

10,000 Churches in East Africa CPM Case study #2

Introduction

In March 2015 Jerry Reddix and I attended what was planned to be a 3 day seminar¹ with Dave Hunt of CityTeam hosted by the Frontiers US Sending Base (USSB) on Disciple Making Movements (DMM). Frontiers workers around the world are actively embracing the principles of DMM. This has happened from the grassroots, among the team leaders, rather than being something initiated by the top leadership and passed down to the field. Because interest in DMM came from “the field” many at headquarters were unfamiliar with the model. The purpose of the seminar was twofold. First, to orient those in the USSB to DMM so they would know what those on the field were doing. And secondly, some at the USSB hoped that Frontiers workers in the Phoenix area might begin to apply the principles in their ministries.

Initially, I was not excited about attending the seminar as I thought Dave Hunt had simply done what I am currently doing: researching CPMs. I want to learn from other researchers, but later in my learning process. However, upon reading the two books² written by leaders at CityTeam, I realized they were not describing the findings of their research (although they had done research), but that they have actually been part of facilitating CPMs in East Africa and beyond. My anticipation grew and my hopes were more than realized over the two days.

This case study will be a bit different than the others as I have not yet visited their work in Africa. I decided to write up a summary and some initial observations as I thought the opportunity to engage with someone who had experienced developing multiple CPMs was very valuable. For that reason I have decided to offer more quotes especially from his dissertation, since I cannot offer first hand observations. I still hope to visit their work in East Africa next year, and have continued to have conversations with Dave Hunt who resides nearby in southern California. I anticipate writing an addendum (or perhaps another case study) after visiting.

¹ Dave Hunt was sick and returned home after the second day. The planned agenda for the final day was the application of DMM in the US context.

² Miraculous Movements and The Father Glorified. Full bibliographic information can be found at the end of this paper.

History

This work was birthed from a most unusual source: a rescue mission. CityTeam began as the San Jose Rescue Mission in 1957 and has established or adopted rescue missions and other ministries with the poor in several locations around the United States.

Some years ago they began to ask some provocative questions about their impact after decades of ministry among the poor primarily focused on meeting physical needs. Dave Hunt described this mission changing meeting in his dissertation:

“The provocative question was tossed like a grenade into the assembled group of CityTeam Ministries executives seated around the table in the president’s conference room. “What do we have to show for the \$75 million we’ve spent over the past ten years?” For a few moments no one dared break the poignant silence. It was almost as if we were holding our collective breaths. Minds whirled with defensive answers, responses no one wanted to express because they seemed too shallow; the question was just too penetrating. Most of this leadership team had been together for more than the past ten years. Diligent effort, commitment to excellence, and kingdom thinking characterized each ones’ contribution. There were many good answers. Just look at the reports. In ten years over five million hot nutritious meals and one million nights of warm safe shelter provided to the homeless. Thousands of inner city kids had been given the opportunity of a lifetime, a week at summer camp. Well over fifteen hundred babies were born to women in crisis pregnancy; many saved from abortion. Thousands of families had been cared for; many marriages restored. Hundreds of men and women had graduated clean and sober returning to jobs, families, and productive lives. And the list of good accomplishments could go on and on.

But the question still haunted as the hush extended. It became one of those God-moments when silence was the only appropriate recourse. Gently He stirred our hearts, “Yes, you have done many good things but I want you to do great things.” We knew that, for us, the issue was “fruit that remained.” After ten years of service, how many real disciples of Jesus could we identify as a result of our ministry?” (Hunt:12)

Dave describes their response to God’s startling invitation when he writes:

“The grenade had exploded, shattering the complacent satisfaction with our ministry accomplishments and forcing a deeply introspective self-evaluation that was to lead to a ministry that looks fundamentally and radically different. Since that day God has birthed a new vision in our hearts, a vision to raise up and empower truly transformational leaders who would be the catalysts to initiate an explosion of literally thousands of new churches – caring communities of Christ – that consistently and rapidly replicate themselves among the poor in

communities throughout the world. As one CityTeam leader put it, “We are pregnant with a thousand churches!” (Hunt:13)

Making disciples had been a key part of their mission statement but they had not been making them in substantial numbers. Now it would become a major part of their ministry focus. They began by sending Dave Hunt on a series of short term mission trips to Ethiopia. Simultaneously Dave met a small church of Ethiopians in northern California. Together they formed a new ministry together.

