absence shouldn't hinder the propagation of the gospel. Jesus didn't tell people to become literate before they could serve him. He modeled ministry patterns that could be followed by both nonliterate and literate people.

What kind of leadership would we like to see emerging? We want empowering leaders who raise up new leaders by telling people, "You can do it. There's no limit to learning and expanding." We want people who recognize opportunities and follow the Spirit's leading to move into apostolic anointing.

Recently I spoke with a brother in an area experiencing heavy persecution. We haven't given his group a lot of input, but their ministry has grown out of the same essential vision. None of these people have a lot of seminary training; they don't have the time, money, or educational background for that. They're not used to an academic system for learning. They received our training, which is systematic but delivered in bite-sized modules.² They have "ordinary" people serving effectively as leaders in a very challenging situation. And God is blessing their ministry.

2. See the section "Our Training" in Chapter 3.

DEVELOPMENT FOR THREE TYPES OF LEADERS

Three types of people are involved in the Bhojpuri movement:

1. A small group who started with me more than two decades ago
2. A number of partners affiliated with the movement who joined us because they liked what they saw God doing. They relate to us and connect with us, as the Spirit has led them this way.
3. The millions who have come to faith through the movement and have had the movement's DNA from the beginning of their life in Christ.

The first group has mostly become strong and effective leaders over the years. The second group needs to stay on a learning track, acquiring and being reminded of movement principles and grasping how to implement those. Otherwise they begin to repeat their previous church patterns. With training, they can modify those patterns and begin to live out new ministry patterns that bear more fruit for the Lord's glory.

The third group constitutes the vast majority of those we train, both in discipleship and leadership. Most of what we describe in this book will be the patterns we apply with the third group. These three groups could be pictured as a growing tree with its roots in Christ and the lower trunk being the original leaders. Then some branches have been grafted in and are bearing fruit. But most of the branches, twigs, leaves, and fruits are the organic growth the Lord has brought through the years.

The movement provides a sense of identity for those who see it as a visible manifestation of their identity in Christ. They don't have church buildings or denominational structures or names to give them an identity. But they know who they are and what they're about in Christ as his disciples in this world. Being part of the movement helps them not feel inferior, compared with others who have the more commonly recognized trappings of religion.

A LEADER'S PERSONAL LIFE

MAINTAINING INTIMACY WITH THE LORD

Leaders walk into a very dangerous field if they begin to believe too much in themselves. They then stop asking themselves the hard questions that would keep them humble and maintaining dependency on the Lord. Asking those questions involves personal evaluation and assessing how we as leaders are really doing. It involves looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's word and taking action based on what we see. The apostle James wrote:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

JAMES 1:22-25

This self-evaluation applies to all disciples, with special application for leaders. It involves inviting the Lord to shine his spotlight on hidden things within us: our motivations, attitudes, and emotions that push

us one way or another. This assessment enables us to move ahead with fewer burdens and removes the emotional drain that results from delayed obedience. Even highly motivated leaders need continual sharpening by God's Spirit to maintain intimacy and maximize effectiveness.

The psalmist prayed,

*Test me, LORD, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind;
for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love
and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.*

PSALM 26:2-3

And again:

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

PSALM 139:23-24

A leader's first responsibility is to maintain integrity before God. But our second responsibility is to those who hear our words and observe our lives. As the apostle Paul wrote, "I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Cor. 9:27). On a human level, one of the greatest hindrances to unbelievers turning to Christ is hypocrisy among Christian leaders, those who preach a great message but live a double life. For all these reasons, we need to continue asking ourselves the hard questions concerning our integrity and personal walk with God.

For example, how easy is it to not follow through on a promise given lightly? When someone shares a problem with me, how often do I say, "I'll pray for you"; then life goes on and I forget all about it? Or how often do we as leaders get so busy preparing teachings for others that we rarely

take time to meditate on God's word just for the enjoyment of his presence and personal application to our own lives?

Sometimes I ask one of my leaders, "What did you read in the Bible this morning?" If the person goes blank, that tells me something. We can ask *ourselves* that question, so it's really part of our lifestyle. A fringe benefit is that we don't have to be embarrassed if someone asks us about it out of the blue. But most important is taking personal initiative to keep our intimacy with God fresh and alive. If we as leaders don't have personal time with God at the heart of our own discipleship, we can't effectively make disciples, much less raise up new leaders.

A few years ago, I was invited to speak to a group of pastors. Instead of giving them a monologue full of advice, I raised a question. I noted that Bible study and prayer can easily become just a routine for ministry preparation. I then asked, "What do you do for your *personal* spiritual growth?" Many of them had not given much thought to that in a very long time. To answer my question, the pastors took some time for personal evaluation. The Lord used the question to sharpen their walk with him and thus improve their ministry. I also evaluated myself: "Now *I* have to answer honestly. Here's what I do." That's part of mentoring: being willing to do things out of the ordinary in order to help leaders receive what will really help them grow.

Jesus used key questions to guide people into discovering deep truths. He asked the Pharisees: "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" (Matt. 22:42). He asked an expert in the law (not because he didn't know the answer but to push the man to find his own answer): "What is written in the Law . . . How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26). Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" which led to Peter's great confession of him as the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:15). Jesus asked the chief priests, "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons" (Matt. 21:28). The priests' answer to his brief story enunciated their own condemnation. In a similar way we can oftentimes use a question to help people realize a deeper truth than they would have internalized if we had just told them what we wanted them to know.

Acts 27 tells us that Paul warned against sailing from Crete, but the ship sailed anyway. Then a hurricane struck, and the storm raged for many days. When everyone on the ship was giving up hope for survival, Paul told them, “Keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you’” (vv. 22–24). More than a week later, before anyone had sighted land, Paul encouraged them to eat some food, because they were getting close to land (vv. 33–34). How could Paul be so clear-minded and bring words of hope in the midst of chaos? He heard clearly from God and obeyed him by delivering the message. Out of that terrible situation, God received glory; many people were healed, and God’s Kingdom was proclaimed.

A leader’s prayer life is vitally important for staying in tune with God’s heart. Our model is Jesus himself, who often took time to get away from the crowds and be alone with his heavenly Father (Mark 1:35; 6:46). If *he* needed to keep that connection fresh and active, how much more do we? Too often we leaders ignore our own prayer lives. We don’t pray for our own issues because we’re so busy mobilizing prayer for others. Then our own prayer life dies so subtly we ignore it until it disappears entirely.

JOURNEYS OF FAITH IN LEADERSHIP

Effective leadership involves multiplying vision and at least six key journeys of faith. Here we will discuss two of those journeys: prayer and character. Four others (money, persecution, challenges, and others’ failures) will be discussed in chapters 10–12.

1. **PRAYER.** Since prayer expresses and increases our faith, it plays a major role in effective leadership. In *Bhojpuri Breakthrough*, we

mention that “most of the leaders in the movements spend three to five hours a day in prayer.”¹ Some people misunderstand that and they picture leaders just sitting and doing nothing else but praying for three to five hours a day, as if prayer is another program that can be added into the schedule. They miss the point that prayer is part of a *lifestyle* of communicating with God. A later sentence gives a clarifying example: “They pray for guidance as they go to new places.”² And some of the leaders are farmers or laborers who can pray for hours while working at their regular jobs.

2. **CHARACTER.** Faith builds and expresses character. A leader's character has a major impact on those who look up to them. None of us is perfect; only Jesus lived a sinless life. Our goal is to keep *growing* in Christlike character as long as the Lord has us on this earth. When a leader is expected to be perfect, that expectation has a negative impact on both the leader and the people being led. It encourages a false sense of righteousness. It also results in leaders becoming unsympathetic to people wrestling with sin. We are all equal before God—all imperfect children being transformed by his power at work within us. We all have challenges and temptations; we all have occasions when we need repentance (sadly, a word disappearing in today's world).

King David had character (“a man after [God's] own heart” [Acts 13:22]) combined with repentance. The Bible didn't hide David's sin in order to help him still be considered great. The whole gospel is based on repentance; that's how we *come* to Christ. It should also be part of how we live our lives in him. We need clarity in repentance for sins and acknowledging mistakes. And when other leaders repent they need to have a clear way back into restoration. Why should a leader be rejected

1. Victor John and Dave Coles, *Bhojpuri Breakthrough: A Movement that Keeps Multiplying* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2019), 193.

2. John and Coles, *ibid*, 193.

forever? Repentance is key, followed by reconciliation with God and others.

When we're honest about our human imperfection—that we're still a work in process—God can shape others through our testimonies of transformation. Hearing of others' transformation gives God's children encouragement to look to him for transformation in whatever areas they need it—whether it's lying, stealing, wife beating, suicide, alcoholism, quarrelsomeness, or whatever. Every generation and every community has an issue that goes to the heart. Many times, Christian leaders fail to perceive the key issue for a group, so they miss the best access point for presenting the good news of God's Kingdom. They do everything correctly; except they miss the best entry point into people's lives.

For example, in 1 Timothy 6:1–2 Paul gives the example of slavery (“bondservants” *esv*). We can apply that in many ways, some of which will be relevant and others irrelevant in our society. Leadership requires applying Scripture in ways relevant to the context of those we lead. We need to show how biblical principles bring transformation, so people can grasp God's plan clearly and be transformed by his Spirit.

We also aim to embody the character we hope to see formed in those we lead. Paul wrote, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). I tell my leaders, “I don't know the apostle Paul personally, and you don't know the apostle Paul personally, but you know Victor John. I've lived among you, and you know how I live. Follow me as I follow Christ.”

HUMILITY

I learned early on not to judge people; I'm liable to make the same mistakes (or worse!) myself. Every leader needs to understand that. Too often, people put leaders on a pedestal, and the leaders develop a holier-than-thou attitude. When we feel ourselves being put on a pedestal, we need to climb off as fast as we can, before we fall off. Jesus said, “You are

not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. . . . The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matt. 23:8, 11–12). Our identity as "all brothers" lays a foundation for healthy interaction with *all* God's people—from the least of us to the greatest.

Every leader needs to have people close to them who will speak honestly and not feel afraid to tell the truth. I tell my leaders, "If you see me doing something inappropriate or offensive, I want you to point it out to me." I need that honest feedback from close brothers and sisters, so I very intentionally give that liberty to certain people I trust. Many leaders maintain a status one level above their coworkers; they think if you're vulnerable people won't respect you. Asian culture tends to feed that temptation, but I think it's worth the risk for *every* leader to have those "one another" relationships where accountability and correction can go both ways.

Human ego pushes us all to think we're never wrong; so we never correct our course, because we assume we're right. And no one else can correct us because we always think we're right. The psalmist gave this description of the wicked, "In their own eyes they flatter themselves / too much to detect or hate their sin" (Ps. 36:2). In Psalm 19 he prayed:

*But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.*

vv. 12–13

We need to release our ego enough to be ready and willing to hear both the Lord and some trusted others inform us about our hidden faults.

PROCESSING EMOTIONS

Effectively processing emotions plays an important role in Christian leadership. The quicker a person learns to process their emotions well, the more likely they will succeed in ministry. Emotions are a normal and important part of how God made us. But emotions can easily lead us to react to people or situations in ways that are less than the Lord's best. A mature person is aware of their emotions and processes them before the Lord in a godly way that yields good fruit. We see David doing this in the Psalms. For example, we see how he handled discouragement (Pss. 42–43), anguished weariness (Ps. 6; 13), threats from enemies (Ps. 3; 7), awe (Ps. 8), joy in victory (Ps. 21), and many more.

Some people get too excited when being praised or too discouraged by negative comments. All kinds of emotions can arise and carry a person away. Leaders often face heavier emotional situations than the average person. We face emotions arising not only from our own personal situations but also those connected to the lives of people we shepherd. As Paul wrote, "Apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28 ESV). We need to know how to bring our emotions to the Lord and keep going. Otherwise, we can leave open a door for Satan to attack and push us to sabotage the Lord's best in a situation.

One particular instance caught me by surprise. In the 1970s, three other men and I were working in a neighboring country. Officials arrested the other three but just looked at me and said, "You go home."

I said, "I'm with them!" The next day their pictures were printed in the newspaper announcing that they had been caught preaching the gospel. I had expected persecution—to go to jail or something big—but nobody bothered to take me there. I got angry with God, and stayed angry for a long time, that he chose me to *not* go to jail. I didn't have any great story to tell! It took me a long time to overcome my anger at God. I thought, *How could he do that to me? I'm such a sincere and hard-working guy!* I was ready to face persecution, but I wasn't ready to face being ignored.

And I wasn't ready to face my own anger over the situation. Sometimes we're all set to fight Satan on one side while he's sneaking around the *other* side. Unprocessed emotions may quietly be opening a back door for him. We all face an onslaught of emotion at some point, and effective leadership depends on processing those emotions well.³

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Effective leadership requires healthy relationships. Growing healthy relationships requires a lot of sacrifice and investment of oneself to build emotional bonds. This doesn't mean letting people take advantage of us; it means communicating love to people, and loving is hard work. *Liking* is not hard work. But really *loving* people requires work. We want to lead in ways that nurture unity, motivation, and moving in the same direction. To accomplish that, we need to make 1 Corinthians 13 the center of all our relationships.

LONELINESS

Scripture gives us numerous examples of loneliness in the lives of spiritual leaders. God called Abram to leave his own people. We often focus mainly on God's promise, the great things to which God called Abram, and Abram's obedience—all of which are important. But we overlook the fact that Abram left his relational context and moved into the unknown. He had his wife Sarai but no children; and though his nephew Lot went with him, they ended up needing to separate, and Lot chose the nicer-looking location. Abram spent a lot of time alone. But God told him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless" (Gen. 17:1). He invited Abram to walk in his presence.

3. Practical steps for developing this ability can be found in the document "Connecting with Your Feelings," available at <https://ent.freemin.org/connecting-with-feelings>.

Many Christian leaders sit with the Bible in the morning to hear from God, but they don't know how to isolate and quiet themselves in his presence. They're thinking about an email that needs a response. They're thinking about a message they're getting ready to share with a group or a funding request that was rejected. They're thinking about some problem or plan that distracts them from intimacy with God. They never get away enough to connect with God's *presence*. There's a reason God told Abram to walk before him and live in his presence.

Noah offers another example of lonely ministry. God told him to build an ark, a huge boat, on dry land very far from any body of water on which it might float. Estimates of the time required for the project range from as few as 20 years to as many as 120 years. Clearly Noah spent multiple decades investing all his best energy in a huge, visible project that looked *incredibly stupid*! To clarify the picture, consider God's reason for the ark and the flood: "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Gen. 6:5). As we picture Noah surrounded by very wicked people, we can imagine the mocking and abuse he must have endured as he worked obediently through all those decades. God gave him a very embarrassing job and a lonely walk of obedience.

God called Hosea to a very painful and lonely task: to marry a promiscuous woman. God told Jeremiah not to marry or have children, a very lonely calling in that cultural context. And his ministry consisted mainly of delivering bad news to all the people, eliminating any hope of having many friends.

We might wonder why God gave such strange commands to his servants. A leader's personal relationship with God has to mature; so God often brings a leader to a place of loneliness, where God himself becomes everything for them and they learn to dwell in his presence.

In the New Testament, God called Joseph and Mary to walk a strange and lonely road: a supernatural, premarital pregnancy, birth in a barn, and becoming refugees in a foreign land. John the Baptist ended up alone

in prison wondering whether his life message about Jesus the Messiah had actually been true. And Jesus spent his whole time on earth with no one, even those closest to him, really understanding who he was or why he did the things he did.

Loneliness plays a crucial role in a leader's life. The word *loneliness* has a negative connotation, while the related idea of solitude is often recommended⁴ as part of the spiritual discipline “silence and solitude.” God invites us into solitude to escape the clutter of the external world and better hear his voice. Jesus invited his disciples to make a habit of solitude in their communication with the Father: “When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matt. 6:6).

Talking to God in solitude (“in secret”) enables us as leaders to find out more of the secrets on his heart. Every effective leader wants to know God's heart, not just for themselves, but for God's people and the purposes of his Kingdom. Consider the biblical examples of Abraham, childless decade after decade, who was called God's friend (James 2:23), and Elijah when he ran away into the desert to escape the wrath of Jezebel (1 Kings 19). We see there a mighty prophet of God living under the shadow of fear. That shadow took him into a cave where God spoke to him and asked, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (v. 9b). After Elijah answered the question, God led him beyond external distractions and disruptions. He was already in the desert with no other people anywhere for miles around. He had no TV, no internet, no cell phone, probably not even many animals. Yet God led him past a great and powerful wind, an earthquake, and a fire, before speaking in a gentle whisper.

They had a very sweet conversation there, and God redeemed Elijah from his fear. He gave him fresh insight into earthly realities invisible to the human eye (“seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal” [1 Kings 19:18]). And God gave Elijah fresh

4. See, for example, Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998); Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: HarperCollins; repr., 1999); and Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014).

instruction on where to go, what ministry to accomplish at the national level, and whom to anoint as his successor for future prophetic ministry. As a result, Elijah anointed two kings and his successor, Elisha. Elijah's fear took him to a place of loneliness; then God's presence turned his loneliness into solitude.

God can change the meaning and outcome of loneliness, even when a leader doesn't have clarity at the moment. We all sometimes go through fear, panic, and situations where fear is our shadow. The bigger our calling and ministry, the larger the problems and threats that may arise. God doesn't always take away the shadow of fear, but he delivers us as we walk by faith *through* our fears. Leadership can be a lonely calling. Yet we need the journey to lead us from loneliness to solitude, then from solitude to anointing.

Sometimes a situation happens that pushes us to a place of loneliness, and we immediately blame the devil for causing the problem. We spend our energy rebuking the devil and trying to get back to a place of feeling good; meanwhile, God wants to use the loneliness to invite us to solitude with him. We can end up fighting and struggling, facing one direction while the Lord stands on the other side saying, "I'm waiting for you." He holds open a sweet invitation for those who quiet down long enough to hear.

We need freedom not just from fear but from whatever negative forces or issues shadow us—possibly shadows from our childhood or shadows from hurts we've experienced in ministry. Or it might be the shadow of living by Christian rules without the delightful passion of an intimate relationship with God. Paul wrote to the Galatians about freedom from living by a rule book. Some people think they will have a good Christian life if they follow all the right rules. They think their holiness comes from following the rules. But that's what the Pharisees did!

Jesus came to bring abundant life and freedom. We need to make sure others understand that essential message. I talked to someone affiliated with the movement who said, "In the past, I was leading people to Christ, but I didn't know what it meant to walk with Jesus. I was living

and sharing a religious thing, not an experience with Jesus.” Through his connection with the movement, he gained a healthier perspective: a humility and willingness to deny his own rights—the kinds of things that only come from having a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord.

We talk about persecution, and many leaders understand the need to prepare for it. But leaders, especially apostolic leaders, need to also know the lonely aspect of leadership, as Paul wrote, “I die every day!” (1 Cor. 15:31 ESV). Of course Jesus calls *all* his followers to die daily to themselves (Luke 9:23). Apostolic ministry among the unreached adds additional threat of physical attack and the reality of God leading us down a lonely path very few people travel. Leaders must prepare for that as well and live in God’s presence for our sustenance. Leadership requires faithful perseverance without expecting someone to hold our hand all the time. This can also contribute to loneliness, not having anyone to help carry the burden, including the times when it seems as though God doesn’t respond.

A leader needs to know how to follow Christ daily, regardless of what others are doing, and how to obey God’s call, even when others don’t appreciate where that call is leading. Being alone with God can sometimes feel lonely; but it’s a part of the process God uses to make a leader sensitive to his voice, despite all the other voices and noises in the world around us.

HOLY SPIRIT INTUITION

Leadership requires hard work, discernment, integrity, and much sacrifice. It also calls for understanding and interpreting one’s gut feeling which, when it is from God, I call Holy Spirit intuition. Gut feeling includes the intuition that develops over time as a leader learns to interpret the vibes or indicators of what’s happening. The world overflows with a variety of sounds and forces, like radio waves all around us.

They're present all the time, but many times we don't notice. We need God's help to interpret and decipher the various ideas, thoughts, and feelings floating around. Effective leadership comes from those who tune in and move in relationship with God.

Sometimes that intuition brings a word of encouragement, correction, or challenge. It may come out in a sermon, when the speaker senses a spiritual vibe from God: "I planned X, but the Spirit inspired me to say Y." Or it might arise in a group discussion when the Spirit gives a fresh perspective that's more than a natural insight. Sometimes you may be in a group and feel uneasy about what's happening. Ask God, and he will show you what you need to know.

This sensitivity enables leaders to function from their gut feeling: a maturing combination of the word of God, relationship with God, and intuition. When we're with others, how do we know what to do or say? When we seek God, he guides us, and part of that is sanctified intuition. We already have a kernel of that by nature because we're created in God's image. When intuition is sanctified and redeemed, it goes to a much deeper level through the power of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes people ask, "How do you know? How can you say that?" The answer comes from moving around in that spiritual atmosphere. We can become experienced in listening to God and trusting our intuition so we become able to say and know things God reveals to us.

The Book of Acts provides numerous examples of the Spirit directing and guiding leaders in a subjective way. Acts 8:29 describes how the Spirit said to Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it," resulting in the salvation and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts 10:19 describes Peter pondering the meaning of a vision he had received, when "the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you.'" This resulted in the salvation and baptism of Cornelius's household. Acts 11:12 also refers to the Spirit's guidance, where Peter defends his actions to the circumcised believers in Jerusalem: "The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them." Early in Paul's first missionary journey, the Spirit gave him subjective insight that led to

astonishing boldness in announcing the blindness about to come upon Elymas the sorcerer.

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun."

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the pro-consul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

ACTS 13:9-12

In Chapter 16, the Spirit twice prevented Paul and his team from following their previous plan. "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to" (vv. 6–7). This guidance, followed by a vision, ultimately led Paul and his team to plant the church in Philippi. The Book of Acts describes many events unique to laying the foundation of Kingdom advancement through the apostles. Yet countless testimonies throughout church history and in the present are clear that God continues throughout this age to give his children subjective guidance by the Spirit. This gift is available to *all* God's people, and those who consistently tune in to and follow that voice become more likely to serve as effective leaders in his Kingdom.

For a spiritual leader, three factors work together to sharpen the accuracy of gut feeling: (1) loneliness, (2) walking with the Lord, and (3) understanding from God's word. External input from others (such as mentors and other strong believers) also plays a role. Praying and sharing

with another mature Christian can provide confirmation of a message or something a leader senses. This especially applies to younger leaders and those beginning to sharpen their spiritual sensitivity. Part of becoming more mature involves not always needing to ask someone else's opinion. At the beginning, we do well to ask others for confirmation (like a young preacher asking for feedback: "How was it? Was it OK?"). But after a while we become more confident and ready to face the consequences if we miss something.

We should handle our gut feelings humbly and respectfully, knowing that our perception is fallible. Yet the more we practice listening and acting on Spirit-led intuition, the better we can discern what's coming from God and what may arise from some other source. The greater the vision, the larger the stakes. We need active spiritual guidance, not just our own good ideas or someone else's. This is God's work; we need him, not other humans, to guide our leaders.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE GUT FEELING

Paul wrote in Ephesians, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). Another way to translate "heavenly realms" would be "atmosphere." Spiritual forces of evil do their work in the atmosphere of various places. We need to discern the places and nature of our spiritual battle in everyday situations.

For example, we might come into a room where we sense heaviness. We feel like saying, "Can somebody open a window?" This is actually discernment that some spirit has overtaken the atmosphere in that place and is working to oppress the people there. Or we might have an interaction with someone that shifts our internal state from happiness before the interaction to suddenly feeling depressed for the next three days.

A lot of people in those situations don't know how to respond to such

things. We forget sometimes about our continuous spiritual battle. The devil and his minions roam around constantly, looking for someone to devour, or at least oppress (1 Peter 5:8).

When I enter a new situation, I tune in to discern whether I sense any spirit trying to rob me of joy, peace, or love. When those things disappear mysteriously, it's no accident. I don't just think, "Oh well, some days are not as good as others." I discern whether the place or situation has a spirit fighting against the Spirit of Jesus Christ within me. If I'm not aware of this confrontation, I could be overpowered—not because the demon is stronger than God but because of my ignorance or unawareness of the spiritual dynamics at work. Many Christians don't realize what has overtaken their spirit and robbed them of joy and peace. To become an effective leader, especially in the context of reaching the unreached, we have to cultivate the habit of spiritual sensitivity.

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If a person has watched television half the night, their spirit is impacted. Maybe they watched something pornographic, or maybe just passively watched a lot of news or entertainment. Even through the spin given on the news, a person's mind and attitude can be polluted. We start to speak by faith and they react against it with human logic. If we don't tune in to the spiritual dynamics, we may have no clue why they're talking the way they are.

Many years ago, I led a prayer meeting, and one of the men in attendance, whom I'd known for quite a while, always seemed angry. I didn't always do everything the way he wanted, and he felt I wasn't giving him the respect he deserved, so he directed some of his anger toward me. At this prayer meeting, I said, "Mr. X, please lead us in prayer." Everyone closed their eyes and waited, but he didn't say anything. When it began to feel awkward, I peeked and saw him staring at me with just an angry

glare. At that moment I thought he might beat me up. Tension filled the room; I could feel heaviness in the air and a spiritual intimidation pushing me toward fear. I had to fight that external fear trying to push its way into my heart and mind.

When Mr. X finally started to pray, he asked the Lord for forgiveness. After the service, he said to me, “Thanks, that was a good service today.” I could have been disturbed and distracted by him. But once he asked the Lord to forgive him, he opened himself to something beyond my control. I couldn’t have made that difference by saying something directly.

Even among believers we may meet people with other expectations than we hoped. We want to get the gospel out to everyone, and we focus on reaching this generation with salvation. But some people focus only on their own personal interests and issues. They see us as a means of personal gain to help accomplish their own success. Maybe they hope to make a trip abroad or attend a conference or get some material benefit or improve their reputation. They appear receptive, but they don’t really receive the message. They listen, but don’t really hear. They seem interested, but we end up dealing with their hypocrisy. Sometimes we sense it; sometimes we don’t. Sometimes it takes years to figure out that a person never had a genuine interest; they just wanted to use us.

When I feel something wrong or heavy in a situation, I pray in the name of the Lord. As soon as I begin praying in his name, two things happen. First, I call into action the Spirit of God within me. It’s the New Covenant equivalent of the psalmist’s prayer: “Summon your power, God; / show us your strength, our God, as you have done before” (Ps. 68:28). I invite the Spirit to work in this context and situation. Second, through silent prayer, I take authority over the atmosphere in the situation. If some dark spirit is at work, that spirit, and whatever person he’s attached to, no longer controls the atmosphere. When I do that, someone often gets up and leaves the room. They may not even know why they’re leaving; they just suddenly feel they have to leave. That spirit needs to get out, so he finds a body to carry him away.

Both Christians and non-Christians might carry a spirit of dissension

or lust or fear, trying to influence me. Even at Christian meetings, the conversations often focus on things more worldly than spiritual. If I don't protect myself, I feel disturbed after I leave. I might end up arguing with someone else and not realize why or what's happening to me. I could become the carrier of an unhelpful spirit.

I'm not referring to demon possession. I'm speaking about oppression or carrying around a spirit that's not of God. Some people think that can't happen to a Christian. But I would ask, "Isn't it possible for a Christian to carry around strong drink or pornography or an illegal drug?" Of course that's possible, though it's not God's will. If we believe it in the visible realm, why do we disbelieve it in the invisible realm? Christians can carry around a very destructive spirit. How sad when Christians and their leaders don't recognize Satan's devices and miss the clues of evil, spiritual forces playing their tricks. We have seen enthusiastic people taken down and disappear because of the enemy's schemes.

Another way to describe the problem would be a feeling of discontent in the air. (Women are often better at discerning this than men. Husbands sometimes don't believe it when their wives tell them a hunch they have, but it usually turns out to be right.) We need to recognize the ability God gives us to discern invisible things and train ourselves how to listen to those gut feelings. When we work in a hostile situation, we need to sensitize ourselves to greater awareness of the atmosphere around us. It actually happens all the time, but we need to train ourselves to be more aware so it becomes more natural, more a part of our regular routine.

Sometimes government officials can seem very powerful and intimidating. If we walk into a government office to face questioning, intimidation is in the atmosphere. That intimidation can make us feel nervous and want to give up. We may almost forget everything we had prepared to say. The official may ask questions we didn't expect, and we don't know how to answer. In those situations (which happen often in settings like mine) I don't know how to prepare myself, so I go unprepared. I realize that Christ lives in me. He's the hope of glory. I've got to dwell in the presence of God. I focus on the fact that I'm not there because of

myself but because of the One I serve. (If I'm there because of something I did wrong, then it's my mistake. I can only hope God will snatch me out of the furnace and rescue me from my own folly.)

We need to keep the perspective: "I'm here because of Christ, so he'll deliver me." I bind any negative spirit that is present, whether it is a spirit of fear, anger, or intimidation. The Spirit within me is stronger than all those negative spirits combined. God is the source of all wisdom; he'll give me the wisdom to answer. Jesus himself promised that in such situations, "It will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10:20). We can't always prepare ourselves, except by being in the presence of God to calm ourselves and compose our spirits so we can be a vessel in his hands.

I don't love confrontation; it scares me. But my job often involves confronting people about something. Recently I had to confront six brothers; but I've learned not to lose sleep over it. One mistake young leaders make is not knowing how to control their emotions and thus losing sleep over petty problems. When we look *back* at a problem, it doesn't look so big; but in the midst of it, it looks huge. To be effective as a leader, we must learn to put things in the Lord's hands and get his perspective. In many of the psalms, David faced threats and problems worse than most of us will ever face. But he knew how to look to the Lord and pray his way through them.

Prayer has the power to change our attitude because it connects with our emotions and heart. Mind and heart need to be coordinated together; we can't have anger in our hearts and compassion in our words. God calls us to integrity where our attitudes, desires, emotions, words, and actions all point in the same direction—a Spirit-led direction pointing to Jesus. Moving toward that integrity is a process, and to some extent we all continue in that process until we meet Jesus face to face. When we talk about love, we can't mean just an emotion. Love involves so much more, including appropriate action.

I was once summoned to a government office because someone had filed a complaint that I was converting people—an illegal activity. I didn't

know what to expect as I walked in. There was a government officer, who didn't have the Holy Spirit; and there was me, believing in the power of God, believing God works beyond any human ability. As I walked in, I said in my heart, *I take authority over this in the name of Jesus.*

The man smiled, stood up, and shook my hand (which government officials *never* do) and said, "Nice to see you. Have a seat." Then he asked, "How are you? How many children do you have?" and all kinds of friendly small talk. Then he said, "By the way, here's a report we have received," and he handed it to me to read. The descriptions of activities were there, but of course I wasn't the one converting people by their definition. By conversion, they mean things such as giving money, enticing people, and promising something to people if they convert. I don't do any of those things. After I read it, he asked, "What do you think I should do?"

I said, "You're the boss. Do what you think is best. What do you think?"

He said, "I think it's all false."

I said, "I think you're right."

God makes a way when we call on him. Even in a scary situation, when our heart is trembling, we can claim spiritual authority over the atmosphere. The one in us is greater than the one in the world (1 John 4:4). The Bible says God makes us the head, not the tail (Deut. 28:13). To be an effective leader, we have to remember that. I want to be meek and humble, but at the same time, I have authority here. A Christian leader can wield some authority through knowing Scripture and theology. But much *more* authority comes from tuning in to the Spirit of God and discerning creative ways to apply Jesus' teachings in daily situations. The two aren't mutually exclusive. But many times a situation changes, and we have to discern God's best at a moment's notice. Our ability to discern can have a major impact on people's well-being, safety, and provision

Much *more* authority comes from tuning in to the Spirit of God and discerning creative ways to apply Jesus' teachings in daily situations.

for their needs. It impacts protection, resources, and stewardship. In all these areas we need wisdom, tact, and the Spirit's leading. A leader needs the ability to exercise appropriate authority over these situations.

This discernment doesn't mean being hyper-spiritual; it means tuning in to spiritual dynamics and applying our rightful authority in situations of everyday life. We live actively *in* the world but not *of* it. We help the people we lead become sensitive and know how to get free from the enemy's snares, "hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh" (Jude 23). We don't have to act spiritual just for the sake of looking like a spiritual leader. As we walk by the Spirit, we can lead a balanced life and enjoy everything God allows us to enjoy while guarding our hearts and minds to not give the devil a foothold. As the Lord said, "Above all else, guard your heart, / for everything you do flows from it" (Prov. 4:23). The Lord's promise to make his people the head and not the tail applies to those who carefully follow and obey his word. That's the foundation of our victory in the spiritual realm.

