# Generational Dynamics and Challenges[[1]](#footnote-1)

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Movements are messy, and might not always develop as neatly and sequentially as presented here. However, as we study hundreds of movements around the world, we see that movements typically grow through seven distinct stages. Each stage represents a new breakthrough, but also brings new challenges. A brief overview of these stages and challenges follows. Since CPM so often works counter to our traditions, it is difficult to stay on track. CPM efforts need great intentionally at each stage.

First, two clarifications: when we speak of generations (Generation 1, Generation 2, Generation 3…) within a movement, we mean new groups/churches of NEW believers. We do not count the original believers, team, or churches who initially worked to start new groups. We consider the believers/churches initiating the work Generation 0, indicating that they are the baseline generation.

Also, our working definition of a church comes from Acts 2:37-47. A church is born when a number of people in a group commit to Jesus as Lord and are baptized. They then begin to live out together their love for and obedience to Jesus. Many of these churches use Acts 2 as a pattern of the main elements of their life together. These include repentance, baptism, the Holy Spirit, God's word, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, prayer, signs and wonders, giving, meeting together, giving thanks, and praise.

**Stage 1: Key Dynamics For Starting a CPM Effort**

* A CPM team is present, ideally working together with others.
* Initial CPM efforts are often started by outside disciples – sometimes called “alongsiders.” These disciples from outside the culture work alongside cultural insiders or near-cultural neighbors.
* Movements require a shared God-sized vision, so alongsiders focus on hearing God’s vision for this group.
* Movements require effective processes, so alongsiders focus on laying a foundation for these.
* Initial catalysts focus on extraordinary prayer and fasting – personally and with co-laborers.
* It is also important to *mobilize* extraordinary prayer and fasting (continues at all stages).
* One high value activity is casting vision and searching for local or near-culture partners with whom to work together.
* Developing/testing access strategies is necessary to gain opportunities to engage with lost people.
* This access must lead to searching, sowing widely and filtering for Households (or networks) of Peace (via People of Peace).
* At this stage the first Households of Peace are encountered.

**Challenges for Initial CPM Efforts**

* Trying to turn friendly people into Persons of Peace[[2]](#footnote-2) (A real PoP is hungry.)
* Mistaking an interested individual for a Person of Peace (A real PoP can open up their family and/or network of friends.)
* Rather than training as many believers as possible to join the search, the outsider works alone to find the Persons of Peace/4th Soil[[3]](#footnote-3) people.
* Not a broad and bold enough outreach
* Not relying fully on God; relying too much on “the methods” of a certain CP model
* Not working hard enough (Fully supported people should be working at this full time; people with other jobs must give significant time to prayer and outreach as well.)
* Spending time on good (or even mediocre) activities rather than on the most fruitful activities
* Focusing on “what I can do” versus “what needs to be done”
* Lack of faith (“This area is too hard.”)
* Alongsiders not being doers, but rather just “trainers” who do not model what they train

---------------The hardest hurdle is from 0 to 1st Generation churches---------------

**Key Dynamics for 1st Gen Churches**

* The new church must base their understanding and practice of being disciples and being the church on Scripture – not on the opinions and/or traditions of the outsider.
* They must be dependent on Scripture and the Holy Spirit, not the outsider.
* There must be a clear CPM path. Though there are many variations, CPMs have clear paths for all involved. The key elements are: 1) training believers, 2) engaging the lost, 3) discipling, 4) commitment, 5) church formation, 6) leadership formation) 7) starting in new communities.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* There must be a strong and clear call to commitment.
* There must be a clear understanding of some crucial truths: Jesus as Lord, repentance and renounciation, baptism, overcoming persecution, etc.
* The outsider must not be the leader(s) of the church – they must empower and coach insiders to lead the new church.

**Challenges for 1st Gen Churches**

* One common failure is not finding key local co-laborers with vision (not “hired workers” doing ministry mainly for funding).
* Outsiders can sabotage growth by not having a high tolerance for error. They must avoid the temptation to become the expert. Obedience-based discipleship corrects errors and keeps the Holy Spirit and Bible as the leaders.
* Leaders must gently move on when unproductive people don’t produce.
* One mistake is mentoring people who do not mentor others.
* A related mistake is mentoring just the ministry aspect and not the whole person (personal relationship with God, family, work, etc.).
* Inexperienced alongsiders can slow or thwart growth by not knowing how to empower and release insiders to facilitate or even initiate new groups.
* Alongsiders sometimes do not realize or are not committed to the intensive coaching needed for new leaders.
* One oversight is an emphasis only on “profession of faith” and not also on renouncing allegiances that separate new believeers from God.

