

MISSIONTM FRONTIERS

ISSUE 40:4 | JULY / AUG 2018

A MAGAZINE OF FRONTIER VENTURES | missionfrontiers.org

Finding “Fourth-Soil” People: A Field Strategy for Movements



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FINDING “FOURTH-SOIL” PEOPLE

PURSUING MOVEMENTS AS JESUS DID

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MISSION FRONTIERS

VOL.40, NO.4 | JULY/AUG 2018
ISSN 0889-9436

Mission Frontiers is published six times a year.
Call 888-881-5861 for subscriptions, address changes
(714-226-9782 for Canada and overseas)
Email missionfrontiers@pfsmag.com;
Order online: www.missionfrontiers.org, choose subscribe.
Editorial Office: rick.wood@frontierventures.org
Advertising: advertising@missionfrontiers.org
Website: www.missionfrontiers.org
Address: 1605 E. Elizabeth St. • Pasadena, CA 91104

Rick Wood, Editor
Taya Johnson, Production Coordinator
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Images from [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)
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MissioNexus and Evangelical Press Association (EPA).



OUR ORGANIC GOSPEL AND KINGDOM. GOD INTENDS FOR US TO MULTIPLY



BY **RICK WOOD**
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This has never happened before. For the first time in our history we are giving over the entire theme section of *MF* to a single author, Kevin Greeson. We have done so because of the tremendous insights Kevin provides into understanding Jesus' Parable of the Sower and its implications for fostering movements. Kevin is well known for creating the CAMEL Method for effective outreach to Muslims. Can a parable of Jesus actually be applied as a field strategy to foster movements of discipleship and church planting in every people? Did Jesus actually model this field strategy with His disciples after presenting it in the parable? These questions and more will be answered in this special edition of *Mission Frontiers*. For those who are well steeped in movement methodology, prepare to have your paradigm adjusted by Greeson's article, "Fourth-Soil Person or Person of Peace" starting on page 16. You may never look at this topic the same way again.

Fostering and growing movements of discipleship in every people is a learning process and we are getting better at it all the time as insights are

shared among the field practitioners through networks like the 24:14 Coalition (see their update starting on page 46) and through the pages of *Mission Frontiers*. This issue is our opportunity to share with you some of these insights gained from Scripture and actual field experience. Study this issue carefully. Soak it all in. This is one of the rare places where these key insights are available. We have been waiting a long time for these biblical practices and book of Acts-like models of ministry to re-emerge into the Church's consciousness once again. Let's take every opportunity to put them into practice.

EXPONENTIAL ORGANIC GROWTH IS EVERYWHERE EXCEPT IN MOST CHURCHES

It should be obvious to everyone that we live in an organic world where every living thing—plants, animals and even bacteria and viruses—have a God-given means for reproducing themselves after their own kind. Rabbits reproduce rabbits and people reproduce more people. We naturally expect this reproductive process to continue without much thought. But we do become concerned, and

rightfully so, when these natural organic processes do not work as they should. When honeybee colonies begin dying off or the last male Northern White Rhino dies, it makes the news. We know instinctively, that this is not the way the world is suppose to work. Something is wrong and needs fixing. Yet we seem to take a different approach when it comes to the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For most people in the Church today, they do not expect the gospel to grow exponentially and organically the way rabbits and people naturally do. They seem to think that a different order exists for the gospel than for every other living organism in the world. Would God ordain that everything in the world would grow exponentially and organically except the most important thing in history, the gospel of the kingdom? Not likely, and certainly not biblically.

When it was time for the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, to become God incarnate, taking on human flesh, God honored the natural organic process for how humans come into being. Indeed, it

was so important that Jesus be part of a certain lineage that the gospels of Matthew and Luke each record a genealogy for Jesus, one descending from Abraham and one from Adam, each demonstrating that Jesus was a descendant of King David and therefore eligible to be the Messiah.

Throughout His short three-year ministry on Earth, Jesus continually spoke and taught in parables. Many of these had their basis in agriculture, which again is all about exponential organic processes. This was natural since the people He was speaking to depended upon the productiveness of these various organic processes—wheat, grapes, figs, sheep, etc. for their very lives. So Jesus used stories about these vitally important aspects of their lives to teach them what the kingdom of God was like and what the King expects from His servants.

As one reads through the various parables, two important aspects of the kingdom become very clear. First, God's kingdom is designed and intended to grow organically and exponentially from a small beginning to something very large. Secondly, God expects His servants to be fruitful and to multiply.

THE KINGDOM IS MEANT TO GROW ORGANICALLY

In the Parable of the Mustard Seed; Matt. 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19; Jesus starts out by asking the apparently rhetorical question: "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?" Jesus could have chosen just about any story to illustrate what the kingdom of God is like, but He specifically chose the Parable of the Mustard Seed because it illustrates the organic nature of the gospel and God's plan that it grow exponentially. The smallest of



Would God ordain that everything in the world would grow exponentially and organically except the most important thing in history, the gospel of the kingdom? Not likely, and certainly not biblically.



seeds grows into the largest of garden plants. There is no way to avoid the conclusion that Jesus is making a direct corollary between the growth of the mustard plant and the natural growth characteristic of the kingdom. If we do not see the kingdom of God growing like this, then something is wrong that needs to be corrected, just like the honeybees.

In the Parable of the Sower; Matt. 3:13-23, Mark 4:3-20, Luke 8:4-15; the "Fourth-Soil Person" produces a 30, 60 or 100-fold crop. As in the Parable of the Growing Seed in Mark 4:26-29, God uses people to sow the seed of the gospel and it grows organically from that seeding process to produce a great harvest. A man may sow the seed but it is God who causes it to grow. There is the expectation that the abundant sowing of seed will produce an exponential harvest.

On average, from every kernel of wheat, eight stalks of grain will grow. In each of these heads of grain are 50 kernels of wheat. So from every kernel of wheat, around 400 more kernels are produced. That sure looks like exponential organic growth to me.

GOD EXPECTS HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE FRUITFUL IN GROWING HIS KINGDOM

Throughout the parables Jesus praises faithfulness and fruitfulness while condemning fruitlessness. God ordained that the world grow

organically and be fruitful. God's kingdom is no exception. It, too, is designed to grow organically and to produce spiritual fruit that remains. He expects His followers to faithfully and obediently participate in this organic process. This is what Jesus expects from those He calls his friends.

In John 14:21, Jesus says, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." In John 15:14-16, Jesus goes on to give the qualifications for being a friend of God.

¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

Jesus calls those who keep His commands His friends and He empowers them to go and bear fruit.

In John 15:5-10 Jesus says,

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are

picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

So let's summarize what we learn from this passage about being fruitful. 1. We must remain or abide in Jesus in order to bear much fruit. 2. God expects His followers to bear fruit and uses rather harsh imagery to describe what happens when we do not. 3. Bearing fruit glorifies God and verifies our status as His disciples. 4. We remain in the love of Jesus by obeying His commands just as Jesus remains in the Father's love by obeying the Father's commands. I think one can fairly say that this parable teaches that one aspect of remaining in Jesus and bearing fruit is obedience to what He has commanded. Without this obedience to God's Word or "remaining in Jesus," the potential for exponential organic growth of the kingdom is lost. The greater our obedience to Jesus, the greater the fruit we will bear.

FAITHFUL OR WICKED?

There are a number of parables where Jesus talks about wise versus wicked servants. The wise and good servants are those who are found being faithful stewards of what their master has entrusted to them when their master returns. The wicked and lazy servants are those who ignore the responsibilities entrusted to them.

One such parable is the story of the ten talents presented in Matthew 25:14–30. Jesus tells the story of a

rich man who goes away and entrusts his wealth to his three servants. From the context of the passage it is clear that the rich man expects his wealth to be invested wisely in order to gain an increase in wealth. Two of the servants double what was entrusted to them and are commended with the statement, "Well done good and faithful servant." The master expected a good return from what was entrusted to his servants and the first two did not disappoint him. The third servant refused to do anything with what had been entrusted to him and this lack of fruitfulness earned the harsh rebuke of, "You wicked, lazy servant!"

The unmistakable message of this and other parables like it is that Jesus expects His friends to be faithful and fruitful in carrying out the work of the kingdom that He has entrusted to us until He returns—and this involves fostering movements of multiplying disciples within all peoples.

MANKIND'S ROLE IN OUR ORGANIC WORLD AND GOD'S ORGANIC KINGDOM


The world is obviously organic by design and we have seen from the parables that God has ordained the gospel of the kingdom to be organic as well. In every organic process, there is the part that God plays—causing things to grow without any outside help. We see this in the Parable of the Growing Seed where the seed grows all by itself once the seed has been scattered. But there is also the part mankind plays—spreading the seed etc.

In the perfect world that God created before sin ever entered the picture, Adam and Eve were given the task of tending the garden and caring for the animals. Why would God give them this job if He causes everything to

grow? It's because the organic processes that God set up need mankind's help to be more productive and fruitful. It is a fact of life that cultivated land is far more productive than land that is left fallow. Mankind has the power to bless or curse the normal organic processes that God has established. The same is true for the gospel of the kingdom.

As we remain in Jesus and His love by obeying all that Jesus has commanded, we will aid the growth and flourishing of the exponential organic nature of God's kingdom. We can either act like the seed that fell on rocky ground and produce little or be like the seed that fell on the fourth soil, the good soil, and produce a 30, 60 or 100 fold crop. I want to be a Fourth-Soil Person. I trust that you would like to be so also. It will only come through obedience to God's word.

BECOME A MISSION FRONTIERS VISION CASTER

We are making progress! A growing number of *MF* readers are stepping forward and donations to *MF* are beginning to increase. But so much more is needed in order for us just to cover our costs, not to mention trying to move forward. *MF* exists to promote the vision of movements of discipleship in all peoples. If that is your vision as well, then please join with us financially in furthering this effort. 

« If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. »



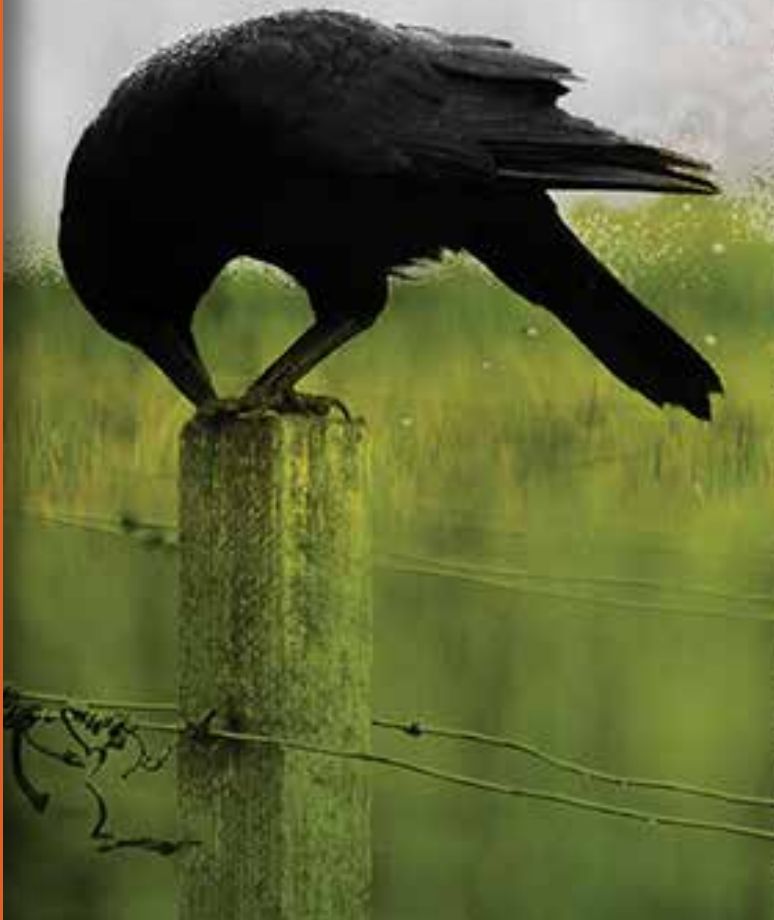
It is a fact of life that cultivated land is far more productive than land that is left fallow.

Mankind has the power to bless or curse the normal organic processes that God has established. The same is true for the gospel of the kingdom.



EDITORIAL

Jesus' field strategy appears in the Parable of the Sower and contains a multiplicative ingredient: the hundredfold, Fourth-Soil Person. (see Luke 8:8)





Composite photo images left to right by: Wolf Hannes, Dan-Gold, D'ng-Tri, Andrey-Grinkevich, and Lukas-Langrock.

Finding Fourth-Soil People: **Pursuing Movements as Jesus Did**



BY **KEVIN GREESON**

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Kevin Greeson earned degrees from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served with the International Mission Board, SBC (1993-2015), based in South Asia. He is the author of *Camel: How Muslims are Coming to Faith in Christ* (WIGTake, 2010). Kevin currently serves in Houston with Global Gates.