CHANGING THE SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE

Becoming a leader who leaves a legacy involves living out our apostolic calling with apostolic anointing, impacting lives and the atmosphere of various places. Scripture gives us great examples of how people in tune with God's Spirit can have a radical impact on the atmosphere and on those around them. After Saul was first anointed king of Israel, he and his servant met up with a procession of prophets.

The Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he joined in their prophesying. When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

1 SAMUEL 10:10b-11

Saul had been anointed as king, not as prophet. But when Saul came into the presence of the prophets, the Spirit working in that atmosphere impacted him powerfully. God's people can powerfully, consciously change the atmosphere. Sometimes, when we get close to a powerful servant of God, we're suddenly transported to another atmosphere. There's a feeling of God's presence, and something about that atmosphere lifts us up in our spirits.

At other times (even in Christian meetings) the atmosphere can feel suffocating; everyone present feels as if they are under a blanket of heaviness. It takes discernment to recognize and identify what's happening at times like that. If we don't realize we're in a battle, we're not likely to win that battle. Someone once said, "If you're not in conflict with Satan, you're walking together with him." We need to recognize when we've walked into a skirmish in the invisible battle.

The apostle Paul wrote:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-6

Apostolic leaders know how to take over any unseen environment by blending their own humility, the word of the truth, and the power of the Spirit to conquer any situation through inner strength from God. Most of my experience with this has been positive. When I visit leaders in the movement, I see people catching vision, and they start talking about winning and discipling more people without me saying anything. They start mentioning the numbers of people they're going to win, and they *do* that! When I listen to them, I say, "Do you realize you guys just made a commitment to win five thousand people?"

And they say, “Yeah, we can do it! We’ll reach six thousand!”

I’m not there to get the leaders all pumped up. This is just what God does when they get together and the Spirit moves in the atmosphere. They themselves come up with these numbers.

Several times at the Bhojpuri conference, I’ve gone around to check in and see how people are doing in the tents where they’re staying. And I find that none of them are sleeping; they’re in groups worshiping. I’ve seen with my own eyes on those nights; it’s like the glory of God descending. It’s very powerful. I’ve also seen sick people being brought and healed instantly. Some people start to speak words of wisdom and insight from the Lord. And, when I meet them the next morning, they all look fresh, though they might not have slept at all! I tell them, “Go get some sleep, so you won’t fall asleep during the next day’s talks.”

They respond, “I didn’t come here to sleep!”

A leader’s inner life and deep intimacy with God lays the foundation on which ministry can flourish and God’s Spirit can build effective leadership. One essential building block is discipleship, to which we now turn.

DISCIPLESHIP LEADING TO LEADERSHIP

A PERSON WHO BECOMES A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST IS called a disciple. Scripture calls disciples to live disciplined lives, following the examples of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer (2 Tim. 2:3–6). By continuing faithfully, a disciple can become a disciple multiplier. God calls us to focus not on the number of disciples multiplied but on diligence in cultivating the habit of disciple-making.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

A disciple is a Spirit-transformed follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Follow me” (Mark 1:17). That command and invitation still applies today. A major obstacle to following Jesus is making discipleship seem far too complicated. For that reason we try to present a *simple* understanding of what it means to be a disciple. In Mark 8:34, Jesus describes three active steps in discipleship:

1. **DENY YOURSELF.** Discipleship means an obedient life, characterized by hearing and obeying the voice of the Lord, and letting go of old patterns shaped by sinful nature.

2. **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS.** Discipleship means a life committed to the redemptive purposes of God and a willingness to die to selfish goals for the sake of accomplishing God's goals.
3. **FOLLOW JESUS.** Discipleship means a Spirit-led life of increasing spiritual maturity and awareness.

Scripture presents five marks of a true disciple:

1. A disciple is Spirit-filled (Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:9).
2. A disciple is obedient (John 14:21–24; Heb. 5:8).
3. A disciple is loving (John 13:34–35; 1 John 4:19).
4. A disciple is faithful (John 8:31–32; Heb. 3:1–2).
5. A disciple is reproducing (John 12:24; 15:8).

To see these marks grow, we expect discipleship to develop organically (naturally). Organic discipleship, like organic evangelism, is not a program, Bible study, class, cell group, or department of the church. It's a *lifestyle* of obedience and growing spiritual maturity characterized by a passionate love for Christ and others, a willingness to suffer in service, and a commitment to reach the lost. Organic discipleship is the *fruit* of our relationship with Christ and his followers. *Organic discipleship begins with reproduction, not instruction.*

We seek to guide each new disciple to:

1. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. Grow in their awareness of God's presence.
3. Learn to hear God's voice through his word.
4. Develop a strong love for God and their neighbor.
5. Repent of their sins and clear their conscience.
6. Share their faith with others.
7. Operate skillfully in their spiritual gifts.

Long-term success depends not just on what a person can accomplish but on those they nurture and raise up to continue and multiply the

ministry. Many people want to succeed, but they can't because they don't recreate themselves. Some have taken up the good idea of aiming for at least four generations of churches but haven't realized that four generations of churches require four generations of new leaders. Leaders have to multiply themselves.

Leadership development starts with discipleship—with leaders taking initiative in discipleship. These leaders make disciples and help people mature in Christ. They deal with the baggage a person brings. That might include things such as fear of the unknown, of the dark, or of a curse. In our context, fears such as these have often been instilled through culture, religion, or family. Believers in any culture can bring cultural baggage into their walk with Christ and even into Christian leadership. We can be driven by impulses that run contrary to what Christ calls us to be and what his word teaches. So effective leaders deal with those things in their own life and in the lives of others. Discipleship is not just taking people through certain teachings; it involves unpacking the baggage.

At the second level, a leader models prayer, Bible study, and Bible reading. We show a new believer how to pray and allow that person to pray. We give them opportunities to engage and be involved. Once a person begins to confess Christ and other biblical truths out loud, something supernatural happens in their life. Transformation begins taking place through the work of the Holy Spirit. We, too, often forget that and put our emphasis on technique, as if the right technique could somehow raise people up. But it won't. Our rebellious nature (which we have from birth) collides with the redemption of Christ, and that's where transformation takes place. That's how a person emerges like a diamond. Confessing sin and accepting Christ and his sacrifice on the cross begins the work of reshaping our lives. Then obedience to his word continues the shaping.

Discipleship involves changing attitudes. That's why the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) is so crucial. If we implant those patterns into a person and they accept them, their life is transformed. (Similar to transplanting an organ, the recipient's body has to accept that organ so it really becomes a part of them and enables their body to function in a healthy

way.) In the same way, the Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount have to be implanted in a disciple in order for transformation to occur. Then, when they start to function as a leader, they already have the right spiritual DNA.

For many people, becoming a leader is a big issue. If you call them a “director,” they suddenly think they’re a big deal. If you fail to recognize a problem until that promotion, it’s harder to fix. A lot of mission work has been destroyed because of an immature leader’s emotions. The person had talent and got promoted based on that talent, but they didn’t mature spiritually. That’s why we consider heart transformation, through radical obedience to Jesus, an essential ingredient of discipleship.

Disciple-making requires proximity—being close enough to a disciple to be vulnerable with them. Many times, people envision discipleship and leadership training as a program: a course someone goes through for a certain number of weeks, and then they’re done. That wouldn’t work in our context; we use a more relational and effective means, as mentioned above. For example, in villages, people really open up at night. Those who haven’t said anything all day will open up and share. They ask solid questions about how to deal with various issues and how to overcome problems. Spending two nights with people can accomplish as much as two weeks of training.

The dichotomy of sacred and secular messes up our understanding of God’s intention and twists our understanding of what a leader should do and be.

A leader has to realize that we don’t focus only on saving souls and then neglect to *holistically* redeem people and their culture. We need to break down old paradigms that give people wrong direction. The dichotomy of sacred and secular messes up our understanding of God’s intention and twists our understanding

of what a leader should do and be. Christ’s redemption has to touch and reshape every part of people’s lives: their speech, finances, relationships, community, and nation. We can’t give people a model that has failed over

the years: separating “spiritual” matters from the “stuff” of everyday life. We need a bigger perspective to make a transformative, lifelong impact. A leader has to think in many dimensions, seeing God’s miraculous redemption worked out in *all* of people’s lives, not just filling the pews. I aim to bring the whole gospel to people, not divide it into spiritual and social work.

Leadership involves loving people. Fear immobilizes and prevents them from pursuing the Lord’s highest goals. But love drives out fear. So, to help people move forward in the Lord, we love and serve them, which involves sacrifice. Leaders should join the apostle Paul in saying: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

This goes back to the issue of dealing with people’s *hearts*. In the past (and still, to some extent, in the present) some groups believed that the way a person should signify following Christ was to raise their hand, so if a person raised their hand at a meeting, everyone felt happy. Some groups think if you read through four laws with someone and they recite a prayer at the end, God guarantees that person’s salvation. So they focus their energy on finding individuals who will hold still long enough to listen to the four laws. Some people think giving out Bibles on the street is the best way to get people saved, because God’s word won’t return void. But a huge, missing piece in that thinking is biblical *discipleship*. God intends to not only forgive sins but also transform hearts and lives, so his Kingdom becomes manifested by shaping those hearts and lives.

How does the good news become truly *good news*—not just good advice—for someone who has never heard the name of Jesus? Telling someone, “Come to my church so you can find nice friends” may be good advice, but it’s not the good news. Good news transforms hearts and lives. It informs people about a God who made a way to fix *everything*—in their lives and in the world—while they were still living in brokenness and even before they were born. The apostle Paul

presented this good news to a hostile world—“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION

We don’t have a secret plan to convert people. If people don’t become Christians, have I failed? No. *The gospel benefits people*; it improves their lives, relationships, and economy. I don’t have to twist people’s arms to try to get them to receive God’s blessing. We live out a transformative gospel, and the reality of God at work attracts people. I’ve seen, in the Bhojpuri work, how people have been transformed. Some have come to faith and ended up planting twenty churches, whereas I could hardly manage to lead one church back when I was a pastor.

The main thing is to bring people to the saving redemption of Christ who meets people right where they are. When people walk with Jesus, they realize “this area and that area of my life need to change.” Discipleship needs to impact a person’s economy: hard work, honesty, helping others, not being selfish, not relying on money, understanding the use of money, and so forth—implications of the fact that God truly owns everything.

Leaders need to help people think about these issues; if a person doesn’t think, they won’t act, and they won’t change. It’s not enough to say, “The Bible has the answer.” *Where* in Scripture is the answer? Proverbs says, “A word fitly spoken / is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (25:11 esv). Discipleship involves helping people access the riches of God’s truth and guidance for their life in Christ—the right verses for the right topics at the right time. I’m talking about something simple, relational, and multipliable, not a complicated program of sitting through lectures.

Where are we leading people? If a person aspires to be a disciple maker, that’s great, and that aspiration can remain throughout the person’s life. A disciple maker can also transition into a leader, who may also transition into becoming an apostolic leader. The transition to becoming

an apostolic leader arises from a deep dissatisfaction within: an unresolved longing to reach those who haven't yet heard the good news. That kind of longing leads to taking risks and doing things others might consider unthinkable.

BASIC TEACHING

When some people hear the word *teaching*, they think of a PowerPoint presentation or an explanation from Greek or Hebrew. That is all fine and has its place, but it often can't be done in our situation. Many of the people we reach don't understand their own ethnic language. And they haven't read the whole Bible. So, for them, the teaching they receive needs to be something applicable to everyday life, something that will work for them, to help them live out God's word in their own situations. Many of them come from a background of a fatalistic worldview. They need God's word to generate faith in them; the need to move from *fate* to *faith*. It's an ongoing transition toward a faithful, faith-driven life.

RECOGNIZING LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

We can have criteria in mind of people we think will become good leaders—people who will survive and become effective—but our assessments are fallible. I've known many good people whom I hoped would do well, then suddenly something happened and they disappeared. We can't take anyone's success for granted. We all have flaws and vulnerabilities; only by God's grace can any of us bring forth good Kingdom fruit. And I love that God can always raise up new people. The psalmist said, "It is God who judges: / He brings one down, he exalts another" (Ps. 75:7). Our lives and ministries belong to him.

Leadership development depends on the people involved; not

everyone becomes a leader. To raise up effective leaders we need to try to distinguish who will be able to handle greater challenges. It's a journey from fear to faith; some people will take that journey further than others. If you take some people to the fifth floor of a building and ask them to look out, they'll be afraid. Some will be fine there but afraid to look out from the seventeenth floor, while another guy walks on a tightrope between buildings or across Niagara Falls! He leaves his fear behind and takes a step of faith in a huge way, a way that not everyone will be able to do. We all enjoy watching those people or those who bungee jump. But that's not for me!

The point is that, in my walk with Jesus, the more I leave behind my fear and take steps of faith, the more those steps grow me into maturity and increase my ability to do things that no one else would dare to do. Many people go out as missionaries, but only a few succeed in a way that accomplishes something unique. Two people may land in the same place, but one sees more fruit than the other.

A person who takes a step of faith also has humility and knows how to take insults. We must be humble enough to suffer while also brave and ambitious enough to aspire and achieve great things for God.

TRAINING VERSUS EXPERIENCE WITH GOD

Some aspects of leadership are trainable, while other aspects must be learned by experience with God. Intimacy with God is essential for effective biblical leadership, and it can't be taught or trained as we usually think of those processes. We can model intimacy with God, and others can observe practices that nurture that intimacy: time spent in prayer and God's word, bringing key challenges to God, and so forth. Ultimately that intimate relationship must be a personal heart connection with God's heart through his Holy Spirit.

When Jesus trained people, they applied (or didn't apply) his teaching in ways that fit their unique backgrounds and qualities. Jesus doesn't use

a cookie cutter that makes all his followers look and act exactly alike. Different people apply principles in different ways; that's often a good thing, not a problem. Applying God's word is a personal process. That's true on an everyday level, with various applications people might choose in a discovery Bible study. It's also true at the level of more intensive ministry training. People with diverse gifts can end up in a wide variety of ministries.

The most effective training happens through *modeling*. People remember what they see modeled. But personality can't be modeled, because every person is unique. In fact, when aspiring leaders imitate the personality or mannerisms of their leader, it often irritates others and feels phony. It's imitation by the flesh rather than imitation by the Spirit. When Paul wrote, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 ESV), he didn't mean the unique personality or mannerisms of Jesus when he walked the earth; Paul never knew Jesus during those years. He meant the character and godliness, passion for truth and holiness, and love and zeal for God's glory, manifested eternally in Christ and growing in all his true disciples. Jesus' character and Kingdom patterns can be transferred through serving in close enough contact that the biblical concepts become real-life practices and patterns.

HELPING NATURAL SOCIAL GROUP LEADERS BECOME GODLY SERVANTS

When a person comes to faith, they enter either *along with*, or *into*, a spiritual ring of relationships with people who are growing in the Lord. When a person enters that ring, if they aren't transformed after a while, something is wrong. A person is transformed by simple obedience. People don't become transformed by simply acknowledging Christ, by just believing. That's a first step, but a person has to apply and obey Jesus' commands. Once obedience and application begin, transformation starts happening in a person's life. Otherwise, they become artificial and a

hypocrite. They end up misfits in God's Kingdom, and eventually the hypocrisy will come to light. Jesus said, "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open" (Luke 8:17).

If a person is genuinely converted and being transformed, we don't have to do something special; they will naturally grow into a spiritual leader. Leadership doesn't mean an executive position, however. When a believer leads another person to discover the gospel truth, salvation through Christ, they have already begun exercising an important kind of leadership. That doesn't require an academic degree. I do see value in formal education, and in some cases I encourage leaders to get an academic degree to sharpen certain skills—it gives them more confidence—but that's not our main goal or focus. We consider it most essential that *all* God's people learn the basic principle of leadership: the ability to lead others to the truth in Christ.

God has already given many natural gifts and skills to those who will enter his Kingdom, and every believer becomes a representative of God's Kingdom. The *way* they represent it will depend on their own style and capacity. Their charisma, skills, or talents will be an added blessing, and God will consecrate all those things and use them for his glory. Of course, demonic "abilities" don't continue. We have, in the movement, some former fortune tellers and palm readers. They don't do those things anymore. Disciples renounce and turn away from works of darkness, even works that used to be lucrative or impressive.

Our job is to lead people to God's truth in ways that make a difference right now. We build one truth on another. For instance, parents tell their children what happens if they don't eat vegetables; they want to build a healthy lifestyle. A doctor tells us the truth, whether we like it or not. God's truth brings liberation; it helps people build self-confidence through Christ who dwells within. A Christian leader can make a difference by telling others where to find love, peace, and joy. Reconciliation brings peace in the heart, with God and with others. Joy arises when we share with others and do things for them; God gives the gift of joy

unspeakable. His love is not like worldly love. We can talk to someone with confidence, because we can tell them about the love, joy, and peace we have within us.

A common practice in many Asian cultures is to take a gift when we visit someone's home. We come with something in our hand: maybe some fruit or vegetables or something we've bought at the market. God brought us gifts when he came to earth in the person of Jesus. Along with forgiveness and redemption he brought love, joy, and peace. He calls us to pass on those gifts to others: "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

Beyond transforming us as individuals, God's Kingdom plan includes creating *shalom* communities: a foretaste of future Kingdom rightness. What do Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus need? What do terrorists need? They all need love, joy, and peace. *Everyone* needs them! Would anyone say they're against those things? They might have a twisted idea of what they mean or want them only for themselves. But God has placed, in every human heart, a longing for those fruits that come from the Spirit: love, joy, peace, and all the others (Gal. 5:22–23).

We've all experienced brokenness. But Romans 5:1–5 speaks about deep peace and joy that God has poured into our hearts by his Spirit. People don't have to search for peace with God. He has already taken the initiative: "For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (v. 10). We can point people to helpful Bible verses as they grow toward leadership. But we

never want to give the impression that a person has to acquire a title or position in order to do substantial ministry. God calls *all* his children into ministry: to live as disciples who make disciples. As a person serves faithfully and bravely, God

God calls all his children into ministry: to live as disciples who make disciples.

might shift their role, so instead of touching five people, they touch 500 or 5,000. But that happens best when it happens gradually—when those

faithful with a few things receive responsibility for greater things. We all need to serve faithfully with whatever opportunities God gives us to glorify him on the earth. We can all aim to convey love, joy, and peace—both to believers and unbelievers. We can always start with these three.

Some people would like to run straight to the conclusion of whatever ministries God might have for them. But God usually reveals the ministries step-by-step, over time, as we walk in faithful and radical obedience to whatever he gives us day by day. I have a conclusion for myself and my situation. And I may have some insights and observations for others—ideas, Scriptures, and principles to share—some observations of whatever gifts the Lord appears to be blessing in them. But each person needs to draw their own conclusion from the principles and what they discern the Spirit is saying to them. At the end of our lives we will all give account to God for what we've done with the gifts he entrusted to us. We are all fellow servants; God hasn't appointed any of us as the judge. So we just keep asking ourselves and helping others ask: "How will I obey what God is showing me by his Spirit through his word?"

OUR TRAINING

Our training is systematic, delivered in bite-sized modules. It focuses on helping workers with very practical issues. We balance the needs of literate and semiliterate leaders, equipping from a biblical perspective. The training is designed to help them make good decisions. Because most of the disciples don't come from a biblically informed background, their perspective can be overshadowed by elements from their previous worldview. So the first part of the training helps them learn and apply biblical principles in practical ways, in daily life. They learn how to make good decisions about everyday issues such as bribery, cheating, and fighting and how to incarnate Kingdom life and truth into those kinds of situations.

The second aspect of the training teaches how to make *other* people's lives better, and improve their quality of life, by helping them make good

decisions. We don't give people a lot of theory to try to remember. We address what they're facing right now, which gives them hope, and the ability to change and make small decisions. We do follow a curriculum. These two underlying issues—biblical application for everyday life and helping others—are the backbone of it.

RELIEF WORK LEADING TO LEADERSHIP

When COVID-19 hit, we involved a lot of people in relief work related to the virus. We recruited more than three hundred young people as “Corona Warriors” to bring education about the virus. (Some of these young people were believers; most were unbelievers.) We seized the opportunity to shift people's focus and involve them in doing good works in the community. We gave them a new perspective without having a big budget. Once they were involved, they enjoyed what they were doing. We provided them with placards, taught them about social distancing, discussed sanitation and the vaccine, and taught them how to approach government officials. We taught them how to increase awareness and how to counter rumors. Their parents also got excited and said, “Our children have changed!” A program like that brings acceptance, unlike gospel workers just being considered useless in the community. It took initiative to do something that engaged a lot of young people.

One girl on our team initiated this work in one area of the capital. When a local authority asked, “Who are you?” she said, “I work with an NGO [non-governmental organization].”

He said, “Tell me more about this organization.” After she described the kind of community assistance the team was giving, he told her to stop standing in line with others and ushered her through a VIP door because she was helping people. He said, “Come in any time, and bring people who need help. You're doing such good work, helping people. We want to help you.”

In a city of eighteen million people, almost nobody cares about

anyone else. When we start to care for people practically, some people take notice. This is a part of leadership: making people useful to their communities.

In Genesis, God gave humans the authority to manage the animals and creation. When we add to that the knowledge of Christ, we have an even greater purpose. Leadership is leading people toward purpose, righteousness, and goodness. We aim to influence whole families and communities. In this girl's case, the community has assigned authority to her. She can speak words of wisdom to them because she's useful to them. Otherwise, why would people in Indian society listen to a twenty-five-year-old girl?

Our training builds on practical functions. Relational discipleship and transformation in everyday life form building blocks of leadership. Even the newest and simplest believers learn how to lead others to Jesus. For more systematic theology, we follow a curriculum, but our curriculum for basic discipleship is organic and relational.

HELPING LEADERS MATURE

IN THE MOVEMENTS WITH WHICH WE'RE INVOLVED, WE DON'T treat leadership development as a program; we allow people to grow into it. How does a son or daughter become a parent? It takes time. We teach leaders basic biblical principles and allow them to have their own ideas and their own ways of applying Scripture. We allow them to face challenges, figure things out on their own, and answer questions themselves. We guide them at the beginning, but we don't hold their hands forever.

That's why it's so important to have the right picture in mind. Our calling in this movement is not primarily to train seminary professors. From the start, we train people to be witnesses and interpret Scripture on a daily basis and apply it to their own lives. We aim for clarity in the essential first steps. We don't focus on pulpit ministry; we focus on seeing the Kingdom grow into the most unreached, unengaged areas where people have no model of church. How does redemption work in a hostile situation like that?

As disciple makers, we raise the bar for those we disciple. But a leader has to also know how to raise the bar, set new standards for themselves, and achieve ongoing levels of maturity. The apostle Paul described this in Ephesians 4:11–13. Leaders equip the saints (meaning *all* of God's people) for the work of the ministry. Those who have a measure of maturity help

the rest of the body grow toward maturity. None of us has attained perfection, but we can help each other mature in Christ. Anyone who misses this truth has missed the point of being a leader.

Formal learning is only a small percentage of learning. It helps in one's career, but learning in everyday life helps us mature and teaches us how to deal with people. This learning comes through making mistakes, through stories other people tell, and through observing how others act or react to various situations.

In our context, the "basics" means serving among the lost where Christ is not known: the places where no one has ever told people about the good news.

Maturity can't be orchestrated. When a person serves on the front line, they have to learn to feed and protect themselves. It's like teaching a child to ride a bicycle: we hold on and help at first; but once the child takes off, we can't keep up with them. It would be terrible if they could only ride a bicycle as fast as we can run! Sometimes they topple over in the process, but that's part of how they learn. We want the

child to become independent and take initiative to ride way faster than we could ever help them with directly.

Most of our struggle happens if we mix together two distinct roles: pulpit ministry or a seminary professor having great theological knowledge, versus someone who needs to learn the basics. In our context the "basics" means serving among the lost where Christ is not known: the places where no one has ever told people about the good news. Millions have not heard the gospel. We focus on reaching those millions instead of providing theological training to ten, twenty, or one hundred people.

After hearing about huge gospel progress among the unreached, some people have raised concerns about maintaining the gospel's purity when theological training doesn't keep pace with the multiplication of new believers. I say, "Consider the ministry of the apostle Paul." When Paul met with the Ephesian elders to bid them a final farewell, he said,

“I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27 esv). Paul had a deep concern for right teaching, conveying all God’s truth, and imparting good theology. At the same time, when he summarized the heart of his calling, he wrote, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known” (Rom. 15:20). Paul focused on reaching the unreached and bringing them to maturity in Christ. I appreciate theologians, but I’m aware of their limitations in the context of the needs and opportunities among millions of unreached people.

Since God called me to the lost, I have kept my focus: to share with them the gospel and see new churches started. We need significant numbers of saved people and multiplying churches in order to make good use of theologians. If I train ten theologians and teachers, but there are only one or two churches, we have a real problem. We need to send a much larger number of people to reach the lost compared to the number who receive extensive theological training. Because of the heritage of the Protestant Reformation in the West, we often confuse the need for theological training with the need for reaching the lost and making disciples.

If we come back to the basics and ask, “What did Jesus command?” we’ll realize he commanded us to “make disciples” (Matt. 28:19). That disciple-making process includes baptism and teaching people to obey all his commands (v. 20). It’s not just teaching them information; it’s teaching them to *obey* what Jesus said. The goal is not just to nurture Christians with sound doctrine. The goal is to make obedient disciples who make more disciples, people who begin to think and act as Jesus taught. Some people, when they hear about Church Planting Movements, think we must be missing out on good theology or compromising the teaching of sound doctrine. Not at all! We aim for the biblical pattern of reaching the lost, making disciples among all peoples, and bringing those obedient disciples to fruitful maturity in Christ. To accomplish those goals we need the right, context-appropriate patterns of equipping, training, and education.

An example of fruitful, on-the-job training is the circuit riders of the early Methodist movement in the U.S. These men went out to preach

and make disciples, with little or no prior theological education. Each needed a real conversion experience, sound testimony, good character, a consistent personal devotional life, a horse, and a Bible. They had Christ in their hearts, spiritual passion, fearlessness, and mobility. The circuit riders learned as they went, through personal study and sometimes traveling with more mature leaders. These ordinary people looked and smelled like everyone else on the frontier. They rode for miles, spent the night with any family who would put them up, and ate whatever was offered. They carried only what could fit in their saddlebags, traveled through wilderness and villages, and often preached every day at any place available. People came to saving faith and grew in Christ. In community after community they brought people to the Lord and established churches. Through the circuit riders' ministry, Methodism became the largest Protestant denomination at the time. Their leadership reflected minimum requirements with high productivity. That's a simple pattern for reproducing leadership. I've always felt challenged by it, ever since I first read about the circuit riders.

Sadly, in some churches, we now have *high* requirements for leadership but *low* productivity in terms of new disciples and multiplication of churches. Those most established in the traditional pattern often become the loudest critics of Church Planting Movements with their rapid growth and minimum requirements for leadership. CPM threatens the pattern traditional leaders know and believe in and gives people the idea there might be a better way to fulfill the Lord's commands.

Here is one of the first things I had to unlearn: I had considered teaching the most important element in ministry. Some people quote Hosea 4:6a, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge," as a proof text for the importance of a teaching ministry. But the rest of that verse reveals that the "lack of knowledge" consists of ignoring and *rejecting* God's truth. And the prior context (v. 1b) specifies "no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land." God's solution for lack of knowledge is not just presenting more information. His solution is leading people into intimacy with him and obedience to his will. This

includes using New Testament terminology, making disciples, and bringing those disciples to active maturity in Christ.

BUILDING CAPACITY

One big challenge in developing leaders is nurturing the mindset of a discipleship lifestyle. We need to be aware when a leader reaches a turning point, a time when they need to change and do something different or do the same things in a different way. We need to recognize those turning points when they come, so we can help leaders leave behind patterns that no longer fit and move on in life and ministry.

How do we recognize those turning points? We get a gut feeling if we're paying attention to people and to God's Spirit. It's not something that can be learned from a book. We also need to help leaders learn to examine themselves. In his instructions for the Lord's Supper, Paul said to all believers, "Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup" (1 Cor. 11:28). Leaders should take this a step further, not only discerning the meaning of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper, but also discerning what's happening in their overall life and ministry. Where is the Spirit bearing witness to the way things are fitting together? Where does it seem something is stagnant or out of alignment? Good leadership coaching can help in this discernment. Part of the process is also developing *personal* discernment. A doctor might tell a patient to "do a self-examination" in order to watch out for some cancers or diseases. Similarly, leaders need to watch for patterns of healthy or unhealthy growth and recognize turning points when they come along.

Leadership training involves capacity building, increasing personal capacity to observe and give. But I'd actually like to eliminate the word *training*; it's not a bad word, but it can convey a wrong idea. It can connote something related to a position or job. But we're talking about *life*, patterns of behavior from which a person never retires. Leadership doesn't

end at retirement. Even a person slowing down later in life can continue as an influencer in God's Kingdom.

Discipleship needs to be emphasized, or the church will never become what God intends it to be. We have to help increase people's capacity to learn things and impart truth in sustainable and cost-effective ways. Capacity increases through a simple lifestyle and godliness in family, community, and job. Capacity increases as leaders steward whatever resources they have and see how God transforms them into a blessing. Poverty is a symptom—something causes it—perhaps gambling, drinking, womanizing, or some other activity that drains money. Discipleship involves a person learning to steward whatever resources God has given them, management of what they have, according to God's word. Scripture plays a huge role in guiding and strengthening the person and reassuring them of God's promises.

TRAINING PATTERNS FOR LEADERS

We use Discovery Bible Studies (DBS)—not to start churches but to train leaders. I don't favor sending leaders away to Bible school right away, because they learn vital lessons in the context where they accepted the Lord—rather than learning good theory far away, among strangers. Some of the sharp Bhojpuri disciples with leadership potential have gone out of the area for six months to a year for Bible training, but the result rarely helps the movement grow or mature. They never come back; they keep pursuing another degree, then they want a pulpit ministry or job as a Bible teacher. Once people graduate from academic training, they tend to look for a bigger church. Their mentality changes and they want a stable, paying ministry. The body of Christ needs those ministries, but they're not the primary ministries needed to reach the masses, with 2 percent or less Christian population. Anyone who sends their best leaders for that kind of training won't end up with a movement that brings the gospel to the unreached.

I also don't believe in paying church planters to share the gospel. Others have used that approach and raised huge amounts of foreign money with a sales pitch that says, "Give us X amount of money and we'll send a national missionary." But when that approach fell apart, many of those church planters came to us asking for jobs and assistance. We give training but not salaries; our model is totally different. I don't control people with money, and I don't rule over anyone. I just do what God tells me to do, and I encourage others to do what God is telling them to do.

We continually raise up new leaders to lead churches. They work for God, not for me. We give the disciples on-the-job training to become leaders; and as we train and mentor, leaders keep emerging.

Some people ask about our process of leadership training. But I think sometimes they picture, both for discipleship and leadership development, a certain *program* or class prospective that leaders attend for a specific number of weeks. Then, at the end, the process is complete.

We have a different approach. We focus not so much on the process as on the work of the Holy Spirit in leaders' lives. How do we show them what they need to become? That change has to come from inside them as they apply God's word through the illumination of his Spirit. Transformation has to come from their desire to change, not from someone telling them to change.

When we talk about a Church Planting Movement, I sometimes get the feeling people envision something like building a machine or a big airplane. That's not what we mean. We're talking about the Spirit of God touching lives and families and communities. It's multiplication: one impacting three, two impacting five, three impacting fourteen. As long as the multiplication keeps moving, it's a movement. A machine will fail, but the movement of Jesus has not failed in two thousand years. In spite of sins, failings, governments banning it, and kings forbidding it, the movement of Jesus has survived and progressed. Somehow some people had the idea that

The movement of Jesus has not failed in two thousand years.

Western money could create a movement. It can create activity but not a sustainable movement. A movement comes from God working through the time, sacrifice, and determination of key people he calls with a vision and anoints for the ministry. A movement doesn't depend on a person but on the Holy Spirit at work in many, many people.