**Stage 2: Focused Growth – Initial 2nd Generation Churches**

* Generation 1 (Gen 1) churches are actively growing.
* Alongsiders intentionally focus on developing Gen 1 leaders.
* Gen 1 churches are starting Gen 2 groups/churches.
* Gen 1 disciples have come to faith with movement DNA so it is more natural for them to reproduce the key dynamics and processes than it was for Gen 0 disciples.
* As the numbers of disciples and churches grow, opposition and persecution may sometimes grow in response.
* Gen 0 leaders need to prioritize helping Gen 1 leaders and churches reproduce rather than prioritizing starting new groups.

**Challenges**

* The CPM path has been made too complicated; it can only be done by mature Christians, not new disciples.
* Different CPM path pieces are missing; it’s easy for believers to miss key elements (of the 6 items above).
* Group process is weak (looking back, looking up, looking forward);[[5]](#footnote-5) accountability is weak.
* Not finding Persons of Peace/4th soil people at Gen 1
* Not setting the “follow Jesus and fish for people” DNA (Mark 1:17) within hours/days
* Not coaching the “Model-Assist-Watch-Leave” process[[6]](#footnote-6) at every stage
* Not *oikos* (family and friends network) harvesting[[7]](#footnote-7) at Gen 1

---------------The second hardest hurdle is from 2nd to 3rd Generation churches---------------

**Stage 3: An Expanding Network – Initial 3rd Generation Churches**

* Gen 1 & 2 churches are solidly established and growing.
* Multiple Gen 3 groups are starting, with some Gen 3 groups becoming churches.
* Key leaders are actively identified and being mentored and discipled.
* Strong focus on ensuring multi-generational group health and leadership development.
* Most movements are using generational trees (showing children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren churches).
* Desire for “grandchildren” churches (Gen 3) is a strong emphasis.
* Clear vision and reproducible group processes are used across the expanding network.
* Inside leaders at all levels are sharing testimonies of breakthroughs.
* Inside leader(s) with big vision has emerged and is the key catalyst(s).

**Challenges**

* Leaders still go to outsiders or Gen 0 Christians for answers rather than discovery from Scripture.
* Excitement over 1st and 2nd Generation can blind leaders to working toward 3rd Gen and beyond.
* Some key parts of church meetings are missing. (Vision casting, accountability, and training others make the difference between just talking about the Bible in the group versus really growing in discipleship and reproducing disciples)
* Weak vision. Vision doesn’t pass down generationally. (Early generations have greater vision than later generations.)
* Vision is not caught and owned by all or most disciples in the movement.
* Fear has set in; trying to avoid persecution.
* Poor leadership development; need to develop Timothies.
* Insufficient movement DNA in leaders/groups can stall growth. For example, groups not reproducing or local leaders not growing in their call and oversight of other generations and leaders.
* The alongsider(s) departs prematurely.

**Stage 4: An Emerging CPM – Initial 4th Generation Churches**

* Stable Gen 3 churches, with some Gen 4 (or even Gen 5, Gen 6) groups and churches.
* A growing group of indigenous leaders overseeing the movement. ~~Common Characteristics:~~
* Local and alongside leaders intentionally seek to replicate movement DNA in all generations.
* Alongsider(s) still play key roles in mentoring key leaders.
* Intentional development of leadership networks (leaders meeting with other leaders for mutual support and learning)
* Perhaps beginning to spark work in new areas
* Internal or external challenges have helped bring maturity, perseverance, faith and growth to the leadership and churches.
* If movements get to Gen 3 churches they usually get to Gen 4 churches.
* Overcoming challenge of sharing leadership – truly raising up other leaders

**Challenges**

* Lack of vision for reaching beyond their natural sphere (outside their own language/people group)
* Too much reliance on one key movement leader
* Inconsistent or wrongly-focused mid-level training
* Not shifting the priority from outsiders to inside leaders and reaching new population segments[[8]](#footnote-8)
* Change of key leadership
* Saturation of natural sphere (*oikos*) and not yet going cross-cultural or cross-regional
* Relying on foreign funding
* Outsiders not connected to the movement offering salaries to inside leaders
* Lack of preparation through biblical learning to resist influence of outside Christian leaders who want to “correct” their theology/ecclesiology

**Stage 5: A Church Planting Movement**

* Multiple streams of consistently reproducing 4th+ Generation churches (the accepted definition of a CPM)
* This stage is usually reached 3-5 years after the first churches are started.
* Usually 100+ churches
* Most growth is still to come, but the core elements or processes for that sustained growth have been established or started.
* Ideally four or more separate streams
* Ideally a solid leadership team of local believers leading the movement, with the alongsider(s) mostly just working with the leadership team
* While stages 1-4 can be vulnerable to collapse, collapses rarely happen at stage 5 (and beyond).
* Since the greatest growth of movements occurs in stages 6 and 7, it is important to continue training leaders and passing on vision and movement DNA to all levels.

