

The Strategic Perspective – Prioritizing God's Priorities

- I. Introduction: Imagine the results of Football, Cooking, Business, or Education if there were no strategy (carefully planned outcome based on carefully calculated steps). The service we offer to God in obedience to His instruction book should be no less thoughtful and disciplined...
- II. Key Article: ***The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches*** by George Patterson
- III. Key Bible Texts:
 - A. Mark 12:30, 2 Corinthians 10:1-7, 2 Timothy 2:15. Loving God with All Your Mind (God is constantly leading us to mental conclusions by instructing us in His Word. Will we surrender our thinking to Him and let Him mold our conclusions?)

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- B. Romans 10 and Romans 15 (Mission Realities and Priorities)

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IV. Key Concepts

A. Kinds of Church Growth:

1. Internal Growth: Better churches. Level E-0.
2. Expansion Growth: Bigger churches. Level E-1.
3. Extension Growth: More churches. A cluster of growing churches (mother and daughter style). Levels E-1 and E-2.
4. Bridging Growth: Culturally different churches. Levels E-2 and E-3. Pioneer church planting.

B. Pioneer Church Planting: by definition pioneer church planting happens first by targeting not just an unreached people group but often a sociopeople (such as taxi drivers see perspectives reader p.514) within that *ethnos*. This is a narrowly focused project with a specific **people** target, like a sharpshooter.

C. Saturation church planting: this cannot begin until some minimal church movement has begun within a people and the goal shifts to expanding that into a movement throughout their region. This is a very broad based project with a large **geographical** target, like a shotgunner.

D. The "three selves" of church planting and indigenusness:

1. Self Government. But if the form of government being used is foreign, borrowed from the missionary's culture or some Christian television program, the result is not indigenous.
2. Self Support. The Bible allows though for outside support as in the case of the offering Paul took among the congregations he established and visited, for the believers suffering famine back in Jerusalem. It is the local decision making and distribution that is most critical to maintain a congregation's indigenusness. This is, for example, the practice of K. P. Johannan and Gospel for Asia.
3. Self Propagation. Even when a church grows well, it may not always be "indigenous" because it is not so native to local society. It is not uncommon that the novelty of its foreignness or uniqueness plays a roll in its growth, thus making it less indigenous.

E. Mission Station Approach:

1. The mission station approach, so common to modern mission, sets up a fixed base of operation and then **gathers** converts into that colony.
2. This individualistic approach called people to come out from their community and become separate (2 Cor. 6:7).
3. It was often a necessary approach in times past and fitting to the times which required a demonstration of Christianity's stability in lands completely unfamiliar with it.
4. It was not conducive to widespread growth however because of an unsustainable material emphasis and the second generation believers becoming even further removed from their culture.
5. This approach looks like an **organization**.

F. People Movement Approach:

1. The people movement approach, which is only now catching on to a great degree, is an outward wave of group conversions to Christ that keep in tact, by in large, the culture and kinship.
2. This is a community focused approach that instead of removing believers from their web of interrelationships and customs, seeks to work within and take advantage of that existing network.
3. This approach allows for enduring, indigenous, spontaneously expanding, rapidly growing, God dependant churches that as a group look like an **organism**.