APPRENTICESHIP

Often in discipleship or leadership questions, people refer to training programs or school-type technical knowledge. But if we look at Jesus' ministry, and at many effective ministries, the most common approach emphasizes apprenticeship. Many people talk about mentoring, but sometimes mentoring also becomes technical. By contrast, apprenticeship is like gluing oneself to a person. If we pursue the person and stick close to them, we learn from them through the ins and outs of life and ministry. That's how Jesus and the apostles did it. We do that all the time in our ministry; it's our most effective way of training.

Consider the skill of carpentry. Anyone can go and buy materials needed for carpentry, but no one becomes a fine carpenter without an apprenticeship. If a person sticks with us in our ministry for a year or so, they can look into situations, problems, and lifestyles that give them great insight. A person can't gain valuable perspectives and lessons like those by reading a book, because in our context, most people don't buy and read books.

I encourage apprenticeship all through the generations of a movement, continuing the pattern that Jesus started. Examples of spiritual apprenticeship are found throughout Scripture. In Exodus 33:11, Moses had Joshua as an apprentice. Abraham had Lot, but he failed as an apprentice. Jesus apprenticed a dozen men: they hung out, journeyed, and ministered together, and they glued themselves to Jesus and each other. After Jesus' death, the Spirit came upon eleven of them, and they invited others to be glued to them and draw from their experience. They

gained and shared practical knowledge through life on life, not by reading books.

Apprenticeship in ministry means to glue oneself to a Christian leader. I tell people, “That won’t get you a name or fame, but you’ll get the real stuff of discipleship and leadership. You won’t get noticed or rewarded, but spend the

Apprenticeship in ministry means to glue oneself to a Christian leader.

time and gain that knowledge so you move away from the *technique* of discipleship and leadership and into the *lifestyle*.” It’s like parenting: we can read about it, but we never really understand it unless we have someone who has experienced it walking through it with us.

A lot of material on leadership describes the “how to,” but that’s not how a person really learns to lead; it’s a lifelong commitment. Consider the training of a surgeon. They do years of study, but then need to experience actually doing it. They have to do a residency with a more experienced doctor. They could never learn everything they need from a “how-to” book. Apprenticeship is vital both in discipleship and in leadership development.

WHO TO PRIORITIZE

We tend to focus on developing those who respond well to our teaching, and those who radiate excitement about the Lord and his work. This brings a natural attraction. I consider good vibes about a person as one positive side of the gut feeling. We observe them taking responsibility, so we connect the dots and help them grow and move to the next level.

In India we have a lot of stories to tell about the wisdom of Birbal, a minister in the court of Emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century. One of the other ministers became jealous of Birbal and complained behind his back that the emperor favored Birbal above him. Emperor Akbar found out about this grumbling, so at the time of wheat harvest, he sent for

Birbal and the other minister. He told them both to go find out from the farmers the price of wheat and come back to report it to him.

When they returned, the Emperor called them both in, along with his other ministers. First, the jealous advisor gave his report: the harvest would be finished by a certain date, and the selling price would be a certain amount. The Emperor asked, "Anything else?"

The minister answered, "No, that's all. You asked me to find out the price and I've found it."

Then the emperor asked Birbal what he had learned. He said, "I talked to some of the farmers, and the price of wheat at the end of harvest will be this much. But in three or four months, the price will be higher, and we'll make more money if we sell it then. Plus, if we wait a few months, the farmers will store it; so we'll save money on storage, and we can transport it gradually. You'll make money by waiting for the higher price and also by saving the cost of a few months' storage."

The emperor then said to all his advisors, "I hope you see why I pay Birbal more for his service. He found out the current price and about storage, transportation, and the price three and six months from now. You can see why he is my chief advisor."

Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30) conveys a similar idea. The servant who invested most diligently received much more. The servant who did the bare minimum not only brought no added benefit but even accused the master: "I knew that you are a hard man" (v. 24). A person with great leadership potential goes beyond the bare minimum and uses creativity to pursue the best for the advantage of the Master.

Sometimes, though, we think a person will do great; but then something happens and they slow down, and we have to put them on the back burner. We don't give up on them, but they become a lower priority for investment of time and energy. That's why we have to raise up multiple layers of leaders. Focusing entirely on just a few leaders puts a ministry in a dangerous position—putting our hopes on something that's not guaranteed. We can't set our hope on humans; all are fallible. We all have challenges: family situations, sicknesses, financial problems, temptations,

and so on. Some of us can navigate those better than others. We can't just say, "These are my five top leaders" and have everyone assume those five will continue for the next generation, because setbacks happen.

We can't set our hope on humans; all are fallible.

EQUIPPING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

In this Information Age, we sometimes tend to let everything about us be known publicly. But wisdom means working in the background. We prepare people silently. When Jesus preached to the crowds, he didn't tell them everything he told his close disciples. He invested more in those being trained more thoroughly for leadership. We see this, for example, in his parables (Matt. 13:10–12, 36) and with the prophecy of the temple destruction and the end of the age (ch. 24). We need discernment about what to tell each group: our close leaders, strong disciples, mixed groups including believers, new believers and some unbelievers, and public settings where enemies of the gospel will likely hear what we say. The Lord has messages and truths appropriate for each group, and they're not all the same.

TROPHY VERSUS DISCIPLESHIP

Sometimes we get so excited when a person comes to faith with a dramatic testimony that we make them a trophy too quickly. Instead of giving them the quiet discipleship that would mature their faith and win their network of family and friends, someone helps them get away from the network of people who know them. Then, they take the trophy around on a speaking circuit to tell their testimony to groups of Christians who cheer them on and applaud any negative remarks about their previous

faith and way of life. Many people end up surprised and disappointed if a few years later that person with the amazing testimony falls into sin or goes back to their previous religion. The blame belongs not so much to them as to the mature Christians who just used them for entertainment instead of equipping them to mature as disciples of Jesus.

In the early 1990s (a few years before the Bhojpuri movement started), an evangelist went into a village in the Bhojpuri area, about forty-five kilometers (thirty miles) from the church I pastored at that time. One family had an eighty-year-old woman who had been deaf for decades, ever since she was a young woman. The evangelist prayed for her, and her hearing was restored! The family was impressed and believed in Jesus. We baptized that family and some neighbors; thirty-five people came to Christ. This happened before we learned about using Discovery Bible Studies. We catechized the new believers using the old method of memorization.

My church wanted to have the new believers brought to the city for baptism, but I said no. It would be too much work and bring too much public attention. The village was still a very hard area, and the new Hindu revivalism had just started. In those days many evangelists handed out Bibles and literature, but very few Hindus ever came to faith. So having thirty-five followers of Christ was a very big deal. The church arranged buses to take people to the village to see the baptism. The whole village came out, including people from both sides of a huge canal that ran through the village. It became like a big show when the thirty-five new believers were baptized.

Then a new chapter of the story began. Division reared its head among my church elders. A couple of the elders started to interact privately with the new believers in the village and invite them to come to church in the city. They started helping them financially and giving them bicycles and old clothes. Very soon a big tug of war began, which killed the whole momentum. The elders bringing people to the city asked, "If they can't come to church, how can they learn to be Christians?"

The new believers had no previous ideas of Christianity or Christians,

so they just tried to do what these elders told them. They made a great sacrifice to come to the church service in the city on Sundays, which started at 8 a.m. They couldn't afford transportation for all the women and children to come, so they had to make special arrangements with family each week. Those who came had to walk 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) to the main road in order to catch a taxi to the city, and paying that fare stretched them financially. They would just attend the church service, then leave. No one welcomed them or offered them food or any warm greetings. I tried to get the church to take ownership for welcoming these new believers, but it didn't work.

The church members had originally come from villages, but by that point in time they had become city people. They felt uncomfortable having twenty-five people in the church who didn't dress or smell like them and who had different body language. The church was now stuck with the problems I had hoped to avoid, and we didn't have a good way to sort it out.

After a couple of years, the situation deteriorated. I encouraged the evangelist to go and live among them, since the number of believers in the village was still growing. But I didn't have any money or budget to help him move there. That work continues; the church is still there, and it has branched out to additional churches. Lots of missionaries from South India have latched onto these people, and they have joined other groups, which is fine with me. Some are doing well, and some have joined a big agency that pays pastors. So the ministry can't multiply freely, since it's limited by supply of foreign funds and social distance from the majority. It's not unusual for churches and church people to turn new believers into trophies, which, sadly, limits Kingdom growth.

SHORT-TERM SUCCESS VERSUS LONG-TERM FRUIT

Many years ago a Bhojpuri village was touched by a Christian radio program. The speaker was a very famous man who gave good messages in

Hindi. At end of each program, listeners were given an address where they could write. A young man in high school wrote to the address and requested material to learn more. He enrolled in a correspondence course, so after a while he had mail arriving consistently at his address. In his village it was a big deal to get a letter, so people were very impressed when this young man started receiving mail consistently. As he completed the courses, the mail became more regular. At that point, the postman got very interested and asked, "What makes you so important that every couple of weeks materials come to you?" When the young man answered honestly, the postman asked if he could also enroll.

Now two people were receiving the correspondence courses. Both of them accepted Christ through the course. They told the people doing the program they had received Christ, so then they received another course (for believers) and started sharing the gospel with their families and friends. Their families came to faith, and other young people became interested and signed up for the correspondence course. More and more people in the area began getting mail. People loved it, and seventy or eighty people came to the Lord.

After a while, a person from the organization came to visit and found this great number of believers established in their faith with good Bible knowledge. So the organization wanted to hand over shepherding of the group to a mission organization that worked in that area. The problem was that the organization came from a different part of India, so its workers up north were actually cross-cultural missionaries but lacked much cross-cultural sensitivity. They started introducing a lot of rules about "how to be a good Christian."

The missionaries also started talking about schooling for the children of the believers. Everyone wanted their children to have a good education, but most of them had no means or opportunity. The organization offered for the children to go to school in southern India. They thought it would be a good idea to send the children to boarding school 1,000 miles away in the south. The village people were excited by the offer, so the Christian kids were sent to schools in another part of India. When they came back

months later for holidays, no other children in the village would play with them. The Christian kids now played different games and spoke English or a language from a different part of the country, rather than Bhojpuri or Hindi. They had been speaking a different language 250 days a year while away. Now they wanted the other kids in their home village to listen to them, but they spoke in a different language.

The ministry began as a good work; but because the leaders lacked a bigger long-term vision, the local people's motivation changed from interest in the gospel to interest in worldly benefit. And cultural clashes arose. The positive message quickly became a negative motivation.

Church planters have to take great care in how they lead, because we can mislead people without realizing it. Good intentions are not good enough. We need to discern what will likely lead toward fruitful Kingdom growth, rather than leading people off track because of something that seems to be a good idea.

We can mislead people without realizing it. Good intentions are not good enough.

The Christians down south felt very pleased and proud to have people from an unreached area in the north becoming Christians. So when the Christian parents sent their children to school in the south, they also went around giving testimony in churches there. They received a very positive reception, and people treated them as special. In the process, they picked up different attitudes and behaviors. Then, when they returned to their own village, they acted as if they were someone special. Their behavior toward other people changed. Their source of income changed, and they became more private. Their money came from outside, and they had a more affluent lifestyle than before. Their children could speak English, which was a big deal in that rural context. So, then, other parents in the area had one burning question: If I become a Christian, can my children *also* go to that school? Anyone can guess the result. Somewhere in that process, what could have become a multiplying movement faltered instead and never multiplied.

This kind of damage can happen naively. The gift of one bicycle or motorcycle or building can change the whole work. It's very difficult to decide whether or not to do something to help. We try to stick with the principle of not doing anything that will not be sustainable and reproducible *with local funds and resources*. Many times, other Christians go to new believers in the movement and say, "This movement is not going to send your children for education; they're not going to build you a church building," and so on. They use various inducements to entice the new believers to join a group that hopes to claim them as the fruit of their ministry.

New believers are already scared and insecure. When a Christian from the city tells them they've joined something humanly weak and insufficient, new believers may become more scared. The people making these accusations want our approach to look like a failure, and they don't understand mission work. So they come with their preconceived ideas and push their traditional church agenda. I've had a lot of setbacks because of this dynamic. Most of those naysayers have now disappeared. I wish they had come and asked for clarity: "How do you expect the church to continue if they don't have a meeting place? How do you expect a pastor to survive if you don't pay him a salary?" Instead of asking me, they assumed they knew a negative answer.

These stories offer a lesson for our thinking about leadership; we have to think for the future. We need clarity in our purpose: to know why we do the things we do. What will be the end result? It can't be all about me:

We need clarity in our purpose: to know why we do the things we do.

how I look or feel, what people think about me or the fruit of my ministry. We need to not have a codependent relationship with the ministry. Both the Lord's work and the leader as God's child need to have a life and development not dependent on the other for

identity and viability. We need enough distance to empower others and not allow everything to depend on us.

Helping leaders mature requires wisdom, sensitivity, and the kind of insight that comes from experience—both one’s own experience and willingness to learn from the experience of others. We’ve found relational apprenticeship to work most effectively for this process. We’ve also discovered some very helpful patterns for leadership, which we will address in the next chapter.



LEADERSHIP PATTERNS

A LEADER HAS TO BE ABLE TO SEE SITUATIONS FROM GOD'S perspective, with the eyes of faith, not through the lens of their own fears or personal capacity. Real leaders don't have to copy someone; they look to God and his word for clear vision. They can learn from others and get help from those who have gone before, but vision from God is the spark that ignites an apostolic leader and provides motivation to press on toward the goal.

In the 1998 movie *Patch Adams*, Patch gains insight from a man named Arthur in a mental institution. Arthur has been holding up four fingers and asking people to tell him how many they see. When Patch says, "There are four fingers, Arthur," Arthur responds, "No, no, no. Look at me. You're focusing on the problem. If you focus on the problem, you can't see the solution. Never focus on the problem. Look at me! How many do you see? Look beyond the fingers. How many do you see?"

Patch says, "Eight."

Arthur replies, "Yes! Yes! Eight's a good answer. See what no one else sees. See what everyone else chooses not to see, out of fear or conformity or laziness. See the whole world anew each day!"¹

1. *Patch Adams*, directed by Tom Shadyac (Hollywood, CA: Universal Pictures, 1998).

The ability to look beyond the problem and see what no one else sees makes one a visionary leader. For us as Christians, the one we look at is the Lord. When we look past the problem and focus on him, we suddenly see the problem (whatever it might be) in a different way. Our focus on God gives us fresh vision and enables us to see what no one else sees. The bigger our vision, the greater the scope of our leadership.

To launch something that will endure, we need to go slowly and steadily build up speed. The overall direction must be clear, not compromised by shortcuts, but always holding the steps open to the Spirit's leading. As Jesus told Nicodemus, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). This applies not only to salvation but also to effective apostolic ministry. We need first to acclimate ourselves to the context and then be flexible to change direction if the Lord so wills.

Leadership starts with vision and passion. That vision and passion sustain the leader and bring an explosion of power that goes beyond human education or training. I've done a lot of things for which I don't have training or education. But God empowers me and gives me the courage or foolishness to jump in, so by his grace I've been able to do it. Vision makes us available to God for however he chooses to fulfill it. Through the intensity of single-mindedness, God gives us the ability to do things we couldn't do otherwise. No one will train a person to stand before kings and authorities (unless they're hired as a diplomat). But serving God enables us to stand before judges, kings, priests, and all kinds of authorities and power brokers. Jesus said:

On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

MATTHEW 10:18-20

I've seen that promise fulfilled hundreds of times in my life. The Lord guides us into things beyond our control. If something is under our control, we take calculated steps and do only what we're able to do because we don't want to take too much risk. But when it's beyond our control, we trust the Lord to work and provide what's needed. His provision is greater than our natural ability. And when we see him provide, time after time, it becomes easier to trust him for the next challenge.

VISION AND APOSTOLIC CALLING

Jesus described the treasure of God's Kingdom using two short parables:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

MATTHEW 13:44-46

For those called as apostolic leaders, the delight in and passion for the Kingdom extends far beyond personally entering the Kingdom. It extends to bringing Kingdom treasure to whole groups or regions that have not yet heard the good news. This can't be a human design or project; if God's Spirit doesn't implant the vision and passion within, it will never happen.

The apostle Paul wrote, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). God gives us a high calling, but the height remains mostly invisible to human eyes. In fact, the next five verses of this chapter describe the great difficulties involved in fulfilling Paul's apostolic calling. Christians often envision a pyramid of leadership where people can be promoted to higher and higher positions with grander titles. To become the state leader, then country director, then international leader, and so on is not

the biblical goal. The Bible points instead toward apostolic ministry and anointing, a high calling in leadership that doesn't look like much in the world's eyes.

Paul wrote: "For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. . . . We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment" (1 Cor. 4:9a, 13b). So I encourage leaders to look in a humble direction, instead of aspiring to a position as a national or international leader. *Every* believer can aspire to be used greatly by God with whatever gifts and resources God gives them (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Pet. 4:10–11). Not everyone is gifted for apostolic ministry, but all God's children have gifts that can be used for his glory (1 Cor. 14:12–31). God calls leaders to encourage, equip, and prepare his people for a wide variety of works of service (Eph. 4:11–13). No one should view Christian ministry or leadership as a stepping stone for a great position.

Every disciple maker comes to a tipping point in their ministry where they either plateau or excel. If they excel, they break away from their insecure zone, and taking risks becomes a normal lifestyle. The tipping point is like coming out of a cocoon. A person starts training and equipping others to do what they're doing, and leadership emerges as a natural, organic way of transferring DNA. If a person hasn't caught the vision for multiplication and a movement, they may feel as if they need a degree or title to have an identity. They may think, *How about if I go to seminary and become a pastor or a Bible teacher?* I'm not against those things; higher education does provide better skills and equipping. But that's not a way to gain security for the future. I want to help people know there's a higher calling, and no seminary or institution can provide that anointing.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

An apostolic leader advances the mission of Christ and leads in fulfilling a missionary vision. Their words carry weight. While an evangelist

proclaims the gospel, an apostle is a visionary strategist who is able to take a long view of big-picture ministry. An apostolic leader interprets the vision and thus helps people *see* the plan of God. They present it in simple language that people can understand. As an apostolic leader, I cast a big-picture vision to God's people. Then, when people in the group catch the vision, one person might say, "I have a vision for fifteen new villages." Another might say, "I believe God wants me to start work in this unengaged area."

An apostolic leader interprets the vision and thus helps people *see* the plan of God.

Sometimes we need only to give encouragement, to fan the flame, in someone God wants to use. A couple of years ago, I came in contact with a brother in Christ who attended seminary with me. Vivekananda came to Christ out of a high-caste, Hindu background. He's a brilliant man, now sixty-four years old. He made a great sacrifice when he accepted Christ many years ago. Then many Christian groups took advantage of him and used him as a trophy. But nobody cared enough about him to help him really grow toward maturity in Christ. He learned to do ministry in an old model that doesn't really advance the gospel, and he ended up very discouraged.

I felt sympathetic because I don't like to see a servant of God suffer unnecessarily; so I invited Vivekananda to connect with God's work in the movement. It brought a huge shift in his perspective and paradigm. That's not easy for a man in his sixties. We have a lot of young people in the movement, and I thought it would be helpful to add some age to the mix, so I asked him to do some teaching with our people. He wrote me two years later and said, "You gave me a vision." He's now very happy. His face is radiant, and he connects with people in a new way. He recently wrote me:

I often remember the day I met you and shared my situation with tears.
Because of our [past experience together] I felt comfortable to share

my bad experiences with you. I felt grateful that you took time and listened. But I never thought you would stand beside me to bless me with a new challenge and new ministry opening. Now, at my age, I always look for opportunities. I am trying in small ways to share my experience in the Lord—with people of my background and with other believers. Once again I THANK YOU for allowing me to do something for my own people.

All I did was offer, and he accepted the invitation. God will often take some comment or helpful word I've spoken and use it to impart fresh vision to other leaders. Vision and passion blended with compassion help ordinary people to effectively accomplish God's will in his mission.

RAISING THE BAR

Effective leaders raise the bar for themselves; they don't depend on someone else to set a standard for their leadership. They realize their shortcomings and raise the standard for their behavior. They raise the bar because of personal integrity, not aiming for a promotion or a raise in salary. Other people might consider us humble, even while we know in our own heart that we still need to grow in that area. As we keep pursuing Christ, we realize we need to change, in whatever areas the Holy Spirit shows us. That's part of the growth in a Kingdom lifestyle.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Effective leadership involves preparation for a yet unknown future. How might things change in six months, or a year, or ten years? What new conversations do we need to have? What equipping might be needed? We're always asking these questions, because things change all the time.

We want to stay ahead of the present, because those parked in the present get left behind as the future arrives.

In the early 1990s, before the movement even started, I translated into Hindi twelve volumes on theology from Dennis Mock at BTCP (Bible Training Centre for Pastors). I did that as part of the long-term vision. This B.Th.-level material is still available, and many Bible courses in India use this twelve-volume set. A solid doctrinal foundation of Christian teaching had already been prepared before the movement began. I was ready and waiting for the movement to start so people could be trained. That material provides a middle path between sending people somewhere distant for seminary training versus inadequate theological training for leaders. It gives leaders solid teaching, but not at the PhD level. We also use DBS for training leaders—a very reproducible, inductive study to find the basic principles in a text—and take action to apply those truths.

A solid doctrinal foundation of Christian teaching had already been prepared before the movement began.

When the movement started, many of the believers had very little education. But, over the years, the level of education has risen, especially among leaders. Now, when we conduct a training, we have written materials available. But we don't use them as a whole system, in order to avoid the tediousness of credit hours and the whole academic system. We need to use an approach applicable in a context of rapid growth with minimal resources. For example, *The Bhojpuri Commentary on the Bible* (translated from Warren Wiersbe's commentary) has not yet been published in printed form. The New Testament audio has already been recorded, and the Old Testament is currently being recorded. Once this audio is completed, we plan to put it in an app so it can be used widely. In ways such as this, we try to anticipate and provide for the needs of growing believers and leaders in the movement.

COVID-19 put a lot of pressure on us. Yet, even in the midst of the crisis, we started asking, "How should we make the gospel relevant in the

next season? As situations change, how shall we apply Christ's teachings among the unreached millions in India?"

John 13:1 tells us, "Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father." He knew when his time had come. Some of us don't realize when our time has come. We act as though we will be here for eternity, but we won't. We need to anticipate how our ministry will continue and flourish even after we're gone. God calls us to pass on what we have received. We have received freely, so we give freely to those who come after us.

THE LORD'S SURPRISING LEADING

Leadership involves looking to the future, and considering what God may want to do next, but sometimes the Lord's leading surprises us. We need enough flexibility to let his Spirit lead. Here's one example of how that happened to us.

The leaders of another indigenous mission agency asked us to begin work among a different Unreached People Group. They live among the Bhojpuri but are not Bhojpuri people. I had lived near these people and interacted with some of them for fifty years, but they had been a closed community. Suddenly, after all these years, a door opened for ministry to them. I don't know all the factors that unlocked the door, but I know it involved education and outside influence. It included their curiosity about the modern world and access to more travel.

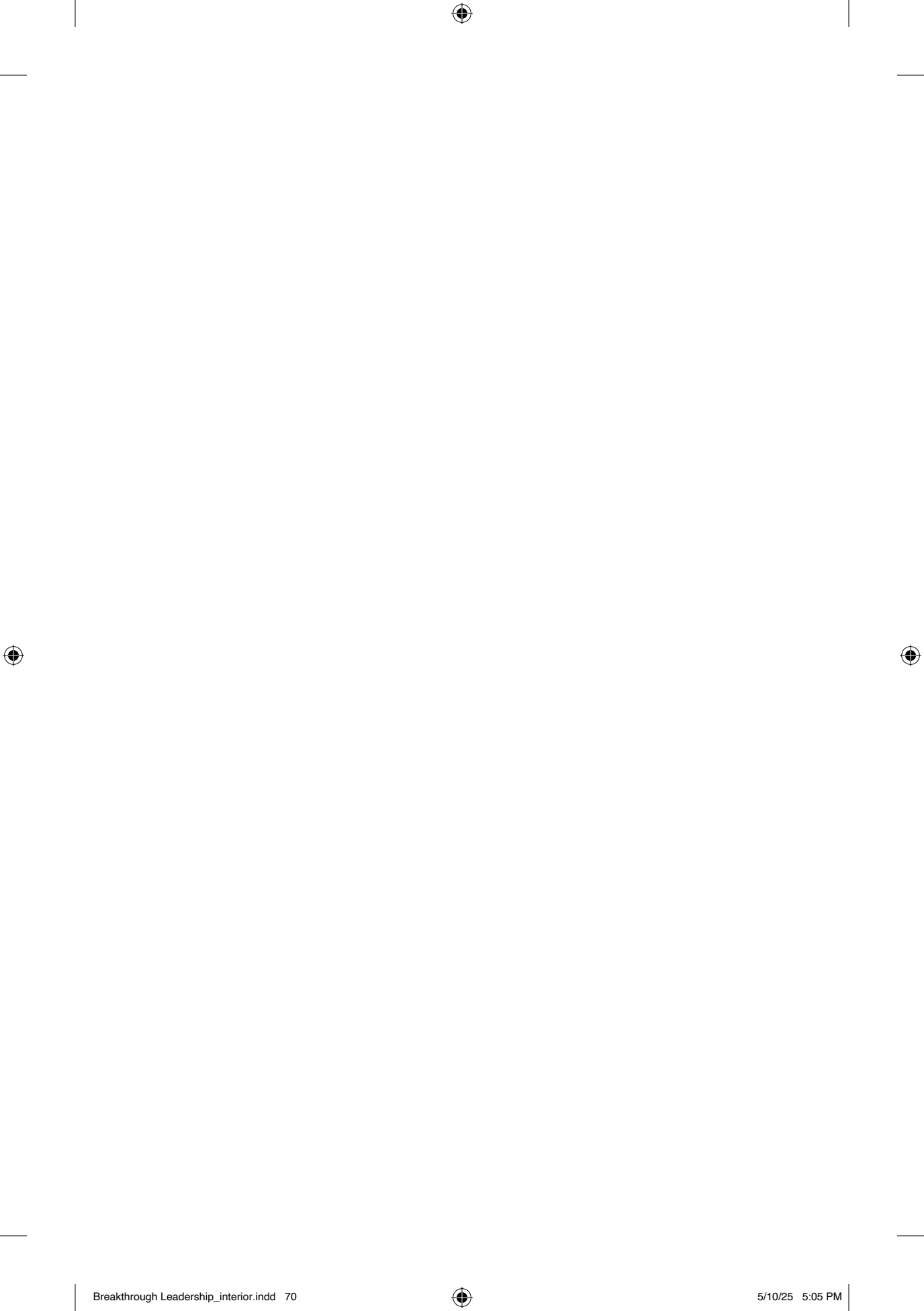
Beginning ministry to this group would mean adding another million people to our current focus. When I discussed the idea with my team, they became very excited about this new effort. I felt hesitant to get involved, but we discerned the Lord leading this way. I concluded that we needed to develop a strategy to focus on them.

We've found it best to try several approaches from different angles. We have a toolkit of possible access patterns that already exist from our previous experience. We can try to find the best pattern for a new context.

But we need clear vision and direction for the ministry so concrete action steps can be produced rather than random activity.

Our first steps toward breakthrough include prayer and research: gathering more information so that six months from now we'll have a clearer picture. We're now talking to believers who live among the people and exploring who else (if anyone) already has ministry in that area. We want to learn who's working among the people, how long they've been working, what fruit they have seen, and what methods they have used. We praise the Lord if he connects us with coworkers from other organizations. We aim to join God where he is working and join his people who may already be toiling in the field. We may be able to encourage them or equip them for the work. Or, on the other hand, the Lord might be calling us to begin a new work and then welcome others along in the adventure.

We can never assume we know how God will work or what role he will give us in the work he is doing. A leader's job includes listening to the Lord in the various ways he speaks, including speaking through others, and then radically applying the love and truth of Christ as we lead others in his path.



MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP AMONG ORAL LEARNERS

EQUIPPING ORAL LEARNERS

When we began the Bhojpuri ministry, my biggest challenge was how to train an illiterate person. How could I do it practically? How could I empower such people to lead and teach a church, make disciples, and raise up new leaders? The literacy rate stood at less than 30 percent, which brought pressure to simplify our training.

Oral learners tend to have much higher retention than people from a written culture. I've made myself "illiterate" to relate to the Bhojpuri people. I'm very comfortable in an oral environment, dialoguing with people and helping to solve their theological issues and so on. Where literate people look for bullet points, people from an oral culture don't need that. They make their own bullet points. It's less precise, but it works much more effectively for their context.

Oral learners have tremendous memories; they don't write down things and then forget. Most oral learners are doers. When they learn something, they do it. Doing something also helps it stick in their memory. And in an oral culture, when we tell a story, the same story gets told a hundred times until our next visit.

I compare this practice to herbal medicine. When oral learners in rural poverty have an ailment, they don't call to make an appointment with a highly educated doctor in the big city. They know what herb to use for what ailment, and they just do it. The lack of precision has a low risk of doing damage. But once a person goes to a highly educated doctor who prescribes expensive medicine, they need to read the label carefully and follow the instructions exactly, or they could end up with a worse problem. A highly educated, written context requires precision and detail. An oral culture deals in things that are much more accessible and easily reproducible.

How do we make disciples among unreached oral learners and bring them to active maturity in Christ? How do we raise up leaders among those who can't read or write? The essential first step is to earn their trust by staying overnight in their village. We meet barking dogs, people coming and going, and we look for an opportunity to converse with those people for a few minutes. Eventually, we find a person of peace who opens their home and shows us hospitality. We share a meal together and drink their water. Nowadays, some people offer a bottle of water. Back when we started, we had to take a risk: drink minimal water or drink their water and trust the Lord to take care of all the bacteria in it. I chose the latter route, and I didn't get sick much, as I sat sharing stories to pique interest in God's truth.

Out of that initial connection emerges something sustainable: the story multiplies and keeps repeating itself. When the messenger leaves, those stories from Scripture keep bringing changes in attitude and lifestyle. The person becomes enlightened and their life is changed. They turn to the living God and away from their old life. They decide, "I'm going to stop my witchcraft, black magic, and all kinds of deception."

In an oral culture, when people hear a good story, they pass it on. Every community loves a story of bravery, love, and sacrifice. Almost every culture has stories from the past that illustrate these values. When we bring the people a story that resonates with their stories, they talk about it. So we translate God's truth into their context.

The Gospel of John begins by describing Jesus as the Word who existed in the beginning: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (1:14). I always grapple with this question: How can that Word become incarnate for the people we want to reach? In Ephesians and Colossians, Paul describes Christ being made manifest through us. When we grasp that simple truth, our stories can reflect him effectively and touch people’s lives.

How can that Word become incarnate for the people we want to reach?

Many Christians don’t understand the mystery of God’s Spirit at work—where our spirit and the person’s spirit connect and they become ready to listen to what we have to say. Sometimes we make things complicated, so we miss what the Spirit is saying at that moment. Too often we depend on our own knowledge and information. If we don’t pay attention to his Spirit, we miss the point.

LEADING MINISTRY AMONG ORAL LEARNERS

Literate people face a huge, invisible challenge when we try to communicate the gospel to nonliterate or minimally literate people. It’s not just an issue of not reading; it’s a whole different way of thinking, reasoning, and learning. A deeper issue still is relational trust, or lack of it. Some literate people come with a feeling of superiority. They have a message to communicate and a sense of urgency to communicate it. But in reality they don’t communicate the message because the focus people are not really listening. They don’t respond because they don’t trust the messenger. So, effective gospel connection remains elusive.

Oral learners can’t connect with what they can’t see; they need something visual. For example, if a fight happens, we can talk about peace. But if we talk about peace and mention fighting, they think we must know something about their background, and we’re talking about some specific

fight. They think we're trying to condemn them as being bad people. We have to be very sensitive to their background and know where they're coming from and how they think. We have to shed our preconceived ideas of learning and communication. We can't teach oral learners something in advance, because they have no concrete reference point with which to connect.

A similar problem can happen in Bible distribution ministry, which used to be popular here. An evangelist would feel good about the fact he distributed God's word. But, looking from the side of the recipients, how many of them read it? He may have given out ten Bibles, but he didn't make ten disciples. He didn't make *any* disciples. He did something for Jesus, but he didn't manage to do what Jesus commanded in the Great Commission: "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19).