Overview

Mathematician Steven Pither describes the difference between addition and multiplication through the use of personification. Addition's attempt to solve problems can be described as passive, lacking a drive to a goal, ill-prepared to overcome obstacles, and lacking enthusiasm to attain a highly valued purpose. Pither describes multiplication as having a desire to overcome obstacles, solve dilemmas, and achieve goals.¹

Missionaries searching for ministry approaches in new mission fields have an assortment of strategies from which to choose. Some fit within the growth pattern of addition. Others position the missionary to experience multiplicative results. Some strategies have a basis from within Scripture; others appear to be structured more as a business model. This series of articles, titled *Finding "Fourth-Soil" People*, introduces Jesus' modus operandi for fieldwork used in Galilee, resulting in a large-scale movement occurring before Pentecost. Jesus' field strategy appears in the Parable of the Sower and contains a multiplicative ingredient: the hundredfold, Fourth-Soil Person (see Luke 8:8).

The *Finding Fourth-Soil People* series recognizes Jesus as the greatest missionary of all times and presents his successful movement in pre-Pentecost Galilee as a case study for missionaries entering into new fields of service. The articles demonstrate the importance of the Parable of the Sower and explain why the parable has not been used as a field strategy approach throughout the centuries—because of improper hermeneutics and understanding. The series also includes an explanation of the difference between a Person of Peace (see Luke 10:6) and a Fourth-Soil Person and the results of a field application using the Parable of the Sower as a field strategy.

I recently listened online to more than thirty sermons on the Parable of the Sower. The majority of the sermons showed concern for the lost by encouraging listeners to live "fourth-soil" lives (they define the fruit of a Fourth-Soil Person as spiritual maturity) that will attract lost people and motivate them to become believers. None of the sermons encouraged listeners to sow the gospel broadly in order to find fourth-soil individuals living in their mission fields. A few preachers acknowledged the parable's context of proclamation, but none used the parable to persuade listeners to adopt the parable as a plan to discover the joy of working as Jesus did, find Fourth-Soil People, and ignite movements as Fourth-Soil People win lost people a hundredfold.

The goal of this *Finding Fourth-Soil People* series is to discover the intent Jesus had in mind when he delivered the Parable of the Sower. Using the parable as a devotional piece or as a motivational device to inspire an increase in spiritual maturity misses the point of the parable. Within a church or within the mind of a missionary about to launch a ministry in a new mission field, the parable should function as a guide or strategy plan.

Jesus' Team

All three Synoptic Gospel writers place the Parable of the Sower next to the story of Jesus' encounter with His mother and brothers (see Matt. 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21). Matthew places the encounter earlier in the day of Jesus' delivery of the parable. Several Bible scholars take note of this and push for a connection between the family encounter and the parable. Jesus likely used the encounter as a springboard to deliver the parable. Luke's narrative makes the clearest connection by referring to the seed in the parable as "the Word of God." With this, Luke has done everything he can to connect the parable to the family encounter by citing Jesus as saying, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear and do the Word of God" (8:21).

"Doing the Word of God" functions as Luke's code language for spreading the gospel. Jesus' true family (team) members are those who spread (sow) the gospel. Luke continues his use of the code in Acts, when he says that the Word of God went out and big results followed ("the Word of God continued to increase and the number of disciples multiplied" Acts 6:7; see also 12:24; 19:20). When missionaries apply the Parable of the Sower and "do the Word of God," they essentially join Jesus' family team.

Jesus Used the Parable to Describe His Field Strategy

I cannot stress this point enough: the parable represents Jesus' own modus operandi for working Galilee. John Nolland points to the parable as a reflection of Jesus' own ministry and his intention that the disciples would do the same: "There can be little doubt that the sowing of the seed represents the ministry of Jesus (and ultimately its continuation through the disciples)."²

The parable contains no imperatives. The grammatical structure of the parable comes in passive voice (e.g., "A sower went out to sow his seed") and does not ask the

1 Steven Pither, *The Complete Book of Numbers: The Power of Number Symbols to Shape Reality* (St. Paul, MN: Llewelyn, 2002), 214.

2 John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 530.

disciples to do anything. The nearest imperative to the parable appears when Jesus says, “Anyone who has ears to hear should listen!” (Luke 8:8).³ Jesus uses the parable to describe how He worked. Yet rarely, if ever, do missionary training programs promote and encourage missionaries to adopt Jesus’ field strategy as presented in this parable. Other programs, methods, and approaches replace or bury the parable. Be careful when adopting a field strategy that does not reflect the Parable of the Sower; this may reveal a missionary attempting to improve on Jesus’ field approach. Simple obedience is all Jesus asks of His disciples.

Why do preachers or missionary trainers not present the parable as a field strategy? Has there ever been a time in the past two thousand years where the Parable of the Sower was used as an approach to field ministry? This article addresses these questions and examines four core issues that traditionally have suppressed the parable from being used as a ministry plan.

Parable of the Sower? Soils? Or Seeds?

Ever wonder why some Bible translators label the Parable of the Sower the “Parable of the Soils” or the “Parable of the Seeds”? The titles for the parable represent an ongoing debate. These two titles ascribe greater importance to the soils and the seeds and shift focus away from the overarching theme of proclamation. A reason for Bible translators and scholars suggesting either of these two titles comes from the structure of the parable. Although the sower appears in the initial verse of the parable, the remainder of the parable focuses on the soils and the seeds. Nevertheless, the argument for assigning these alternative titles appears in opposition to the obvious; Jesus told us the parable’s title: “You, then, listen to the Parable of the Sower” (Matt 13:18).

The parable’s title, ascribed by Jesus, positions the parable as a lesson for sowers. Don’t lose sight of this or get distracted. The context of the parable in Luke’s narrative shows that Jesus uses the parable to describe how He worked and then uses the parable to train His harvest force of sowers how they are to work. Luke organizes his narrative intentionally to show us the function of the parable: chapters 1–3 represent the birth narrative; chapters 4–7 show Jesus alone working while the disciples watch; in chapter 8, Jesus trains

the disciples along with a large crowd of followers using the Parable of the Sower; and in Luke 9–10:24, Jesus deploys the Twelve and the seventy-two to sow.

Parable of the Sower as Allegory

Merriam-Webster defines allegory as “the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human experience.” The allegorization of Jesus’ parables coats them with mystery and has caused many scholars to join Theodore Weeden’s view of the Parable of the Sower as being impossible to understand in its original meaning. Referring to this parable, Weeden states, “apprehension of the full depth and scope of that message has not been possible with current hermeneutical methodologies . . . the limitations of these hermeneutics leave the message still under partial eclipse.”⁴ Thankfully, other scholars express the opposite. Peter Rhea Jones expresses optimism, stating that Jesus’ parables “are better understood today . . . than they have been known for many centuries, possibly back to the first century.”⁵

Robert Stein tributes the early church (to AD 540) along with Origen (third century) as the first to bury the Parable of the Sower with the shroud of allegory.⁶ Stein goes on to deliver good news that in the modern era, beginning with Adolf Jülicher’s two-volume work on parables (1888), “the Babylonian captivity of the parables to the allegorical method of interpretation came to an end.”⁷

Besides using hermeneutical methodologies to discover Jesus’ original intent of the Parable of the Sower, another method is to test the parable through application.

The last article in the *Finding Fourth-Soil People* series reports on a field application using the parable among the Ro (pseudonym) Muslim people group. The case study discusses a volunteer team that selected a people group in a district close in size to Jesus’ Galilee, mobilized seventy-two sowers trained only with the Parable of the Sower (and healing), sowed the gospel for three days, and analyzed germinated seeds (new believers) using the parable’s profile of each soil. For the next ten months, we closely monitored seven potential Fourth-Soil People discovered from the sowing campaign. The field exercise washed away the parable’s allegorical cloud and demonstrated to me the

³ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible 2009.

⁴ Theodore J. Weeden, “Recovering the Parabolic Intent in the Parable of the Sower,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48, no 1 (1979): 97. Weeden goes on to give a glimpse of hope that today we can more fully understand the meaning of the Parable of the Sower using insights of ontology, epistemology, and the phenomenology of language.

⁵ Peter Rhea Jones, “The Modern Study of Parables,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 22 (1980): 7.

⁶ Robert Stein, “The Parables of Jesus in Recent Study,” *Word & World* 5, no. 3 (1985): 248.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 249. Stein states, “a parable is essentially a single metaphor with one basic point of reference,” 250.

simple and practical side of the parable.

Salvific Status of the second-Soil Person

All three Synoptic Gospel writers record Jesus as saying the second-Soil Person believes or receives (the gospel) with joy. Luke's version states that the second-soil individuals later "fall away" (8:13 KJV), while Matthew and Mark prefer the word *stumble* (Matt 13:21; Mark 4:17). The degree of the parable's usefulness for field missionaries hinges on the understanding of whether the second-soil (and third-soil) person represents a genuine believer or an unbeliever. Core to the argument stands the doctrine of eternal security (which I affirm).

The problem arises when placing all truly saved believers within the category of the fourth soil. This means all saved people have produced thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or one hundredfold fruit. If fruit means "souls won" (this is addressed in the next section), then all fourth-soil true believers produced (past tense) a minimum of thirtyfold fruit to achieve this designation.

Brad McCoy states, "A large number of expositors misinterpret it [the Parable of the Sower], by insisting that only the fourth (and final) soil represents the response of born again believers."⁸ The most popular approach for resolving the dilemma of the salvific condition of the second-Soil Person is to invoke the doctrine of eternal security and declare the belief of the second-Soil Person was never true belief but rather a superficial belief.

This approach overlooks the belief related to the first soil. The belief associated with the first soil is a belief unto salvation. Jesus stated, "so that they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12). The same Greek work for "believe" is used in relation to the second-Soil Person. The focus of investigation falls on two Greek words, translated as "believe" (*pisteuo*) and "fall away" (*aphistantai*). Lloyd Olsen states, "fallen doesn't mean 'damned . . .' the word (*aphistantai*) means only depart, or go away in a very wide sense."⁹ The Greek construct of "fall away" allows for the interpretation as "stumbles" as used by Matthew and Mark. Difficulty arises when making the claim that the second-soil category represents unregenerate people, when Luke clearly reports Jesus as saying that they believed.

Mary Ann Tolbert points out that in Mark's narrative

⁸ Brad McCoy, "The Parable of the Sower," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 5, no. 3 (July–September 1999): 2. McCoy views "the key to interpreting the parable is to recognize that only the first soil refers to unregenerate individuals."

⁹ Lloyd Olsen, *Eternal Security: Once Saved Always Saved* (Mustang, OK: Tate, 2007), 180.



The parable's title, ascribed by Jesus, positions the parable as a lesson for sowers. Don't lose sight of this or get distracted.



the only group presented as moving from acceptance to failure when persecution arrives is the disciples. Tolbert demonstrates that Jesus uses the same word in Mark 14:27 to describe His prophecy for the disciples—“You will all fall away (*skandalisthēsēsthe*)”—as He used to describe the “stumble” action of the second-Soil Person.¹⁰

Arriving to the conclusion that only the first soil represents an unregenerate person, while soils 2, 3, and 4 represent regenerate individuals, positions the parable as a highly useful tool for finding fourth-soil movement catalysts. Fourth-soil people are easy to identify, because they win others (due to the *oikos* factor) on a scale of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or hundredfold. Some people believe but do not reproduce by sharing the gospel with others. Through the parable, Jesus trains His disciples to sort through the many responses, be aware of those who sincerely believe but will not share with others and be mindful that some will believe and will produce movements through their reproduction (i.e., share the gospel with their *oikos*).

Fruit as Souls Won

Numerous Bible scholars present the Parable of the Sower as Jesus’ attempt to prompt the faith-wavering, halfhearted crowd on the shore of Galilee to produce greater spiritual fruit than what they were espousing. The first problem with this conclusion is that the crowd gathered around Jesus is anything but halfhearted. Simply to be near Jesus, they spontaneously left their homes. Luke writes, “As a large crowd was gathering, and people were flocking to Him from every town, He said in a parable” (8:4). With unfriendly crowds, Jesus preached repentance; with this crowd, He treated them as equals to the disciples by including them in the sower training.

Herschel Hobbs promotes the idea of “fruit” (Luke 8:15) as “fruits of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22–23). He states, “It takes time and rugged endurance to produce the fruits of a Christian life.”¹¹ Hobbs’ hermeneutical practice involves applying verses written by Paul more than twenty years later to the delivery of the Parable of the Sower. Robert Plummer recommends that a pathway for understanding Jesus’ parables comes from examining the context of each parable.¹² When examining the context of the Parable of the

10 Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 128.

11 See Herschel Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Four Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1966), 138.


12 Robert Plummer, “Parables in the Gospels: History of Interpretation and Hermeneutical Guidelines,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 3 (2009): 5.