Dave ultimately moved to Ethiopia building further connections within the country. Relationships developed with other Ethiopian Christians. From this group they began training a number of interested people across denominational lines who formed an informal network of workers. Dave describes the process:

“The first step in the process of developing the strategy was to conduct a series of Church Planting Workshops for the new partners in their countries. Participants were primarily grassroots church planters and mission workers, but also included national church and organizational leaders, mission trainers, pastors, evangelists, theological college students, and other believers. Most workshops were five days in duration and included formal presentations on various aspects of church planting, small group discussions and feedback, prayer times, and interactive role-playing on various church planting themes and scenarios. Through the process of these workshops the strategy began to emerge and participants, many who had struggled for years with the challenge of planting new churches were inspired and left enthusiastic about implementing a new strategy of planting churches in their areas. A few were never heard from again, but many became part of the network that now numbers approximately a thousand church planters and 131 partner churches, denominations and organizations.” (Hunt: 57)

All the details of the training structure can be found in the dissertation but basically they provided a series of cascading levels of training to churches and emerging leaders. Groups of church planters were brought together in a central location for quarterly training meetings lasting about a week. These are called “Grassroots Equipping Centers” and the gatherings happened under trees, as well as in homes and rented facilities with a common curriculum that focused on Bible discovery.

One of my questions related to the use of money - always a challenging issue. Dave indicated that they primarily used outside funds for three main purposes:

1. To purchase Bibles, either audio or written, for distribution - obviously access to the Bible is critical to Discovery Bible Study (DBS)
2. Salary and travel expenses for key “apostolic” leaders who oversee the churches

3. Occasionally for relief projects in extreme circumstances

They discovered that dependence on foreign money significantly slowed the replication process. They seem to be, as we have been, quite unsuccessful at transitioning workers from support to self-support even with assistance in micro-enterprise schemes. Dave writes “It was expected that by providing funding for the startup of business or other means of generating income most church planters could be transitioned to self-support. However, that did not occur, leading to the current model where most church planters already have an income as teachers, farmers, aid workers, business people, or some other work when they begin as church planters. As such they are more effective in recruiting other self-supported church planters.” (Hunt: 69)

Interestingly they drew from coaching as a model for working with leaders in a way that was most empowering. (Hunt: 50)

The fruit was startling. In Ethiopia they formed 20 groups in the first year. Then these multiplied to 200 groups in the next two years. This increased to 1 new church emerging every day. And by 2009 5 churches per day were being established with an anticipated total of nearly 9,000 churches by the end of that year.³ The average size of the churches in East Africa is 32.5 people. Dave summarized what they had experienced by noting that “God was at work and we got to be part of it.” They have documented churches planting churches out to the eighteenth generation. God is building the Church.

Summary - What did it take? (Points from lecture by Dave Hunt)

1. A new paradigm of church

“Keep it simple”

“Perhaps the most critical factor impacting this entire project was the development of a new understanding of church. This new paradigm became one of the key catalytic forces behind the explosive multiplication of new churches throughout the region. But it was also a paradigm of church that brought a significant level of maturity to the newly emerging churches. Rapid multiplication was not at the expense of maturity of the church. Of course, this is not a new paradigm at all, but a re-discovery of the biblical paradigm of church.” (Hunt:77)

“From the beginning of this church multiplication project it was clear that there needed to be a new way of doing church. Rapid multiplication of churches, a real movement would not happen using the existing forms of church. It would not be possible to generate enough money, sufficient professional leaders, or

³ Dave’s dissertation was completed in mid-2009 before the final annual figures were available.

adequate management systems to expand the current model to the point of covering every city, village, community, and neighborhood in the region.” (Hunt: 77)

2. Church planters are primarily viewed as disciple makers

“It’s less about sharing a message and more about sharing lives.”