**Challenges**

* A CPM may plateau at this stage if leadership development is weak.
* Not having a clear process to track and ensure health in all generation of groups.
* The greater the quantitative and qualitative growth, the more likely outside traditional Christian groups will be motivated to offer funds in exchange for control.
* Not continuing to start new streams
* Alongsider being too involved in decision processes

**Stage 6: A Sustained and Expanding CPM**

* Visionary, indigenous leadership network leading the movement with little or no need for outsiders, and multiplying leadership at all levels
* Spiritually mature inside leaders
* The movement grows both numerically and spiritually
* Significant penetration and expansion throughout the people group
* Enough streams, leaders, and churches to be able to find and refine best practices to help with the continued growth of the movement
* Stable Gen 5, Gen 6, and Gen 7+ churches in multiple streams actively multiply groups and churches, with movement DNA being replicated in all generations.
* The movement has weathered strong internal and/or external challenges.

**Challenges**

* Up to stage 5, movements may still be “off the radar,” but at stage 6, they become more well-known and navigating this can present challenges.
* This visibility can lead to opposition from traditional churches/denominations.
* This visibility can also lead to increased persecution and sometimes targeting of key leaders
* Leadership networks need to continue expanding to keep up with the expanding ministry.
* Need to contine wise use of internal and external funding.
* Stage 6 growth can be significant, but is usually limited to one people group or people cluster. To get to stage 7 often requires special vision and training to get a movement to jump to new people groups and regions.

**Stage 7: A Multiplying CPM**

* The CPM is usually both organically and intentionally catalyzingCPMs in other people groups and/or regions.
* The CPM has become a movement that multiplies new movements. This should be the end vision for all alongsiders when they start their work at stage 1.
* Movement leaders adopt a bigger vision to complete the Great Commission in their entire region or religious group.
* Movement leaders develop training and equipping resources to help start other movements.
* Typically, 5,000+ churches.

**Challenges**

* Stage 7 leaders need to learn how to equip and send others to effectively cross cultures.
* It is important to learn how to develop movement leaders who are not dependent on the original CPM leaders.
* Leading a network of multiplying movements is a very rare role. It requires relationship and mutual learning with other Stage 7 leaders from the outside.
* Stage 7 leaders have a lot to offer to the global church, but there must be intentional effort to give them a voice and for the global church to listen to and learn from them.

**Key Principles** (Some of the most important principles, as agreed upon by a group of 38 CPM catalysts and leaders)

* Importance of “letting go”: not all groups, disciples, leaders, will reproduce; so let some go.
* Invest deeply in those we work with – relationship with God, family, workers, character issues. Be transparent as pilgrims together.
* The mentor not only “gives” but also receives info and is vulnerable to those he/she mentors.
* Multiplying “nurture.” Avoid slowing down reproduction. Mentor new mentors to equip next generations. (Matt 10:8 – a real disciple freely receives and freely gives.)
* Create a counter-traditional Christian culture without bashing the traditional church.
* Tracking progress is important – evaluating and diagnosing for growth.
* We all start out ministries with high levels of intentionality, but we don’t always adjust as it works out into the future. We must keep that level of intentionality and reliance on God. We should not “coast” on a system already established.

1. This was published in 24:14 – A Testimony to All Peoples which is available at <2414now.net/resources> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For description of this, see the “Enter New Communities” of Chapter 7: “Dynamics of a CPM – Planting Rapidly Reproducing Churches.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Note Matthew 13:23 where the 4th type of soil produced a harvest of 100, 60, or 30 times what had been sown. For further description of this concept, see “Cultivating ‘4th Soil’ Disciples in Ourselves and Others,” in the July-August 2017 issue of *Mission Frontiers* (<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/cultivating-4th-soil-disciples-in-ourselves-and-others>). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For further description of this path, see Chapter 7: “Dynamics of a CPM – Planting Rapidly Reproducing Churches.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For a description of these elements, see “Four Helps in Getting to Church” – “2. When you start a training group, MODEL from the beginning the parts of church life mentioned above,” in Chapter 10: “The Bare Essentials of Helping Groups Become Churches: Four Helps in CPM.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For a description of this process, see the “Use the Training Cycle” section in Chapter 7: “Dynamics of a CPM – Planting Rapidly Reproducing Churches.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For a description of this important concept, see the “Group Conversions” section of Chapter 36: “Five Lessons the American Church is Learning from CPMs.” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See “The S.O.I.L.S. of the CPM Continuum” by Steve Smith, in the the Nov-Dec 2014 issue of *Mission Frontiers* (<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-s.o.i.l.s.-of-the-cpm-continuum-the-sliding-scale-of-strategic-time-inv>)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)