Sower, one sees the theme of proclamation. Most scholars agree with this conclusion. Tom Johnston does not mince words when examining the nature of the fruit of the Fourth-Soil Person as related to the context of proclamation.

In the context it is most logical that the fruit in question is the Word of the gospel sown in the lives of others, in other words, multiplying believers; to see fruit in this context as anything else, such as merely the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23), the fruit of one’s words (James 3:12), or the fruit of one’s teaching (Mt. 7:15–20), seems quite shallow and/or avoiding the obvious.¹³

Remaining within the context of the parable, Earle Ellis recognizes the nature of the Fourth-Soil Person’s fruit, “Only the last [good soil] produces the fruit of witnessing and obedience.”¹⁴ Clearly the result of witnessing involves either rejection or acceptance of the gospel (i.e., the winning of souls). “Obedience” in this context likely carries a narrow meaning of “doing the Word” (see Luke 8:21), which is to sow the Word of God (i.e. proclamation) rather than a broad meaning of obeying all of God’s commands.

Conclusion

Over the centuries, the Parable of the Sower has been subjected to attempts of making the parable difficult to understand. Lurking in the shadows of many missionary training programs is the belief that aggressive proclamation as seen in the parable represents an outdated model. A relational, nonconfrontational, and “earn their trust before sharing” idea of evangelism represents the best approach for today. The problem with this ideology is that you will not find it in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus’ approach takes this ideology into account; the Fourth-Soil Person uses this approach to win all of his friends and family (the *oikos* factor). Missionaries and cultural outsiders are not Fourth-Soil People in new mission fields. Their job is to find Fourth-Soil People through large-scale seed sowing campaigns so that Fourth-Soil People will believe and then begin the process of launching a movement in their communities. 

¹³ Tom Johnston, “The Parable of the Sower,” chap. 25, *Evangelizology* (2015 unpublished edition) 25:995, accessed July 21, 2015, [<http://www.evangelismunlimited.com/documents/evangelizology/evangelizology-2014-chapter-25.pdf>.]

¹⁴ Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 126.



Finding Fourth-Soil People:
**Fourth-Soil Person
or Person of Peace**

« The only similarity
between a
Person of Peace
and the
Fourth-Soil Person
is generosity
and hospitality. »

The designation *Person of Peace* originates from Luke 10:5–7:

Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this household.” If a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they offer, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Don’t be moving from house to house.¹

Learning about the Person of Peace concept greatly enhanced my ministry by giving me a specific target to aim for in the vast sea of lostness within the country I served.

The problem occurs when we inflate the biblical text; admittedly I am guilty on the topic of the Person of Peace. While the text limits the actions of the Person of Peace to generously receiving the disciples and extending hospitality by providing food and shelter, many missionaries expand the actions of said person to include the winning of his household, connecting the disciples to the community, and even starting a movement in the community.

In this article, I am not asking missionaries to dismiss the idea that potential community movement catalysts are waiting for sowers to share the gospel with them. Here I simply reassign the “movement catalyst” designation from the Person of Peace to the Fourth-Soil Person. With this schematic change, the idea of Jesus training His disciples how to establish movements appears stronger within the biblical text.

Person of Peace

In Luke 10:1–24, Jesus prepares His laborers for work in the harvest. He tells the disciples where to go, what to say, with whom to talk, what to watch out for, and what to do if their message is rejected. These detailed instructions do not represent the goal of the assignment; Jesus expresses the goal in terms of a harvest. The overarching mission involves broad seed sowing throughout Galilee. Within the framework of preparing the disciples for their mission, which did not come with travel funds, Jesus developed a plan that would cover their basic needs of food and shelter

by arranging a divine meeting between the needy disciples and hospitable people who would care for them.

Clarifying the role of the Person of Peace, I found Roger Gehring’s *House Church and Mission* helpful. Gehring refers to Jesus’ plan to care for the disciples as the “House rule”² that provides a base of operation for fieldworkers assigned to unfamiliar mission fields. A careful examination of Jesus’ instructions to the Twelve and the seventy-two demonstrates Gehring’s “House rule”:

Whenever you enter a house, stay there *until you leave that place*. (Mark 6:10, emphasis added)

When you enter any town or village, find out who is worthy, and stay there *until you leave*. (Matt. 10:11, emphasis added)

Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they offer, for the worker is worthy of his wages. *Don’t be moving from house to house*. (Luke 10:7, emphasis added)

In other words, Jesus instructed His disciples to find a home base, then cease the search for more home bases. They were not to waste time looking for multiple homes while they sowed the area with the gospel. Is it possible for a Person of Peace to also be a Fourth-Soil Person? Certainly! When the area has been sown, travel to a new area and repeat the process; first find a Person of Peace, then again saturate the area with the gospel.

The only similarity between a Person of Peace and the Fourth-Soil Person is generosity and hospitality. W. E. Vine and Merrill Unger agree that in Luke 8:15, when Jesus describes the Fourth-Soil Person, He uses *kalos* (honest or noble) and *agathos* (good) together, these two words, when combined form an idiom common in the time of Jesus. The “good and noble” (8:15) idiom means “one that, instead of working ill to a neighbor, acts beneficially.”³ A. T. Robertson states the idiom refers to a “generous” person.⁴

A challenge occurs when pushing the meaning of Person of Peace beyond the stated text. The process of discovering Persons of Peace comes through the disciples’ appearance as

1 Scripture quotations are from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, 2009.

2 Roger Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 55.

3 W. E. Vine and Merrill Unger, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words: With Topical Index* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 274.

4 A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930), 2:114.

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persons in need (“don’t carry a money-bag, traveling bag, or sandals” Luke 10:4). The problem emerges when Jesus later revokes His instructions of going out as needy individuals (see Luke 22:35–36). Rather than imposing assumptions onto the understanding of the Person of Peace, the hermeneutical approach works best by allowing the Person of Peace to function as a home base while continuing the role of a sower in disseminating the Word of God through the community.

Many missionaries point to the centurion, Samaritan woman, Cornelius, Lydia, and Philippian jailer as examples of Persons of Peace. Each of these individuals becomes a believer and reproduces. With the Person of Peace description though, each appears more as a Fourth-Soil Person than as a Person of Peace. For missionaries entering into new mission fields with the intent to sow the field with the gospel, Jesus’ “house rule” offers a tremendous service. Knowing that both Fourth-Soil People and Persons of Peace are generous, the search for Persons of Peace could result in the discovery of a Fourth-Soil Person.

« **In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus not only describes a Fourth-Soil Person; He also provides detailed descriptions of what a Fourth-Soil Person does not look like.** »

Fourth-Soil People


Making the distinction between a Person of Peace and Fourth-Soil Person comes with advantages. The description of Fourth-Soil People appears more developed than the description of Persons of Peace. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus not only describes a Fourth-Soil Person; He also provides detailed descriptions of what a Fourth-Soil Person does not look like. His hundredfold portrayal of the Fourth-Soil Person gives hope of an exponential

movement influencing lost people in a community. Jesus connects the Parable of the Sower to the other parables through His statement, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any of the parables?” (Mark 4:13), we can use parables such as the mustard seed and yeast to understand that Fourth-Soil People may not be obvious people in a community.

A profile of the Fourth-Soil Person, according to the Parable of the Sower, includes the following: believes the gospel, perseveres and reproduces even when passing through a time of testing (i.e., threat of persecution), and reproduces regardless of the threat and distractions of worry, riches, and pleasures of life. Jesus provides additional information by describing the Fourth-Soil Person as a generous or hospitable person who reproduces (i.e., wins souls) at a pace of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold.

Sowers do not make Fourth-Soil People; they find them through seed-sowing campaigns for a season. People often ask me how to transform second- and third-soil people into Fourth-Soil People. Although I believe this is a possibility, I remind them of Jesus’ Parable of the Growing Seed (Mark 4:30–32; Mark places this parable after the Parable of the Sower)—that our assignment is only to sow and reap a harvest. Efforts to transform second- and third-soil people into Fourth-Soil People should not replace broad seed-sowing efforts to find Fourth-Soil People in the harvest fields.

Conclusion

So which would you rather find among a people group, Persons of Peace or Fourth-Soil People? In *How Jesus Won Persons*, Delos Miles describes the social order of the communities among which Jesus walked: “The ancient *oikos* reflected the status order of that period.”⁵ Likewise, the *oikos* factor becomes apparent when a Fourth-Soil Person wins a hundredfold of his *oikos*, and their unshakable faith serve as the change agent for their community. The *oikos* factor may appear in the research of scientists at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute who contend that when just 10 percent of the population holds an unshakable belief, the majority of the society will adopt their belief.⁶ *Jesus’ Parable of the Sower functions as a first-century explanation of describing how movements develop in communities.* Lost people within a people group benefit the most when a follower of Jesus sows with intent of discovering many fourth-soil movement catalysts. 

⁵ Delos Miles, *How Jesus Won Persons* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), 244.

⁶ “Minority Rules: Scientists Discover Tipping Point for the Spread of Ideas,” Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, July 25, 2011, http://news.rpi.edu/luwakkey/2902_

Finding Fourth-Soil People: A Movement Case Study from Galilee

Analyzing case studies typically represents one of the key learning activities at a missionary training program. Often overlooked as a case study is Jesus' work in pre-Pentecost Galilee, partly because He did not plant churches, but mainly because a handful of biblical scholars view Jesus' pre-Pentecost work in Galilee as a failed mission. William Kurz, for example, argues that Jesus' mission work failed to produce results. Kurz states, "Jesus never saw the results of His preaching in His lifetime on earth."¹

The intent of demonstrating that a movement ensued in pre-Pentecost Galilee within the ministry of Jesus aims at catching the attention of missionary-movement practitioners. Unless missionaries are convinced Jesus established a movement in pre-Pentecost Galilee, they may underestimate the value of Jesus' case study.

Before providing evidence of Jesus' movement, the definition of the word *movement* must be clarified. For this, I use David Garrison's definition of a movement as described in his latest book, *A Wind in the House of Islam*. Garrison writes, "For the sake of clarity and consistency, let's define a movement . . . to be at least 100 new church starts or 1,000 baptisms that occur over a two-decade period."² Using Garrison's parameters of a thousand baptisms (Jesus did not plant individual churches), few missionaries will doubt this number of baptisms constitutes a noteworthy movement.

¹ See William Kurz, *Following Jesus* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1984), 33.

² David Garrison, *A Wind in the House of Islam* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2014), 5.

³ Scripture quotations are from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, 2009.

Evidence of at Least a Thousand Baptisms

In John's discourse of Jesus leaving a region and traveling to another due to conflict, he mentions that Jesus' ministry accumulated more baptisms than the sum of John the Baptist's ministry; "When Jesus knew that the Pharisees heard He was making and baptizing more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were)" (John 4:1–2).³ Matthew describes the number of those baptized by John the Baptist, "Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were flocking to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins" (3:5–6). Luke explains that John the Baptist's followers gained the attention of governmental officials, Pharisees, and crowds that included tax collectors and soldiers, all coming to him for baptism (3:7–21).

Knowing that the Jewish tradition included the practice of baptism before the time of Jesus and that Jesus' disciples conducted baptisms in pre-Pentecost Galilee, it is not difficult to imagine that many from the large crowds, such as the five thousand (Luke 9:12–17) and the four thousand (Mark 8:1–9), received baptism in the presence of Jesus. Often Jesus preached on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, which served as a convenient environment for conducting baptisms.

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In fewer than ten days after Jesus' ascension, three thousand people in Jerusalem received baptism. Notice that the three thousand apparently knew what to do when Peter told them, "Repent and be baptized." No formal training on baptism is mentioned. For this occasion, the three thousand likely had seen or heard of Jesus' death and resurrection, witnessed the miracle of the disciples' speaking in tongues, and heard Peter's powerful sermon. If this is what it took to get three thousand baptisms, it should not be a stretch to suppose that for each miracle Jesus performed in front of crowds in Galilee at least fifty to one hundred people routinely came forward for baptism. See Matthew 4:17, 23–25:

From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!" . . .

Jesus was going all over Galilee . . . preaching . . . healing. . . . Then the news about Him spread throughout Syria. . . . Large crowds followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

Historian Richard Horsley postulates that the Galilean movement was supported by first-generation believers; the movement did not depend on the Twelve or the seventy-two disciples once Jesus and the disciples left the region on their final journey to Jerusalem.⁴ Finally, to reach one thousand baptisms, the Twelve plus the seventy-two disciples only needed to baptize twelve of their *oikos* members.