3. Disciple making was the strategy

“As the seed so will be the tree.”

Operational Principles of DMMs - From lecture by Dave Hunt

1. Intensive prayer

This includes the personal prayer life of each individual, as well as group prayer especially in anticipation of going into new areas. There was special prayer for new areas particularly with regard to identifying new locations as well as the timing of initiating new works.

2. Presence of the Holy Spirit in supernatural power

They commissioned a study to determine what had been the fundamental component in launching new works. They had anticipated that it would be the effectiveness of their engagement in the community through service projects, etc. But the study showed that the key component was the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. In 70% of the cases it had been a dream, vision, healing or deliverance that had been fundamental to the development of new groups. This takes God working to happen.

3. Engagement in the community

Authentic relationships with non-Christians was essential. They encouraged new followers of Jesus to live like citizens of the kingdom - being light and salt - and letting others see their changing lives.

4. “Living out loud spirituality”

A pivotal passage for them is Deuteronomy 6:1-9 - The Shema - which states:

“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 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.”

The two key issues here being the cultivation of one's own spiritual life and letting others see. The focus is on intentional modeling rather than just words.

5. Person of Peace (POP) is a key strategy

Based on Luke 10 and Matthew 10, the person of peace is someone who welcomes the worker into the community.

Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you..." Luke 10:5-7a (NASB)

They are already prepared by God and spiritually open. God develops the persons of peace; our job is to discover them.

"Perhaps no one principle in this strategy of church planting has had such a singularly powerful impact as the principle of finding the person of peace. From a strategic perspective it becomes one of the key elements in this overall process." (Hunt:122)

Is the POP principle working?

"Initially in the East Africa project the Muslim sheikhs were avoided. They were considered to be the enemy. As the principle of the person of peace began to take hold, some church planters started to focus on the sheikhs. They were indeed often the spiritually sensitive people in the community. They were influential with the people. Many sheikhs were discovered to be the person of peace to bring the gospel into the community. In one part of the Rift Valley the church planter began to seek out sheikhs with the gospel message. Within three months, five local sheikhs had become believers and were deeply engaged in a discipleship process with the church planter sometimes meeting together several

times a week. These five then began to carefully share the newly discovered “truth” with other sheikhs in nearby communities. Within twelve months, seventy-two sheikhs became followers of Jesus.” (Hunt: 124)

6. Discovery Bible Study (DBS) as the core

DBS is based on John 6:44-45 believing that those who are taught by God will move toward Jesus. It consists of a few key components:

What does the passage say? The passage is often read out loud a few times

How would I say it? Each person writes (if they are literate) in their own words (this can be done ahead of time)

What must I do to obey...based on this passage? This results in each participant giving an “I will.....” statement in front of the group

They have 4 modules of verses for use in DBS...they can obviously be contextualized according to the emphasizes of different movements. Their preferred process starts with the story of Creation and moves forward from there. Because it is based in Bible discovery, the DBS process can be lead by those who have not yet made a commitment to Christ.

Hunt writes that “...understanding that the new insider is more effective than the highly trained mature outsider is counter-intuitive to the leader who is oriented to traditional academic training and credentialing. Those who use a traditional evangelistic model may reject as counter-intuitive a process of gospel sharing that starts with creation, instead of Christ and that encourages even the lost to lead Bible studies. A process of discipling people to conversion does not support a get-them-saved-quick model of ministry.” (Hunt:60)

7. Obedience based discipleship - the emphasis is on doing not simply hearing

8. Discovery Group Meetings as the model of a simple form of church

The interested community meets often including those who are not yet believers. The group tends to correct itself if the leader (often the person of peace) keeps the group focused on the passage of the Bible being studied.