As I grappled with this communication challenge, the thought of retreating often became so intense I felt paralyzed. I struggled to find a way forward or some encouragement in my efforts. An illiterate person's outlook seems, in some ways, like a clean slate. They have no hidden agenda, but to write something on that slate requires crossing a huge chasm. On the positive side, they have awesome retention power and the ability to remember what they hear because they don't rely on something written on paper or electronic devices.

My first lesson came from discovering how oral learners communicate with each other. At that level, the most important thing is not the message but the *relationship*: one that generates trust and mutual acceptance, which can overcome the chasm. Developing the relationship includes habits of prayer in everyday life (not avoiding prayer because I'm in the presence of a not-yet-believer). It also includes habits such as praying for food, praying for people when they come to our home, praying for a journey when people leave, and praying that a person's work will be blessed. We model these habits of how and when to pray. Most people here have some idea of prayer, but they had previously thought of prayer as just twice a day lighting a light and folding their hands briefly. We help them realize we've become God's child and he's our Father. They

can come close to him and share their heart with him because he has shared his heart with us through Christ. Habits form when we do things together with someone else, over and over. Our habits of prayers are one way of sharing and demonstrating what we believe.

This process involves frequent feelings of inadequacy: “Let someone else do this, not me.” I felt quite inadequate in myself but gained encouragement from Scripture:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-5

New believers also may feel lost and inadequate, thinking, “Maybe God’s not with me.” Both former Hindus and former Muslims may hear a voice in their head saying, “You made a wrong decision.” So we listened to them and encouraged, sustained, and loved them. We identified with their stories through sharing our own stories. We reassured them that such struggles are common and they’ve not made a mistake. We see people in the process of becoming disciples even before fully accepting Christ. They like hearing stories (from the Bible or our experience), and they appreciate being visited and respected. Thus, many of the leaders follow a similar pattern as the work multiplies.

The new believers were not used to public demonstrations of faith, such as sharing their testimony, praying for people, and getting involved in power encounters. But consistency has great power for building holy habits. By doing life together with the new believers, we helped them grow in habits such as witnessing, Bible reading, and prayers of faith for things to happen. We taught them that if nothing happens when you pray, you need to keep praying. It’s like water dripping on a rock: after just one or two drops, it may appear nothing is happening. But eventually

dripping water will wear away a rock. Prayer changes situations, hearts, and lifestyles. As new believers grow in Kingdom habits and behaviors, we have seen the change.

INCLUSION IN DECISION MAKING

The momentum to sustain a movement comes from the bottom up rather than from the top down. A visionary can catalyze something, but it has to take root among insiders: local people who know the location, culture, history, and quirks of a place and its people. An outsider can never be an insider, no matter how much they try. That's why sustainable work depends on insiders. Insiders can make better decisions for their own context. So, we move immediately to that resource: the local people. I have always aimed to shorten the time needed for raising up local leaders, even though some have low education and low social status.

I include the local leaders in decision making, so they know the future of the ministry depends on them. I start them off with small decisions, such as the best time to start a meeting. Then, gradually, they make bigger and bigger decisions. I let them know it's their decision, not mine. They don't always make what I would consider an ideal decision, but they own the decision. I can't teach people based on my mistakes, but I

Including local people in decision making honors them and increases their capacity for effective leadership.

can teach them *a lot* based on their own mistakes and successes. Many good ministries have failed because they seldom included local believers in decision making. They only used local people to serve them in a project or in church work. Including local people in decision making honors them and increases their capacity for effective leadership.

We help the leaders grow in practical things: witnessing, leading a meeting, leading a prayer group, and doing Kingdom hospitality

effectively. We help them learn to balance the “Martha and Mary” roles in hospitality so they don’t spend their whole time cooking and end up with no time for fellowship and prayer. Before 2008, we had no CLC¹ concept in operation, so we made ourselves available to help with a variety of practical tasks. This meant going to the hospital if someone fell ill, or going to government offices if they needed some official work to be done regarding their land or crops, or going to the courthouse to help them with legal matters. We loved them and connected with them in a variety of ways. People saw our good works as we helped people. They began to open up and feel comfortable in telling us their stories.

Meanwhile, we took the opportunity to tell Bible stories and share verses to build their faith in the Lord and enthusiasm in living a Kingdom lifestyle. And, whenever possible, we also taught the new believers to read and write.

The church grew, believers were added, and they learned to cooperate in the church. This reflected a major transformation from their previous patterns. An outsider would be amazed at how much unbelievers in this context are driven by petty jealousy and fights over small things. As people come to faith, they see and experience new patterns, and the Holy Spirit enables them to grow into new patterns. They learn to come together and serve without someone having to instigate it. The gatherings reflect an environment of the Holy Spirit with everybody submitting to one another. It’s a beautiful thing. At our conferences there are thousands of people, but things flow smoothly, without panic or bickering. Apart from Christ, everyone has so much ego; the new patterns of those in Christ reflect a huge transformation.

Factors in our outreach to oral learners have included:

1. **BUILDING TRUST.** We ate their food and drank their water.
2. **SHARING LIFE TOGETHER.** When we got tired (which happened often) we spent the night in the community, only to realize that this

1. Community Learning Centers, a holistic approach to addressing felt needs in a community, are described in detail in Chapter 4 of our book *Bhojpuri Breakthrough*.

created a powerful bond and impacted the community. We discovered that people opened up and asked the most questions at night. This gave us valuable opportunities to explain to them more of the gospel. Mark 4:34 tells us that Jesus “did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.” Jesus took extra time to explain the parables to his disciples. He didn’t just tell parables; he explained the meaning later. Sometimes evangelists hurry so much they don’t take time to explain to people what things mean in language and thought patterns they can really understand. Reaching oral learners requires sharing some of life together, not just a hit-and-run presentation.

3. **MODELING PRAYERS.** We prayed together with the people. Most of the time we prayed for vision—that they as Bhojpuri people would catch a vision for reaching their own people. For a movement to really move and become multigenerational, the vision needs to take hold within that group. The vision of someone from outside the group can go only so far. The momentum is carried forward when they catch the vision for their own people.
4. **USING THE AUDIO BIBLE.** We listened repeatedly to the audio Bible and asked questions to help the oral learners process what they heard, what lessons they could glean and how to apply them. The audio Bible played a huge role in discipling these oral learners; it enabled them to keep learning and growing when we weren’t there in person. In the early days of the movement, the now-common DBS questions were still being shaped. We just thought of the audio Bible as inductive Bible study with application and action steps. We had them listen to just a few paragraphs or a chapter of the Bible, then take turns telling it in their own words so everyone could retell the content. Then we’d ask: “What did we learn?” What can we take for our own lives and apply?” We then added the question about obedience and “Who will you tell?” We noted that if we’re learning something we need to share

it with someone. That's the best way to reinforce it in people's minds as well as sharing the good news with others. We didn't see immediate fruit from that approach, but it began to bear fruit after a while. I actually felt surprised at how the groups began to multiply. The audio Bible's developers also didn't really expect such amazing response. They were just trying to get God's word out to oral learners. The Lord blessed their efforts far beyond what any of us expected.

5. **TEACHING HYGIENE.** We taught the people personal hygiene and corrected them when they moved back to old practices.
6. **VALUING CULTURE.** We taught people to value their culture and keep its good elements—elements consistent with Scripture and usable for a Christ-glorifying lifestyle.

I realized that many doors had been closed to the gospel in the past because of Christians' foolishness and naïve enthusiasm for trying to make people look and act like us. We had thought that to really convert people to Christianity they needed to change and look like Christians. I got tired of the idea of people looking like Christians: Christian clothes, Christian hairstyle, and so on. It seemed to be a very shallow idea of what it means to follow Jesus. I didn't find that in the Bible. As a result, some outside Christians brought tension by criticizing us and insulting our culturally-sensitive approach. They complained we were not bringing people to Christ in the right way, but we ignored their comments.

They protested, "They still look like Hindus!"

I said, "So what?"

We found that a lot of Christians attack if others do something outside their expectations. But the Lord vindicated our choice to let Bhojpuri people still look and act like Bhojpuri people by bringing so many to salvation.

The most important thing for nonliterate people is to hear and see the testimonies of changed lives. Observers who think in religious categories may say that people have changed their religion. But the disciples

explain, “We don’t focus on religion. We are changing our lives and our minds; we are moving toward the truth. We believe in the living God.”

We teach new believers about the love and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as his resurrection and second coming. Then, as their faith grows, they become leaders and enthusiastically teach the same things to others. We also teach them how to testify wisely. Jesus said, “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16). The disciples become able to teach others and develop the art of communicating the gospel using their various abilities.

Some communicate through songs and storytelling. This may include a special form of singing, called *biraha*, in which a story is narrated in songs that can last an hour or so. (This form is very common. Though now overtaken by Bollywood songs, it’s still quite popular.) *Biraha* also means “separation”: a person so much in love that he or she separates from everything to be with their lover. The idea is “I want to be together with you alone. I can share my heart with you and listen to you.” It conveys intimacy. We take that concept and apply it to intimacy with Christ.

We encourage the disciples to be good observers and to notice potential door openers for the gospel. We tell them to pay attention to others: “What appeals to this person? What makes them happy? What makes them afraid? What’s on their mind?” We don’t just do or say whatever makes us feel comfortable. Among people from a different background, sometimes the most effective thing actually feels *uncomfortable* for us. And that’s OK. Jesus didn’t say, “Go and be comfortable.” He said, “Take up [your] cross [obey even when it’s *extremely* uncomfortable] and follow me. Go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19; Luke 9:23).

The new, illiterate disciples meet often on their own turf to hear and learn God’s word. They receive the word through oral stories at a pace that fits their learning style; we custom-fit the presentation to their local environment. We encourage them in their growth and give them opportunities to share a song or testimony in front of groups of disciples. Because of their background, the new disciples often have very low view of

themselves and little confidence. We help them believe and apply the truth that God's Spirit lives within them and they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them (Phil. 4:13). When we have a program for believers, we give some of the newer disciples responsibility to share some sort of testimony—something God has done in their lives, or taught them, or an answered prayer. Standing in front of a group of people builds new disciples' confidence and helps them grow as disciples and potential leaders. When they stand to give testimony or sing a song, or share how God answered their prayer, it's a huge accomplishment for them. Since I discovered the great value of giving people opportunity to stand up and speak, I use it a lot; it's a great motivator. They begin to think of themselves as important and take their responsibility very seriously.

Whenever we hold a big conference, we have some of the young leaders stand up and share. This develops in them the habit of standing in front of a group and explaining things. This strengthens them and increases their confidence and capability as leaders. This has helped us grow and develop leaders over the years. Now *they're* the ones leading the work, building and sustaining the momentum down through the generations. I brought some vision, discipleship, and motivation. But, ultimately, it's younger leaders through the generations who keep the movement moving. They sometimes have to face all kinds of accusations in their community and face boycotts or ostracism. But, instead of being cowed and defeated by these things (which society and their background would expect of them), they have learned to have confidence in the Lord within them. They've become able to speak with appropriate boldness, even in the face of great challenges.

MAKING DISCIPLES AMONG ORAL LEARNERS: THREE THEMES

In these testimonies from various leaders within the movement, we see three themes entwined as they describe how they make disciples among oral learners. They address oral learners' *learning style*, various *concrete*

needs within the communities (including illiteracy), and the *character change* that accompanies real discipleship.

Reuben²

1. I live a simple lifestyle to identify with the people in the village. I sit with them and get used to following and using their way of speaking and their patterns of communication. I also get involved with their situations and life challenges. Praying for sick people to be healed has opened the door in many villages.
2. I give priority to nonliterate and simple people. We use songs and present Bible stories in a simple way to help them understand.
3. I teach them good (biblical) character and help them leave behind bad habits, such as quarreling, foul language, abuse, drinking, stealing, and cheating. I help them grow in practical discipleship, which results in them having a positive and noteworthy testimony in the community: the example of a changed life.
4. I also encourage our new believers to work hard and earn their own living, so they don't have to depend on others.
5. I try to minimize the evil social practices that some people use to try to gain supernatural power, influence, or success in life. This was really a great challenge but has helped our work very much. [Victor adds: Many people use astrology and other practices to try to improve their karma and have a better fate. I don't attack these practices directly. If I talk too much about their evil, it closes the door. I tell people: "Talk about God, who is bigger and greater, rather than criticizing. Then they themselves will realize how small those things are. We don't have to prove our God is better than theirs; we don't even have to make comparisons. We just continue to show the light and show the greatness of our God. We help people exercise their faith more and see more of God's greatness."]

2. For security reasons, most names in this section have been changed to pseudonyms.

Andrew

1. I use education as a tool to connect with the community and get them involved.
2. I have learned that although nonliterate people cannot read or write, they generally have sincere hearts and exceptionally good memories. So we share biblical stories and testimonies with them. We give them examples of disciples in the Bible such as Peter and others who were “unschooled, ordinary men” (Acts 4:13) yet accomplished great things for God’s glory because they “had been with Jesus.”
3. We don’t teach them; we *train* them by showing them how to pray, how to share their testimony, and how to lead a church service.

Although nonliterate people cannot read or write, they generally have sincere hearts and exceptionally good memories.

Asher

1. Awareness programs, which I learned from the CLC, have helped us gain access to the community. These include things such as well-child awareness, literacy, how to save money (including caution about loan sharks), and educating people about issues of disease. In the past, it included countering misinformation and fear about AIDS/HIV, and more recently it has included COVID-19 awareness and the importance of getting vaccinated. The government appreciates the work we do to raise public awareness about these issues.
2. I have focused on educating the uneducated by starting a literacy center for children and adults.
3. Nonliterate people can quickly learn and copy things; that skill has become a great tool for our ministry.

Paul

1. I use Bible stories and life stories to train nonliterate people.

2. The CLC has helped me gain access in the community. I didn't have that previously, when I used to share the gospel directly.
3. I focus on raising up local leaders, in accordance with 2 Timothy 2:2. I give them responsibility and send them out two by two (according to the pattern we see in Luke 10:1).

Sarah

1. I received training in the CLC approach and chose education as a channel to reach the community.
2. I formed a small group of nonliterate women and trained them by sharing short biblical stories and testimonies, showing them how to pray, and helping them memorize the word of God. We also taught them songs and helped them memorize those.
3. I gave more time to new believers and even made myself available twenty-four hours a day for any help or prayer they needed.
4. The CLC has helped me to understand effective ministry and opened doors that were previously closed for us as Christian workers.
5. Audio teaching has helped us train nonliterate leaders. This includes mostly Bible recordings but also recordings of Victor John's teachings and recordings of the Bhojpuri commentary on the Bible.
6. I helped nonliterate men and women learn to read and write so they could read the Bible.

Titus

1. I chose education, which I had learned through the CLC, as tool to reach the community.
2. Audio teaching (such as audio Bible recordings) has helped me train nonliterate people to become leaders.
3. I show them the love of Jesus and teach them the importance of relationships.
4. I have learned that I should not control any of our leaders but rather love and motivate them.

5. I have given priority to developing local leaders—both men and women—to reach their own families with the gospel.

Aaron

1. I have learned to do holistic ministry, including both spiritual and social components, focusing on blessing the entire community.
2. I share my testimony—how the Lord has changed my life. This enables people to see and learn from my life.
3. We have nonliterate people involved in our leadership. I involve them in the awareness program and show them ways to practically express love for people. I help them get motivated and involved in ministry. *[Victor adds: When we do an awareness program, we need a team. We teach people to include in their ministry those they are discipling, so they learn how we work and act and learn character and skills firsthand while ministering together. They learn more than just going to church. This life-on-life interaction also eliminates the pattern of Christianization (shallow change of religion without life transformation). The pattern of ministering together helps newer disciples see how to deal with challenges and frustrations. Even if people can't read or write, they can help with tasks such as sweeping the floor, collecting chairs, putting up banners, handing out flyers, and so on. Running an awareness program involves hundreds of little tasks that need to be done. We don't pay people to do those things; everyone serves because they love the Lord. At the end of the program, the team thanks God together for what he has done. Everyone who has helped out sits and drinks chai together as equals. This creates a team spirit. People from very humble backgrounds feel elevated. They feel recognized and appreciated. This kind of teamwork gives them a chance to experience interaction with Christ, even if they don't yet fully believe in him.]*
4. I use stories, testimonies, and the teaching I learned from other leaders to train nonliterate people and develop them as leaders.

That teaching includes simple things like how to relate to people, how to organize things, and how to handle a group without shouting and arguing. Often when people in our region gather, chaos is the norm, but our people learn how to be orderly and kind and serve others. People notice this difference and appreciate it.

RAISING NONLITERATE PEOPLE FROM DISCIPLES TO LEADERS

We raise up church and ministry leaders through training, direct contact, conferences, prayer mobilization, and signs and wonders. We don't differentiate between people because of their social status, literacy status, caste, or livelihood. We focus on personal transformation in discipling new believers and give leadership opportunity equally to all who come forward for that Kingdom work. Primary ways we encourage and promote leadership by nonliterate people in our ministry include these:

- We first encourage nonliterate people toward a better physical life, through health knowledge and family care, provided as an

access program. Once their physical life has improved, they become interested to know more from the leaders who have facilitated these changes. The leaders share the gospel with those interested and pray for them. As some of them come to faith, they become living examples of transformation, which attracts others to talk to them about what has changed their lives. Some of them begin leading people to Jesus. Then, with training and regular coaching, we entrust them, step by step, with some leadership.

Our training uses flexible learning methods—oral-friendly approaches for nonliterate people, classroom style with books for those who are literate, and higher-level training for those who need more in-depth knowledge.

- When people come to faith, they start using their special skills such as storytelling or singing for God's Kingdom. With proper encouragement, they rise up in leadership.
- Our customized training program plays a major role in equipping these new disciples and leaders. Our training uses flexible learning methods—oral-friendly approaches for nonliterate people, classroom style with books for those who are literate, and higher-level training for those who need more in-depth knowledge.

Here are a few testimonies and descriptions from some of our partners and leaders.

Baiju

We encourage illiterate people through training and seeing a comparison of their previous life and their life after accepting Jesus. The gospel transforms every aspect of their life; it has a multifaceted practical impact. They used to fight and quarrel over small things; they no longer do. We tell stories to help them visualize how the new way of life can look. Those stories come from the lives of other disciples and from Scripture. On a very practical level people learn that their bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit, and they learn basic hygiene, to become good stewards of their physical bodies. Before coming to Christ, the people were very dirty. They had only one set of clothes, and they rarely bathed, which is especially problematic in a very humid area such as ours. At our first two annual conferences, the new believers smelled really bad. But as people grew in discipleship, they started to practice better hygiene and wear cleaner clothes. This serves as a visual example for the newer believers: the gospel impacts not just spiritual issues; it has very practical everyday implications. We encourage the new believers to stay connected with their community and to go to their relatives and share their testimony. Their relatives observe the contrast between their previous life and the change in them, and some come to faith.

We train them about the life of Jesus Christ, from the Gospels. We

always do the teaching in a group, though sometimes the group consists of just one family. Whenever I visit, I share some teaching, usually some creation-to-Christ stories. Sometimes we use the Discovery approach, but that's more for leaders who have a bit of background. (Back when we used the *Faith Comes by Hearing* audio Bible, that was mainly a Discovery discussion done in a group. Some effort was required to crank up the player and make it go.)

In our context, DBS is less practical for new people. We first do informal trainings for the new believers and then bring people together for more systematic training on a monthly basis. We give further training to those who show higher-level leadership qualities. We listen to their stories and help them deal with their challenges in ministry. We also help them get acquainted with how to do social work, how to deal with government officials, how to be intentional in gospel planting, how to open the door for ministry, and how to make an exit plan. We use a very relational process that involves a lot of mentoring.

We have four illiterate house church leaders and one illiterate CLC leader. They are doing a good job. Most of our illiterate leaders get motivated to study and learn to read and write. Some new leaders, though, are still illiterate. We don't distinguish the literate from illiterate leaders or segregate them; we have the same ministry expectation for all. We expect all leaders to be righteous and honest and represent God's Kingdom as a man or woman of God. They learn to witness, win people, and start small groups. Those who can read and write make use of available books; for those who can't yet read we use stories, pictures, and more discussion. All the different methods have the same goal. So many of the people we're reaching are oral learners that all our leaders need equipping to lead appropriately in that context.

Robert

To train illiterate people in leadership, we have discipleship training for groups of new disciples who have received initial follow-up. Because of security issues people need to be filtered through initial discipling

by someone in their house church before we bring them into a training group. That way, people we don't know relatively well don't meet a large number of others who could be endangered. We mostly hold the discipleship training in people's village or within walking distance of it.

When we start discipleship training at a new location, we share Bible verses (like Matthew 28:18–20) on the first day of training. We explain what the word of God says and share three basic points from the text. We use video clips to explain principles according to a clear standard curriculum so they can understand the teaching well. We keep trainings very practical and help them develop skill in storytelling.

We ensure that during the formative period of learning each new disciple grows in practicing their faith in obedience to the word of God. When disciples make disciples of others, a Church Planting Movement naturally results. The process continues consistently, making it clear to the disciples that church is not an organization but the body of believers (disciples). We help new disciples understand the purpose of this training so they know how to make disciples of others, how to train others to grow in Christ, and how to start and lead new churches.

To train illiterate people to start and lead a church, we begin with Luke 10. We present everything in the form of stories. When needed, we present material in short skits. In every training, we motivate trainees to make new disciples as their homework. During the training (a few days together, with a month or two between meetings), they aim to make ten to fifteen new disciples. This new disciple group then becomes a house fellowship.

We tell the trainees to share the gospel with their own people group, because it's easiest to share the gospel with those close to you. This gives them experience in sharing with others and also builds confidence and experience. We also motivate our CLC leaders to help all the new disciples with adult education. They slowly learn to read and write. Through signs and wonders—especially prayer for healing—they can touch others, share about Jesus, and make new disciples.

Gideon

We train and motivate illiterate new disciples so that when they make disciples, they can multiply and become part of a movement. We also train people to take ownership within their community and ministry. We train them in a holistic approach in order to bring complete transformation to people, according to their needs. By introducing Kingdom values, we change their perspective on life through discipleship to our Lord Jesus Christ. These values include loving others without expectation, peacemaking, compassion, mercy, faith, and joy—all based on Jesus' earthly ministry.

We teach, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." We see in this verse that Jesus calls us to reflect Kingdom values with our mortal bodies, live as citizens of God's Kingdom, and reflect Christ's likeness each day. This helps our people stand firm in their faith journey, even in times of difficulty and persecution.

We train the disciples to use basic principles of multiplication: one church births another, one leader births another, and one believer births several new believers. We mentor this process until the fourth generation, at which time it becomes a movement that continues to reproduce. We continue to train them and work with them until they have learned to lead others.

We have many leaders who, when they came to faith, didn't know how to read or write a single word; but after they came to faith in Jesus, they began growing not only in leadership but also in learning to read and write. They are now good leaders, leading many churches.

One example is Gabriela, leading twelve house fellowships with an assistant leader, who she trained with help from our team. Another example is Rachel, who suffered from multiple diseases. She had been possessed by demonic spirits for nearly five years, and her entire family was disturbed by it. When her father learned that George prayed for people, he brought his daughter to George. He prayed for her, and she was delivered of demonic spirits and all her diseases on the same day.

This incident brought the family closer to George, and he kept in regular contact with them.

Then one day, Rachel asked, “How can I join you in God's work?” George started her off with oral Bible listening. He then taught her about discipleship, explaining the Scripture and teaching her how to live in society with God’s authority. She began to share what she was learning of the gospel, and gradually half her village became disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus, the people accepted her as their leader, and today she leads a viable church in her village. We have trained and equipped her on a regular basis—in social issues, discipleship, and leadership. God is wonderfully using this illiterate woman for his Kingdom as she serves as a leader.

Rachel began to share what she was learning of the gospel, and gradually half her village became disciples of Jesus Christ.

Samuel

Through the CLC I learned of ways to gain access to a new community, and I chose education. I started a literacy center, and in a very short time I had connected with more than one hundred youth and children. Through them I reached their parents and started a house fellowship, which later became a church. This became the beginning of the Church Planting Movement among our language group.

I chose and trained as leaders the men and women who were very committed and ready to work. Many of them were nonliterate. I trained them through motivational stories: not just Bible stories but also other stories of people’s sacrifice, loyalty, and dedication. I also shared testimonies and showed them the love of Jesus Christ. By that I mean being kind and humble and really loving people in practical ways. Because our society has so much selfishness and self-centeredness, many people haven’t seen practical love demonstrated before. So, when they see Christians being loving, it makes a big impact on their life and their perspective.

I gave the nonliterate disciples special opportunities to share in

church gatherings the verses they had memorized from the word of God. When people saw our changed lives, and all the bad habits left behind, they started listening to us and became interested.

Nonliterate women started reaching their relatives and friends by sharing their testimonies.

I learned from the Bhojpuri movement how they encouraged leaders by personal coaching during their conferences. I took some of our leaders to the Bhojpuri conference to learn from them so we could do the same thing in our area. We now have our own conferences, which gives local leaders encouragement, motivation, and vision.

LEADERSHIP IN CPM PRINCIPLES

LEADERS WORKING WITH GOD TO LAUNCH A MOVEMENT

When we began our ministry among the Bhojpuri people, we followed the disciple-making vision of the Great Commission. This involved six things we did and at least ten the Lord did.

What we did:

1. **LANGUAGE APPROACH.** We made the gospel available to people in their mother tongue.
2. **GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH.** We went to People Groups' homelands—the places where their group lives in the greatest concentration.
3. **HISTORICAL-CULTURAL APPROACH.** We used local stories and connected those to biblical stories.
4. **COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS APPROACH.** This gave us access to the communities.
5. **ABUNDANT SOWING APPROACH.** We applied to gospel-sharing the biblical principle that if you sow much you will reap much; if you sow sparingly you will reap sparingly (2 Cor. 9:6).
6. **PRAYER MOBILIZATION.** We kept the unreached and unengaged

people and places in front of us in prayer, and we allowed God to change our attitudes.

What God did:

1. HE MADE OUR MESSAGE CLEAR TO THE PEOPLE.
2. HE CONVICTED HEARTS AND BROUGHT PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE.
3. HE GAVE US WISDOM AND HUMILITY.
4. HE HELPED US SEE PEOPLE AS HE SEES THEM.
5. HE HELPED US DESIGN THE STRATEGY.
6. HE HELPED US FIND MEN AND WOMEN OF PEACE (Luke 10:6).
7. HE PERFORMED SIGNS AND WONDERS WITH MANY POWER ENCOUNTERS AND MANY PEOPLE DELIVERED FROM DEMONS.
8. HE HEALED THE SICK (Luke 10:9).
9. HE GAVE SUPERNATURAL PROVISION AND PROTECTION.
10. HE RAISED THE DEAD.

Leading in this way opened doors for God to do his amazing work. Many discussions of Church Planting Movements talk about strategy but overlook the importance of leadership. Everything in a movement hangs on leadership, like a door on its hinges.

Everything in a movement hangs on leadership, like a door on its hinges.

People don't usually pay attention to the hinges; they just notice the door. But the hinges take the load and let the door work. In the same way, people notice a movement when it happens; it's really better if they don't especially notice the leaders. We would rather have people

notice God's powerful work in and through great numbers of ordinary people serving God as they obey his word and follow his Spirit.

We try not to focus too much on ourselves. We study how growth happened in Scripture and aim to follow those patterns in our context. In Paul's letters to the Thessalonians we see that growth and maturity

happened very quickly among that group. The Corinthians, by contrast, had all kinds of problems, including quarrels and factions, even though Paul spent more time there. Leading people toward maturity is not a one-size-fits-all project. It involves personal relationships, addressing everyday life situations, and inviting God's Spirit to apply his word to those situations.

GENERATIONAL MULTIPLICATION

Churches are planted as disciples multiply. Second Timothy 2:2 describes four generations of reproduction: "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

- Paul was the first generation.
- Timothy and "many witnesses" were the second generation.
- "Reliable people" were the third generation.
- "Others" were the fourth generation.

We aim to intentionally reproduce to the fourth generation and beyond. Each leader continues to work closely with their disciple until that stream reaches the fourth generation.

Multigenerational ministry requires a multigenerational mindset.

- Learn to think beyond ourselves.
- Think and plan beyond the first generation.
- Lay a solid first-generation foundation: select the first generation carefully and help them make their disciples.
- Hold the first generation accountable to think beyond themselves.
- Continue to work closely with our disciples until at least the fourth generation.

As you choose your first generation:

1. Set a high standard. Look for:
 - faithfulness (2 Tim. 2:2);
 - availability (Luke 12:22–48);
 - and passion.
2. Pray.
3. Communicate the vision.
4. Make the call specific and look for commitment. Test the leaders by giving them an assignment and watching to see whether or not they did it.

Some keys to quicker multiplication (not for the sake of speed itself, but for the sake of seeing more lost people saved) include:

1. Helping your disciples make their first disciples.
2. Multiplying sooner rather than later.
3. Keeping the passion level high.
4. Reproducing and training your leaders soon.
5. Avoiding classroom discipleship.
6. Asking God to bring to you the ones he has chosen.
7. Keeping your discipleship training simple.
8. Keeping your discipleship training relational.
9. Doing projects that bless the community.

IS THAT FOR REAL?

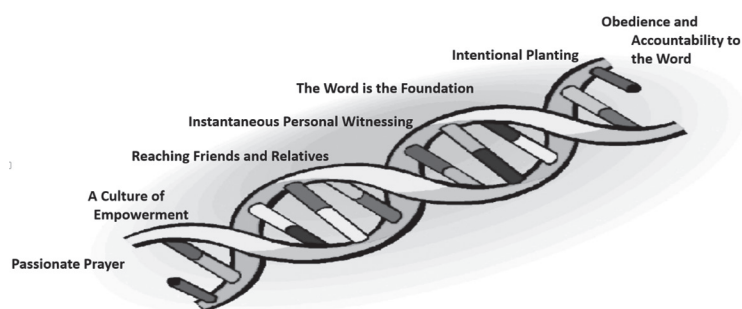
As some outsiders hear of movements happening in India, they want to know: How wide and how deep is that movement, *really*? Does it last? I encourage those who wonder to look at the survival and maturity of the movement work in India. The answer appears in the disciples' spiritual depth. They continue a lifestyle of active faith: obeying the Lord

even when it leads to persecution, persevering after persecution, and enthusiastically continuing to win new people to Christ. This is not a hierarchical denomination, where everyone has a place in the structure and everything is organized neatly, with lots of full-time staff paid to direct and control and organize the ministry. This is a movement; no one is trying to control everything. We empower leaders to make decisions for themselves; and the connections, teaching, and accountability flow regularly through relationships.

This is a movement;
no one is trying to
control everything.

MOVEMENT DNA

DNA is the long-term formative part of a person. In a human family we inherit DNA physically from our parents. With Jesus, we don't have direct blood lineage, so our DNA takes shape through obedience and enables us to become like him. You can see the DNA being passed down through the many generations of the Bhojpuri in this DNA chart, which came out of an audit in 2008.¹



1. We see great value in occasional audits of the ministry. The Bhojpuri movement has been audited numerous times over the years. A well-done audit can give great insights into the movement's strengths and weaknesses. It can also increase the confidence of those who may have questions about various aspects of "What's really happening there?" Sometimes Western donors to ministries in Asia and Africa have allowed themselves to be lied to by never having an audit.

PASSIONATE PRAYER. From the very beginning, most of the movement leaders showed a commitment to prayer. They, in turn, influenced their families and coworkers in prayer. Some Westerners misunderstood our description of hours in prayer and interpreted it as a focus on the *time spent* in prayer. For us, it's prayer as a *lifestyle*. We don't focus on the number of hours per day in prayer; we focus on the connection with God in all that we do. Much of the corporate prayer (which also involves teaching from Scripture) happens during the week, not just on Sundays.

If the disciples go somewhere to interact with a person, the trip always begins and ends with prayer. They might tell others: "Please pray for me. I'm going for an interview." It's not a matter of setting a clock and praying as a duty or as a program; we make every occasion a matter of prayer. If I spend a half hour or an hour in my devotions, then I pray for and about various things all through the day, it adds up. We don't compartmentalize everything. We don't say, "I need to pray two hours per day, go out witnessing two hours per day, and have some family time two hours per day" and so on. We bring prayer into every aspect of life.