Jesus' Pre-Pentecost Galilean Movement Case Study

There is more information in the gospel narratives regarding steps Jesus took to establish the pre-Pentecost Galilean movement than there is regarding steps taken by Paul—recorded in Acts and his letters—to establish the movements in Asia Minor. Paul wrote his letters to existing movements; very little information appears about how each movement began. The following represents basic actions Jesus implemented to produce a thousand baptisms in pre-Pentecost Galilee. To present the most accurate historical steps Jesus made to establish a movement, we will look to the narrative of Luke, who attempted to present events in chronological order.⁵

« Galilee, the size of Rhode Island with a population of more than two hundred thousand, represented Jesus' target mission field, and the lost house of Israel represented His primary target people group within His ministry field. »

A threefold-ministry-training periodization emerges in Luke's narrative: Jesus ministering as the disciples watch (chap. 4–7), Jesus training the disciples with the Parable of the Sower (8:4–15), and the disciples applying their training in the field (9:1–6; 10:1–24). Galilee, the size of Rhode Island with a population of more than two hundred thousand, represented Jesus' target mission field, and the lost house of Israel represented His primary target people group within His ministry field. All three Synoptic Gospel writers appear convinced that Jesus visited all 204 (according to Josephus) villages, towns, and cities in Galilee (see Matt 9:35, "Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages"; Mark 1:38–39, "Let's go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. . . . So He went into all of Galilee"; Luke 8:1, "He was traveling from one town and village to another"). Eckhard Schnabel lays out the possibility that Jesus could have visited all towns and villages in Galilee in less than a year.⁶ Once the people tried to slow Jesus down, to spend more time with Him, He replied, "I must proclaim the good news about the kingdom of God to the other towns also" (Luke 4:43).

4 Richard A. Horsley, "Early Christian Movements: Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel," *Harvard Theological Studies* 62:4 (2006), 1222–23. The basis of Horsley's theory rests on the large number of historical records and the letters of Pliny.

5 See John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1–9:20* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 547. Nolland comments, "The consensus is as follows. Luke reproduces quite closely the original order and scope of the materials."

6 Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1:247. Schnabel writes, "If Jesus spent two days in each of the 138 settlements of Galilee that Mordechai Aviam mentions, he would have needed 276 days, or 46 weeks (not counting Sabbath days), to reach every single Galilean town or village—not an impossible task in view of the three years of Jesus' public ministry."

Jesus explained His secret of multiplication using the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4–15). From a season of broad seed sowing, a certain number of new believers will in turn produce hundredfold new believers from among their *oikos*. The *oikos* factor (winning close friends and family) likely functioned as the key ingredient for the explosive growth coming from fourth-soil individuals.

Application from the Case Study

Taken from Luke's narrative, especially from 8:1–10:24, below is a list of lessons I learned from Jesus and how he established a pre-Pentecost movement in Galilee. I converted the lessons into action steps for missionaries preparing to launch ministries into new fields of service:


- Identify and adopt a specific geographic target area, like Galilee.
- Choose a people group within the target area.
- Develop a systematic plan for the gospel to be shared in every community.
- Model seed sowing for potential harvesters.
- Inform sowers of a pending harvest in the target ministry field.
- Enlist twelve sowers, train them with the Parable of the Sower, send them out.
- Enlist an additional seventy-two, train them with the Parable of the Sower, send them out.
- Warn sowers of dangers and teach them how to find Persons of Peace.
- Using the parable's description for each soil, look for fourth-soil individuals.
- When sowers return, discuss results using the four soil descriptions.
- Praise and thank God for fruit (souls won) coming from Fourth-Soil People.

The above activities represent a season of ministry, possibly lasting from one to two years. Upon completion of the sowing season, a new season of training leaders and forming churches emerges. Sowing season must not be rushed or filled with distractions.

Conclusion

Between 1999 and 2001, my ministry focused on a district (similar in land size to Jesus' Galilee) in a South Asian country with an estimated one million Muslims and no history of gospel sowing among the Muslim population. Over two years, with team members and volunteers, we sowed the gospel from village to village. Miracles, such as those occurring in the ministry of Jesus, did not take place. Our seed sowing came in the form of simple gospel sharing, distribution of Bibles in the local language, and multiple nighttime showings of the *JESUS* film. At the end of the two years, our work appeared fruitless, as fewer than a dozen Muslims professed Jesus as Savior.

But in one village of seven thousand Muslims, a young man heard the gospel from one of our sowing campaigns with volunteers from the United States. From this young fourth-soil man, a movement emerged as he shared the gospel with his *oikos*. Within two years, he established twenty-four house churches. Over the next 15 years, the movement, titled Way of Peace, added ten thousand baptized former Muslims. Today the movement actively sends missionaries from their movement into two neighboring countries.

Frank Beare believes the Luke 10:1–24 event of Jesus sending out the seventy-two (with the Twelve) likely took place in lower Galilee.⁷ Because Jesus sent them out to find Persons of Peace for housing purposes, the seventy-two likely came from the established movement in upper Galilee. By the time Jesus reached Jerusalem after leaving Galilee, Luke records 120 followers in the upper room (Acts 1:15). A principle emerges where Jesus uses believers from one movement to establish new movements in different locations. If missionaries will take the time to establish one movement, they can use “hot coals” (individuals from an existing movement) from the original movement to do as Jesus did to ignite movements in new areas. The next article demonstrates this strategy as I used “hot coals” from the Way of Peace movement to establish an emerging movement among a near-culture people group, pseudonymously called the Ro people. 

⁷ Frank Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 214.

Finding Fourth-Soil People: Modern-Day Application of Using the Parable of the Sower as a Field Guild

Applying the Parable of the Sower as a mission-field guide may represent a new concept for many missionaries, but I propose that the first generation of disciples likely knew this approach well. The word approach may be interchanged with strategy, *modus operandi*, or plan. Missionaries with varying backgrounds prefer different ways of saying this.

You may think I am reading and applying the Parable of the Sower on a literal level beyond Jesus' intent. I know of no better way to understand this parable than to approach it in this manner. Before entering into the project of applying the Parable of the Sower among the Ro (a pseudonym) people group, I spent two years in a seminary environment engaged in research on the Parable of the Sower.

For Jesus to place His field strategy within a parable is ingenious. Encapsulating the lesson in a parable has enabled it to travel across time and cultures. Missionaries longing to work as Jesus did and see results that He experienced in pre-Pentecost Galilee will find value in taking the parable off the pages of Scripture and applying it in the field. Yet in my research journey, I found no scholar or preacher recommending literal application of the parable as a means of understanding Jesus' original intent. Simple obedience, rather than intellectual contemplation, may represent the key to understanding the parable. Remember, it was farmers and fishermen who represented the original recipients of the parable.

My own application of the Parable of the Sower as field strategy took place in June 2017. I will present this

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application portion of my findings in steps, beginning with the selection of a target geographic location and, within that target area, a people group. Weekly follow-up took place, up to the writing of this article, for a total of ten months. Again, I have used pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants.

Step 1: Establishing a “Galilee”

The square mileage of Galilee in the time of Jesus mirrors the state of Rhode Island, roughly two thousand square miles. The South Asian district chosen for the project contains 2,400 square miles. Historians estimate a broad range of two hundred thousand to three million residents in Jesus’ Galilee. The population of my target people group, the Muslim Ro people, stood at five hundred thousand at the commencement of the project. Living as minorities in the district, the Ro people suffer and face tremendous hardships.

Step 2: Believe in a Potential Harvest

The parable’s climax moves past three soils with negative results and escalates to a surprising end, the discovery of hundredfold-producing individuals. Since we know the end of the parable, missionaries approaching their “Galilee” should assume an attitude of confidence. I personally believe that the Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Priceless Pearl (apparently told not long after the delivery of the Parable of the Sower) were used by Jesus to explain His attitude when approaching new communities in Galilee. The treasure likely represents the harvest coming from the Fourth-Soil Person.

To build up my confidence that a harvest awaited among the Ro people in the district, one year prior to the project I requested and arranged for a team of two near-culture evangelists to travel to the district and share the gospel among the Ro people. They functioned like the spies whom Moses sent ahead of the Israelites. The evangelists returned with amazing stories of Ro people responding to the gospel. On their journey they led eight Ro to faith and baptized them. I shared this report with a church in Houston, explaining that I believed a large harvest awaited among the Ro people. The church agreed to send volunteers and to finance the project.

Step 3: Broad Seed Sowing Campaign

Applying the Parable of the Sower required a season of gospel sowing in the form of evangelism campaigns. For the initial campaign, I attempted to reconstruct Jesus’ deployment of the seventy-two disciples. Eight American

volunteers traveled to the South Asian district. As Jesus used disciples from the harvest in upper Galilee to seed lower Galilee, I arranged sixty-five disciples from the Way of Peace movement (from a neighboring district; with ten thousand baptized believers; see article on page 17) to join the project. In total, seventy-two disciples went out for three days boldly sharing the gospel.

Orientation occurred the evening before deployment. The seventy-two disciples were asked to forgo their normal approach to engaging lost people and adopt Jesus’ approach of “preach and heal.” For healing training we simply read three of Jesus’ healing episodes, analyzed what He said and how He healed, then agreed as a group to do the same. The main training involved the reading of the Parable of the Sower followed by explanation and specific instructions for field application.

Our group of seventy-two disciples, traveling in pairs, agreed to begin all engagements with Ro people by stating, “We are men of God and have come to your community to pray for sick people.” After prayer, the disciples would share the gospel; Jesus is holy, paid our penalty when He died, rose from the dead; we believe that Jesus alone can get us to heaven. The second portion of the orientation was given equal importance to the first portion. When a Ro person agreed to believe the gospel message, the disciples began analyzing and categorizing responses using the Parable of the Sower.

Step 4: Analyze Germinated Responses

In John 4:34–38, the disciples return to meet Jesus after his encounter at the Samaritan well, where a woman immediately believed and returned to her town telling others about her experience. The disciples, not fully understanding the situation, prompted Jesus to explain how quickly a harvest can occur: “the sower and the reaper can rejoice together” (4:36). With that statement, Jesus taught the disciples to expect immediate positive responses; in the case of the woman at the well, they experienced large positive results. With this in mind and knowing that I would ask them to report on actions and statements from positive responders, our seventy-two disciples prepared to analyze this portion of the project.

I provided our seventy-two disciples with specific examples of statements and actions coming from the positive responders. Positive responders who received the gospel but stated they would not share the gospel with their *oikos* due to fear of persecution we labeled as second-soil individuals. Positive responders who made statements

such as “I cannot share this with my family and friends because I will lose everything” would be labeled as third-soil individuals. Our disciples were not asked to keep track of second- and third-soil responders, only fourth-soil responders (individuals who stated that they would share the gospel with their family and friends or immediately began to share the gospel with their family and friends).

Results

After three full days of sharing the gospel, our group of seventy-two disciples debriefed in pairs, totaling thirty-six interviews. With elation, these disciples related more than twenty stories of Ro people being healed or stating that they felt better. A total 681 Ro people heard the gospel, and 399 Ro individuals responded positively that they now believed Jesus was their Savior and that there was no other way to heaven but through him. From the 399 positive responses, the disciple teams reported that 98 persons fit the descriptions of the Fourth-Soil Person. Narrowing down the 98, we identified seven individuals whom we would closely monitor over the next ten months.

Three Examples of How the Disciples Identified Fourth-Soil Individuals

When the disciples entered into “G’s” community and shared the gospel, G believed and immediately gathered twelve of his family and friends to sit and listen to the disciple team retell the gospel story. Upon visiting G’s house one day later, the disciple team witnessed an angry group of Islamic religious leaders entering G’s house with threats to everyone in the room to reject the message of the disciples. After the leaders left, G told those remaining in his house not to listen to the religious leaders because their message does not offer salvation. Revisiting G’s house the next day, the disciple team discovered that G had shared the gospel with additional neighbors. Over the past ten months, G has baptized twenty-two of his family and friends.


After hearing and receiving the gospel from a disciple team, “A” immediately invited the disciple team to his house and called twenty of his neighbors to come listen to the gospel. A believed the gospel and asked for prayer. After the prayer, A said, “You gave us good news for how we can go to heaven. We should tell this good news to others.” Over the past ten months, A has baptized twenty-six Ro individuals.

After “K” heard the gospel and believed, the disciple team heard K say, “I have to tell this message to my family and friends.” A few weeks later, K brought twenty-five of his family and friends to a gospel-sharing event hosted by the follow-up team. After ten months, K has seventeen baptized individuals in his emerging network.