The role of the outsider, who is usually not present at the DGM, is to be a coach - not fixing problems but encouraging them to work it out. They let the “Person of Peace” work it out.

The emphasis of the DGM is on obedience to what is being learned and sharing what is being learned with others. If a person in the group does not share with others,

they might be asked “Is this the right group for you? This is a group of people who are responding to the reading and sharing with others.”

Typically consists of these components as participants respond to the following questions:

- What are you thankful for this week?
- What are your challenges this week?
- Is there some way we can help?
- With whom did you share last week what you are learning?
- How did it go with your “I will” commitments from last weeks’s DBS?
- [Go through the DBS process with the week’s passage]
- What does this passage teach about God?
- What does this passage teach about people?
- With whom will you share what you learned this week?

9. Spiritual warfare and persecution are be be expected - be prepared

“Persecution dramatically accelerates the expansion of the church. In almost every case where the church has been persecuted, it has grown dramatically.” (Hunt: 131)

10. **DNA of reproduction - our part in the process of CPMs**

- a. Empowerment of the insider (person of peace and others) - **not** passing the baton but empowering from the beginning
- b. De-culturalize the Gospel message
- c. Groups emerge within natural networks rather than trying to create a group - not trying to create a group
- d. Focus on obedience
- e. Groups / churches are not dependent financially on outside money
- f. Discovery rather than teaching is the primary method of training
- g. Utilizing the person of peace strategy (insider launches the group)
- h. Focus on making disciples of every believer
- i. Creating expectation and intentionality of replication

- j. Keeping it simple
- k. Intensive prayer for the lost is essential
- l. Minimal external influence
- m. Departure of the outsider is planned from the beginning

Some of my key observations

1. They have a strong emphasis on the Bible and the expectation that followers of Jesus will be doers and not just hearers. They place a strong emphasis on John 6:44-45:

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ (Isaiah 54:13) **Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me.**” (NIV)

Believing that as people learn directly from God, they will come to Jesus...thus the basis for DBS.

2. Discovering where God is at work and getting involved with God.

Again in 70% of the cases, the work of the Holy Spirit was critical in the opening of new works. A surprising and unexpected discovery for folks with roots in Prairie Bible College.

They went where God was working. Where God was working was not always immediately evident. The person of peace seemed to be used as the primary element in the discernment process.

3. These movements were initiated by outsiders but led by insiders
4. The Gospel was planted into existing communities/groups/families - their emphasis was not primarily on individuals but on existing groups and families.
5. Discipling people into conversion not just after conversion - this is important

“Discipling starts starts at the point of meeting (not conversion).”

6. The key barriers to a CPM or DMM are not being willing to let go and step back

7. Jesus is the model

They placed a priority on the Gospels, as opposed to the Epistles, as the key source for their model of mission. They rightfully view the Epistles as correctives written to address problematic situations while the Gospels show mission as modeled and intended by Jesus. They happily use the Epistles when facing similar challenges as they are correcting (e.g. legalism). I found this quite interesting.

8. Its organic and it will be messy - are we ready for that?

9. Going slow to eventually go fast

“Rather than doing extensive personal or mass evangelism, it seemed counter-intuitive to many to adopt a strategy to go slow at first in order to eventually go fast, and to focus on a few to eventually win many by looking for the person of peace and spending a few months discipling a single family that would open the community to the gospel.” (Hunt: 60)

10. Constant training is critical

Rapid church multiplication must be supported by continuous training. Training is at the core of their method of church planting. The amount and kind of training changes as a person moves to higher levels of leadership but always has a bias toward discovery by the participants.

Further information

Dave Hunt's 2009 dissertation, in its entirety, can be found here: <http://www.davidlwatson.org/wp-content/plugins/downloads-manager/upload/2009huntcpmdissertation2.pdf>

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