G. The Commands of Christ and Church Planting:

1. Veteran missionary and church planter George Patterson summarized the more than 300 commands of Christ to just seven.
2. These commands, which Christ told us to teach the nations to obey as part of the great commission (Matthew 28:20) are the following:
 - a. **Repent, believe, and receive the Holy Spirit** (Mark 1:15, John 3:16, John 20:22)
 - b. **Be baptized** (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - c. **Break bread together / The Lord's Supper** (Luke 22:14-20)
 - d. **Love God, fellow disciples, needy neighbors, enemies** (Luke 10:25-37, John 13:34, Matthew 6:44)
 - e. **Pray** (Matthew 6:5-13, John 16:24)
 - f. **Give** (Matthew 6:19-2, Luke 6:38)
 - g. **Make disciples, heed the Word** (Matthew 7: 24-29, Matthew 28:18-20)
3. When planting churches this summary of Christ's teaching is helpful in defining the essence of the Christian faith to people (in evangelism) as well as discipling them after conversion in the core priorities that Christ himself established for us. It also gives believers a guide as to what to focus on in their worship services. New churches and home fellowships that can get grounded in the basics of their faith can then reproduce themselves more quickly while they grow deeper in their understanding and practice of the Word.
4. A surprising bi-product of teaching obedience to Christ's commands is that it actually guards against legalism or "teaching for doctrines [of God] the commandments of men" (Mark 7:6-13). Paul taught us that "knowledge puffs up but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Teaching just *about* the Bible fills the mind with information and knowledge which easily results in spiritual pride and legalistic Phariseism. When we teach from the perspective of simple obedience (James 1:22), which is how we show our gratitude and love to the Lord (John 14:15,21; 1 John 5:3), we cultivate active discipleship instead of passive listening. And active disciples are better equipped to make more disciples in the church planning process than self righteous know-it-alls. They are also less likely to tear the church down later with doctrinal squabbles and power plays.
5. Evangelism is also enhanced exponentially this way as all believers come to understand their privileged responsibility to make disciples (#7), converting entire congregations into evangelists (or at least "doing the work of an evangelist" as Timothy was exhorted to do in 2 Tim. 4:5)

instead of just those with that “calling”. This understanding definitely helps promote a people movement.

H. Conglomerate Churches:

1. Conglomerate churches are those made up of individuals from different segments of society. Since this type of church is an amalgamation of many different groups and not reflective of any one culture, it essentially a third culture church, or one that creates a strange, compromised mix of the others.
2. Such a conglomeration, though popular with many American church planters that come from a “melting pot” country, will not be attractive to the people of any specific cultural group as the won’t be able to identify with it. It will feel foreign to them and will only gather those willing to divorce themselves from their culture and families.
3. It’s main drawback it that it will grow slowly, drawing a line in the sand between Christians and their culture that will prevent the missiological breakthrough for that people group the missionaries are trying to accomplish. This is a prime example of “extraction evangelism” and it greatly contrasts what has been called “community evangelism” or “inclusion evangelism” where the gospel spreads freely within a culture, redeeming those elements incongruent with God’s word.

I. People Movements (their characteristics):

1. Converts are encouraged to remain one with their people
2. A cluster of growing churches is targeted
3. Brotherhood among all believers is emphasized
4. Converts are encouraged to be exemplary of their own cultures highest ideals.

J. Creation of Christian Sub-cultures:

1. On the one hand, missionaries and local extraction type churches **pull in** new believers toward the new Christianized sub-culture with verses like “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:17 – note that in context this only refers to separating oneself from the practice of idolatry and not a community or culture). There seems to be a fear that their converts will turn back and be lost so defensive, protectionist measures are taken.
2. On the other hand, local culture leaders often react negatively to one or a handful of conversions and **squeeze out** the new converts from the local culture by ostracism or persecution.
3. Either way the converts can end up extracted from their society. Thus the importance of equipping new believers, on the one hand, to follow Christ in culturally sensitive ways, and on the other to suffer strategically so that they will endure the hostility and find a way to remain as a recognized member of their people group.

K. Encourage converts to remain with their people:

1. This principle is difficult for the missionary because he has less control over his converts. He must truly have faith in God and the message he is teaching to encourage them to make their own applications of the scripture within their own world.

2. It is also difficult for the new converts in the sense that they need to continue to face bravely each day their family members, friends, co-workers and officials that will probably express disfavor or even persecution for their decision to be a disciple of Christ.
3. Though difficult, this principle is highly strategic for permanently planting the Kingdom within a people group. Believers will have to differ from their culture in certain sinful practices, but they will largely continue to not only “fit in” but excel as productive, helpful, happy, and committed citizens. This will provoke other community members to jealousy and help lead them to faith in Christ as the source of this goodness. Marriages will benefit, families will benefit, communities will benefit as well at the general society. This also makes every believer a witness for Christ and multiplies the evangelism within a community to reach the greatest number of people.