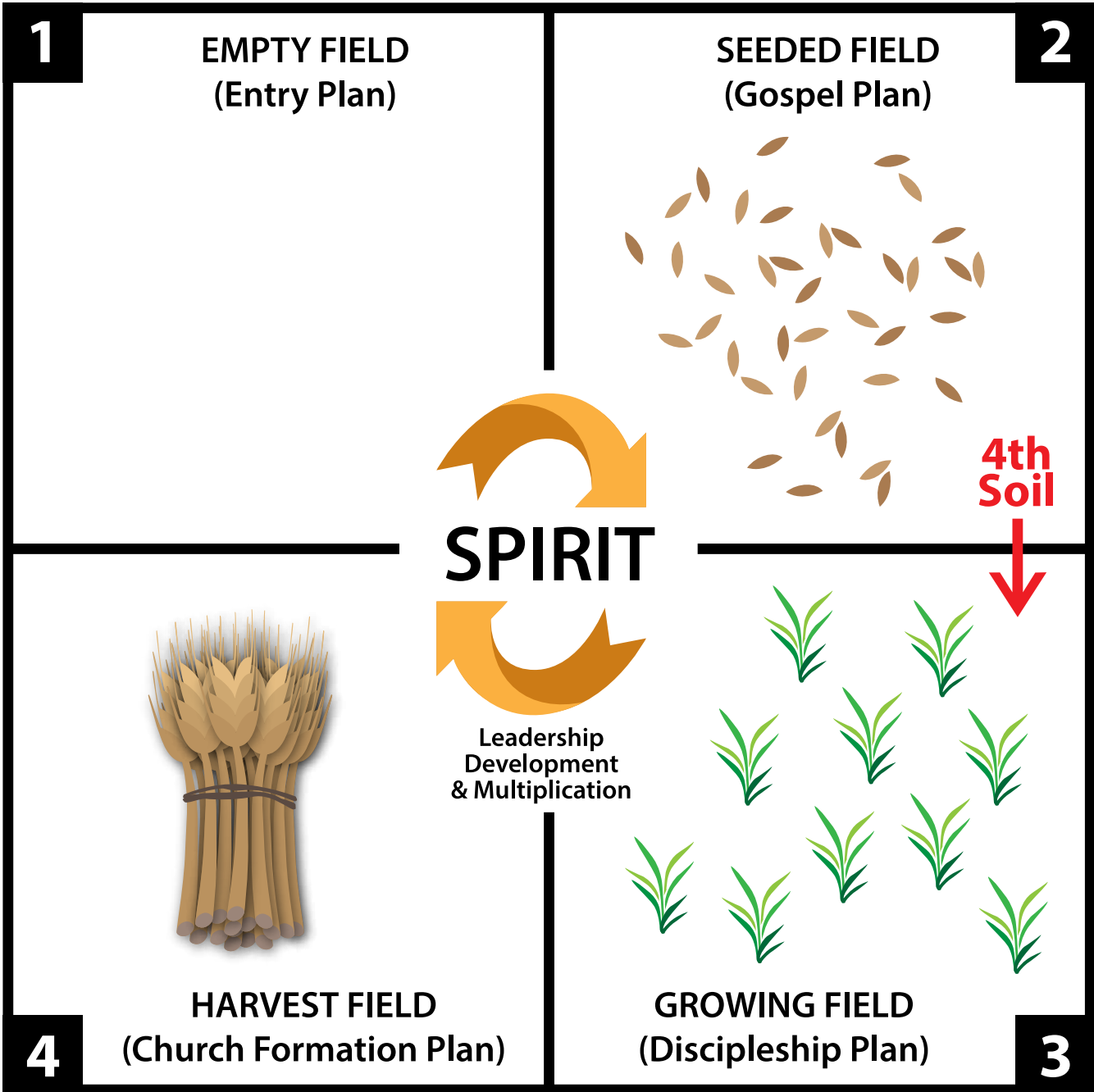
The follow-up team keeps track of the seven individuals identified as potential Fourth-Soil People because of their immediate actions of sharing the gospel with their *oikos*, regardless of threats and concerns. From the seven potential fourth-soil individuals, a total of 163 (research includes generation tracking) Ro people have been baptized. A second seed-sowing campaign in new areas of the district took place three months ago in which more than three hundred received Jesus as their Savior and thirty-five experienced baptism. The follow-up team continues the work with ongoing Bible training for all new believers.

Connecting the Finding Fourth-Soil Project to *Four Fields*

For missionaries familiar with *Four Fields* training (see diagram below), the Finding Fourth-Soil project takes place within field 2. Progressing from fields 2 and 3 occurs when new believers emerge from gospel-seed-sowing campaigns. Missionaries moving their ministry into fields 3 and 4 with many new second- and third-soil (nonreproducing) believers requires the missionary to take on a role as a motivator to get second- and third-soil individuals to reproduce. Progressing into field 3 with multiple Fourth-Soil People reproducing new believers represents a healthy emerging movement in which the missionary’s role appears much different from that of a motivator.

The Finding Fourth-Soil People project demonstrates that patience and hard work in discovering multiple Fourth-Soil individuals using the Parable of the Sower as a strategy plan makes a great impact on a people group and aligns the missionary’s ministry with Jesus’ model in pre-Pentecost Galilee. The temptation to move quickly out of field 2 with a handful of new believers to begin forming churches limits a missionary to a mode of “growth by addition.” Finding and investing in fourth-soil individuals can catalyze the work from “growth by addition” to “a movement of multiplication.” 

Jesus' Four Field Strategy for disciple making and church formation.



Moving from field 2 to 3 with multiple 4th-soil individuals rather than multiple 2nd- and 3rd-soil individuals, positions the missionary's work in "growth by multiplication" rather than "growth by addition."



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Finding Fourth-Soil People: American Context

A couple of years ago on a college campus, I watched a group of college students help their fellow student find his lost dorm key in a grassy field. The student could not retrace his exact steps, so his fellow students searched and roamed aimlessly. To expedite the search, I stepped in and asked the students to form one line and walk together in unison, covering one section at a time. In a matter of moments, the students swept the field and the student was reunited with his key. Inside a missionary's target working area awaits a movement catalyst. Jesus not only provided us His plan for finding fourth-soil individuals; He modeled it in pre-Pentecost Galilee.

Let's apply lessons learned from Jesus and his ministry to the U.S. context and use all the tools and resources available to help missionaries find Fourth-Soil People among the many unreached people groups residing within our borders. Churches as well can adopt unreached people groups in specific geographic locations. Plans and tools are only beneficial when used.

Establish a Target

Jesus began His ministry with a specific target, the lost house of Israel in Galilee. In my own ministry, I discovered that when I did not have a specific target, I hit nothing. As well, when I had multiple targets, I also failed because of distractions. The first step of establishing an unreached people group movement in the U.S. involves choosing a people group or population segment within a geographic location. This represents your Galilee. Keep in mind that Jesus' seed-sowing ministry in Galilee lasted one to two years. Patience and extended commitment to the goal of finding movement catalysts are required.

A valuable tool assisting missionaries to establish their target people group or population segment in a geographic location is available from Mapping Center for Evangelism and Church Growth¹ (www.mappingcenter.org), which uses the latest consumer data (used by Fortune 500 companies for marketing purposes) and merges it with current mapping

technology. With the Mapping Center tool, I created my Galilee in my city. The map below showed me 2,761 probable Muslim homes, representing my target people group. To help me systematically sow my field with the gospel, I used natural boundary lines (major roads) to create smaller sowing fields (second map).



After one year of work, 811 of 2,761 resident homes of my target people group received a knock on the door. Residents at home during our seed-sowing campaigns (20 percent were home) heard the gospel, and we gave them a copy of the Gospel of Luke and a *JESUS* film. For the remaining 80 percent we left in a pouch hung on their door the Gospel of Luke and a *JESUS* film.

Besides going door to door, our team of missionaries interact with Muslims in and around our Galilee by eating at Muslim restaurants, frequenting the many mosques, shopping at Muslim stores and interacting with them at soccer games. Most of the thirty-four Muslims who professed Jesus as their Savior up to this point came through a team member living in a Muslim-majority apartment complex. Along with volunteers, our mission team averages

¹ The Mapping Center claims their accuracy of data is 86 percent accurate. Data for apartment complexes appear less accurate. All information is public data, and the program includes numerous features assisting missionaries not only to identify a people group, but also to keep track with seed-sowing progress.

sixty gospel shares per month in and around our Galilee. We estimate a total of two years to cover our Galilee, as best as we know how, as Jesus covered his Galilee. At this point, three of the thirty-four former Muslims shared the gospel with immediate family members, the remaining lived in fear or worry about how to survive financially.

« **A strategy growing in popularity outside the U.S. that should be employed in the U.S. involves temporarily extracting fourth-soil individuals from existing overseas movements and dropping them into a U.S. missionary's Galilee.**



We Are Not the Only Sowers in Our Galilee

Unlike Jesus' Galilee, our Galilee had sowers living within its borders before we adopted the target area. In a highly restricted Muslim country, one of my team members visited a like-minded mission organization conducting a Bible correspondence program with thousands of Muslim graduates. The team member visited the Bible correspondence office and asked for assistance in locating a person. The Bible correspondence representative gladly responded with an offer to help, but he needed a description of the person the missionary had in mind. The missionary asked if any of their graduates met the profile of a Fourth-Soil Person. From the description, a representative of the Bible correspondence arranged for my team member to meet three graduates. From those three former Muslims, more than five hundred Muslims had accepted Jesus as their Savior and received baptism.


Considering this, our hometown team spends a fourth of its time connecting with churches in our Galilee asking if they know of any Muslim converts who meet the profile of a Fourth-Soil Person. Many churches have ESL programs or refugee ministries; we ask them the same. Churches and organizations often serve as lighthouses for Fourth-Soil People and need to be trained in what to do and not do with potential movement catalysts.

Preaching an accurate understanding of the Parable of the Sower to churches has a correlation with the FBI's actions of disseminating their "Top 10 Most Wanted" list, which contains profiles of people they intend to find. Every opportunity I have to speak at a church, I exposit the Parable of the Sower and use it as a means of disseminating my "Top Fourth-Soil Most Wanted" list. Knowing that church members work alongside, sit next to at school, shop from, and do business with the people group in my target Galilee, my goal involves presenting a profile of fourth-soil individuals so that church members will in turn inform me of potential Fourth-Soil People sightings.

Hot Coals

Jesus mobilized 120 Galileans from the Galilean movement to ignite the Jerusalem movement on Pentecost. A strategy growing in popularity outside the U.S. that should be employed in the U.S. involves temporarily extracting fourth-soil individuals from existing overseas movements and dropping them into a U.S. missionary's Galilee. From a single hot coal of a fire, many new fires can ignite. Because a "hot coal" (person) comes from the same or near-culture targeted people group and has experience with the makings of a movement, a hot coal comes with advantages over an American missionary. With this approach, the Fourth-Soil Person works in the missionary's Galilee to find Fourth-Soil People and does so without the *oikos* factor. Faced with a situation of not having the Fourth-Soil Person's *oikos*, a hot coal must function as a sower, same as the missionary. From my experience with the hot-coal strategy, hot coals typically sow on a level that typically supersedes the work of the missionary. In my state, two Hindu temples and one mosque have been closed due to the work of overseas hot coals.

Conclusion

The Parable of the Sower informs missionaries that a catalyst for a fourth-soil movement exists, and the process of finding this person occurs best through large-scale, gospel-sowing campaigns followed by careful examination of germinated seeds (new believers). The usefulness of the parable for missionaries stands on many factors, including the use of good hermeneutics to understand the parable, the missionary assuming the role of the sower rather than of the Fourth-Soil Person, and the missionary viewing the Parable of the Sower as the best approach for multiplicative results. 

Finding Fourth-Soil People: Jesus' Modus Operandi for Establishing a Movement

Bible scholars and missionaries often speak different languages. While missionaries might refer to Jesus' Parable of the Sower as representing His approach to fieldwork, His strategy for discovering a movement catalyst, or His modus operandi, biblical scholars use different words to describe Jesus' Parable of the Sower. Consider the following comments by scholars:

A. T. Cadoux suggests the parable represents Jesus' "apologia (defense) for His practice of preaching to all and sundry."¹ Malcolm Tolbert claims that Luke "connects the parable to the itinerant preaching mission conducted by Jesus in cities and villages."² N. T. Wright notes, "The paradoxical prophetic 'sowings' of the 'Word' were being recapitulated in Jesus' own ministry."³ Morna Hooker (easiest to understand) views Jesus' use of the parable as an "explanation of His whole ministry."⁴ Additional scholars

state the same, but in vaguer terms. Robert Stein says the Parable of the Sower "serves as an example of the preaching mentioned in Luke 8:1."⁵ Within Klyne Snodgrass's eight traditional options for interpreting the parable, he says, "The parable reflects the experience of Jesus in His own proclamation."⁶

Importance of the Parable of the Sower

The Synoptic Gospel writers do all they can to demonstrate the importance of the parable, mainly through placement within their narratives. The parable appears in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matt 13:1–23; Mark 4:1–20; Luke 8:4–15). Klyne Snodgrass says the Parable of the Sower represents the first substantive parable in the Synoptic Gospels.⁷ Only the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Mustard Seed appear in all

1 A. T. Cadoux, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Clarke, 1977), 155.

2 Malcolm Tolbert, *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 9:72.

3 N. T. Wright, "Kingdom Redefined: The Announcement," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, ed. James Dunn and Scot McKnight (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 218–19.

4 Morna Hooker, *Gospel According to St Mark* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 122.

5 Robert Stein, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 24:242.

6 Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 156.