A CULTURE OF EMPOWERMENT. Faithful leaders are doing the right things. I have allowed them to do a lot of things their own way. Developing leaders need that freedom to really thrive in ministry and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. One leader's church has existed for more than fifteen years. They decided to build a church building, although I don't recommend building church buildings. I didn't tell them to build it, and I didn't give any money toward building it, but when they asked me to come and lay the foundation of the building, I did that. We don't have an absolute rule against church buildings; building one is not a sin. The local leaders have freedom to make their own decisions on how best to mature the believers and reach the lost.

Another kind of empowerment includes maximizing a person's potential, even when they make mistakes. For example, Vijay (whose chart of generations of churches we shared in *Bhojpuri Breakthrough*)²

2. Victor John and Dave Coles, *Bhojpuri Breakthrough* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2019), 169.

was one of our good workers, whom I hoped would really do well. But at one point he left our ministry and disappeared because somebody else offered to pay him. That really upset me. But about two years later he came back, asked for forgiveness, and started to work with us again.

I took Vijay back because I knew he already had the DNA; I didn't need to start from scratch. We just made a few course corrections and got moving again. During his time away, he had picked up some unhelpful habits: certain behaviors and ways of speaking that hindered effective ministry. (Many groups and denominations have distinctive patterns and "Christianese" language that tend to shift their focus from pioneer evangelism to an inward focus—just helping already-believers to better fit that group's pattern of what a disciple should do and believe. Their denominational distinctives become the most important thing they talk about and focus on. That feels very comfortable for those within their own group, but it creates distance from other Christians and especially from unbelievers.) Vijay had also stopped doing pioneer work and had gotten into maintenance mode—with an internal focus on certain rituals, titles, and offerings—things that consume the focus of many Christian leaders.

Vijay had become accustomed to waiting for orders, someone telling him what to do. Some Christian organizations treat their employees like servants and don't allow them to make significant decisions. I consider that a huge issue. Leaders *have* to be able to make decisions. If they can't make decisions, they'll never bear fruit and multiply. They'll always be limited by someone else's capacity to direct them and make decisions for them.

Vijay asked me, "Can you help me with a few things?" I said yes. I recognized potential for apostolic ministry, so I helped him let go of his unhelpful patterns of speech and behavior. In Asian culture, when a person loses face, it's not easy to regain a good reputation. But someone who has credibility can help restore another's reputation by standing with them and giving referred trust. (I may start to trust a person because someone I trust trusts them.) As the Lord leads, I take a risk in supporting people who have realized their mistakes and want to get back on a

better track. In Vijay's case, nobody would stand with him because he had floundered in ministry. He knew his reputation was shot and nobody would trust him. But I stood with him in public and showed myself with him, so he regained respect in other people's eyes. People concluded, "If Victor John trusts him, I guess we can trust him too. If Victor thinks he has changed, we can try working with him."

It's easy to condemn people but more difficult to build them up. Some people *can't* be restored in ministry, either because they don't want to be, or because they aren't willing to change the sinful or unhealthy things that brought them down. But, whenever possible, I like to see the Lord reclaim one of his servants for fruitful ministry and see relationships restored.

I assisted Vijay in moving into a more apostolic ministry, into a new position with accountability for his management of time, people, and money. Before that, he didn't have church plants, let alone generations of churches. He now has multiple generations of churches planting churches. We maintained our relationship, even as he began to have his own area of responsibility to manage his own ministry. He has become independent and has done very well. He has responsibility and connections of his own and leaders with whom to interact. His ministry is now self-sustaining, self-managing, self-propagating, and self-correcting.

By self-correcting I mean he has the ability to work personally through a process of correction and growth, where one realizes a mistake or sin they have committed. Too often, leaders get stuck in a pattern of guilt because of their shortcomings and don't know how to get free without creating a wall of false spirituality around themselves. Many potential leaders don't succeed because they haven't dealt with their guilt. For example, if I were going to talk to a group about prayer, but my own prayer life had dwindled recently, what would I do? I couldn't just pretend, which would keep me living in guilt and hypocrisy, and it wouldn't build up my hearers (Eph. 4:29) if I just used that speaking opportunity to confess my own weaknesses in prayer. I would need a fresh commitment and a revived prayer life. To be effective leaders we need to know how to

correct weaknesses without depending on someone else to tell us how to fix them.

Too often, mentors create dependency. The best gift a mentor can give is to help mentees become confident in the Lord and self-correcting, so they know how to grow and mature and overcome the weaknesses and temptations that will surely come their way. We teach self-correction as part of our pattern of discipleship, so it's already a habit as people become leaders. First John 2:27 says, "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him." Human teachers and mentors play a vital role in a person's spiritual growth. Part of that role is teaching people to depend on the Spirit's leading and anointing so they can thrive and grow freely without depending on others for overcoming every issue.

We teach self-correction as part of our pattern of discipleship, so it's already a habit as people become leaders.

Every disciple must learn and every leader should know what to do when confronted with their own faults. When we sin or fall into temptation, we need to get out (repent), ask God to forgive us and clean us up, and then "remain in him": move ahead and grow in the joy of our salvation. The ability to self-correct is essential for growing in personal maturity in Christ and for effective ministry as a leader. People need to know how to not get stuck wallowing in guilt. We teach freedom: God's grace is sufficient for every need. As the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:1–15, grace doesn't mean we continue to sin. It's the foundation of our new life in Christ with our inheritance of freedom and joy in him.

Vijay has now ministered in more than one hundred villages and developed leaders in many of those villages. That was all his decision and not my idea. We have hundreds of guys like him, which is one reason the movement has continued to grow. A leader doesn't have to do

everything right, but they have to understand the basics. They have to develop a simple structure that can multiply and empower other leaders for multiplication. Some essential elements of that basic structure include prayer, fasting, Bible study, and other ongoing patterns and functions of the church (as we see in Acts 2:42). It includes repeated patterns of both doing ministry and multiplying ministry.

Rather than just trying to describe this empowerment dynamic myself, I asked some other leaders in the movement, “What did I do differently (from other leaders)?”

Their answers included:

- “You didn’t tell us what to do. You showed us by example and did ministry together with us.”
- “You mingled with us and helped build our confidence.”
- “You helped us discover self-respect.”
- “You worked alongside us and came alongside to empower us.”
- “You didn’t act as if you always had all the answers. You let us try out our ideas and step out in simple faith.”

Movement and decentralized function go together. We don’t give people day-to-day instructions on what to do. They have the Holy Spirit and basic discipleship, so they know how to live for the Lord’s glory. They integrate work and witness, so they witness while they work. If I needed to tell people what to do, the ministry would be limited by my human capacity. People would be waiting for my next instruction, and their own creativity would be underutilized. Leadership and initiative have to be decentralized for a ministry to become a movement. Disciples and leaders need to be empowered so they can live and serve in the power of the Holy Spirit, which is part of their birthright in Christ.

REACHING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES. We model for the new disciples how to start new churches. When someone gets a vision we always welcome starting new churches. It’s already in our DNA. If we see a person coming from two miles away to get fellowship, we encourage them to consider

starting a new church in their location. After they witness to family, friends, and relatives—and some other people have come to faith—we tell them, “We’ll coach you.” This now happens automatically.

INSTANTANEOUS PERSONAL WITNESSING. As much as possible, we want new believers to share their spiritual journey with their family, friends, and other close connections. We try to avoid having new believers become isolated from their families and network of relationships. Even when they experience persecution, if they can manage to stay connected, the Lord often uses that connection to bring others to himself. If a new believer becomes extracted from their community and just spends time around Christians, they lose their best opportunity to share the good news. By the time they’re more mature in their faith, even if they take a special class in evangelism and study great methods, they’ve already lost their best contacts for sharing the good news. So we encourage an ethos of instantaneous personal witnessing.

THE WORD IS THE FOUNDATION. We build everything we do, including the faith of new believers, on the foundation of God’s word. As much as possible, we point people to the word for their growth and guidance, rather than depending on what some human teacher says. The leaders have a system for watching over new groups, and if they see some wrong teaching, they correct it early on. We don’t wait and try to deal with problems later. Trash has a tendency to gather more trash. If one person tosses trash somewhere, someone else will likely see it and add more. So, we try to keep the house clean with God’s word as the standard.

As much as possible, we point people to the word for their growth and guidance, rather than depending on what some human teacher says.

INTENTIONAL PLANTING. Even though a new church two miles away from its mother church has the same DNA, it will be a bit different because of geography and people’s personalities and needs. But they’re unified in their teaching, prayer, and Kingdom practices. So we don’t have to bother with too much oversight; I don’t have to control them.

When a new group starts, they may feel nervous and insecure. We aim to bring stability to the group so they form habits of meeting together, worshiping, respecting one another, being open with one another, forgiving one another, bringing prayer requests to the body, recognizing the Body of Christ, and recognizing the power of God in the Body. Understanding these things enables the group to thrive. We praise God that churches in the movement are still thriving, even in the midst of increasing persecution.

Leaders should bring people out quickly from any pantheistic worship and out of pantheistic and fatalistic worldviews. How can we change those quickly? By instilling the truths of God's word. More mature believers teach the new believers using DBS, stories, and testimonies of failure and of God's strength. The mentor-mentee relationship includes modeling every aspect of ministry. When a new believer starts a group with those in their network who have come to faith, a lot of people gathering on a Sunday morning might draw unnecessary attention and become an immediate target. So we encourage them not to start with too large a group—no more than five to ten people. We also encourage meeting on different days of the week and not always on Sunday morning. But we tell them not to gather on market days, since market days are prime time for connecting with the community both for social and economic interaction. A more mature believer normally visits the new believers on a weekday to disciple them. Then the mentor and the new believer they're mentoring often go together to visit a new area where an even newer work is starting. In that context the mentee begins to act as a mentor.

Leadership and mentoring transition takes place without having to hand over or take over leadership. In this model, a person doesn't have to end ministry in one place to begin ministry in another. Leaders work themselves out of a job in a smooth way that doesn't draw much attention. The groups may meet three or four times a week in some form. They might have a prayer meeting, a women's meeting, a worship meeting, or whatever. They meet often, and not everyone comes to all the meetings. The size of the gatherings depends a lot on local context and community

relations. In a high persecution context, the gatherings will be much smaller and less obvious.

If, for example, the whole group consists of twenty to thirty people, a given meeting might have twelve people; the number varies. Each one then talks to their own neighbors. They might say, for example, “I went to a meeting last night, and this is what I learned,” and they pass on the stories. Continuous sharing helps believers learn and grow and be open with one another. Growing in the Lord and in his truth is a natural part of everyday life.

OBEDIENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE WORD. We teach disciples from the beginning that when they learn *anything* from Scripture, they need to obey that. We want to avoid creating dependency on anyone, so we always encourage people to obey the word and the applications of it that God’s Spirit gives them. The goal of foundational teaching is to help believers understand and apply basic biblical truths, so their foundation becomes strong, and they know what to do in a variety of situations.

THE ONGOING NEED FOR REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

Revolutionary action in the church begins whenever we question an existing religious system and seek earnestly to address spiritual erosion that may have crept into the system. A great example is Martin Luther, the German theologian and reformer who catalyzed the Protestant Reformation. He began to question the establishment and the system that had become corrupt and manipulative. God used his powerful quest to birth a movement, which then divided the European church by exposing to ordinary people the erosions of biblical teaching. At that time the church had become corrupt; human ideas had corroded the spiritual life and sanctity of the church.

In every age, we need to guard against the corruption that can degrade the church as an institution. Other priorities can push aside Jesus’ Great Commission, the importance of relationships, or the centrality of

obedience to Christ. Priorities can become focused on money or property, on status or self-protection. Christian leaders in any age can fall prey to temptation—whether financial, sexual, political, or social. We need to go back to the Scriptures and align ourselves with God’s word, as Luther did in his ninety-five theses.

John Wesley, in his time and situation, took revolutionary action to move beyond the dullness of the existing church. He saw a need for urgent and radical action to bring salvation to the lost. So he took the unheard-of step of preaching outdoors to bring the gospel to those who wouldn’t enter a church building. And he set up serious discipleship groups to shape into real disciples those who came to saving faith.

We need to keep aligning ourselves with Scripture so the church can move ahead as God intended. We get the wheels on our car aligned so the car can move ahead at its best. The more a person drives on tires that are out of alignment, the worse the problem gets. A small misalignment will shorten tire life by a few thousand miles; a major misalignment will wear out tires in a few hundred miles. In a similar way, misalignment of the church with God’s word doesn’t fix itself. God raises up leaders to guide, guard, and sometimes correct, rebuke, and call for a new path when the system has become misaligned with God’s word.

The church’s witness can become stagnant and stale in any age. A few centuries ago many Christians in Europe and America justified chattel slavery, a form of slavery much worse than anything addressed in the Bible. But God raised up revolutionary responses. In 1732, two young Moravians sold themselves as slaves in order to take the gospel to African slaves in the West Indies. That revolutionary action reflected an exceedingly high level of commitment. Later in that century, William Wilberforce led the movement to abolish the slave trade in England. But the European churches from which those men arose have stagnated.

The church of the twenty-first century faces new and different challenges. We have the global issue of human trafficking—a different kind of slavery. We need to show how the gospel applies to our current situations and challenges, including issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and

people losing their jobs. What hope do we bring? How does Jesus intend his holistic gospel to impact the whole range of human needs and brokenness? After Jesus overcame the devil's temptations, he returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. For his first sermon in his hometown, he read Isaiah's prophecy:

How does Jesus intend his holistic gospel to impact the whole range of human needs and brokenness?

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

LUKE 4:18-19

Jesus then made the audacious claim: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21b). The gospel of Jesus doesn't only promise a nice life after death. Jesus came to bring freedom that touches body, soul, and spirit; the gospel message impacts whole lives. Holistic ministry is both a fruit of the gospel and a door opener for gospel proclamation.

PLURALITY IN LEADERSHIP

As we mentioned in *Bhojpuri Breakthrough*, the churches in this movement normally have multiple elders and multiple levels of leadership, not just one leader. So, if a leader is traveling or needs to be away for some reason, the ministry still continues. That also helps to overcome problems related to persecution or one leader falling into sin. The Lord has set

things up in such a way that the ministry can still continue, even in the face of various challenges.

- Human sin doesn't destroy the movement.
- Money doesn't destroy the movement.
- Persecution doesn't destroy the movement.

TEACHING AND EQUIPPING LEADERS

I've heard some people express concerns that Church Planting Movements shortchange the gift of teaching. We do need teaching—and we are teaching all the time—through our lives, testimonies, and actions. But when people hear the word *teaching*, they often think of a classroom, a very scholastic environment. They picture people going to a seminary or Bible school to become an educated pastor. But, in a context like ours, many of those who go for formal training never return to the front lines of reaching the lost. They want to become professors or teachers or find a big enough church somewhere that can pay them a good, full-time salary.

Our goal is to help young believers reach out to their families and communities—those who have not heard the gospel. That's the way many of us in the movement work with new believers to train leaders. We've taken away the distinctions of ordination, paid staff, religious titles, and positions. That way, the movement can easily be advanced by anyone who loves Jesus.

Maintaining the purity of the church is one of the jobs of leaders in our context. Most of the disciples come from a Hindu background, so a very clear separation takes place at some point in their life. That's why they have become Christians. They understand clearly the dangers of practices such as idol worship, black magic, and mysticism, because many of them have been involved in some of those things in the past. Redemption has brought them a new experience as they follow Christ.

It's not for us or others to question their experience or doubt it. We have to trust a person who says, "I was blind, but now I see."

If you quiz a new believer about deep theological questions, they will have a hard time answering. We need to trust and accept what that person says as valuable. We need to respect their testimony and give space for them to keep learning more and growing deeper in the Lord. Some Christians have a problem with that and don't want to give people personal space in the spiritual sense. How can we expect new believers to develop if they don't feel accepted and included? Too many churches have a very narrow entrance. They've misunderstood Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:13, "Enter through the narrow gate," as if church rules and mature doctrine were the gate of which he spoke.

At the same time, the church many times has a very wide exit. Too frequently, when a person leaves, no one notices or misses them or makes any effort to reach out to them. Many leaders watch closely who comes in but don't pay much attention to those who leave. That needs to be changed; it should be the other way around. The gate into church should be wide open and the exit very narrow. When someone wants to leave a church or ministry, we should say, "We bless you; we love you. We're both still part of the big family of God." Leaders play an important role in the patterns of welcoming new believers. That often means changing some assumptions and patterns built on traditional church culture.

PRACTICAL LOCAL THEOLOGY

We aim to have God's people apply his truth to local situations in daily life and culture. Jesus' followers need to grapple with points of contact and points of conflict between biblical teaching and community norms and traditions—including family, food, and worship. Scripture gives principles but not step-by-step commands on such issues. Each local situation differs a bit from other contexts; sorting out the best way forward can be a messy process. Outsiders looking in may misunderstand some practices

and think, “These people have an aberrant form of Christianity,” because it looks different from what they experienced growing up. Especially when outsiders observe contextual worship, they often confuse some cultural elements with a worship practice in a different religion and fear some kind of syncretism has occurred.

When we talk about culture, we always mention three things Indians especially care about: *bhasha*, *bhojan*, and *bhajan* (language, food, and worship). These elements of culture live close to a person’s heart, and culture shapes a person’s response to them. No matter where a person goes, they won’t forget the food they grew up with and the songs of worship that touched their heart.

Local theology develops through applying God’s word to a local culture, figuring out principles and applications for issues on which the Bible has no direct teaching. We train people to interact with Scripture as a part of their daily lives. That brings it into contact with the local culture: what to reject, continue, or change. Some describe that process as contextualization. But having a cultural outsider attempt contextual analysis differs greatly from having local people figure it out from within their culture. Local people have unique insight into their own lives, hearts, and practice. So, when God’s Spirit illuminates his word to apply it in their lives, that brings deep transformation of their lives and, eventually, of the culture.

For example, in some cultures of India cursing is very common. How do believers bring the biblical teaching to bear on that so people are freed from it? They need to realize how cursing affects their personal sanc-

A transformed heart
yields a transformed
mouth.

tity and their relationship with God and others. Jesus said, “The mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45b). A transformed heart yields a transformed mouth. That’s a difference people notice.

Relationships are important in Bhojpuri culture, but many relationships are more abusive than healthy. When Bhojpuri people become

Jesus' disciples, they stop misusing relationships to take advantage of others. As their changed hearts bring forth changed lives, they become more redemptive and helpful. They stop twisting relational dynamics for personal gain and look for ways to help other people. Many of the leaders in the movement have gained respect in their communities because of their honesty in relationships. They have authority with people because they love them, and their lives reflect a huge transformation.

Local theology involves presenting God's word in a very redemptive way, rather than presenting it as a law. Many times, both in cross-cultural ministry and in same-culture church ministry, leaders have brought unnecessary offense by turning God's word into a bunch of human laws. Christianity, in many global contexts, has created unhelpful rules for people instead of grappling with the culture and asking the hard question, "How does God's word apply in this situation?"

Too many have announced rules: "You can't do this or that if you're a Christian." It's much better to point people to the relevant scriptures and convey the perspective: "Now that you follow Christ and obey him in your daily life, his word will transform your life. What do you see him saying through this scripture?" This involves reflection on people's everyday lives, everyday events, and local realities. It yields a uniquely relevant portrayal of Kingdom life as a beautiful light within each local context.

WEST VERSUS EAST

Some people ask, "Can movement principles work in the West?" I wonder if that's the right question. If it's not working, *why* is it not working? We've got to identify the obstacles and remove them. What hinders a movement in any given context? The same principles apply, but each context is different.³

3. For further insights on this, see Jerry Trousdale and Glenn Sunshine, *The Kingdom Unleashed: How Jesus' 1st-Century Kingdom Values Are Transforming Thousands of Cultures and Awakening His Church* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: DMM Library, 2018).

We aim to establish not just viable churches but also sending churches. We see this as crucial. Disciples don't just hold still with a private faith; they reach out to friends, neighbors, and relatives. That's part of the sending. They don't have a Western concept of formally sending missionaries to faraway countries. In our country, they're surrounded with Unreached People Groups all around them. They look for natural opportunities.

For example, when people look for jobs in bigger cities, the church uses that opportunity for "sending" missionaries. Disciples land in a new place and start to witness, and many churches have started this way. The churches have also sent out disciples to other areas in their locality, sometimes across borders in their own district, or sometimes to other districts. One leader works in three different districts. He has sent out people who have started additional churches, and he does ongoing mentoring with those he sends out.

God uses CPM principles—through connection with him and his word—as a globally applicable pattern. Culturally discerning leaders apply movement DNA in the widely diverse places God's Spirit leads them. This results in Kingdom growth in all kinds of contexts, including some of the world's least-reached peoples and places.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN LEADERSHIP¹

RESEARCH PLAYS A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN CHURCH planting. It gives information about the actual situation and what needs to be done. I'm not a trained researcher, but my inquisitive nature and desire to know "what and why" have caused me to pursue more information. As I began to do research, I found all kinds of things we had done wrong in the past. We needed first to transform *ourselves*.

I can negotiate with bandits but found it hard to negotiate with Christian traditionalists. Some people are so rigid about their way of practicing Christianity they leave very little room for discussion of change or reform. As the Lord led me into a more apostolic ministry of pioneering and going into new areas, I tried to obey. So, research played a big role in bringing us to our current level of fruitfulness. I think every church planter should be a researcher, though not every researcher can be a church planter.

Every church planter should be a researcher, though not every researcher can be a church planter.

1. Unpublished interview by Joseph Myers (edited), June 2021.

BACKGROUND

In 1989, I attended the Lausanne Congress in Manila, where I first heard discussion about the idea of people groups. In India we had mostly heard about caste issues and gotten bombarded with the idea of caste-based evangelism. Most Indian missionaries came from the southern part of India and had a strong connection with the West. They talked with Westerners about caste issues and tried to apply church growth concepts to those issues.

I said, “That’s not going to work. The caste system in India is so complicated that Indians themselves don’t fully understand it. No way can a person dissect it and figure it all out. One village might have only two families of high-caste people who dominate and abuse two thousand or five thousand other people. How can anyone start a high-caste church there?” I had many questions but no answers.

At the Lausanne Congress, I heard people talk about the Boldari people and wondered, *Who are these Boldari people?* I heard others talking about the twenty-five million Bhojpuri people, a very large Unreached People Group. I thought, *That’s not right. First, you’re mispronouncing the name. Second, the population is wrong. Third, the location is wrong.*

To prove the “experts” wrong, I needed to gather more information. As I started to discover the actual situation, my heart broke. I recognized how foolish we had been. I realized if we could have made this modification, or made that one change, things could have gone so much faster.

I don’t claim to have the final answer. Research among Unreached Groups is like climbing a mountain. Once you reach the top of one mountain, which looks very high, you discover another higher mountain behind it. Then you climb that and find another one; the discovery never ends. But by God’s grace we’ve discovered some principles that he has used to reach many lost people.

I wanted to see the church free from dependency on Western money, because dependency results in a ministry dying when the support ends. So I decided I'm not going to build buildings, I'm not going to pay pastors, and I'm not going to ask for outside money to support the churches. You can imagine how many people I upset in the hierarchy of existing churches in the 1990s.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH

We ask people to pray for the unreached. But what do we want them to pray *for*? They need to know some specifics of the situation. Where does that come from? Research. A lot of information is already available. But someone has to gather it, compile it, and use that information to build a clear pathway that leads to fulfilling the goal: seeing God's Kingdom increase.

If I were a businessman, I'd think about making more money. If I were involved in the stock market, I'd watch the news very closely to notice trends going up and down. Many aspects of life involve research. If I want a prayer movement, I have to do research. Then we have to translate that information into seeing more disciples made, more churches planted, and more leaders trained. I study those processes in order to maximize the ministry.

The second thing to consider after prayer is people's patterns of behavior. We learn that by spending time with them and hearing their stories of successes and failures. We do this research continually and readjust our approach. We don't want a stagnant approach, working based on research someone did in the twentieth century. Older research can serve as a base, but what progress have we made at this point? What we did twenty-five years ago might no longer be relevant. How can we work with relevance for the current and future situation? We need to study the situation and listen to the Lord.

TRAINING LEADERS TO DO RESEARCH

To train church planters and leaders in the movement to function as researchers, I help them understand the same process I just described. I don't use technical words that might confuse them. I'm like a barefoot evangelist; I just talk to people in their local language. They're not fools; they're smart. In fact, some are smarter than me, and I have a lot to learn from them. I say, "Maybe I can help you interpret some things and come alongside you to give you direction." That's part of my leadership role. After leaders gather new information, we combine it and make any useful adjustments in the direction of the ministry. One of the most important questions we try to answer is: "What can we not yet see in this location, and what prevents us from seeing it?"

We look at the politics, economy, religious practices, trends, and so on in the area where we're working. We identify the gatekeepers and influencers in all those aspects of community life. Once we put all the information together, we have a much clearer picture informing our ministry decisions. Otherwise we could pray and fast and still see nothing happen.

We have struggled to keep a balance between doing the ministry and having a standardized office with people qualified to coordinate research work. So, over the years, we have opened the door for outside researchers to come. At the same time we also equip leaders within the movement, since a person can't pioneer ministry well without doing research. We don't sit with a map with all the details written out, but we each know the geography of our ministry locations. So we can pretty easily identify people's needs and what we should do. India's people are very relational; we focus on relationships and gather inside information based on those relationships.

We also gather periodically as leaders and talk together with two purposes. First, group interaction inherently includes accountability. No one can lie or fake information, since whatever someone reports is verified on the spot. Second, someone might say, "God is leading me to

work in this area” or “I’ve heard about something happening in this area. Let’s find out how we can strengthen that or come alongside that work to accelerate it.” Then others might join in on that idea in some way. If only one person works on something, the process might go quite slowly. But if five or ten people work together, it can go much faster.

We also continually face the reality of external threats. These might include a government official, a system, or a community opposing the ministry. Sometimes a community has received misinformation, so gospel messengers need extra vigilance (being wise as a serpent), lest they are beaten and their lives are endangered unnecessarily. Such threats need research so our people get the information they need and don’t get killed.

RESEARCH IN A RELATIONAL CONTEXT

If someone wants to find out whether a certain road goes to Delhi, they can’t just start driving down the road. Without road signs or a GPS the road would have to be verified. Otherwise they might end up in Mumbai or somewhere else. Maybe some friendly stranger says, “This is the road to Delhi,” but an uneasy feeling says, “I need to verify that information.” So our first step in research involves gathering information. The second step involves verifying it. The third step is implementing a plan based on the research.

When a gospel messenger moves into an unknown area, they make themselves very vulnerable. How do they take care of their own well-being? How do they keep themselves healthy, safe, and alert? In India (or other similar places), the best approach involves developing a relationship *before* gathering information. Otherwise people will feel the stranger just wants to use them to get information. And people are not normally quick to reveal important information to a stranger.

As church planters, we aim to develop substantial relationships. If we were just asking for directions, we wouldn’t need a relationship. But if

we want to go deeper and stay around a community for a while, or come back again, our research becomes multifaceted. We want to learn: “What felt needs does this community have that I could somehow address to help me stay here and better understand people? What would legitimize my presence here so I don’t stir up suspicion?” Without learning that first, people start to wonder: “Why is he coming back here again? Why is he here?”

Asking research questions of believers depends on the area and how well they know the person asking. If they don’t know me, for example, I need someone who knows me and also knows them—a trusted middle person who can introduce me and explain who I am. They might say, “This brother would like to learn a few things. Would you be willing to answer his questions?” In our context not even a church planter or church member will give out information to just anyone. And many pastors feel insecure about giving out information since someone could use it in ways that would cause a big problem.

In our culture, as soon as someone takes out a pen to start writing, people shut down. They don’t want to say anything if it will be written down. A researcher has to understand that; they need the ability to retain information—to remember key points and write them down later. When I did the initial research about the Bhojpuri to try to find out what was happening, pastors didn’t want to tell me anything, especially when I went with an outsider. They’d ask, “Will this be published?” They didn’t want to say anything that would reflect negatively on their denomination or organization. They might have known dozens of things that needed to change, but they themselves didn’t have the power to change them, so they found themselves in a delicate situation.

RESEARCH AMONG A NEW LANGUAGE GROUP

When we intend to begin work among a new language group, we first send people to explore the land. We see, for example, in Luke 10:1, that “the

Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was *about to go* [emphasis added].” Effectiveness comes from knowing the people. Our first principle is to learn everything we can about the people—both the focus people and believers in the area.

We identify who lives in the area, and we meet the people to see if we find some believers with hearts on the same page as ours. These might be some believers within the group or believers from a different group who live among the focus group. We cast vision with believers who show interest and share the big picture. Then we identify those who want to get involved, and we select a few and start working with them. We help them get something going, so they don’t have to figure everything out by themselves. We also check what Scripture portions (whether audio or written) are already available in languages the focus group can understand. Without Scripture, a movement can’t take root and flourish.

We aim to give local believers a vision for salvation of their own people so they develop ownership of the ministry. We tell them at the beginning, “We haven’t come here to give people money or build church buildings. Consider us like one beggar telling another beggar the good news God has made available.”

ONGOING NEED FOR RESEARCH FROM OUTSIDE

We appreciate the role of outside researchers who come to sensitively study what’s happening in our ministry. We need expertise from people who can analyze the data from our pioneer work. We need them to help identify strengths and weaknesses in the ministry. Because the Lord has given us great success in most things we’re doing, we could easily become self-satisfied and nearsighted. But an outsider giving an honest evaluation can tell us: “Maybe you need to strengthen this area. You might be weak in that area.” We can categorize and discuss those

observations. We like to do something along that line every year or two, at different levels.

We do collect data, but we have to keep it very secure. So, when we give information to an outsider, we ask them to please not mention the name or the location.

Interaction with outside researchers also helps inspire our leaders to do research themselves. We aim to cultivate Kingdom-minded researchers who can explore how the Kingdom can grow more effectively. We need people who can look at trends, where the number of believers or groups has gone from 0 to 10 or 100, and see what contributed to exponential growth, or slowed it down, or caused plateaus. That requires research. We need people who can do honest audits, show local people the value of the research, and equip them to do the same. We consider that a vital area for growth. Theological seminaries don't often talk about research or spiritual warfare. A person can graduate, enter a ministry context in a country like ours, and have no idea what to do with the situation they face. We need help to equip workers with basic, simple, and reproducible elements of research.

Research provides a crucial element of leadership, because none of us knows everything. Sometimes we try something without knowing what will happen. We do an experiment, on a small scale initially, to see what

Doing research in advance helps us choose better experiments and avoid many unnecessary failures.

will happen. As the process evolves, we continue with what bears fruit and end what doesn't. It's a process of "testing the water" and "checking the wind." If people act friendly toward us, *why* do they seem friendly? If they oppose us, what's *behind* that opposition?

Research also helps us evaluate our own capacity. We compare our capacity with our findings. We may find the climb is steeper than we realized. We may need to identify the dominating spirit at work in that area and pray against it. Research allows the much-needed time to prepare well, which yields far better fruit than

flip-flopping. Doing research in advance helps us choose better experiments and avoid many unnecessary failures. God has used research to point us in much more fruitful directions, so we see it as a valuable component of effective ministry—a valuable tool in every church planter’s toolkit.



ENCOURAGING LEADERS OF EMERGING MOVEMENTS

WE HAVE OFTEN BEEN ASKED WHAT OTHERS CAN DO TO help emerging movements in our region grow. We offer ten suggestions:

1. In the beginning, focus on small, local, community-centered ministry rather than large groups. Our organization has modeled serving in a catalyst role for organic growth. Some people aim to catalyze pioneer work but still function with structures more like a traditional church. They don't know how to get free from that pattern. The first thing I did, in order to better serve as a catalyst, was to move out of the church role. We try to catalyze organically without any denominational-type attachment. When a ministry becomes a big organization, decision making becomes a slow process, with many approvals and permissions needed in order to take action. We use the motto "Small is big." We are a part of Christ's body, but we don't function as a church. We serve and help the churches being planted by checking, correcting, motivating, and helping to avoid syncretism. We provide empowering

tools to local leaders so the work moves forward in a smooth and sustainable way.