L. Safeguards to Prevent Syncretism in Muslim Believers:

1. Preach that there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. He is both Savior and Lord and one only comes to the Father through Him.
2. Practice Baptism and Communion (both commanded by Jesus) regularly in meeting with other believers.
3. New believers should focus their early study on the Injil (Gospels of Christ) but can incorporate also the Torah and Zabur (Psalms).
4. Occultism, animism, and other religious superstitions must be renounced.
5. Muslim practices not contradictory to the Bible can be practiced as expressions of love and gratitude or to be culturally respectful.
6. The Qu’ran, Muhammad, and Muslim theology will be compared with Bible and subject to it for belief and practice.
7. To be considered a new believer, one must show evidence of new birth and growth in grace and have a desire to reach other lost Muslims.

M. Reconciling Diversity and Unity in the Body of Christ:

1. Dr. Ralph Winter’s famous address at Lausanne ’74 (The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins) obviously caused quite a stir. But that was only because God wanted his body stirred up and put into remembrance of some crucial Biblical teaching (2 Peter 1:13; 3:1). Winter challenged us all to think like God in terms of people groups (*ethne*) and seek a church movement for each and every one.
2. The challenge of status quo though was that acting on such thinking would be divisive for a global church already seen as fractured by denominationalism.
3. But Winter, anticipating the accusation of troublemakers, laid out afresh the nature of God’s long standing unification plan for the already fractured world that He had caused (remember the tower of Babel?). As Steve Hawthorne said on page 140 of the study guide, “God is not threatened by diversity, He created it.”
4. As we look at Paul’s teaching and example in the New Testament, it is not only Christian unity that is encouraged by the master church planter (1 Cor. 1:10-17, Eph. 2:1, 4:3), but Christian liberty (and not conformity) as well (Rom. 14, 2 Cor. 3:17, Gal. 5:13). Liberty (with the associated diversity) and Unity must therefore be ***compatible*** in Christ. But let’s take it a step further by saying that people specific church planting (different churches in different people

- groups) is arguably ***necessary*** for genuine Christian brotherhood and reconciliation between peoples.
5. As people specific churches are planted, there tends to be a powerful attraction among peers that helps them grow, function well, and prosper. This is seen and widely accepted in the youth churches so common today. People anywhere are naturally attracted to their own kind and want to fellowship together. Winter firmly categorizes this as a prerogative of the Biblical teaching of Christian liberty and suggests that such dynamic and healthy fellowships contribute better to our global unity.
 6. As we work toward diversity by the planting of a church in every people as expression of Christian liberty, then the spiritual health of such congregations will wipe out the prejudices, racism, and other sinful practices that detract from the Christian brotherhood and bring about reconciliation between peoples. Respect for the healthy diversity that results from Christian liberty will more genuinely draw congregations together and express our unity in Christ than standardizing Christian behavior and worship (conformity).
 7. Winter Points out as well from the Apostle Paul's teaching that there is actually an "equality of diversity". Put another way, we are unified in Christ by faith in spite of our cultural, caste, or gender differences (see Gal. 3:28). Paul even had to rebuke Peter when he slipped on this point with the church in Antioch by playing cultural favoritism and demonstrating sinful hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-14).
 8. People group church planting is the healthiest alternative, even when it comes to unity.
- N. Orality, Oral Bible Translations, and Storying for the Illiterate and those that prefer Oral Learning.
- O. Training Native Missionaries and Indigenous Pastors.
- V. Key Questions:
- A. Is it right to concentrate the majority our resources (time and money), preaching to those who have already heard the gospel many times while ignoring those who have never heard?
 - B. Do you think there is any Biblical responsibility for the "blessed" to share their "blessing" with the "less blessed"?
 - C. Just because of 1 Corinthians 1:21, should we not use our minds in different fields of study to earn a good living for our families and support churches and missionaries, invade those professions with the Gospel, use specialized professions (engineering, medicine, education, linguistics) to invade "closed" countries, and carry out more technical kinds of ministry like Bible translation? (Note that Proverbs 19:27, *cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge*, is duly noted and taken into account as a caution).