7 *Ibid.*, 145.

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three Synoptic Gospels. Many Bible scholars view the Parable of the Sower with high regard; R. C. H. Lenski claims that the predominant theme of the New Testament flows through Jesus' Parable of the Sower.⁸

Elevating the importance of the Parable of the Sower, Snodgrass describes the parable as “the parable about parables” because of Jesus’ statement to the disciples in Mark 4:13, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any of the parables?”⁹ With the use of *παραβολὴν ταύτην* (this parable), Kenneth Wuest states that Mark clarifies his reference to the Parable of the Sower and claims the phrase *how is it possible* declares “the impossibility of knowing all the parables, if one does not know the one about the Sower.”¹⁰ Matthew Gumpert adds, “To understand what *the Parable of the Sower* means is thus to possess the key to understanding *all parables*.”¹¹ Quintin Quesnell states the same in the negative indicative; “If you do not understand the sower parable, you will not and cannot understand all the parables.”¹²

« To understand what the *Parable of the Sower* means is thus to possess the key to understanding *all parables*. »

The parable comes with an announcement by Jesus that a seven-hundred-year-old prophecy by Isaiah is officially fulfilled. The announcement appears between Jesus’ delivery of the parable and the explanation of the parable in which He quotes Isaiah 6:9, “Looking they may not see, and hearing they may not understand” (Luke 8:10). This quotation may appear insignificant or even confusing; only by reading the Isaiah passage does its significance become clear.

After Isaiah replied, “Here I am. Send me” (Isa.6:8), God delivers the bad news that even though Isaiah will proclaim, people will not hear or listen to him. Isaiah asks, “Until when, Lord?” (Isa. 6:11). God answers Isaiah in 11:1 by informing him that the period of time will

cease when a shoot grows out of the stump of Jesse. Only Matthew completes Jesus’ reference to the Isaiah prophecy passage with a positive and encouraging announcement:

But your eyes are blessed because they do see, and your ears because they do hear! For I assure you: Many prophets and righteous people longed to see things you see yet didn’t see them; to hear the things you hear yet didn’t hear them. (Matt. 13:16–17)

Matthew describes the disciples as living in an era when many will hear and respond to the preaching of the good news. Jesus uses the parable as a platform to make the announcement that the seven-hundred-year-old prophecy of Isaiah has ended.

Context of the Parable of the Sower

D. W. Cleverley Ford points out that Luke 8 is “about preaching.”¹³ An examination of the context of Luke’s presentation of the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4–15) demonstrates that proclamation of the Word of God represents the central theme surrounding the parable as well as the parable’s internal primary theme. The proclamation theme directly affects the meaning of the fruit of the Fourth-Soil Person. The theme appears within the parable with the first-soil person’s decision not to believe and with the decisions of the second-, third-, and Fourth-Soil Persons after hearing the proclaimed Word of God. After Jesus explains the parable, He delivers the parable of the lamp (Luke 8:16), which also carries the theme of proclamation. Finally, Luke places within proximity of the Parable of the Sower the two preaching campaigns of Jesus’ disciples (Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–24).

Applying the Parable: Attitude, Proclamation, and Analysis

One clear action and two implicit actions emerge from the parable. The first implicit action involves maintaining a positive attitude of a coming harvest (not a distant

8 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1943), 522.

9 Ibid. Scripture quotations are from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, 2009.

10 Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 87.

11 Matthew Gumpert, *The End of the Meaning: Studies in Catastrophe* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 154.

12 Quintin Quesnell, *The Mind of Mark* (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1969), 214.

13 D. W. Cleverley Ford, *A Reading of Saint Luke’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1967), 116.

future harvest, but an immediate harvest). This attitude within Jesus appears when He sends out the seventy-two disciples, “The harvest is abundant” (Luke 10:2). The Parable of the Sower emits a positive outlook as it builds to an encouraging climactic ending. Disappointment of the three nonproducing soils dissipates with the appearance of a hundredfold-producing Fourth-Soil People, which we will see represents a movement catalyst.

The second action, and the most obvious, involves the action of sowing the Word of God, the gospel. Within the parable, the sowing occurs as a season, not as a continuous action. This period is followed by a season of evaluating germinated seeds, which enables the discovery of fourth-soil individuals. Looking at the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, His sowing season lasted roughly one to two years. With the sending of the seventy-two likely taking place in lower Galilee, Jesus appears on a mission to sow the gospel in all of Galilee’s 204 (according to Josephus) villages, towns and cities.

« **The majority of the parable gives attention to the description of each soil and explains what a Fourth-Soil Person does and does not believe and do. The detailed descriptions serve as the key to finding fourth-soil movement catalysts.** »

The third action, analyzing germinated seeds, is often the most neglected of the three actions of the parable but should not receive a lower priority than the other two. The majority of the parable gives attention to the description of each soil and explains what a Fourth-Soil Person does and does not believe and do. The detailed descriptions serve as the key to finding fourth-soil movement catalysts. Missionaries are not community movement catalysts; their job is to find community movement catalysts.

Conclusion

Sowing abundantly likely leads to reaping abundant fourth-soil movement catalysts. Discovering multiple fourth-soil catalysts is good news for a people group and represents the best way of moving unreached people groups into the category of reached. Finding fourth-soil individuals creates for a missionary a new season of work that involves training, teaching, and forming churches within the *oikos* (family, household) of each Fourth-Soil Person. The Fourth-Soil People need the missionary as much as the missionary needs Fourth-Soil People.

A special joy and satisfaction awaits missionaries who adopt the Parable of the Sower as their field strategy in new areas of service. Their ministry will likely transform from a ministry of addition to multiplication. I doubt Jesus would be critical of a missionary attempting to replicate His ministry in pre-Pentecost Galilee. The Parable of the Sower provides missionaries with the opportunity to do ministry exactly the way Jesus did. But there are serious issues related to the understanding and translation of the Parable of the Sower that must be resolved before the parable becomes a useful tool for missionaries longing to see movements emerge in their fields of service. MF



A Word of Counsel to UPG Initiatives

According to Joshua Project, 41.5 percent of the world's population is unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Additionally, statistics show an imbalance of Christian workers—despite the great need among unreached people groups (UPGs), most missionaries and funding go to reached areas.

In recent years, these statistics have led to a concerted drive to reach the unreached people groups of the world.

This is all good! Actually, it is fantastic!

But I have a concern with how we go about reaching them. The editor of *Mission Frontiers*, Rick Wood, once wrote:

It is not enough just to send missionaries to every tribe and tongue. **If we bring an incomplete or culture-bound gospel along with an ineffective model of doing discipleship**, then we have failed.¹

I have seen, read, and heard of Western-driven UPG efforts that employ short-term teams and use foreign funding to drive these initiatives. Well-meaning organizations based in the USA invite inexperienced people to sign up and go to the UPGs they serve, under their guidance, for short-term mission trips. Recruiting images show young white people standing among indigenous people—or should I say standing out. These organizations with an UPG emphasis raise money to fund key aspects of their UPG model of mission, such as building training centers, paying local church planter salaries, creating materials and so forth.

This brings me back to Rick Wood's quote, which is worth repeating:

It is not enough just to send missionaries to every tribe and tongue. **If we bring an incomplete or culture-bound gospel along with an ineffective model of doing discipleship**, then we have failed.²

If we want to reach the unreached for many generations—a goal that includes cascading multiplication (disciples to disciples) and generational multiplication (parents to children)—then we need to use models that match our drive.

Once the unreached become reached, they need to be able to pass on a culturally relevant gospel and make disciples from community to community without being dependent on outsiders or giving the impression that foreigners drive Christianity in their context. If the UPG mission effort starts with lots of white people coming and going through STM and foreign funding, we give locals a model that cannot be easily sustained or reproduced based on their own initiative and determination.

The best strategic question I have ever encountered was captured by my friend and mentor, Allen Swanson, in an article he wrote based on his service in Taiwan. The question was originally posed by Sidney J.W. Clark, whom I have quoted repeatedly in some of my recent books (such as *Standing On Our Own Feet* and *Go Light! Go Local!: A Conscientious Approach to Short-term Missions*). Clark raised this question nearly eighty years ago:


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The question as to whether work at any point of its development can still be maintained by the people if it is left by the missionary, forms the best test of the soundness of our mission policies.³

I suggest that all of us adopt this question to help us shape sound cross-cultural mission paradigms.

This is just a friendly word of counsel to those of us who care about UPGs. Let's convert Rick Wood's words and make them our aim: Let's send missionaries to every tribe and tongue. Then, let's plant a holistically reproducible and culturally relevant gospel along with an effective model of doing discipleship for the cultural insiders, in the short-term and over the long-term. 

Notes:

1 2 Rick Wood, Editorial Comment in "Africa: Hope in the Midst of Darkness," *Mission Frontiers*, November–December 2011.

3 Quoted in Allen Swanson, "The Money Problem," *World Encounter: Taiwan – New Strategy for the Seventies*, June 1969, Volume 6.

« Once the unreached become reached, they need to be able to pass on a culturally relevant gospel and make disciples from community to community without being dependent on outsiders or giving the impression that foreigners drive Christianity in their context. »

41.5%
UNREACHED

Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials

By Jayson Georges and Mark D Baker

BY **SCOTT HEDLEY**

Scott Hedley has 30 years of extensive missionary experience both as a mission mobilizer and as a on-the-field worker.

Book Review by Scott Hedley


This book was eye-opening to me, a Westerner, in that it helped me to better understand my ministry colleagues in Asia. Understanding the concepts in this book is also important to the global church because most of the ethnic groups with limited or no access to the gospel (i.e. Unreached People Groups) are predominantly honor-shame in their cultural outlook. It is important for Westerners to understand why hospitality, indirect communication, purity regulations and patronage are all common features of honor-shame cultures. Western Christians must also realize that their own cultural values (i.e. independence, direct speech, efficiency, scientific rationalism, convenience and egalitarianism) are equally hard to understand in the eyes of non-Westerners.

To neglect honor-shame concepts in our explanation of the gospel could lead people into a shallow relationship with God, as people trust God for one component of salvation (i.e. forgiveness of sin's guilt), but then bypass Christ's work for absolving sin's shame.

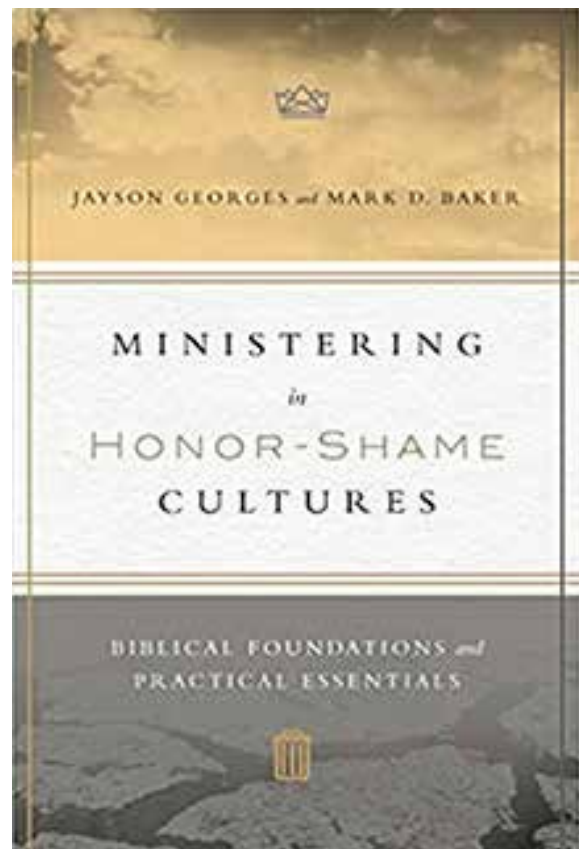
The authors offer an interesting new perspective on the story of the prodigal son. The authors believe that Jesus was telling this story in order to question the flawed identities of both groups – the falsely shamed and the falsely honored. The parable is an invitation to the audience to abandon their old identity as either a despicable rule breaker or respectable rule keeper, and embrace the new status that the Father offers. Just as the father (in the prodigal son story) willingly suffered shame to communicate love and forgiveness in order to restore relationship with each son personally and together as a family, Jesus also summons the Pharisees to adopt His radical, shame-bearing love and join His mission of honoring the shamed through table fellowship.

For those of us ministering in other cultures, it is important for us to analyze the host culture. Here are some important questions for mining the honor-shame elements in a culture. What common terms, idioms, or euphemisms refer to the concepts of honor and shame in your host culture? What are the primary symbols and images of honor and shame? When someone is disgraced, how do they try to restore their honor? What cultural rituals and practices confer status (high or low)? What words communicate respect and disrespect? What objects are associated with honor and shame? What commonly known stories or characters embody the cultural notions of honor-shame? The answers to these questions become

the metaphoric language for explaining biblical salvation. After doing this research, the field workers then can select biblical stories and images in the Bible that parallel cultural notions of honor and shame in the host culture. The authors provide a great list of biblical stories that address concepts of honor and shame in chapter 8 (evangelism) and in the appendices.