2. Share a vision for holistic ministry (as can be seen in the Community Learning Center model).
3. Motivate community engagement; genuinely serve people and their community.
4. Engage more and more leaders in holistic ministry, and allow them to experience the benefits of relationship-building within a community.
5. Motivate proven ministry leaders to mentor others, while allowing them freedom to lead independent small, emerging ministries and multiply next-level leaders.
6. Focus on building the capacity of grassroots leaders and disciples. Develop local leaders so that leadership comes from the bottom up, not from the top down. Leaders at the grassroots level need to function as decision-makers in the ministry. Don't rob them of the privilege of making decisions for themselves by bringing leadership decisions from the top down. We've established patterns so the movement does not depend on me or other top leaders. We empower leaders at every level to make decisions that fit their community and local context.
7. Empower and encourage local leaders to make locally relevant decisions. Different groups and cultures have their own way of managing things; we shouldn't make their processes something foreign. Too often, cross-cultural workers spend time, money, and energy teaching people managerial patterns because we want to see neat and tidy ministry. What is called "raising up leaders" actually consists more of teaching managerial work. In contrast, we consider it much better to help local leaders develop biblical and indigenous decision-making patterns and priorities. Leaders become much more effective and fruitful when the patterns make sense to them and feel like a good fit. Introducing management patterns from the outside tends to handicap a local leader. They end

up spending time trying to figure out how to do things in a foreign way. I say: “I don’t want you to waste your time. Do ministry in ways that make sense in your own environment.” I’m OK with some messiness when God’s people study his word, listen to his Spirit, and work out applications that fit their local context. The results may not look the way I would have arranged them, but they probably look more the way God wants them arranged.

I’m OK with some messiness when God’s people study his word, listen to his Spirit, and work out applications that fit their local context.

8. Strengthen training teams. We do what we can with the resources we have, but we also need more professionally qualified and dedicated trainers for different language groups. We have a glocal growth model: the ministry is local and indigenous, and simultaneously global. We prioritize the real needs of local leaders, and also engage trainers from other parts of the world, welcoming global input.
9. Make creative use of technology to open new opportunities and eliminate boundaries. Since COVID-19 we do a lot more teaching for leaders via Zoom. This has brought us much closer to the field. In the past I had to travel to minister in any specific city at a certain time. Now I can meet whole families in a place without going there. Though it’s not ideal in some ways, we see advantages of using technology to do things we couldn’t do otherwise. Now we can focus more easily on our entire nation. People who have been blacklisted from entering the country can still minister there.
10. Help leaders lift their eyes to see the bigger picture of God’s work in the world. Leaders can easily get bogged down with their own ministry and miss the big picture. We can help them understand and recognize movements and movement dynamics. This

involves making them more aware of movements in their part of the world: existing, new, and emerging movements.

COACHING TO BECOME *SUSTAINED* AND *MULTIPLYING* CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

We have been asked how we coach CPMs and Emerging CPMs (level 5 and 4 movements)¹ to become Sustained CPMs and Multiplying CPMs (level 6 and 7 movements). We offer a few insights:

1. Everything depends on *capacity building*. We could train a very enthusiastic person who has the capacity to disciple just one hundred people. But after one hundred people are saved, he has nowhere to go. In fact, he would have already started slowing down when he reached ninety, as he approached his capacity. He sees everything according to his capacity. He's a great guy; but after the first or second generation of church multiplication, he shows signs of stagnation. We might not have noticed it, because we just wanted to cheer on his success in his first generation of church planting. That would set him up for mediocrity rather than success.

I consciously push people to keep maturing mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If they don't develop their capacity, they'll stop at fifty or a hundred people. A lot of people would consider these persons quite successful, and they could feel happy enough. But we want to focus on developing a person's capacity, as much as possible, in each of the four areas above. They need to understand their responsibility for

1. These levels refer to the "7 Stages of the CPM Continuum" (multmove.net/cpm-continuum), in which a level 4 movement is described as "**Emerging CPM**—Consistent 3rd gen churches and some 4th gen churches," level 5 as "**CPM**—consistent 4th+ generation churches in multiple streams," level 6 as "**Sustained CPM**—Visionary, indigenous leadership leading the movement with little/no need for outsiders. Stood test of time with at least several hundred churches (Most stage 6 CPMs have 1000 or more churches)," and level 7 as "**Multiplying CPMs**—Initial CPM is now catalyzing other CPMs in other people groups or cities."

maintaining health in each of those areas. If they ignore any of those things, they will be slowed down. We try to make sure these leaders don't reach a point of feeling maxed out and overwhelmed.

People sometimes ask how I manage all the aspects of the Bhojpuri and related movements. I don't; I made a paradigm shift. The turning point came when I let go of control. I became willing to be embarrassed in front of other leaders and let people question what I am doing.

What I'm doing is letting go. I own nothing, but I have everything. With just a small team, we've held conferences with ten to twelve thousand people. None of us was born with the capacity to manage something that large. By expanding ourselves, we've learned how to do more. Whatever the ministry, a person must always have capacity greater than the work. If a person has capacity to lead a hundred people, they should prepare for five hundred. If they get to five hundred, they have to prepare to handle a thousand. If they get to a thousand, they should get ready to manage three thousand. We can't allow the work to go forward while we lag behind. We need to press forward and have the work follow us. If we follow the work, it becomes like herding cats—running in too many different directions.

2. We need to find ways to *motivate people's behavior*. In whatever we do, we need to set high goals for ourselves and help those we lead to set high goals for themselves. It's too easy to pat ourselves on the back and say, "I've done pretty well." As we help others set their goals, no one should feel they are being used. We invite trouble if we start behaving like a boss, as if we don't care about people personally, or we only ask about numbers. When that happens, a worker becomes very demotivated. They think, *I'm suffering and getting persecuted, and he doesn't even care. He just asks about numbers and plans and strategy. Forget about the numbers and strategy. I may just quit because of all this suffering.* We have to give workers a human hand and a listening ear, and let God's word and God's Spirit bring light into the situation. We can say, "Let's ask God for a glimpse of how it looks from his perspective." Through

brotherly relationships, we can help workers see with the hopeful perspective of God's truth. Biblical motivation implanted in a heart by God's Spirit can overcome great obstacles for his glory.

Biblical motivation implanted in a heart by God's Spirit can overcome great obstacles for his glory.

a heart by God's Spirit can overcome great obstacles for his glory.

3. In coaching a movement we need to *recognize when a leader has come to a bend in the road*. We need to stand ready to motivate them at the bend, and say, "Just turn left and you'll find a good road. I know the climb has been hard, but a better place lies ahead." It's like mountain climbing in Nepal. A good guide can take a huge challenge and make it feel possible. We need to stay available in strong relationship to help maturing leaders, offering wisdom to help them recognize the reality of their situation. When they stand at a confusing, difficult bend in the road, we don't ask, "What's the next step? What's your strategy?" Talking about future strategy at that moment can make the person feel even lower than they already do. We can share stories, pray together, talk about various issues (maybe personal ones), and help them move beyond the problem. We should never see church planting as a problem, rather as a source of joy. When people have joy, they can keep moving ahead, no matter what happens.

4. Capacity building is part of expanding. We should avoid monotony and *move out of the way*, because a movement has a speed of its own. At first we need to stand in front to lead it, but then we need to run alongside as the Spirit directs—to assist others and keep oiling the wheels. That involves encouragement and giving whatever support they need. We need to make sure we get out of the way and empower others to run faster and further than we could.
5. *Recognize unique needs and issues*. Sometimes just telling a leader, "Well done" accomplishes more than anything else

could—encouraging people, not condemning them. When we talk about accelerating we’ve already come to a point where a leader needs to get out of the mold. We can’t make a one-size-fits-all rule for everything in a movement; people, situations, and movements develop very differently. Each situation will have a few unique factors, and an effective leader has to recognize those differences. If a leader has a crisis or his family has an unexpected need and you just say, “I have a policy not to give any money,” that misinterprets the situation and the need. We all need money. The issue is how to manage money and use it to accomplish God’s Kingdom purposes. A little financial help at the right time can remove a huge burden. When done judiciously, it doesn’t need to create dependency. If we use money wisely, the ministry can be accelerated instead of hindered. We need the Holy Spirit’s discernment to recognize a wide range of unique needs and issues.

6. Going from having a movement among one group to starting work among other groups requires *research* (as described in the previous chapter), both for prayer and strategy. If we don’t do research, we’ll have no idea what to do. Every church planter should do research. They don’t need a lot of technical jargon; they need to learn how to pay attention to people and their life patterns and ask questions. How do they talk? Who do they like to talk to? What do they enjoy? What are they afraid of?
7. *Release control and look ahead.* A person starts as a disciple and then becomes a disciple-maker. They multiply themselves first and then start to multiply leaders. After becoming a leader, they become a leader of leaders and then continue growing to become a mentor—a spiritual parent. Acting as a parental figure means releasing control and allowing others to thrive and develop. We say, “Don’t just think of starting a church. Think of starting a pregnant church, so it’s ready to give birth even from its inception.”
8. *Look beyond the boundaries.* Many leaders of CPMs and Emerging CPMs hesitate to go beyond their *own* area or people group

boundaries. We need to coach them to see that the gospel doesn't have boundaries; it has always crossed barriers of language, culture, and geography. So leaders need to look beyond their focus on their own area, language, and cultural boundaries. Those

The gospel doesn't have boundaries; it has always crossed barriers of language, culture, and geography.

at CPM levels 4 and 5 need to open their perspective to broader horizons, rather than only developing ministry within its current boundaries. This can involve the calling of cross-cultural missionaries.

Every disciple receives Jesus' call: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). His own example offers a challenge for those with an apostolic or missionary call: "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (8:20). This call involves sacrificing natural inclinations and personal comfort, continually moving out and going beyond the generations of work already in existence. Maximizing effectiveness as a movement leader requires letting go of ties that would hold us down so God can give new ties. Few persons will let go of their affinity with their own people and the comforts of their own environment to transplant themselves in another context. By the time a ministry has multiplied to the third or fourth generation, a leader can easily become comfortable. But that's a good time to move beyond one's natural group and cross boundaries into less-reached areas and groups.

9. Moving to the next level requires *broader level training* and capacity building. Every generation of leaders needs this to grow to the next level.
10. *Learn from the experience of other movements* that have crossed boundaries to ignite new movements among other groups. The Bhojpuri CPM stands as just one example of overspill. The

24:14 Coalition (2414now.net) has many such examples from which others can learn. Some are described in the book *24:14: A Testimony to All Peoples*.² Readers can connect appropriately with others by joining the 24:14 Coalition.

2. Dave Coles and Stan Parks, eds., *24:14: A Testimony to All Peoples* (Spring, TX: 24:14, 2019).



RELATIONAL CHALLENGES

MESSINESS IN CHURCHES

The New Testament gives many examples of messiness in churches. We sometimes idealize the early church, as if it had perfect relationships with no quarrels, no disputes, and perfect theology. But a closer look at Scripture shows us issues such as the dispute that arose in Acts 6, the corruption among Corinthian Christians, and the deviation of the Galatians' faith. We also read how the apostles dealt with such issues. Some of us, if faced with challenges like those, would have outright rejected these believers as shallow Christians and missed the fact that God can advance his plans through all kinds of messiness.

In this age, there will never be a perfect situation or a perfect ministry. The early church faced relational issues, demonic problems, religious opposition, and political intrigue. We still have all those. And in some ways this century has some challenges the early church could never have imagined. Collection of personal data and surveillance bring challenges unimaginable even a hundred years ago. Yet Christianity survives and thrives more today than ever before. God is doing amazing things in our day, bringing salvation to the unreached even in the midst of messiness. God doesn't wait for his people (as individuals or churches) to become perfect before he uses us to make known his glory.

As Paul described to the Ephesians, “His intent was that *now*, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 3:10, emphasis added). Except for Jesus, no one ever made it through this world without sin. Through him, God has made provision for our many imperfections, sins, and mistakes. So, as 2 Timothy 3:16–17 tells us, we need to continue correcting our course—as individuals and as churches—while we navigate the maze of life. This applies to all God’s children in all cultures, but the details will look a little different from one group to another.

The Lord has been gracious to keep the Bhojpuri movement from syncretism and shallowness. That protection has happened, not through organizational expertise or theological control, but through biblical principles applied in everyday faith and life. As we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, the messiness tends to get sorted out into maturing faith.

HANDLING MISTAKES

Leadership involves handling people’s mistakes wisely. In our process of witnessing, planting churches, and developing leaders, the most common mistakes happen in areas of discernment, decisions, or trusting the wrong people. A leader can be deceived by what I call pseudo leadership: a person who looks very promising but turns out to have major issues. A person like that not only causes disappointment but also damages those who didn’t see the problem coming.

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others” (1 Tim 5:22). We need to allow and invite God to bring to light if a person has unresolved issues that would eventually undermine their leadership. Some people who have attractive personalities manage to get close to powerful leaders and get their protection. They have a lust for something—whether money, sex, position, travel, or something else. Their real goal is to satisfy that lust, so

they use their talent and personality to succeed at faking in ministry. The process often involves poor discipleship or no discipleship at all. They're not cemented in their faith, so they make no sacrifice. One frequent mistake—in expecting honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity in leaders—is forgetting that these qualities grow as *results* in a person's life. Results don't come without hard work and sacrifice. Christians often talk about the result of discipleship but fail to mention the hard work of *growing* in discipleship.

For example, in a culture rife with lying, *not* lying results from discipleship. Disciples need a process to learn new patterns of behavior. Journeying with Christ involves transformation and change. Some people believe a false gospel that says, "Just believe in Christ and everything will go well." But when they find out everything *doesn't* really always go well, they end up disillusioned and live a defeated Christian life with minimal reflection of Christ's glory. Some Christians consider maturity to be optional, and some leaders assume maturity will come naturally. But the Bible doesn't teach either of those. We can't give people false hope by promising things God has never promised. Paul commands believers, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12b–13). Faith and deeds work together beautifully in Christ, as we look to him daily.

We can't give people false hope by promising things God has never promised.

Scripture commands, "Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need" (Eph. 4:28). Discipleship doesn't mean just telling people: "Stop stealing. Don't do it." Real change involves a journey, not just quoting the right command and assuming those words enable a new believer to stop old patterns. Discipleship and leadership involve the sometimes painful process of walking with people through their challenges to learn new patterns of

obedience. We have to show them how new patterns look in real life and live *with* them through the challenges of changing old patterns to new ones. Shepherding is sometimes a stinky job; it's not always neat and clean. As on the farm, so also in God's family.

When I make a mistake personally, what do I do with that? A leader needs to have the maturity and freedom to confess sin, along with the confidence to ask for and receive forgiveness. Scripture says, "Confess your sins to each other" (James 5:16). Confession brings victory, both in our personal lives and in our ministry. But we need to understand that the Lord doesn't intend us to confess every mistake to everyone, which would give rise to rumors and gossip. Wisdom, discretion, and humility combine to help us discern the Lord's best for confession in our own lives and in advising those we lead.

HANDLING FAILURES OF CHARACTER

Leadership requires faith to remain steadfast and stable even in the face of others' failures. We need discernment in our disciple-making ministry, so even if a person fails, they don't become a public spectacle. If they need a course correction, a more mature believer with a close enough relationship with them should point them back to Jesus and his way of life.

Even if someone in leadership fails, the movement needs to continue. When a leader does fail, we do what we can to apply the redemptive principles of Scripture. We always aim for forgiveness and restoration as the Lord's best. Not everyone *wants* restoration because of sin still at work in the world. But we try to apply the Lord's grace and not throw people away when they make a mistake.

When we have properly laid a foundation, the movement doesn't depend on a single leader, although it might start with one person. Everyone involved develops ownership of the movement. We don't stop to analyze who has the ownership now. We all step out with what God's doing and see who responds. A person who goes fishing throws their line

in the water and sees what bites; they don't preselect the fish. In the same way, we follow the Spirit's leading and see who else is following the Spirit in the same direction.

In a brief letter written not long before his death, Paul wrote of co-workers deserting him: "You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes" (2 Tim. 1:15). "Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. . . . At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me" (2 Tim. 4:10, 16). We all need to count the cost of leadership, because journeying deep into ministry brings many challenges that compel fresh commitment to him who paid the greatest price. Desertions like Paul described have occurred from Jesus' time up to the present. Just hours before his death, Jesus' disciples all forsook him.

During the first missionary trip with Paul and Barnabas, John Mark left while they were at Pamphylia and returned home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). We don't know why he left, but Paul adamantly refused to take him along on the second journey. Paul felt strongly enough about it that he and Barnabas parted ways over the issue. However, the Lord apparently used the ongoing investment of Barnabas ("the encourager"), as Paul testified years later: "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11b). Not every sincere believer has the fortitude needed to stand together in apostolic ministry, but thankfully some desertions are only temporary. Some people will fail, but we do well to leave the door open so they can come back. Sustaining a relationship is important, even if someone has cheated us or let us down. I consider it worth the effort to give people a second chance.

Early in our ministry one of the church leaders was caught in adultery. A group of those working with the ministry wanted me to come and kick him out. I asked them to give me a day to pray about it. I didn't want to hastily establish a pattern that might turn out to be unhealthy. When I met the next day with the other leaders, I asked, "What is the purpose of church discipline?" They couldn't come up with a good answer. All

their answers amounted to punishment, which didn't seem to me like the way of Jesus. I told them, "The goal is redemption and restoration. Jesus didn't condemn people in sin. He helped them out of sin and into new life." Obviously, a person discovered in major sin can't remain in leadership. But we need the church to function as a healing community so people can get beyond past issues and move ahead to grow in the Lord and serve him.

REDEMPTION OF A "FAILED" WORKER

A brother whom I'll call Abishek came from a Hindu background. He served effectively as a disciple-maker, multiplying himself and training leaders. He showed potential to become a leader of leaders. We promoted him to teamwork in an unreached area, where he aspired to a main leadership position. This created conflict with the leader at that time who was quite weak in his leadership. The six team members were focusing on unreached groups in a new location and could have succeeded if they had submitted to one another. The ministry of winning and discipling people was going very well. But they all lacked experience and maturity, and the conflict superseded their victories. They got caught up in an unpleasant personal fight. (In many Asian cultures, a person's failure results in a lot of blame-shifting. This happens in Asia much more than in Western culture because of people trying to avoid shame.) The team couldn't resolve their issues, so our core team decided to dismantle the team and wait for a more appropriate time to return to that location. The leader of the team resigned, and Abishek began looking for a job somewhere else.

I decided to give Abishek another chance at our head office, where I could mentor and coach him. He accepted the challenge and returned to us. He confessed his mistakes and promised to change. That gave me hope, and we started to work together. He now has great influence among many church planters. He mentors them, visits them and helps them deal with difficult situations—whether persecution or church problems. The Lord

has made him fruitful and he enjoys respect among the brothers and sisters. Whenever possible, I try to give people another chance, even though it requires more investment of time and resources. However it works out, though, we can't let one person's failure bring God's work to a halt.

The Israelites' entrance into the promised land didn't stop just because of Moses' failure of speaking bitterly. God had already begun raising up Joshua, so he could step in when Moses' leadership ended. If one leader falls into sin, someone else takes over and deals with the hurt in the group. A process of mourning, and then healing, allows God's people to return quickly to joy. That enables everyone to get on with serving God and making disciples, rather than brooding over hurt and whatever wrong has happened. We need to focus on Christ's redemption and healing rather than on punishment. God takes care of his work, even if a leader fails.

We need to help people understand that what God begins, God is able to complete. If a leader does something very foolish and falls into sin, he may disappear, and those connected with him will face some consequences from that sin. But we don't need to shut down God's work because a leader has failed.

VULNERABILITY

A disciple-maker must be vulnerable and willing to take risks in dealing with people's issues. We can't invest heavily in people's lives without exposing ourselves to a measure of danger. Jesus took the risk of including Judas among his closest twelve disciples. He knew Judas's heart, but he took the risk anyway. I've had many things reported to the government by Christians I worked with. I've also had leaders in whom I invested a lot of trust leave the ministry in painful ways and use our overlapping circle of influence to do fundraising for their new projects. I had hoped they would correct issues I pointed out, issues of false reports and deception. They chose instead to announce their resignation on social media.

As leaders, we make ourselves vulnerable and have to accept that such things can happen. We can feel sorry for the person who cheats us; but we need to move on, rather than dwell on our hurt. Judas cheated Jesus, so how would we expect to be more discerning than the Lord and escape all betrayal? Leadership involves risks. The problem is not that Christians sometimes sin. That problem has a solution. Christ has already died for all his people; he has made a way to overcome any sin. The problem is when repentance doesn't happen. If a person refuses to repent, what can someone else do to fix the problem?

In dealing with those going astray, we can fall easily into one of two wrong approaches: (1) quickly condemning the person for their wrong behavior and washing our hands of them, or (2) blindly supporting the person until disaster happens. The Bible says that a human high priest "is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness" (Heb. 5:2). We need to follow that pattern and deal gently with those we see going astray, since we ourselves are subject to weakness. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). This applies all the more to leaders dealing with issues in other leaders.

RELEASING PEOPLE FREELY

Another brother who had been trained by us as a church planter went off on his own and used ministry approaches we would not have recommended. We didn't hear anything from him for many years; then suddenly he contacted us and came back to work with us. He said God gave him a vision and spoke to him in an audible voice, saying, "I want you to go to this particular village, to a particular group of people" and described their behavior and character.

He said, "I had no idea who those people were. The village was just over thirty miles away, but I had no idea such people existed." So, he went

to that village and met the people, who were all liars and cheaters. They made a business of carving images of gods on small stones, then selling the images.

After meeting these people, this brother thought, *I'm not going to do this. If I wanted to reach a group like this, where would I even start?*

But God told him, "You need to do this." So he started, and one family became believers through his interaction with them. As he discipled them, a number of others responded to the gospel.

As we talked, he told me, "It's so good to come back to my home and feel secure that I belong in this group."

What a surprise! I'm always looking for qualified leaders, and after many years of no contact, he just walked in and shared what God has been doing with him. He's been trained, has experience and a vision, and understands the mission God has for him. I see his return as a boost to our ministry. We had made almost zero investment in him over the last ten years, yet God had worked through him.

We do have a problem with sheep-stealing by weak leaders looking for a shortcut to success. They can't envision or don't have the motivation to pursue fruitful ministry based on their own hard work, so they take shortcuts and try to grab part of someone else's success. But if a disciple or leader wants to accept someone's offer and go elsewhere, we don't fight about it. We release them into the Lord's hands and go on with the ministry. Sheep-stealing and shepherd-stealing often involve the use of finances, so we will consider that shortly.

Sheep-stealing: when weak leaders look for a shortcut to success.

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

What should we do about theological mistakes: syncretism or false teaching? It depends on the context. In a place like the USA, mistakes tend to be more theological in nature—more bookish. In some parts of Asia, we

find more syncretism because of beliefs people have followed all their lives or practices imposed by their families or communities. In India, idol worship and false teaching are all around us, but we don't have a major problem with syncretism and false teaching. Because of fear of persecution, outsiders don't usually come to believers' gatherings. If they do come with some wrong teaching, it disintegrates because of the strong group dynamic—like a furnace that burns up unbiblical ideas.

The disciples understand from the beginning that when they learn a little from Scripture, they need to obey it. They practice that as a strong value. If new believers misunderstand something in Scripture, or are confused about something, we handle those issues through teaching and mentoring.

We aim for self-correcting discipleship. Look, for example, at the apostle John's letters. He wrote: "As for you, the anointing you received from [Jesus] remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him" (1 John 2:27). Believers have the Holy Spirit, who brings conviction when something is wrong. We have a strong emphasis on teaching groups of disciples rather than individuals. Discipleship may start with an individual but quickly move to a group. In this environment, false teaching and syncretism have very little space to grow. The believers can say, "We didn't learn that in our group or during our conference or in our training. It has to be approved by someone." We raise our children with appropriate patterns so they know what to do and not do. They learn: "My dad told me to avoid this kind of situation; my mom told me to watch out for this." We apply a similar pattern with new believers.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LEADERSHIP

Conflict can arise over a person, an issue, or the way a leader deals with a problem. The parting of ways between Paul and Barnabas (Acts

15:36–40) provides a classic example of an unresolved disagreement. Some people tend toward harshness and quickly judging others' failings. I don't quickly discipline those who fail; I aim for restoration, not punishment. I believe in the best in God's children. If possible, I want to see forgiveness and restoration. Acknowledging failure can open the door to personal growth.

Some people love creating conflict, and some love facing conflict and resolving it. In ministry, conflict is a given, but I would honestly prefer to avoid it if possible. On the other hand, some people avoid confrontation; but in my position I have to confront people all the time. I dislike it, but I do it in love. I try to envision myself in each person's situation. That gives me greater compassion and understanding of the issues they face and other factors that feed the conflict.

I used to jump in and try to make peace in interpersonal conflicts; sometimes I just made the situation worse. Now I often leave it to those involved to work something out first and step in only if necessary to give guidance. I try to lead people using Scripture. Depending on the problem, I point them to an appropriate text: possibly Matthew 5–7; or, depending on the situation, maybe Matthew 18, John 3, 2 Corinthians 4 or 6, or 1 Corinthians 13. I might tell them to read a whole letter, maybe 2 Corinthians or Galatians. I'll say, "I'm busy right now. Read that Scripture and come back tomorrow or the next day." They not only resolve the issue but also learn a lesson for themselves and discover how to resolve conflict with others.

When leaders are engaged with Scripture, three good things happen: (1) they learn the Scripture, (2) it cements them for their own life in the future, and (3) because the Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, that engagement gives the Spirit the opportunity to bring conviction into their lives. It's not my job to convict people; it's the Spirit's job.

This very simple approach can deal with a lot of problems. Engaging Scripture opens up a new paradigm. We're looking to the future and preparing new leaders for the future. I have no control over people; I don't wield personal authority. My only authority comes from Scripture. The

more I apply Scripture to my life and various situations, the more authority I gain.

Some people have asked, “How do you handle confidential conversations if someone (like an apprentice) is with you?” We have a saying in Bhojpuri: *Kan bahir aur pet gahir*; roughly translated, “Be deaf in your ears and have room in your belly.” In other words, “Be mature enough to not react to everything you hear, and eat what is served to you; don’t reject it.”¹ Or, “What you hear must remain within you, not come out of your mouth.”

Americans say, “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.” This saying bears some similarity to the Bhojpuri value of confidentiality. A leader can and should teach this concept to an apprentice. I don’t teach people concepts like this as a theory. I present them in a practical situation, where I can explain what damage could be caused if they pass on what they hear. I help them cultivate the habit by involving them directly in ministry, even sensitive ministry. That way the next generation of leaders learns a skill.

BUILDING BROTHERLY LOVE

By God’s grace we have been able to build brotherly love and trust between leaders from different regions as well as cultural and social classes. How does this happen? First, we make sure the relationship doesn’t involve control; we make sure we’re not trying to control others. To the extent

Problems start immediately when control enters in.

we have influence, we need to stay on guard against others controlling the relationship. Problems start immediately when control enters in. Issues may

1. The part of the saying about “room in your belly” means you should always leave some room in your stomach, so that when someone offers you something to eat, you can accept it. It’s important not to reject someone’s food, because food plays an important role in the Indian social context. Offering food shows that the hosts respect and accept you; receiving it shows that you respect and accept them.

stay hidden for a time, but the results of control will appear later on. It's like weeds planted among good seeds. The result is a disappointing harvest. We often try to exert control, sometimes without realizing it. But nobody likes to be controlled, even those who say, "I love you; I submit to you."

If people feel controlled, they will have some resentment deep down. The history of colonial control left a legacy in many nations that has impacted Unreached People Groups, even up to the present. We need to take care that we don't unwittingly tap into latent resentment against Christianity because of its past historical connection to colonial control. Even within a nation, issues of power and control can impact the relationships between one tribal group, or caste, and another.

Several members of my team are strong leaders, yet they submit to me as part of our Indian culture. I have more years of experience, and they heard stories about me even before they joined us. I could easily take for granted that they'll follow me willingly. I need instead to look at every individual uniquely, because not everyone responds the same way to a person's leadership.

To illustrate: As we drive on a road, we have no idea about the circumstances of the person driving toward us from the opposite direction. We don't know whether the person is running away from the police or intoxicated; or if it's a man who just had a fight with his wife; or a woman who just learned that someone in her family has died. We have no idea who is coming toward us. So, we drive assuming certain norms but always watching for something unexpected. We try to stay alert and notice any hints of the other driver doing something unpredictable. At the same time, we avoid doing things that could make another driver nervous. If someone makes a scary move—especially on a narrow road—others may react suddenly, and everyone could end up in trouble.

In the same way, we often don't know a person's current situation and challenges. We don't know whether issues in their background might influence what they say or do. So, we interact based on general truths and norms, but at the same time we watch for clues that something in their

life or perspective might be different from what we would have assumed. A person's culture or background might hold different values from mine, so they might see a situation or issue differently than I do. We need to be sensitive to those differences and discern the difference between biblical commands and our cultural applications of biblical principles.

In Colossians 3:11, Paul describes the multicultural family of God: "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." He reminds his readers that *everyone* in this family is chosen by God, loved dearly, and aiming for holiness. Based on those truths about God's gracious welcome of us all, Paul then tells us how to relate to one another in this culturally diverse family: "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (vv. 12–13).

God knows that problems, misunderstandings, and hurts will arise in our interactions, especially when we come from different backgrounds and situations. So, based on God's gracious forgiveness of us, he commands us to forgive others and bear with one another, even when they stretch our patience. He also commands unique virtues that can prevent and smooth over a multitude of problems, especially in cross-cultural interactions: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Each of these can serve as a mirror for us to examine and guide our interaction with others.

While each of these virtues begins in the heart, the Lord calls us to nurture them as life habits so they appear to others as one of the first things they notice, like the clothes we wear. Paul's brief lesson in cross-cultural interaction closes with this summary: "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Col. 3:14). What a beautiful picture of God's will for his children! People respond to genuine love. We can use texts like these to encourage one another in building brotherly love and trust between leaders from different regions and different cultural and social classes.

The “one another” commands of Scripture can help us truly relate to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We have a sameness of position before the Almighty that far outweighs any human differences in status, background, position, or authority. The Lord’s commands call us to mutual correction: you can correct me, and I can correct you. But many times we don’t do that. Many times, if we interact with lead pastors in a large church, they’re very protected. It’s almost impossible to meet with them. And if we do meet them, we may feel a need to be very conscious of what we say and how we say it. We know a relationship like that won’t be a healthy one, so we leave it with some distance.

A healthy relationship of brotherly love includes mutuality. The apostle Paul took a humble stance toward everyone: “I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish” (Rom. 1:14). Later in the same letter he wrote, “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law” (13:8). We do well to follow Paul’s good example—to consider ourselves as debtors to love—first to love God and then to love all people, whoever they are.

A healthy relationship
of brotherly love
includes mutuality.

Relationships should never be *used*. We need each other and each other’s help. But many times people use relationships; they build a relationship because they need something or want to get to the next level. A lot of people have contacted me after they found out I know important people. They come to me and ask for an introduction to those people. And if I don’t introduce them, they won’t continue as my friend. Or, after I introduce them, they no longer respond to my emails. When that happens, I know they were just using me.

God’s love is a healing love. When we put God in the center of everything we do, he brings healing and reconciliation. Through the blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, God heals us—not just from sin, and not just physically, but also in our relationships, finances, and

wounds. We all carry some wounds; these may include abandonment, rejection, and humiliation. Coming to faith in Jesus doesn't automatically heal all wounds. Just coming to church doesn't heal those things, which is why discipleship is so important. Many Christians are touchy about certain issues because they still carry baggage from past hurts. They become defensive, exercise control, or somehow build a fortress to keep themselves safe, because they don't want to get hurt again. That doesn't all get fixed with just a simple laying on of hands; some healings happen in stages. Discipleship helps people bring each day's issues and challenges to Jesus so they gradually draw closer and closer to God.

PERSONAL CHALLENGES

FINANCIAL ISSUES

Finance is a challenging area for leaders. Most leaders who handle money have had no training in how to handle it. Most missionaries are trained in spiritual things, but not in how to handle money. Jesus said more about money than he did about church. And we've found that small problems with money can stop the whole momentum of a ministry.

Many people struggle with money and finance. Their whole lives have involved dishonesty, laziness, and the wrong use of money; then we come to them with a holistic approach to life and discipleship. When they accept the gospel, it begins to impact every area of their lives, and God brings order to them. Some people think if you just do the right four things you'll have a movement. But progress toward a movement really involves discipleship in every area of a person's life, including their finances.

