**The Secret Ingredient for Church Planting**

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Has CPM become a fad? I was in the meeting where the term “Church Planting Movement” was coined.  It was an attempt by a group of mission practitioners and strategists to describe what we were observing in several countries as we took seriously our understanding of the Great Commission’s charge to go and make disciples of all peoples, baptize them into local churches, and teach them to obey all the commands of Christ.

None of us, in our wildest dreams, ever thought we would witness what was happening.  Our initial goals were to see “beachhead” churches established in very resistant or very inaccessible locations and people groups.  Note!  We planned on establishing a single church where there was none.  We had no plans for seeing hundreds or thousands of churches started.  We didn’t think it was possible in the places we were trying to reach.   These places had demonstrated their resistance to the Gospel, to Church Planting, and any other outside influence.   We were just doing everything we could think of in hopes that something would work and at least one church would get started.  We defined “success” as one church being started in a people group where there was none.

As one of the first in my denomination to take on this challenge, I had no clue how to make it happen.  My wife and I were considered successful church planters.  We were risk takers willing to try new things.  Perhaps, most importantly, we were not afraid of failure.  In the event of failure we would just try something else.

We were trained in research skills.  We discussed access and evangelism techniques.  We developed prayer networks, security protocols, and communication and administration systems.  As a result of research, I knew that reaching “our” people group could not depend on me, because I did not have access.  I knew that this people group would not respond to outsiders, because their history was full of wars resisting outside influence.  But still, I had no clue how to make it happen.

God began to teach me through many failures that I had to focus on making Disciples of Christ, not followers of my church or denomination, and teach them to obey all the commands of Jesus, not my church/denominational doctrines or traditions.  And this is what led to the breakthrough that has resulted in more than 40,000 churches among a people who were once considered unreachable.

Many people use the term “CPM” to describe or justify what they are doing.  But, on closer examination, I find that many groups who use this term are simply applying it to what they have always done.  CPM is not a method!  It is an observation of results.  In my experience, and this is what I teach, CPM is the result of obedience-based discipleship that sees disciples reproducing disciples, leaders reproducing leaders, and churches reproducing churches.  If this is not happening, it is not CPM.

True CPM methodology is about being disciplined in education, training, and mentoring to obey all the commands of Jesus, regardless of consequences.  The results are not quick. They only appear to be quick because of exponential growth.  When one is truly engaged in the process that leads to observable CPM, then one is spending years investing in leaders.  The typical investment timeline is two to four years.  But, because of the replication process due to obedience to make disciples and teach them to obey, in this same two to four years, as many as five more leaders, who are also developing more leaders, will emerge.  Each leader is investing two to four years in other leaders who invest two to four years in other leaders, and so on.  The apparent result is explosive growth that does not seem to take much time and energy.  But appearances are misleading.

CPM is extremely time and energy intensive.  Leaders invest a major portion of their time in equipping other leaders.  Churches invest in starting more groups that will become churches as they obey the teachings of Christ and begin to fulfill the nature and functions of church, which means they teach others to do the same.

There were no visible or measureable results the first four years of my ministry among a very resistant unreached people group.  My mission was ready to discipline me for failure to do my job.  But during those years I was equipping five leaders.  These five leaders began to equip twenty-five more leaders, who in turned equipped hundreds of other leaders.

A few churches became more churches as leaders were equipped and trained to obey all the commands of Christ.  More churches became hundreds of churches as the leadership equipping process continued.  Every leader has years invested in him or her by other leaders.  Nothing is quick.  It only appears to be quick because more and more leaders are being produced in obedience to the command of Christ to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them inthe name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV)

So, CPM rapid multiplication really isn’t.  We go slow in order to appear to go fast.  We invest extensively in one in order to reach and train many.  Our goal is to add at least two new leaders to our mentoring process each year, and equip the new leaders to do the same every year.  As leaders multiply, churches grow and multiply.

If you really want to have CPM anywhere in the world, invest in teaching, training and mentoring leaders to obey all the commands of Christ.  If you want to evaluate a so-called CPM, examine the discipleship and leadership equipping process.  Real and lasting CPMs invest heavily in leadership and training.  CPM is a result, not a cause.

Blessing