I recommend this book for all people who work in non-Western cultures. 

« To neglect honor-shame concepts in our explanation of the gospel could lead people into a shallow relationship with God. »



Faith

—With Evaluation and Change—

Yields Much Fruit

BY **C. ANDERSON**

C. Anderson blogs weekly about Disciple Making Movements and church planting among the unreached at dmmsfrontiermissions.com and about general missionary life issues at missionarylif.org. She has also co-authored a 30 day devotional for church planters called *Faith to Move Mountains*.

Some people are addicted to change. They love it! Most of us hate it. We like things to be predictable and stable. A distaste for change, however, blocks the path to seeing a multiplying movement of disciples making disciples.

Let me begin with a confession. I am often in the category of those who dislike change.

My husband has a very annoying habit (to me, not him!) of taking new routes when going somewhere. I get in the car, expecting to relax and serenely ride to the movies on our date night. Soon I notice we are on an unfamiliar road. In panic (okay, not exactly panic – but with some anxiety) I say “Honey, aren’t we going to the movies? Where in the world are we?”

Suddenly the great adventurer, he replies, “I thought we would try a different way to get there.” Arghhhh! No! I just wanted a relaxing and predictable evening.

Change. It isn’t comfortable for most people, myself included. A willingness to evaluate and revise what we do, though, is vital if we want to release a Disciple Making Movement (DMM).

Faith Gets Us Started, But We Can’t Stop There

Hebrews 11:6 says, “It is impossible to please God without faith” (NLT). Faith is the birth place of a movement. Dreaming of seeing thousands upon thousands from your Unreached People Group worshipping Jesus – it’s a foundational first step.

Can you close your eyes and see it? Disciples making disciples? Groups of disciples starting new groups in new neighborhoods in a natural, organic way? This multiplication bringing cultural and community transformation that sweeps through your region? Without that powerful vision of hope strong in your heart, a movement is unlikely.

Faith is the beginning point. It is also this passionate dream that keeps us pressing forward when the going gets tough.

Together with sincere faith and vision, there must also be a genuine willingness to constantly examine what we are doing in relation to the goal of multiplying discipleship groups.

If our current efforts are not creating those results, we must be willing to do some painful work - changing *how* we do ministry. We may even need to change what we *believe* about ministry. If we are experiencing only addition growth rather than multiplication, it means we must take a hard look at our methods and activities. This is not easy. It can, in fact, be deeply distressing. This process is necessary, though, to release a DMM.

Parable of the Barren Fig Tree–Luke 13:6-9

Jesus tells a disturbing story in Luke 13 about a fig tree that didn’t bear fruit. The parable is about a man who planted a fig tree in his garden. Every time he checked on the tree, no fruit was to be found. This disappointed him.

“Finally, he said to his gardener. ‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down. It’s just taking up space in the garden.’” (Luke 13:7-NLT).

The gardener who daily tended the plants, asked the owner for time to do a few things differently. He said he would fertilize the tree and give it special attention. If after one more year it still didn’t produce fruit, he would cut it down.

This story is an apt illustration of how unfruitful discipleship activities take up space in our lives. If after adjusting a few elements these tasks and projects still don’t produce fruit, we need to be willing to remove them. We need to make room for new things to grow.

Shifting to Just-In-Time Training

For twenty-eight years I worked in an organization that was very innovative when it began. Like all organizations though, certain patterns of operating became deeply established. One accepted system was how we train. There was a particular formula used to structure training. The vast majority of training programs followed that approach.

We used this established method for many years to train both national and international church planters with the goal of seeing them start DMMs. The problem was, we didn’t see very many movements. We saw some, but they were few and far between.

« Some people are addicted to change. They love it! Most of us hate it. We like things to be predictable and stable. A distaste for change, however, blocks the path to seeing a multiplying movement of disciples making disciples. »

Our flagship training program was well known in our organization. It was the accepted and familiar program for those who wanted to do church planting among unreached peoples. An honest examination, however, showed that it wasn't producing the results we dreamed of. Though once fruitful, it now neither attracted many students to attend, nor resulted in numerous rapidly multiplying churches being started.

It was painful to even admit that. Thinking about doing something different was difficult! I felt personally attached to this particular training program. There had initially been some good results. I had fond memories of those early victories. Some significant churches started among unreached peoples! I'd made a heavy personal investment of time, money and prayer—developing this program in our area.

Mediocre or Meaningful

Audrey Malphurs wrote in *Christianity Today's Leadership Journal*, "When you avoid honest, objective assessment, you are opting for comfort over courage and ministry mediocrity over meaningful ministry." When I took a hard, critical and honest look at things, I had to admit that the results we were getting from this training were mediocre.

Passion in my heart to see more lost people know Jesus, and the overwhelming spiritual need of the unreached compelled me to ruthlessly assess what we were doing. I asked further questions.

- How effective was this method of training really?
- Were just a few believers and churches started by the students in our training enough in comparison with the massive need of the lost around us?
- Was it truly worth the huge investment of time and personnel to keep this training running?

Henry Cloud writes in his excellent book, *Necessary Endings*, about the positive power of hopelessness. We must become "hopeless" to the point where we are willing to stop what we are doing. Only then will we have the space and energy to start new and more effective activities. When we finally reach that hopeless point, God has us where He wants us. Instead of doing something He spoke to us about ten or

fifteen years ago, or maybe even just one or two years ago, we are willing to listen to Him speak afresh.

- What is on God's heart to do now?
- What is needed to take things forward?
- Do we have other options?
- Are there any innovative approaches with which we could experiment?

When we are stuck in a particular methodology, strategy or way of operating, we don't ask those questions. We just run the program. We just keep doing what we have been doing, hoping for a different result. Small adjustments are made and we may even fill out evaluation forms. But our mindset is already set. We keep doing what we have always been doing.

Getting to where I was willing to evaluate and experiment with new things created a shift. Our team moved to a Just-in-Time training (<http://dmmsfrontiermissions.com/what-is-just-in-time-training/>) approach using much shorter classroom training periods with application and coaching in between. We began to filter, only inviting those who were applying the material to the next trainings. Other adjustments were also made.

These changes were hard. They made many people uncomfortable—even angry. Passionate commitment to fulfilling the vision God gave us to release movements propelled us forward and through these challenges.

The result? Instead of seeing third generation growth of discipleship groups after twenty years, we began to see it happening within one or two years. Rather than thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of discipleship effort into people who later decided they weren't that interested in seeing a disciple making movement, we invested about 10% of our previous time and money and in some locations we saw thousands become Jesus followers through the trainees. We are still learning and evaluating, but already the results are bearing much fruit.


Be Hopeless Enough To Change

Dan Allender, in his book, *Leading with A Limp*, quotes a man named Stockdale. The context is slightly different, but I love this quote as I think about starting Disciple

Making Movements. He writes, "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end, which you can never afford to lose, with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality."

The illustration above, how we evaluated and changed the way we trained, is just one example. The principle (faith + evaluation + change = greater fruit) applies to disciple-making efforts on many different levels. Think about it related to how you are doing evangelism, how you mobilize, or how you invite people to make a decision for Christ. It applies to how you are learning language, to friendship evangelism strategies, to contextualization, to leadership development and more.

If you are not yet getting the kind of results that match the dream God has put in your heart for a movement, don't despair. Evaluate. Be courageous. Be "hopeless" enough to do something different. Experiment and try something new. Most of all, go back to God and ask Him what He wants to do now. God is incredibly creative! He is never stuck or out of great ideas for how to bring about His kingdom fruit.

What are you doing right now that is not bearing the fruit you hope for? 

« **If you are not yet getting the kind of results that match the dream God has put in your heart for a movement, don't despair. Evaluate. Be courageous. Be "hopeless" enough to do something different. Experiment and try something new. Most of all, go back to God and ask Him what He wants to do now.** »

Kingdom Kernels:

Death: the Spiritual Triggering Effect

I had just flown in from the middle of the Church-Planting Movement (CPM) we helped catalyze in the mountains of a highly restrictive country in Asia. I landed in a world very different from my mission experience—a traditional field with over 100 years of mission work, churches of all denominations and mature seminaries. Yet, despite the large number of indigenous Christians, it was a field in which the kingdom had plateaued and was now in decline.

« **In Asia, persecution was not fueling our movement; boldness and perseverance in the face of persecution were.** »

Describing our case study of explosive Spirit-empowered growth in Asia, I encouraged the brothers and sisters that God could do the same in their countries. One missionary objected. “Well! If we just had persecution like you have in Asia, we too would have movements.”

Coming from a world of interrogations, imprisonments, ostracization and beatings, I grew livid at such a comment as if we desired persecution. What this brother failed to recognize is that persecution can either fuel or quench a budding movement. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus described the second soil:

...*When tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.* (Matt. 13:21, ESV)

Jesus warned that persecution can easily stop any growth that has occurred. In Asia, persecution was not fueling our movement; *boldness* and *perseverance* in the face of persecution were. I have yet to see a CPM emerge on any of the six continents where persecution in some form did not have to be overcome by Christians.

In my *Mission Frontiers* articles over the last few years, I’ve dealt with many principles related to cooperating with the Spirit of God in launching CPMs. I have alluded to the element I call “death” which is an essential for movements, but have not dedicated an article to it. I take this term “death” directly from Jesus:

“*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and **dies**, it remains alone; but if it **dies**, it bears much fruit.*” (John 12:24, ESV, emphasis added)

Jesus was describing His upcoming death which would make way for the fruit of salvation among the nations. He chose not to shy away from the cross despite the immense cost. Again, **boldness and perseverance in the face of persecution.**

Jesus was also describing the path that every disciple must walk—the way of the cross—if we are going to bear lasting fruit. As Paul said, it is costly to do God’s bidding—dying to self, beatings, ridicule, shipwrecks,

BY **STEVE SMITH**

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Steve Smith (Th.D.) was part of a church planting movement in Asia. He currently leads a global effort to catalyze biblical church planting movements in every unreached people group and place by 2025. He is the author of *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* with Ying Kai (WigTake Resources, 2011) and *Hastening and Rebirth* in the “No Place Left” saga (2014 Ventures, 2015 & 2016). Steve serves as VP of Multiplication for East-West Ministries and Global Movement Catalyst for Beyond.org.

imprisonment, betrayal, even physical death. Paul described this endurance by the same term:

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the **death** of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to **death** for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So **death** is at work in us, but life in you.*
(2 Cor. 4:8-12, ESV, emphasis added)

Paul, with the other apostles, chose not to be intimidated by difficulty. Again, **boldness and perseverance in the face of persecution**.

The elements of disciple-making movements are not unlike a rocket ready upon the launchpad. The rocket is fully assembled (e.g. all of the mechanics of the strategy). The right trajectory is loaded into the ship-board computer (e.g. vision). The fuel tanks are topped up (e.g. the spiritual dynamics of abiding in Christ and prayer). Even so, the rocket will not take off; it is just ready to take off.

What takes it from “ready” to “take-off”? Ignition. Someone must push the triggering button to ignite the engines to hurl the rocket into space. *“Death” is the spiritual triggering effect of every movement of God.* Until a servant of God is willing to pay the price, CPM elements remain a theory in the laboratory. Until a servant of God takes the time to hit the streets, meet with ridicule, endure false accusations, sacrifice personal priorities, joyfully receive imprisonment and even pay with his or her physical life, a movement is only *ready* to ignite. But in reality, it *slumbers* on the launchpad.

« **“Death” is the spiritual triggering effect of every movement of God.** »

When I train disciples around the world, I always take time to focus on persecution and difficulty. I ask this critical question: “Do you *really* want a movement of God knowing what it will cost?”

To help them have a biblical perspective, we study the gospels and the book of Acts examining the price disciples paid to launch movements all over the Roman empire. In those movements, the *evangelistic teams* suffered. Their *families* suffered. Their *new disciples* suffered.

Before reading any further (or for additional study) I invite you to examine the following ten passages. Take ten sheets of paper and divide them into four quadrants. Answer the following questions, spread them out side-by-side and look for patterns.

Ten Passages from Acts	Four Questions
1. 3:1-4:31 Peter & John arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What started the persecution? • Who did the persecuting? • How did the evangelists respond? • What were the results of the persecution (good or bad)?
2. 5:12-42 Apostles arrested	
3. 6:8 – 8:4 Stephen martyred	
4. 12:1-24 James killed; Peter in prison	
5. 13:13-52 Paul & Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch	
6. 14:1-28 Paul & Barnabas in Iconium, Lystra, Derbe	
7. 16:16-40 Paul & Silas in Philippi	
8. 17:1-15 Paul & Silas in Thessalonica & Berea	
9. 18:1-17 Paul & Silas in Corinth	
10. 19:8 – 20:1 Paul & team in Ephesus	

What started the persecution?