Faith enables a leader to look to and lean on God, which should enable a healthy perspective on money. A movement mustn't be dependent on money, though it's a huge issue. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the essential principle of contentment. He said: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. . . . If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Tim. 6:6, 8). A healthy view of money starts with

an attitude of contentment. We could always use more money; we could always think of more good things we could accomplish if we had more money. However, that attitude can easily turn worldly but cloaked in spiritual language. It can lead to temptations to stretch the truth in order to impress donors, or to be manipulated by the preferences and priorities of generous donors. To ward off those temptations, we encourage contentment.

We as leaders try to help people but make sure we don't create dependency. We need to use whatever money the Lord provides as a tool for his purposes and not get pulled aside by it. We have to see God's promise on one side and the lust of the eyes on the other. An effective leader has to win the battle in that arena. Everyone can always think of more good things they could do if they had more money. And we may face challenges in funding. But we can't let that stop the work of God. We have to come to a place of peace with money issues and not let them distract us from God's intended focus. God doesn't worry about money; he has greater things on his mind. We need to focus on the greater things as well.

We need to make sure that our ministry doesn't depend on money—that leaders don't do ministry just because they get paid. When a movement really moves, people serve God because of the Spirit's work in their lives. They have a personal calling—a calling they live up to daily. They don't wait for someone else to tell them what to do or offer them payment for ministry.

Our ministry has had some people run away with money—not a huge amount, but roughly a month's salary. Honestly, two or three people in twenty years is not a big setback. I chose not to chase after them; I just left them to the Lord to deal with. They destroyed their lives, and now they're nowhere to be seen. They have no standing, and they feel embarrassed because they went from one mistake to another.

When a leader sins, they destroy themselves. For example, in Exodus 1, God was blessing the Hebrews, but Pharaoh didn't appreciate that or view the Hebrews positively. The Hebrews made a great contribution to Egypt, but Pharaoh didn't acknowledge it. Instead, he viewed the Hebrews as a problem. Because Pharaoh was shortsighted, he increased their hardship and ended up damaging his own country and family.

In our context, we have a cultural concept of people *paying* someone to cast out a demon or pray for the sick. To overcome that mindset of spiritual blessing as a way to make money, we share Scripture freely and pray freely. We teach and model Jesus' instruction: "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matt. 10:8b).

We also teach biblical principles of generosity. Most people in our context view life from a mindset of scarcity rather than a mindset of abundance. But our God is generous, and he invites his people to live in the abundance of his presence. He told Abram, "I am God Almighty; *walk before me* faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers [emphasis added]" (Gen. 17:1–2,). When we walk in God's presence, we tap into the spiritual riches of our inheritance in Christ, and our actions can bear fruit. Generosity connects us with our Creator. He acts generously out of his abundance, and he is the fountain of all generosity.

Those who minister in our context often face the mixed blessing of money coming from the West to the East. Then people in both the West and the East sometimes end up blaming each other for the problems that arise. We need to discern together what uses of outside money are helpful and what uses actually do long-term damage to the ministry.¹

When my wife and I were married thirty-nine years ago, we decided together that we would not go into debt. We wouldn't buy things we couldn't afford, and we would check our own hearts constantly to deal with greed and envy. That decision became harder when we had children.

1. One excellent article on this subject: is Steve Parlato, "Use of Outside Funding in Multiplying Disciples and Churches," *Mission Frontiers* magazine, Jan/Feb 2022, 34-37. <https://2414now.net/use-of-outside-funding-in-multiplying-disciples-and-churches/>.

We often had to say no to the children when they asked for something that others had. Some parents think, *I've had a hard life, but I don't want my children to suffer*, so they buy them lots of stuff and never teach them the vital, biblical lesson of being content with what you have (1 Tim. 6:6, 8; Heb. 13:5).

Some people consider it very hard to live in contentment, but it's really not. Contentment versus greed depends essentially on attitude, not how much a person has or doesn't have. Now, after almost four decades of marriage, my wife and I have no debt except to love one another (Rom. 13:8). Intentionally nurturing this attitude also had a positive impact on our daughters. All three grew up not being lured by the temptations of competing with other girls and the world. As adults they also now live free of debt. As leaders we need to pass on to others the value of contentment, both by our example and by pointing them to biblical principles.

In talking about movements and money, we need to start with how we handle money in our own households. No one can say we've taken money that wasn't ours or used others as a way to enrich ourselves. We give to the Lord's work and God's people, and we make hospitality a habit. We also try to meet sporadic needs that arise suddenly. We don't brag about our giving; we mention it only for the purpose of training other leaders.

THE DANGERS OF MONEY

Money holds great power. It tries to control us and tempt us to use it to control others. Scripture clearly warns, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). If a person's sanctification doesn't impact their finances, they will always struggle. Only Christ can rescue us from temptation, lust, greed, and pursuing selfish desires. Union with Christ plants contentment in our soul so we don't go looking for greener grass elsewhere.

Leaders, especially new leaders, need to recognize financial temptation as a danger they could easily fall into. Paul counseled Timothy:

“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim. 6:9–10). We need that warning as much today as leaders did in the first century. I’ve seen leaders with great potential trade their blessing and anointing for money.

The Lord gave Moses important instructions about how to help leaders avoid ruin. He commanded, “The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself. . . . He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold” (Deut. 17:15–18). We can draw out the principle from this text and call these the three great temptations of a leader: power, sexual excess, and wealth.

Many ministries are destroyed because leaders don’t see the hidden power of money. God’s people have to handle finances carefully in order to meet needs appropriately without falling into temptation.

SHORTSIGHTEDNESS

In India, a lot of ministries became outdated or died a natural death because their shortsighted leaders experienced immediate success. They became self-centered and proud of what they had done and were doing. Shortsighted leaders often succumb to their own success. They talk about eternity but live with a focus on immediate pleasure, advantage, fame, or shallow spirituality. Today’s success can blind a leader to the potential for future growth or pitfalls.

One leader had terrific anointing in pulpit ministry. When he spoke, people were spellbound. But he lived in a place where political “muscle-men” (strongmen) were active, and he felt he needed protection. So, he began associating with corrupt politicians and speaking at their political meetings. He became so mesmerized by his own success that he didn’t

see the deep trenches around him. He managed to protect his wealth but didn't notice the change in his behavior that resulted from associating with worldly friends. He began treating people rudely and speaking unkindly, in ways inappropriate for a servant of God.

The political realm has potential for good—for accomplishing God's purposes. But it also holds a lot of temptations that a shortsighted person can fall into. When we interact with the kingdoms of this world, we need to always keep God's Kingdom in view and his Kingdom values as our guiding light in what we do and say. The Lord calls us to live a good testimony so the people of the world (including powerful people) can see and taste something of God's Kingdom through their contact with us. We are his temple (1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19), so we take God's presence with us wherever we go and as we interact with others. Living and leading with that reality in mind keeps everything in proper perspective and saves us from shortsightedness.

Luke 4:17–19 describes Jesus quoting Isaiah to proclaim his calling and purpose in ministry. He knew who he was and what God had called him to do. The DNA of identity and calling in Christ has been passed on to us by his Spirit who lives within us. A parent passes on their DNA to their children; but if a child wants to become like their parent in some positive way (whether in character or skill), they need to intentionally develop the potential with which they were born. We have Jesus' Kingdom DNA in us through the new birth, but we need to cultivate Kingdom habits to become more like Christ in our everyday lives and in all our efforts. When we fix our eyes on Jesus, and the joy he sets before us, we can throw off the temptations and sins that would distract and hinder us from effectively running the race (Heb. 12:1–3). Jesus provides the long view that keeps us from becoming shortsighted and looking for immediate gain.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Scripture says, "A man reaps what he sows" (Gal 6:7b). Social media can be a great tool. It doesn't sit somewhere in a closet waiting to be used

when the time comes. It has a life of its own that can destroy lives, and anyone can succumb to it—regardless of race, age, or financial status. Use of social media will surely increase in the coming years, so how should a leader plan their time when using it? How does it impact a leader's devotional time or time for connecting with others for ministry and leisure time? How does it impact discipling and mentoring others?

Frequent use of social media can gradually diminish our ability to think deeply. It can also cause people to forget the value of deep relationships. Sometimes I would rather text people than talk to them. Things that used to be very intimate can get taken over by social media.

Nowadays we can do many things virtually, which has both positive and negative effects. Having easy access to so much more information is great, but that easy access can also cause anxiety, sleeplessness, and abundant temptations. Social media is like money; it's a good servant but a terrible master. Those online cruel masters can destroy a person from the inside without the person ever realizing what's happening. So, we as leaders need to discern, and help others discern, how to use social media to accomplish God's purposes (serving us), without allowing it to make us its servant. We need to grapple with how to use social media to save people's lives and point them to God's Kingdom.

EQUIPPING CHILDREN

In traditional churches, children are often separated from adults for Sunday school and teaching. By contrast, in our house churches, children sit together with their parents and learn to pray, sing, and listen to Scripture. That's how the early church did it, and it worked fine for them. The children hear Scripture when it is read and preached. They also hear it in Discovery Bible Studies and in people's testimonies of how they apply Scripture in their lives. Children memorize verses and meditate on them for themselves. These experiences have a deep impact on them.

Children observe that when their parents receive Christ their

behavior changes in many ways, including their behavior toward their children. Instead of beating them and using bad language, parents now show love, care, and protection. Children notice these changes and understand something important has happened. These everyday testimonies have a great impact on the children, so they also change and become a living testimony for others.

Children have a great ability to learn. So, when we teach them about Christ, they learn quickly and change and grow. They also help their parents and older relatives to understand Christ and his love. Healing plays an important role in our movement, as parents bring their children for prayer and for healing from various sicknesses. This has a multi-dimensional impact on the family and strengthens their faith as a family in Christ.

In our training programs in the field (one to three days' training for pastors and disciples in villages), we don't forbid children from attending. We don't include babies, but quite a few children (for example, eight to twelve years old) attend. They also learn during the trainings, since the content is easy to understand. Children often have more education than the adults. They sometimes do a better job than adults at explaining simple truths. They catch the ideas, then later help their parents and other relatives clear up any confusion on some topics. The children take an active part in family conversations about spiritual things. We encourage believing families to maintain ongoing contact with non-Christian relatives, and the children often share with those relatives. They're children today, but they will soon be adults. So we don't separate children from adults, unless an occasion arises in which the group needs to deal with someone's sin.

We do have some specific programs for children, such as youth camps, children's camps, Christmas celebrations, and birthday celebrations. The camps include teaching through role play and testimonies. Birthday celebrations are a community event. People in the movement don't invite just a few friends to celebrate a birthday. They invite the whole community and make the most of the opportunities to celebrate God's

blessings. (We don't have a high expectation of lots of gifts for these birthday celebrations.) In the Bhojpuri conferences, we also always arrange a special program for the children where we focus on ministering to them in age-appropriate ways. But parents serve as the primary disciplers of children, not others outside the family. Whatever the parents learn, they pass on to their children in everyday life, so the teaching becomes very relevant. Families grow together in the Lord; each encourages the others to apply what they know of the Lord's truth.

Programs that train children (as well as their parents) in health and hygiene are provided. While implementing these programs we share with them about Christ's love and teach Bible stories. Then the children share with others what they have learned and become witnesses of Christ's love, even in their schools. They're very bold and also wise. They share their testimonies of ways God has answered prayer; and they pray for other people, since the gospel has become an integral part of their lives. We view these children as the leaders of the future.



EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

POWER ENCOUNTERS IN VILLAGE MINISTRY

Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:18b). Jesus does one thing, the gates of hell do something different, and the two always oppose each other. That means we can expect some form of power encounter when Jesus’ light comes to break the darkness.

Entering an Indian village is not easy, nor is sharing Christ in a hostile environment. In some places, a person can show the Jesus film and speak openly, but our context is very hostile. At night, which is the best time for deeper conversation, demonic activity often causes distraction and brings manifestations. When a gospel messenger goes into a place, the demons often start to act up even more. It’s like turning on a flash-light in the kitchen at night: suddenly a dozen cockroaches start running around. It has happened that way many times in the villages, so we have to be careful. For example, a pack of dogs might show up suddenly. I’ve opened the door where I was staying, and suddenly six or seven aggressive dogs appeared, looking as if they were going to attack. They were probably demon possessed.

Every time we invite people to follow Christ, something happens in the cosmos. In Ephesians 6:13, Paul wrote, “Put on the full armor of

God.” But how many people understand that? We have to overcome a lot of small things to earn the trust of people and talk about how faith works in our lives. We share our testimony, tell stories, and stay ready for a power encounter. Somebody may suddenly get very sick, or somebody may start to scream. So, with God’s strength, a gospel messenger must stay calm and ready for what God’s Spirit may want to do in that situation. The messenger has to deal with it; they can’t run away. It’s a sudden test where the messenger has to show that a simple prayer can work to cast out demons or heal someone at 3 a.m. That generates a deeper kind of discipleship.

TRANSFORMATION IN POVERTY

How can we presume to tell those who have lived all their lives as beggars, with no education and no work skills, what changes they need to make to live as Christ’s disciples? Will we supplement their income? A lot of good-hearted Christians err because they want to help. They supplement a poor person’s income, and that person becomes dependent on them. We can easily be sucked into that. A more biblical perspective says that we do our part, and the Holy Spirit plays a role in transforming people’s hearts and life patterns. The best change comes from the inside out.

This touches on one of the failures I see in much established mission work in our contexts. Many Western missionaries looked too much at the poverty of people in India and got distracted by the poverty and deprivation. They hoped that trying to improve people’s external (impoverished) situation would help change their inside situation. But when the external situation improved, people felt content and lost motivation to change internally. The external change also brought persecution because of jealousy and social competition. We now face having to deal with that kind of situation, which hinders the power of the gospel.

The gospel is the power of God and is able to transform people from the inside out. As Paul makes clear in Galatians 1, there is only one true gospel. If a person adds something, they dilute the gospel. If a person

subtracts something, they diminish the gospel. Some churches have an imbalanced focus on healing, or evangelism, or worship, or social action. But the gospel of Christ comes as a whole package: salvation, worship, and action. Forgiveness and intimate union with God in Christ leads to action. The gospel can heal, restore, and transform. Its power can be manifested in countless ways, as long as people grasp the heart of the gospel and multiply themselves as obedient disciples. We need to bring people the whole gospel, not a fragmented message.

ADDRESSING SOCIAL EVILS

We navigate the caste system with two goals in mind: redemption and reconciliation. Paul didn't deal with slavery as his first topic of conversation; he talked about Christ. From the foundation of redemption and transformation in Christ, he approached slavery and other specific problems. Too often we become judgmental when dealing with a social evil, instead of viewing it from a redemption perspective. Christ gives a new perspective to deal with all things.

The church doesn't get anywhere by criticizing, and we need to make that clear. We aim for the full gospel of Christ to transform hearts, minds, and lifestyles. When transformation really happens, it undermines the foundations of social evil. As disciples live out Jesus' light, the light automatically testifies against the darkness, including evil social systems. Every leader needs to deal with these issues—not become distracted by the issues themselves—but bring gospel principles to shine Jesus' light into the situations.

FACING CRITICISM

We've faced hostility from some Christians because of our different ministry approach, but we have always tried to respond humbly. We have a

policy of focusing on heart change (what's inside) and leaving external structures to change gradually. Some Christians have criticized us for that. But we sought the Lord, and we believed we had good biblical and missiological reasons for our approach to making disciples. We didn't want to spend all our energy arguing and trying to defend ourselves; we wanted to reach people with the gospel. So, when people criticized, we didn't respond with arguments or rudeness.

We didn't insult other ministry approaches, even when we considered them to be ineffective or even counterproductive; we just did what God told us and continued bearing fruit. As Paul wrote about various disputable issues, "Each [person] should be fully convinced in their own mind" (Rom. 14:5). We each need to make peace with ourselves and God. That saves us from being distracted and gives more stability. To lead well, a leader needs confidence they are walking in God's will.

CHALLENGES AT THE EAST-WEST INTERFACE: INDIVIDUALISM

We praise God for the many ways the gospel has shaped Western culture and the ways Western Christians have blessed unreached peoples of the world with the gospel message and Christian resources. Yet, in some cases, a Western perspective misses valuable insights and important needs among non-Western peoples. While insights from the West are valuable for leaders to learn, one challenge of Asian leadership is making sure to not import perspectives that become counterproductive in an Asian context. One prime example is individualism.

Western culture is very individualistic, so theology from the West tends toward individualistic orientation. The Western world has the money, resources, and intellectuals to influence and export that approach to the rest of the world. But when an individualistic-oriented message comes to communally-oriented groups, such as most peoples in Asia and Africa, the gospel's momentum gets lost. Ironically, we now see Church Planting Movements thriving more often among communally-oriented

groups when the gospel arrives in more community-oriented and culturally sensitive ways.

CHALLENGES AT THE EAST-WEST INTERFACE: DETAILED ANALYSIS

Western perspectives also offer a mixed blessing through analysis. The Western penchant toward detailed analysis has brought great advances in both the hard and soft sciences. Yet the vigorous and persistent focus on dissection to establish details can fail to resonate with many Asians.

To illustrate, consider the problem of pain. Westerners consider this a major philosophical and personal conundrum: “Why did this happen?” Asians tend toward more general acceptance of pain as a fact of life: “This is probably my fate. There’s nothing I can do about it. I need to move on.” When a Westerner experiences major personal pain, they may take a long time to heal and ask, “Why me?” For many Asians, that’s irrelevant: “If someone dies, I mourn today, but tomorrow I move on with my life.” So, Western Christians tend to linger with the problem until they find an answer. I would rather say, “We need to just let some things go. Not everything has a clear-cut answer. With all the dissecting and digging into those issues, you make yourself and everyone else miserable. It just keeps the wound fresh. It’s not worth it.”

Jesus lived on earth as a non-Westerner. New Testament theology developed as Jesus’ disciples walked in obedience to God and served the cause of Christ in a hostile world. The church in the West has put those pieces together in some wonderfully detailed ways, but those thinkers were not Asian. They were very learned people sitting comfortably, trying to analyze things Jesus said while walking down the dusty roads of an occupied foreign land. The simple answer is Christ and living in him by faith.

It’s important for Asian leaders to hold on to the simple, relational message of God’s Kingdom, and the freedom and victory we have in him, in *every* situation. We can learn a lot from the historical and global

church of Christ. But we need to not adopt the ways Jesus' message has become contextualized to Western ways of thinking and living. Jesus' teaching was simple and applicable to everyday life.

THE CHALLENGE OF PLURALISM

One unique challenge in our context is that most people have a pluralistic view of life. We have to deal with syncretism, fatalism, a pantheon of gods, charms, and an "acceptance of everything." So, when a person says yes to Jesus, how do we know if their understanding and intent is what Scripture describes as truly becoming Jesus' disciple? We find that a huge challenge. We discern a person's progress by their commitment to steps of discipleship and their response to God's word. Following the biblical Jesus means they have to break away from the pantheon. They have to gradually get free from a lot of things that have bound them: ungodly elements of the culture that formed automatic habits through their upbringing.

Once a person follows Christ, the revolution begins, because Christ challenges everything. He doesn't just coexist with everything. He challenges every part of life to align with the truth of God's word and the ways of his Kingdom. Discipleship involves establishing new patterns in relationships, speech, use of time and money, and many other things. Scripture plays a major role in the discipleship process. A disciple-maker has to be personally guided by Scripture first, and then they can guide others through the various challenges.

LEADERSHIP IN PERSECUTION

PERSECUTION CAN COME IN MANY FORMS. PEOPLE MAY attack our faith, treat us as subhuman, belittle us, or use our faith as a reason to humiliate us in public or private. Persecution can come from an individual or a local community; it may be authorized by a government or religiously motivated group. But God uses persecution to exhibit his incredible and unfailing love. When we walk by faith, persecution doesn't destroy the movement; persecution never lasts forever. Our leaders know following Christ comes with a price, but they remember the Scripture that says "If we endure, / we will also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). This keeps persecution in proper biblical perspective.

We have no simple, detailed guidelines for what to do when you are persecuted. Jesus gave this general instruction: "When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10:19–20). So the disciples in the movements rely on the Holy Spirit to guide their response in each situation. And, because they do things in groups, the younger leaders learn from more mature ones how that process can work. Here's what happened in one recent case:

The police arrested one of our pastors, Simon, and his son (who is also a pastor) after a neighbor complained to the police. They had been

told to stop meeting for worship, but they refused. They lead about fifty churches, and more than a hundred people come regularly to this particular church meeting on Sundays.

As the pastors were being questioned, one of the policemen became curious and asked, "What do you do at your gatherings?"

The pastors answered, "We pray, we worship the Lord, and we share God's word."

The policeman asked, "Can some of your people come and pray in our police station?"

They didn't answer immediately. The next day, the police let Simon go, but they kept his son in jail for a few more days.

Simon asked the Lord what he should do about that strange invitation, and he brought the request to his group that night. They started to pray about the idea. They didn't know whether or not it was a trick, but they felt they should do it. And the Lord gave Simon a bigger idea than just coming once to pray. While the group was seeking the Lord that night, Simon felt the Lord tell him they should have 365 days of prayer and fasting to pray for the police and the area. He went back to the police station and asked the officer, "Do you mind if I have people sit here praying every day?"

The policeman said, "No problem! Come, and I'll also join in." (This was really miraculous, given the persecution happening at this time.)

The believers came in teams of ten or twenty to pray in the police station for five to six hours each. They determined to pray every day, 24/7. Within two months, crime in that area decreased, and the police said, "It's so peaceful when you're here. Please continue." Now, over two years later, they still continue this pattern of prayer at the police station.

This amazed me; I never would have dreamed up such an idea. The police *invited* the believers to come pray; God's children have a presence at the police station because of an official invitation! We didn't weasel our way in. On a typical day, eight or ten police officers work at the station, and all kinds of people come and go. All sorts of things happen at the police station, and the believers pray for each one. The police come and

sit with them and are prayed for, and they learn about Jesus. When they don't have much work, some of them join in a song or prayer. They now feel very relaxed about having the believers there praying. One of them said, "You should do this everywhere. I want you to start praying in more police stations."

I never imagined, twenty-five years ago, that things like this could happen—followers of Jesus could have so much boldness and passion that even in the midst of persecution they follow the Spirit's leading and end up with great opportunities to bless their communities and witness. Experiences such as these can happen when God's people take the time to listen to him and then respond with radical obedience.

The disciples in the police station are speaking God's word publicly every day. That's an application of Deuteronomy 6:6–9:

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

One of Moses' commands was to speak God's word and make it available where others could see it. The word has power to change us and change others. It's a two-edged sword: it cuts inwardly and outwardly. Reciting God's word clears the atmosphere of demonic forces and enhances the understanding and memory of God's people. The word cements our faith as we rely on God's promise.

THE NEXUS OF PERSECUTION

Suffering has been an inseparable part of Christianity since New Testament times. Scripture says, "Everyone who wants to live a godly

life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). The apostle Paul strengthened new disciples by informing them, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

From the outset, Jesus explained this basic principle of the Kingdom: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:10). As leaders, we need to help our people internalize biblical values and teaching about persecution, so they become able to stand strong even in the midst of great challenges.

The apostle Peter told God’s people to not confuse suffering for wrongdoing with suffering for Christ (1 Pet. 2:20). So, before we cry, “Persecution!” we need to check that the problem is not because we’ve done something foolish or wrong. But suffering often results from our faithfulness and allegiance to Yahweh, as happened with Elijah (1 Kings 18:1–40). God called Elijah to a direct confrontation with the followers of Baal, who had royal support and backing, while Elijah stood alone with Yahweh on his side. What happened next was extraordinary and testified powerfully to the greatness of Yahweh alone.

As we obey Jesus’ commands in our daily lives, we can expect attacks from the devil because he doesn’t like us and he doesn’t like Christ in us. He wants to cause God’s people to fail. But Jesus promised his disciples that the forces of death and darkness would not prevail against or conquer the church (Matt. 16:18). This promise gives us hope in the midst of discouraging times of persecution.

As an insider from the persecuted church in India, I want to not simply react to persecution. I aim rather to try to understand where it comes from and how to better communicate the gospel of freedom when being targeted as anti-national. When we know the truth, the truth helps us deal tactfully with various situations. If we simply react, we miss the path of God’s wisdom.

Remember that a person does not become a martyr without a reason. Martyrs are chosen specially by God for a distinct purpose. Most martyrdom provides an opportunity for the world to know: “Here is a world

changer. Here is someone who brings hope and healing.” In our context, persecution often ends up bringing community support.

I see five reasons why persecution takes place: race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or adherence to a particular political opinion. Persecution differs from place to place. In most cases it has been sanctioned by higher authorities: a community leader, a village chief, politicians, temple priests, imams, or church leaders who look the other way when basic human rights are violated. Persecutors intend to make believers regret their decision to follow Christ. They might try to hurt believers by destroying property, burning or damaging vehicles, insulting or humiliating publicly, mocking with ugly remarks, throwing bricks or destroying crops at night, threatening children and females in the family, or stopping believers from taking water from a public well or water supply. Persecutors may also try to lure Christ’s followers to recon-vert by providing jobs, enticing them with the appeal of public acceptance by the majority community, or offering money.

ANALYZING THE NEXUS

Persecution is a reaction to change, and careful handling can help us live in peace with others. Persecution may come from a number of sources that influence our lives every day. In our context, persecution comes from the nexus of the following:

1. **LOCAL COMMUNITY.** In the past six years’ people in many villages have been taught by certain groups, and a political party, that a house church is a hub for converting people to Christianity so it must be stopped. Neighbors may initiate petty fights or objections to house gatherings over issues such as “too much noise” (i.e., singing, shouting *hallelujah*, or loud preaching). Neighbors may also complain, “We don’t know why so many are gathering all the time in this house.”

2. **POLITICAL LEADERS.** In our context, political leaders usually come as peacemakers, but a certain political party has propagated the claim that 80 percent of the community is in danger of extinction by the minority communities. (Christians, for example, represent 2 to 3 percent of the population.) The conclusion presented is “we need to stop them and eventually eliminate them.” The leaders presume that Christians do not vote for a particular political party, hence they are anti-national.
3. **RELIGIOUS LEADERS.** These leaders align with politicians for protection. They aim mainly for personal gain, temple income (usually unaudited), or land grabs to build a shrine or temple. They use religious ceremonies and rituals, black magic and witchcraft, and sorcery and astrology, claiming they will solve people’s problems. Lately, some religious chauvinists have become more vocal in support of these practices, even though black magic and sorcery remain banned by the law.
4. **GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.** Police and other authorities have to maintain law and order. They start with upholding the law, but this often ends up colored by religion or other dominating factors (such as caste) in the area. Some pastors and ordinary believers have been arrested on charges of proselytizing and have been treated unfairly. Demands for bribes have increased. Many states’ police and authorities sympathize with right-wing chauvinists since they have a similar background. Thus, they take very seriously any report of conversion to Christianity. Immediate action is taken against Christians, while action is slow for other crimes (such as murder, rape, or fights due to land disputes).
5. **BUSINESSMEN.** These people give money to build temples, fund religious processions and functions, and give huge donations to political parties, thus controlling which political party rules. Most businessmen belong to the far right-wing party.

The nature of connection between these five groups may differ due to location, but without the nexus of these players,

persecution would not last. It doesn't matter who starts the persecution; they help each other in sustaining it for a longer period. Many of them function as gatekeepers within their communities.

To view this in proper perspective, we must remember that we don't fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and spiritual powers (Eph. 6:12). Behind the powers we can see stand the powers we *can't* see. And, while we fight the latter, we can reach out to and try to connect with the former. So, we need to be aware: "Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

6. **SILENT CROWD.** Great numbers of people in the majority remain silent about persecution due to apathy or fear of repercussions. They don't want to engage with the problem, but they *do* make videos on their phones to post on social media. They don't have concern for the atrocities committed against minorities (including other minorities as well as Christians). Their lack of engagement results also in normalization: denial of crimes committed in front of their eyes, which further encourages the wrongdoers.

In light of this nexus of persecution, I advocate having local believers develop good relationships with the local community. Visibility and engagement with the local community is very important. When relationships with local leaders are good, they will often protect believers and show up in the hour of need. But, if the local leaders feel suspicious, they often invite persecutors from the outside. So, I say, follow Jesus' teaching: love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Be transformed by God's love, and bring transformation because of that love. Your love for God can be manifested in the community through a good life that reflects the sincerity of Christ and the generous kindness of the Father. Matthew 5:45 tells us that he

Visibility and engagement with the local community is very important.

makes the sun shine on both evil people and good people and sends rain on both the righteous and unrighteous. Don't start relationships with an agenda to convert people, with the attitude that your way is a better way. Invest in the local community and make a positive impact. God can use this as a testimony to his character and love.

BETRAYING A HISTORY OF WELCOME

Ironically, India has been a land of refuge for hundreds of years. The Jewish community arrived in India somewhere around the fourth century BC. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus, is believed to have arrived in India in AD 52. Many Christians came from Syria when persecution arose around the fourth century. Also the Baha'i, who were persecuted in Iran, came in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many other religious groups, political figures, and authors from various countries have taken refuge in India for many years.

But, in recent years, the basic Indian philosophy of coexistence seems to have evaporated. India's pluralistic harmony is being destroyed by those who try to force a monolithic culture rather than an open culture. The persecutors show no care for human life, dignity, or property. They have made the color saffron a symbol of hooliganism. The moment someone clothes themselves with saffron, they become arrogant and rude. They know their protectors and supporters are watching, which emboldens them.

OUR REFUGE: IDENTITY IN CHRIST

I have come face-to-face with such persecutors; I know how vicious they can be. They come in groups of at least twenty-five and sometimes even hundreds. When faced with such situations, I have to remind myself constantly who I am in Christ. I recite Bible verses such as these:

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.*

PSALM 23:4 ESV

*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them,
because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in
the world.*

1 JOHN 4:4

*“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They
will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you
will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of
my name.”*

LUKE 21:12

*“Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry
beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at
the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”*

MARK 13:11

JOHN THE BAPTIST AS A MODEL

John the Baptist suffered deadly persecution in his day, not for preaching repentance to the masses, but for speaking God’s truth to a worldly power—King Herod. After a visit from John’s disciples, Jesus posed to the crowd a series of questions about John. The first was: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind?” (Matt. 11:7). Clearly John was no reed swayed by the wind; he was a model of steadfastness and strength in the path of God. Jesus’ question pointed to John as a model of endurance, even in persecution. From him we learn

to stand firm and be strong in our faith, not swayed by winds of persecution. John sat in prison, aware his earthly ministry might be near the end, and wanting to confirm that his message had been on the right track. Implicit in Jesus' response, I find four things we must know to strengthen us in persecution:

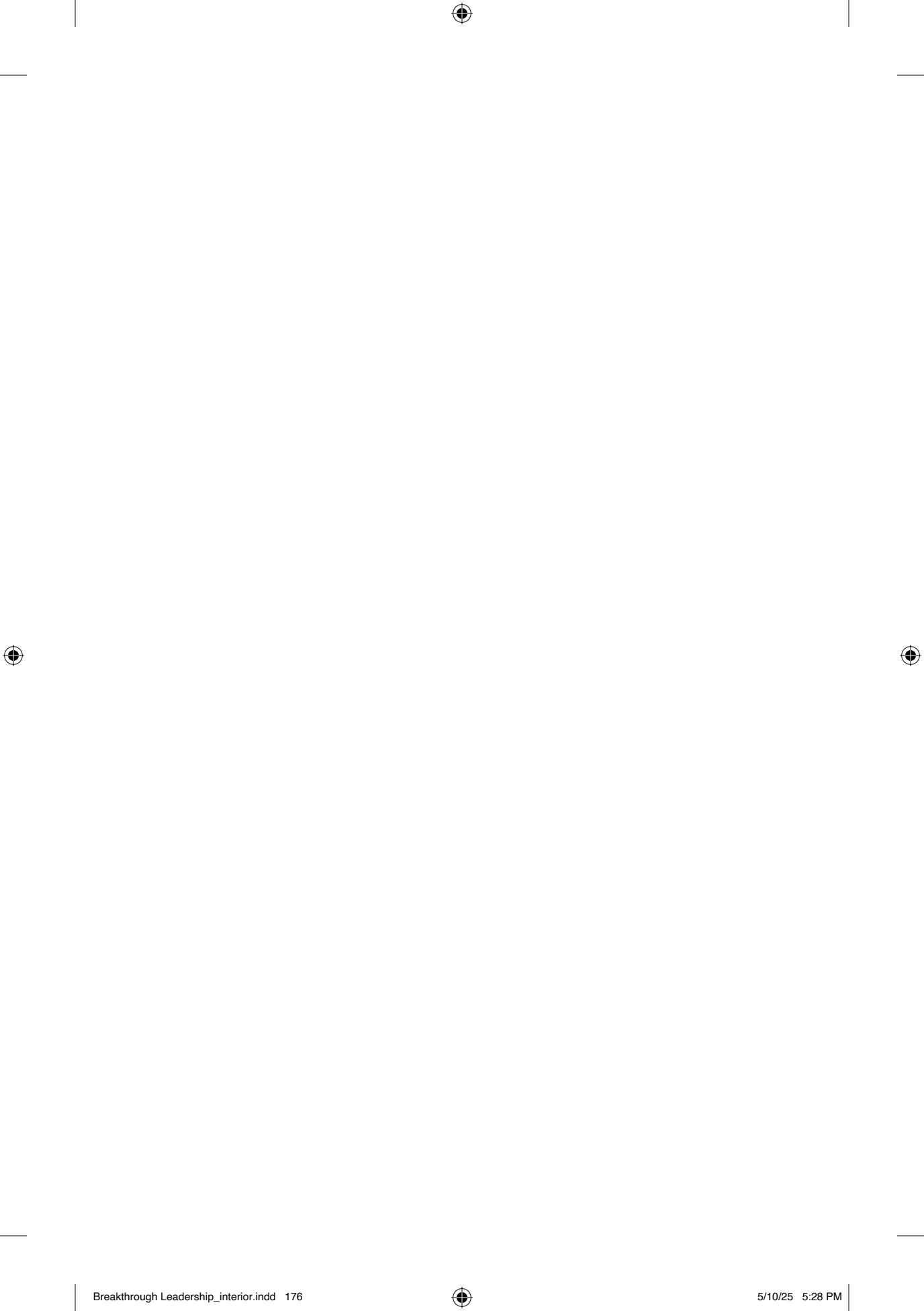
1. Nothing happens without God's knowledge; his will is supreme. God "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1:11).
2. Our identity and character ("Who are you?"). As noted in Peter's letter, we make sure our suffering is not because of some violation of God's law (1 Pet. 2:20), and we follow the model of Christ in suffering (vv. 21–23).
3. God's character (Who is God?). His promises never change, including his promise to never leave us nor forsake us (Deut. 31:6). God is ever true to his promises to keep us firm to the end (1 Cor. 1:8–9).
4. Nothing is permanent; one way or another, persecution will be over soon. When Jesus returns, he will end all suffering and pain (Rev. 3:11; 21:4).

In light of these things, we hold on to what the Lord has given us: our faith and the teachings of Jesus (Rev. 2:24–25). The apostle Paul wrote to remind believers of our calling: "If our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world" (1 Cor. 15:19 NLT). When we depart from this world, we will leave behind the joys and sorrows of the world. But we will take with us our character, which is permanent. Throughout eternity, a godly, Christlike character will remain. Hence we can go through any trials, knowing whom we represent and that he has promised to never leave nor forsake us.

GOD'S INTENT IN ALLOWING PERSECUTION

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul paints a picture of God's intent for what persecution can accomplish in our lives and the lives of persecutors. He roots this picture in our relationship with Christ and a lifestyle shaped by following him as his disciples. Paul begins with a wide-ranging exhortation to earnest discipleship: "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). He expresses confidence that such a lifestyle will guarantee good fruit, including unity with God's children and strength in persecution and opposition: "Then . . . I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you" (vv. 27b–28a).

Paul then goes even further to describe how Christ-grounded discipleship, with firm faith and humble witness, will testify *powerfully* to the enemies of the gospel: "This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God" (v. 28b). With such a promise in mind, Paul points out that when persecution comes, we should receive it as a gift God has *granted* us: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him" (v. 29). We know this is not just religious theory, but is truly possible, since Scripture records this example for us: "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). This is our calling and a pattern for us to pass on to those we lead.



LEADERSHIP IN OUR INDIAN CONTEXT

COMMUNITY MINDSET

India has a community mindset. When people do things together, it encourages everyone. People feel: “If I believe, my whole family must believe, so I’m not all alone.” We use that community mindset for the Kingdom. We don’t think first about self—an individual focus. We build up everyone together rather than focus on just one person. So, we sometimes bring unbelievers to various events and celebrations and treat them as if they already believe. That helps them find acceptance and get over their apprehension. They start to think, “These people are not so bad. Why am I not a part of this?”

Any large gathering of believers attracts the attention of Hindu radicals, but persecution doesn’t last forever. People react to something new, but in our context they tend to get used to it after a while. If a person can live through the intolerable season of persecution, they become a survivor and a victor. If they run away, the persecutors become the victor; but once the believers live through the challenges, communication opens up in some way. So we prefer to promote helping people endure persecution rather than helping them escape. We also capitalize on the power of

functioning as groups rather than individuals. A solitary person can be attacked and intimidated easily or even killed. But if a group has ten or twenty people, no one will kill them.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

In Indian cultures, *yes* is negotiable. The perspective of many Indians is shaped by a Hindu way of thinking. I say Hindu because that's the dominant influence in our nation. The Western way of thinking is linear. According to the Bible, God exists from everlasting to everlasting. Within God's plan, time had a beginning, and the world will end at a certain point. The Hindu worldview is cyclical: the world goes on forever.

For a Westerner, "time is money," and time is precious. An Indian tends to value relationships more than time. In a scenario that has taken place countless times, an Indian and a Westerner make an appointment to meet at a certain time and place. The Westerner arrives at almost precisely the minute his watch displays the agreed-upon time. He then waits for what seems to be an eternity until the Indian arrives. The Westerner feels irritated and stewes over whether to address or try to ignore what he perceives as the Indian's rudeness. The Indian seems oblivious to his lateness and offers no explanation or apology. He doesn't focus on the fact that the Westerner has been waiting. His focus is on the relationship: the fact that he *has come*. That's a cultural difference.

In our context, we work together most commonly as a team and minister in groups, whereas leaders in the West tend to function primarily as individuals. In South Asian culture, individuals almost don't exist. In Buddhism, for example, the goal is for the individual to disappear. As Christians, though, we know that when Christ comes, we'll be transformed yet still have our individual personhood. The "me" that continues for eternity will have continuity with the "me" that exists and is acting right now.

In a context with so many diverse cultures living mingled together

and on top of each other, leaders need great discernment to present the gospel and discipleship in ways that utilize good elements in each culture, yet simultaneously help people let go of elements contrary to God's truth. The standard is Christ himself and the truth and beauty we come to know through intimate relationships with him.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH FOOD AND FAMILY

The Bhojpuri region has a common saying that defines trust, affinity, and acceptance: *Hamara Beti—roti ka sambandh hai*. A literal translation in English would be, "We have a daughter and bread relationship." This symbolizes mutual trust and acceptance for each other. *Roti* is bread, which represents the food we eat every day. This constitutes a basic building block of a close relationship. If we want to enter a place to share the gospel, how do we get invited to eat together with people in that culture?

Beti means daughter. This represents a family relationship: giving one's daughter in marriage to expand the family. Our context has numerous barriers to finding a good marital match: the form of culture, one's place of birth or home area, caste, and religious background. If two families arrange a marriage, that counts as a great victory. So, in this context, an arranged marriage can play a role in overcoming many hurdles. We recognized this factor early on and tried to work within the system, knowing that Christ came to redeem and transform the culture, not destroy it.

Our culture considers it important for most people to get married. And the Bible focuses on how to live after getting married or while remaining single, not on *how a person chooses* who to marry. So we encourage the disciples to continue in cultural family patterns that don't violate Scripture. Most of unbelievers' opposition to the gospel comes from an expectation that Christianity will change their culture, making them more Western and less Indian. They fear not only for the present but also for precedents being set for the future.

We see the importance of strong marriages and families for the longevity of the movement. So we have initiated creative means to strengthen marriages with biblical values and practices, some of which are counter-cultural in our context. For example, we held a couples' seminar for church leaders, to help build better relationships between partners and help couples work together for more effective ministry. This was the first-ever couples' seminar for almost all the leaders.

Key lessons included:

- Love each other: “[Bear] with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, [forgive] each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Col. 3:13 ESV).
- Honor your partner: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2–3).
- Serve God as a family: “He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly” (Acts 10:2).
- Have a God-centered family: “Unless the LORD builds the house, / the builders labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1).

The gathering included conversations about spouses' expectations of each other. During this wonderful discussion, many women shared that their spouses have great passion for ministry, and work hard, but allow less participation for women. They expressed the desire that their husbands allow them opportunities for greater involvement in ministry. The husbands accepted this willingly.

One of the most touching moments took place during the prayer and dedication time in which husbands and wives prayed for each other. This opened a Pandora's box of hurt. The Lord brought tremendous healing through the interaction. Many had tears in their eyes as they sought forgiveness from each other, recommitted to their marriage, and prayed together for their family.

We experienced God's anointing and presence in our midst as many couples mended their relationships and committed to serve God more meaningfully together. Through this event we saw a lot of reconciliation between husbands and wives. We hadn't realized what deep problems existed in some cases. And we found that once leaders were healed in their marriage, it became much easier to move forward in other areas.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

We, as God's children, too often hold everything political at arm's length, but then we grumble and complain about what's happening in the political realm. God doesn't intend for his people to talk negatively about whatever government we have in our various locations. On the contrary, he commands us to not only obey rulers (as is consistent with his commands) but also to pray for them (Rom. 13:1–5; 1 Tim. 2:1–2).

Our world currently contains a wide variety of political situations. God has graciously brought Church Planting Movements in all kinds of differing political contexts. Scripture doesn't prescribe one single pattern for political involvement by his people, but the Lord does give us principles that can be applied diversely in various contexts in this age.

From the early days of my Christian life in India, I tried to understand why we were told to stay away from politics. At that time, those who represented Christianity in any form were not local people. They were white, Western missionaries caught between power, Western interest, and faith. One could describe it as serving the interests of two kingdoms. So, wise counsel advised staying away from any involvement in politics. This influenced heavily the shaping of Christianity in India. Local Christians avoided politics at that time, as politics meant standing against the colonial power, which would violate the law of the land.

However, when we partition off parts of life, we weaken it. Following Christ should not eliminate our engagement in the affairs of our nation and its people. He calls us to engage in every aspect of life as contextually

appropriate, not to treat one realm of leadership such as politics, as inherently unholy and fit only for corrupt people. Such an attitude negates an opportunity to bless our fellow countrymen.

God doesn't call us to positions of power so we can rule over others. He invites us to use a variety of positions and roles to function as salt and light in the world and as Kingdom yeast in our communities. We can use whatever roles the Lord allows us as platforms to speak about and apply the goodness and righteousness of God's Kingdom. Jesus was recognized in his social context as a rabbi (e.g. John 1:38, 49; 3:2): a person qualified to act as spiritual leader and religious teacher of the Jewish community. He used that role not to stroke his own ego but as a platform for pointing people to the truths of God's Kingdom.

Among the early Christians, leaders and influential people who came to faith made use of their position to become a blessing and point others toward the love and righteous life found in Christ. In our various contexts we can look for creative opportunities to impact our communities for God's glory. In some situations, and for some children of God, this may include involvement in the political structures and roles of the context. We encourage those with leadership potential to discern whether the Lord might open doors for Kingdom ministry through involvement in the political realm.

Six of our church planters have won elections for their local councils. This gives them opportunities to bless many people and become more known as a person willing to help and serve others. They can make God's Kingdom more visible, instead of going unnoticed. We praise God for these opportunities to manifest his goodness and righteousness in the world.

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THE LEGACY OF A LEADER

LEADERSHIP ALWAYS INVOLVES A MEASURE OF SUFFERING, but in the process, God promotes us and calls us to something higher. I myself came from a very humble background, but today I interact with people from all over the world. In a few years I'll be gone, but I leave behind a legacy: many disciples glorifying Jesus Christ. The apostles and leaders throughout church history left behind that kind of legacy. In modern times we talk about leaders like William Carey and others who contributed to our spiritual growth. Each one of us has the potential to influence others for God's glory. We can contribute something to others' lives that makes a difference.

For those with an apostolic calling, the turning point toward an apostolic legacy comes when we begin apostolic ministry with apostolic anointing.

Each one of us has the potential to influence others for God's glory.

We start to move around, establish new churches, and raise up leaders in those churches. While pastoral ministry involves maintaining, nurturing, and overseeing the life of an existing church and its people, apostolic ministry involves starting new work. I encourage those whom God calls to aspire to that level, because an apostolic leader inspires others with their faith, sacrifice, love, and commitment—to the gospel, the church, and the unreached.

As leaders we look forward to the day when we can say to those our ministry has touched, “I fought for you: first on my knees, and then with all I had, to bring you into the fullness of life in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.” As the apostle Paul wrote, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7–8).

LEADERS' VOICES FROM THE FRONT LINES

FEW CHRISTIANS HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF HEARING DIRECTLY from multiple leaders on the front lines in numerous Church Planting Movements. Language barriers and security would make it very difficult for most readers to talk directly with these leaders. In light of those challenges, we have captured brief answers from about two dozen leaders within the Bhojpuri and related movements. Their answers have been translated into English from the languages in which they were originally given: Bhojpuri, Hindi, Magahi, Maithili, Angika, Awadhi, and Bengali. In addition to responses directly answering the questions posed, we can also glean additional insights into the leadership dynamics experienced and applied by these leaders within the movement. Alert readers will also note some differences in the details of the way various leaders handle some situations and challenges in their sphere of influence. Clearly, these leaders do not follow a cookie-cutter pattern or conform to centrally dictated instructions for how all ministry should be conducted.

- 1. How do you identify servant leaders who will be able to serve growing numbers of people by empowering others, without gathering status or power to themselves?**

- a. I look for people who have submitted their lives into God's hands and live as a true witness—people who are dedicated, trustworthy, and walk faithfully with God. These qualities become evident through their works. As Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt. 7:20).
- b. I look for people who are called by God and are hardworking and humble.
- c. I can identify a servant leader through their skill, character, and works. I watch for people who live a moral, spiritual life and have a good relationship with their family and others. They pray for their spouses and stay emotionally connected with them. They take care not to get so exhausted in ministry that they have nothing left for their family. They keep their emotional "well" replenished so they can draw from it for their family as well as for their ministry. They have concern for the whole person (themselves as well as others) and take care to stay emotionally connected. They don't just focus on certain actions to try to advance the movement or treat people in impersonal ways. They interact relationally with their family and close coworkers, so they know the details of how people are actually doing and where they need to grow. They're sensitive to situations that can become a good opportunity for teaching someone a biblical principle. Doing all these relational things contributes to the momentum of the movement.
- d. I can identify a servant leader by seeing their behavior toward others: the way they talk and make decisions. They work well in a team and consider others' concerns before making any decision.
- e. I identify servant leaders by their behavior, honesty, daily lifestyle, family life, and patterns of dealing with others. One *disqualifying* factor I watch for is becoming

proud when they become successful in ministry. Good mentoring gives opportunity to watch for this danger and to try to address it as soon as it arises.

- f. I look for people who have a heart for lost souls.
- g. I look for humble people who have good capacity for relationship building.
- h. I look for people who are willing to accept challenges without thinking negatively.
- i. I look for people who are ready to suffer in all respects and willing to pay the price.
- j. I look for one who studies and meditates on Scripture, who is able to understand biblical principles.
- k. I look for one who is prayerful and willing to help others and serve without conditions; also one committed to the movement rather than personal gain.
- l. I look for one who is able to teach and mentor others.
- m. I look for one who follows 2 Timothy 2:2.
- n. A leader should live a prayerful life and pray for the development of the church God has entrusted to them. They should love and care for their people. A true leader has concern for the development of their family, church, and society.
- o. A true leader believes in teamwork. They create a team and share responsibilities in their ministry, just as our Lord Jesus did.
- p. Servant leaders can be identified by their speech, behavior, nature, and how they move forward and grow in God.

2. What different types of leaders are needed as a region grows beyond what a small leadership team can handle?

- a. Dedicated people with a sacrificial attitude who can lead a team of servants and help them grow in dedication and willingness to sacrifice.

- b. Leaders who will not be content to just plant one church with a building but instead have a large vision and see every soul as important in God's sight.
- c. We need spiritual leaders with a caring heart, who keep growing personally in spiritual maturity.
- d. We need leaders with capability in finance and administration.
- e. We need "Timothy builders": those who are willing to use every opportunity to build the next generation of leaders. This involves a continuous process of teaching and equipping others.
- f. We need leaders who watch carefully and support their team, who give extra time for their team members, and can also look outside their team and provide leadership to other persons.
- g. We need leaders who are like Christ who cared for others and gave himself for the people. They also have a burden for the overall development of their area and pray for the people of their area. They lead people with humility.

3. How do you decide which leaders to give more time, attention, trust, and resources?

- a. I look for trustworthy people who are faithful in their work.
- b. We can recognize a good leader through their character and love for people. They have a helpful nature and often invite and involve others. I also look for those who have a large vision.
- c. By looking at their skill and their work: those who are open for change, have management skills, and consistently make good decisions.
- d. I entrust them with doing ministry, along with the authority to make decisions. Then I evaluate how they do

with those assignments. I also observe the changes that have taken place from their past life until the present.

In our movement, we work toward developing local leaders, so it's very important to give them the authority to make their own decisions. They

It's very important to give leaders the authority to make their own decisions.

know their situation better than we do, so their handling of decisions shows their maturity level and ability to take more responsibility.

- e. I watch to see a leader's life and commitment to God's work, along with their behavior toward other coworkers and handling of finances. When these are developing well, we share more resources and time with them.
- f. Those who are willing to learn and teach others.
- g. Most important is that they have a good relationship with God. It's also important that they have stayed together in ministry for a considerable time. They must be dependable and hardworking. As taught in Scripture, they should not be a new disciple; they should take care of their family and congregation, be a good teacher; and have a good reputation.
- h. We focus more on leaders who are willing to go to new places and teach new leaders from Scripture and help them grow.
- i. Those who are happy to go with existing leaders into the field for sharing the gospel and to make new disciples and mentor them.
- j. First, a leader maturing in faith, devotion, love for God and people, and—most importantly—led by the Holy Spirit. Second, a leader's zeal to learn, grow, and be transformed. Third, a leader who has responded to God's

calling and is willing to serve. We also consider: How do they lead the group? How much are they devoted to the word of God? How much is their teaching and preaching based on the word?

We consider a person's character. As a mentor of several leaders (mostly new ones), I want to find out what kind of teaching is circulating. I often make a phone call to a preacher and ask, "How did your preaching/teaching go today?" I want to analyze what they presented and make sure it's a proper teaching. (Not many churches do that.) At the same time, I check on the personal growth of the new leader. I also send new leaders among old ones so they can learn many practical things from those leaders. Their behavior and efforts for the church and society help me decide which ones to invest more time and effort in.

4. What aspects of leadership are more trainable, and what aspects must be learned by experience with God?

- a. The skills we can teach include praying, preaching, sharing one's testimony, talking with people, writing, making plans, and leading their local leaders. However, a leader needs to learn growth in spiritual life by spending time with God and reading his word.
- b. For growth in prayer, leaders need to spend time in fellowship with Jesus to learn to pray as he did.
- c. I send developing leaders to the field with other leaders who can communicate well with people. They go to different fields to be used in various kinds of ministries so they can sharpen their abilities. I see preaching and teaching the word (mostly trainable skills) as the most important aspects of leadership. However, humility, a servanthood attitude, and commitment to the cause also

hold a crucial role in leadership. We can model these, but ultimately they come through experience with God.

- d. **LEADERSHIP ASPECTS WE TRAIN:** brotherhood, understanding one another, obeying biblical commands, and teaching this to others. Matthew 28:18–20 is the most important foundation in training leaders to raise up and train more leaders. This training takes places in an oral format and through mentoring and coaching. It happens side by side while leading people and the church. We also train them from the Bible, so they have a full knowledge of the word of God. This involves applying biblical principles in their life and ministry and results in a growing prayer life and Bible reading. Each one grows according to their capacity, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- e. **LEADERSHIP ASPECTS LEADERS LEARN THROUGH EXPERIENCE WITH GOD:** Personal interaction with God changes the leader bit by bit as they experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and learn about healing from God. When they see Jesus' healings in the Bible, they apply it according to situations in their life, which helps them to grow closer to God.

5. How do you help natural social group leaders become godly servants like the Lord Jesus?

- a. We can't depend on natural gifts. Even a natural leader (maybe *especially* a natural leader) must repent and live a holy life. Evidences of repentance include great changes in their personal, family, and social lives with changes in their priorities, core values, and financial dealings.
- b. By teaching and training leaders through the word of God, with various types of classes (including discussion and storytelling) as well as through experience and practical ministry with a mentor.

- c. We help them through teamwork and learning as a team.
- d. In our relational interaction with leaders in everyday life, we teach them stories of Jesus Christ, how humble and caring he was while he was on the earth. The Holy Spirit guides us to know what biblical stories and truths will be most helpful for their growth in the Lord.
- e. Ministry starts with the family. We help them learn and apply Christlike attitudes and behaviors at home—being faithful with their family as a foundation for ministry.
- f. Social group leaders should first study the Bible with great faith and understanding and learn from the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. They should learn to be humble and have a heart to serve others.

6. How do you build brotherly love and trust between leaders from different regions, cultures, and social classes?

- a. By accepting their culture, since the word of Christ says we are one.
- b. By sharing biblical stories, especially the creation story; by leading them in discipleship and encouraging them to grow in faith.
- c. By showing God's commitment and compassion toward those from different areas, cultures, and social levels. We participate in their programs with the purpose of sharing our lives as examples.
- d. By intentionally getting to know one another and building relationships.
- e. By learning to identify others' needs and helping each other, and being willing to share each other's challenges.
- f. By nurturing practical obedience to the biblical command to be like-minded (1 Pet. 3:8).
- g. By participating in their special occasions such as birthdays, marriage, and other such functions, and we

happily enjoy their fellowship. This kind of sharing builds relationships. We also contribute our help and gifts on the occasion of marriage celebrations. This helps in building brotherhood with those from different cultural backgrounds and social classes.

- h. By visiting people and talking to them. We try to learn their challenges and then work with them lovingly to resolve the challenges. We pray for them and work with them by faith in our living God. We also try to help them in their economic problems. While doing social work with them we discuss God's word with them and pray with them.
- i. By talking to each other about love, which is very important; training is also very important. We conduct our trainings in such a way that people really talk to each other, which builds and strengthens relationships.
- j. By being polite to new leaders who come from different cultural and social backgrounds—to encourage them and help them learn new things about ministry. Whenever we send out new leaders, we take care that they don't fall into the trap of wrong teaching. Whenever we get information from our leaders about wrong teaching in the field, we try to quickly confront the false teachers with brotherly love. If the person continues to present wrong teaching, we discuss the problem with their leaders or the organization to which they report. Then the partner leader or organizational leader corrects their own field leaders.

For example, a few months back, two pastors from another organization were teaching the believers to bury a Bible while laying the foundation for any new building. They said that a Bible in the foundation would protect the new house and save its occupants from evil. Our leaders confronted them with brotherly love and explained

a more biblical perspective: God's protection doesn't depend on physical objects. A few weeks later, they were again found burying a Bible in a newly laid foundation. We connected directly with their organization's leader and explained the situation. The leader acted promptly and discussed with the field pastors their wrong teachings and actions. Finally, the two pastors acknowledged and apologized for their actions.

Other wrong teachings we have had to address in certain areas include: (1) prayers using oil in such a way that many believers were misled to put their faith in oil rather than the power of God, and (b) charging money for prayer for various specific needs. Our CLC leaders work closely to correct such errors, rebuke those who teach them, and train leaders within the movement, so God's people in the movement will not fall into the trap of unhealthy teachings.

7. What in the DNA of your movement helps people to be both good followers of Jesus and good leaders of others?

- a. We train all disciples, including leaders, to "learn one thing, then do one thing." This encourages active growth in discipleship and leadership. We help people become good leaders by giving them ministry opportunities, even when they may not feel capable. This helps them gain confidence and encourages them to multiply.
- b. We show the love of God through our lifestyle of good character and by humbling ourselves. Through frequent interaction and working together, many aspects of our lifestyle become consistently visible to others in the movement, especially those in the next generation of

disciples. These include a loving and helpful nature, a positive attitude, and our spiritual and family lives. As Scripture says, we share with others the good things we have been given (Matt. 10:8). The movement increases as we pass on to others the truths and the blessings we have received from the Lord.

- c. Prayer, sharing the gospel, the Great Commission, and generational multiplication (as in 2 Tim. 2:2) all help disciples live as good followers of Jesus and help leaders to become effective and multiply.
- d. Our movement DNA includes living as sons and daughters of God; thus, those who believe in Jesus become part of our family. We show love and care for our communities, doing good and serving others. These aspects of our DNA reflect that God's family is a loving and welcoming family. This helps us to grow and spread the Kingdom of God.
- e. Pioneer work with a vision for real discipleship.
- f. In our movements, *love and humility* have a great impact on people and help them in following Christ as obedient disciples. This is a new experience for many people, which gives them the correct message about Christ.
- g. Our DNA is "love of Jesus for all." We believe God's word from John 3:16. We share these words humbly with love and say we are going to the Kingdom of heaven.
- h. Our movement supports people from different backgrounds and helps them know and understand God's word. Our leaders try to address cultural issues in ways that will not cause unnecessary offense to those outside the faith. As Jesus said, give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25).

8. How do you do conflict resolution in leadership?

- a. We try to solve conflicts as soon as possible with the help of church leaders: elders, experienced believers, or sometimes by inviting other church leaders.
- b. We get to know people better, so we have a better understanding of the problem.
- c. We accept one another as people with weaknesses and develop willingness to forgive each other through a continuous process.
- d. We encourage openness with an honest and humble attitude, and we model that we as leaders are open to correction.
- e. We resolve conflicts in our ministry leadership through *love and brotherhood*. Sometimes we have to find a reputable leader to counsel both parties and help resolve conflicts. For example, in one area two leaders came into conflict because they each considered themselves better than the other. This conflict came to our attention, and we used Christ's teaching based on Matthew 23:11–12: "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Through this, the problem was resolved.
- f. We apply obedience to God's word, especially from the Epistles and Acts 6:1–7, to solve any disagreement in our church.

9. If a movement consists mostly of women, how do you develop biblical leaders?

- a. We include biblical training and teaching for women from the books of Esther and Ruth. We give women responsibility as worship leaders, leading women's seminars, giving baptism, and serving on our church

committee. This committee's role includes managing conflict and finance, reaching the next village, and other leadership tasks. When a house church grows, it always forms a local committee.

- b. We identify talented and committed women who are teachable and able to share the blessing with others.
- c. We allow them to get involved in leadership, while being sensitive to cultural and social issues.
- d. We first pray with women believers and tell them stories of women believers and leaders from the New Testament, especially from Matthew and Acts. We tell them about the healing power of Jesus and teach them to pray and lead others with faith in Jesus.
- e. We promote women leaders. Women leaders can reach both women and men of their community. The story of the Samaritan woman in the Bible (John 4:39) inspires us.
- f. If a woman spends her life praying for others, I encourage her to come forward and serve the Lord in a leadership capacity. After training, she can be appointed as a leader. If a leader is illiterate or uneducated, we connect that leader to a leader who has more education, so that he or she can help her.
- g. I have raised up women leaders who go and help other women in their problems by sharing from the word of God. Women often hesitate to tell their problems to male leaders. And if a male leader goes to a woman's house, her husband won't like it. So we equip women for effective ministry to women.

10. How do people who have access to money but live in a sea of poverty make good leadership decisions to prevent jealousy and conflict over the use of money?

- a. We encourage ourselves and everyone to not be proud

but instead to control our unnecessary expenses and help others.

- b. We teach the message from the New Testament that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10).
- c. Those who have money but live a very simple lifestyle serve as a great example to others in the community. They show that we are good stewards of God’s resources and that we have to use resources wisely.
- d. We encourage conviction and guidance from the Holy Spirit and accountability in use of finances.
- e. We strictly avoid any misuse of this money by self, or any other leader, through prayer and mentoring, so we have a minimum of conflict about misuse of money or jealousy about its use or ownership.
- f. We live simple lives; we use bicycles and walk on foot with people. We don’t show off anything; we talk with all people equally. We use money judiciously; even for small expenses, we take others’ advice. We participate with people in their joys and also sit with them in their sorrows.
- g. The church mentors both the rich and those struggling financially to apply biblical principles to their situation. The leaders also provide counsel if villagers have any conflict among themselves (financial or otherwise).

11. How are you raising up leaders?

- a. Through individual care and personal relationships.
- b. Through teaching (both one-on-one and learning together in small groups) and empowering them: sharing opportunities for ministry.
- c. Through giving Bible trainings to make leaders thoroughly acquainted with scriptural principles so they can face any situation and resolve it. We also provide training in community service and other social skills.

- d. Through keeping on looking for humble and faithful leaders who are willing to learn. We teach them from the Scripture and pray with them. We equip them with humility and faith and tell them about the miracles of Jesus.

12. As leaders are being raised up quickly, how do they come to maturity?

- a. They come to maturity through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and commitment to obey God faithfully. They recognize the Holy Spirit's guidance through their simple obedient faith, past experiences, and guidance from the Scriptures. They cultivate regular prayer and Scripture study, which leads to maturity and helps leaders recognize the Holy Spirit's voice and distinguish it from other spirits or mere human ideas. They also mature by processing their personal experiences through signs and wonders, prayerfulness, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- b. They come to maturity through understanding and obeying biblical principles. They gradually gain ability to separate timeless principles (and current application) from things that applied in a specific situation but not for all time. This comes to them bit by bit, as described in Romans 12:2—transformation by the renewing of the mind—increasing ability to test and approve God's will. As leaders mature in Scripture by studying, meditating, and memorizing, they learn to recognize timeless principles such as Galatians 6:6–7, then other principles for to day-to-day situations and cultural events such as wedding, burials, childbirth, and so forth.
- c. They come to maturity by studying Scripture, first on their own, then discussing the Scripture in their prayer groups and families. Leaders also grow through time in

prayer and using the knowledge acquired in trainings in their area.

- d. We send them for training and to work in their own communities or to a place where they have relationships or contacts. We give leaders responsibility and ask them to focus on completing the work through prayer and sharing the gospel. By raising up indigenous leaders, this pattern is passed on to the next generation. Their DNA includes birthing more disciples, churches, and leaders. They do the same things they have seen their leaders do. We equip them for maturity in the Scripture, and they evidence this maturity with fruit in their personal lives and transformation in their ministry.
- e. We help them by connecting them with more mature leaders in social activities. We also build their confidence by trusting them. The first generation of leaders in the movements focused on three or four generations, bringing leaders from the third and fourth generations (and sometimes fifth and sixth generations) for training. Those leaders then passed on the trainings to further generations.

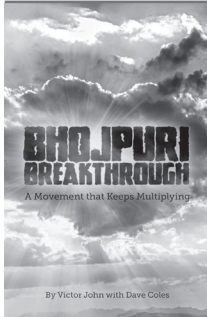
13. What is a unique challenge in your context, and how have indigenous leaders used Scripture to respond to it?

- a. Unique challenges include the caste system, noncooperation by leaders of traditional churches, wrong relationships, lack of opportunity, and false teaching.
- b. Unique challenges include cultural issues such as marriage traditions, rituals related to birth and after death, use of names and titles, style of worship, and influence by various outside leaders.
- c. Each leader is equipped to handle various issues, while applying and obeying God's word, with relevance and

sensitivity to their own culture and the cultures and local patterns of the people they are reaching.

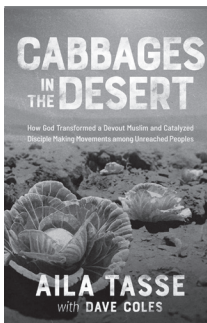
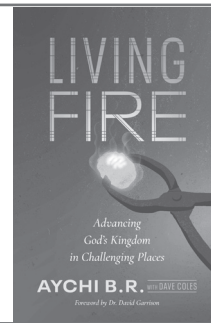
- d. The biggest challenge we face is the accusation of “conversion” and promoting “foreign religion.” To respond to this, we give examples from the Bible showing that Jesus never talked about converting people; he called for repentance. We teach this in our churches and explain the same to those who protest or complain.

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