Invariably persecution arose because ordinary disciples opened their mouths in difficult environments to proclaim the gospel boldly. Sometimes miracles were associated with their proclamation. But always there was a clear, culturally understandable, verbal presentation about Jesus. This happened even in harsh environments with opposition from Jewish leaders, government leaders, citizens, businesses, and demonic powers.

It was not just the proclamation of the gospel that started the persecution, but the fact that dozens, hundreds and even thousands of new disciples were attracted from the old way of life to a new life in Christ. This frequently sparked jealousy among those of the status quo.

There is an important lesson we can learn from this: if you don't want to be persecuted, don't boldly proclaim the gospel or make loving, Bible-obeying disciples of those who believe. Yet, according to the Great Commission,

this is not an option! Persecution hounds real Christianity.

Paul wrote:

*You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.***
(2 Tim. 3:10-12, ESV, emphasis added)

Who did the persecuting?

Typically, three major groups were the sources of persecution, sometimes coordinating their efforts. The first group was the *religious community*. In a great number of these passages, the Jewish leaders (believers in the Scriptures) were incensed about the proclamation of Jesus as Lord, often inciting riots or government arrest of the evangelists.

It is not uncommon today for religious leaders to incite persecution. It's one thing for Hindu fundamentalists or Muslim radicals to do so. But imagine the great pain when CPM initiators find themselves attacked by respected Christian leaders of well-established churches! In our work in Asia, leaders of government-sanctioned churches frequently turned in house churches to the local authorities.

Even in the West, church leaders often lead the charge in ridiculing movement efforts. Rather than biblically going in private to meet with those they ridicule to try to love, understand and build unity, they publicly malign hard-working servants of God. At the same time, CPM initiators must guard themselves from becoming proud or divisive, and justly inviting criticism.

In Acts, the second group that persecuted was the *government*. Just as Pilate worried about his appearance and control, thus condemning Jesus, so also these government leaders became nervous as a new kingdom—though not a political one—spread under their watch.

Especially under authoritarian regimes, government persecution is quite common and sometimes tipped off by religious leaders or local citizens in the community. Government persecution frequently results in interrogations, imprisonment and even martyrdom. Though it may not make the news, in two thousand years of church history, persecution has never been greater than it is today.

In Acts, the third group to persecute were *local citizens* that were concerned about the impact of the spread of the gospel. Sometimes they were business leaders like the Ephesian silversmiths or Philippian fortune-tellers who were losing business. At other times, they were ordinary people who were stirred to riot over concern about their way of life being jeopardized.

In many places around the world, neighbors are the ones to turn house churches in to the police. At other times, mobs form to attack the homes of those who have left the local religion. Sometimes, families ostracize a new believing family member and after beatings, they then hold a funeral over this one who is now dead to them. At other times, believing family members are locked up and put through a deluge of weeks of re-indoctrination.

In our Asian CPM, neighbors in the village came to two believing families to collect a 75-cent annual fee to purchase and kill a pig to sacrifice to demons. As the believers examined the Scriptures, they felt convicted not to pay for food offered to idols. A mob damaged their homes and tore down the walls on their centuries-old rice terraces. Without home or livelihood, both families were forced to flee for their lives.

« **They were willing
to die in order to live
for their faith.** »

Yet in all of the cases cited, the new disciples faced these persecutions with boldness and perseverance. They were willing to die in order to live for their faith.

This has always been the secret of disciples of Jesus overcoming difficulty and becoming movements of God—they love not their lives even unto death:

*And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony,
for they loved not their lives **even unto death.***
(Rev. 12:11, ESV, emphasis added)

How did the evangelists respond?

In the ten passages in Acts, the evangelists refused to be quieted.

*But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right
in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God,
you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have
seen and heard.”* (Acts 4:19-20, ESV)

Jesus had taught the disciples to share the gospel and make disciples, and to expect difficulty in doing so (Matt. 10:16ff). Because they expected it, persecution did not quench the zeal for their work.

In addition, the evangelists frequently responded with rejoicing in the midst of persecution, bearing witness to their tormentors, encouraging local believers to remain steadfast, and sometimes fleeing to the next places to continue preaching the good news.

For them, persecution was part and parcel of normal Great Commission work. The religious freedom we have experienced in the West over the last 250 years has been a brief blip on the timeline of church history. Normal church history involves persecution for believers who are serious about their faith. Let us not bemoan the fact that even in the West persecution is rising. Though we don't relish it (and can sometimes pass laws to minimize it), this is normal and to be expected.

What were the results of the persecution (good or bad)?

In all cases in Acts, the Word of the Lord continued to spread relentlessly. There was no promise that the evangelists would be delivered from persecution in this life. They were imprisoned, interrogated, beaten and even killed (both Stephen and James the Apostle). Though not always delivered physically, they were always delivered eternally:

*I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ **this will turn out for my deliverance**, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, **whether by life or by death**. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

(Phil. 1:19-21, ESV, emphasis added)

At times the evangelists were miraculously delivered from their situation. They were filled with joy when it made no sense. They were guided clearly by the Holy Spirit as God's presence rested heavily upon them. Whether physically delivered or not, they stood up to persecution with boldness and perseverance.

Only "death" produces fruit. When disciples of Jesus joyfully endure difficulty, the kingdom of God multiplies. When disciples withdraw under the pressure, the kingdom wanes in that area. Most of us will not die, but

all of us must pay some price. We must die to ourselves to fulfill God's agendas. Only then does the Spirit rest heavily upon us:


If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.
(1 Pet. 4:14, ESV)

« **When disciples of Jesus joyfully endure difficulty, the kingdom of God multiplies.**
When disciples withdraw under the pressure, the kingdom wanes in that area. »

We must prepare ourselves and disciples we train to prepare to boldly and joyfully endure persecution. This Acts study is one resource to help do that. And prepare you must, for no movement occurs until the spiritual triggering effect of death is activated.

In the early days of African evangelization, missionaries packed their belongings in a wooden coffin for the long ship ride. With disease and opposition, they knew they would likely only have a few months or years to proclaim the good news. We must live with the same spirit.

I recall an evening in Asia where my wife and I called our three young sons into the bedroom to ask them this question: "If it cost Mommy or Daddy our lives so that our people group could receive the gospel, would it be worth it?" We all agreed that it would, and the gospel eventually spread like wildfire. We did not die during that time (though we experienced many other difficulties), but the life-threatening cancer I now carry in my body apparently came through the parasites I picked up in those remote mountains.

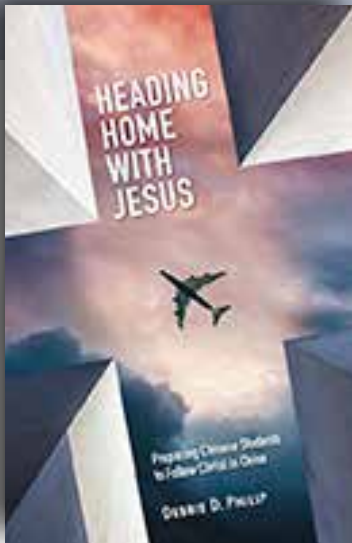
We would all say it was worth it because Jesus Christ is worthy of praise from every tongue, tribe, people and nation. Knowing the cost, do you want God to start a movement through you? 

¹ Steffen, Tom 1974 *Passing the Baton: Church Planting that Empowers*. La Habra, CA: Center for Organizational & Ministry Development, 4.

² Johnson, Jean 2012 *We Are Not The Hero: A Missionary's Guide For Sharing Christ, Not A Culture of Dependency*, Sisters, Oregon: DeepRiver Books, 175.

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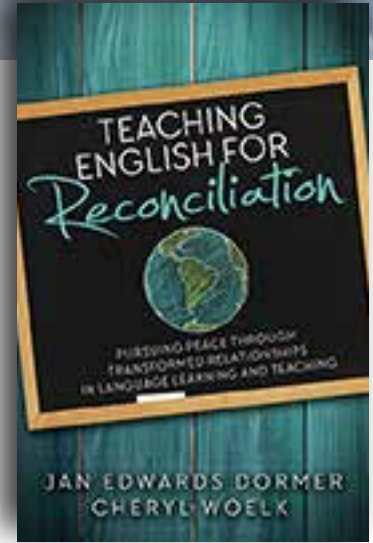
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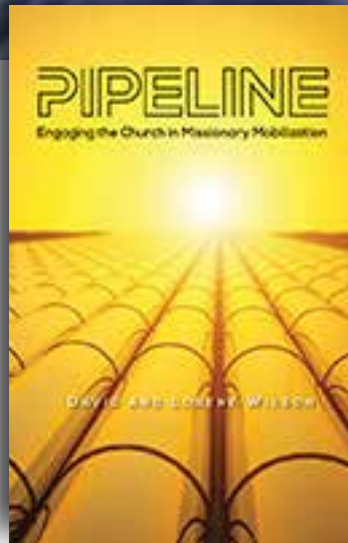
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24:14 Update



A Global Revolution in Missionary Training

Chris McBride

In the September/October 2016 edition of *Mission Frontiers*, Steve Smith, in “Four Stages to No Place Left in Our Generation,” reported on a developing trend in training missionaries. It is one that focuses on creating experiential learning in catalyzing movements for candidates in their home cultures before they deploy to a cross cultural field situation. He envisioned a network of Church-Planting Movement (CPM) Training Hubs that would help new field personnel navigate “the dark period of trial and error.” They would first learn to apply CPM principles in their own context before deploying to a cross-cultural location where CPM principles are already bearing fruit. They would then be mentored into effective catalyzing of a CPM among a new focus group, and finally help that movement to launch workers into yet more unreached groups.

« We sincerely believe this [hubs] model can greatly increase the frequency of CPMs among the unreached of the world. »

The 24:14 Coalition (2414now.net) has formed a task force to facilitate the growth of a network of CPM Training Hubs. We have identified a number of emerging hubs that are training Phase 1 missionaries in their home cultures (both Western and Non-Western). More than a dozen teams and organizations have started Phase 2 Hubs, which are receiving trainees from Phase 1 experiences.

Phase 2 Hubs are reporting missionary candidates to be much quicker than the average candidate to learn and implement CPM principles. They have already developed experience applying CPM principles in their home culture before moving to a foreign cultural context. Those learning CPM experientially in this way are also receiving excellent ongoing coaching as they deploy to catalyze work among a UPG (Unreached People Group).

In the months to come, the Hubs Task force plans to continue finding and documenting new Hubs beginning to function, and gathering Hub leaders to develop best practices. They will also create cross-connections between organizations sponsoring Hubs (that could decrease need for duplication), network interested people and organizations to the Hub system, and assist organizations and churches that want to create CPM Training Hubs. We sincerely believe this model can greatly increase the frequency of CPMs among the unreached of the world. For more information contact hubs@2414now.net.

Africa 24:14 Gathering

Stan Parks

Africa is an incredibly diverse continent with 54 countries and 1.2 billion people. It is home to 3700 people groups, of which 990 are considered unreached and have a total population of 350 million. The African Union has its headquarters in Addis Ababa. So, it was fitting that 30 movement leaders from around Africa gathered in this capital city of Ethiopia to discuss forming a 24:14 Africa team. Attendees included movement leaders representing over 100 Church-Planting Movements, as well as key mission leaders, church and church network leaders, denominational leaders, researchers, and intercessors.

BY CHRIS MCBRIDE, STAN PARKS, JUSTIN LONG, AND JOHN BECKER

Without a full representation of the Church, we are incomplete. The lost desperately need you to be a part of this fight. Visit our website at www.2414now.net or email info@2414now.net to learn more and get involved.

We experienced a significant atmosphere of unity and common vision. Our discussion focused on how to more effectively work together as citizens of God's kingdom and brothers and sisters in Christ. We formed five task forces, to focus on prayer, research, mobilization, training, and strategy. A five-person facilitation team was formed of leaders from across the continent.

As the primary engine of God's work, the prayer task force will begin connecting existing African and global networks of intercessors to the African and Global 24:14 efforts. They will also seek to mobilize new intercessors. They will focus as well on catalyzing new prayer coordinators in areas of special need and using secure channels to share 24:14 prayer requests.

The mobilization group set out a plan for regional mobilization efforts among churches. They planned ways for missionaries to be trained and re-deployed to groups not yet engaged with a movement effort. They also developed plans to mobilize more churches, businesses, donors, and intercessors to take part in the 24:14 vision in Africa and beyond.

The training group chose to focus on two priorities. First, the need to keep developing CPM curriculum that is simple, contextual and reproducible at every level. Second, the need to train leaders from existing movements to focus on and reach nearby UPGs.

Both the research and strategy task forces highlighted the need to share information and gather new data. We want to better understand the remaining unreached people groups and places and make a "master list" for all of Africa. That list will be continually updated, and the 24:14 Africa team will focus on identifying groups that are being engaged with a strategy for movements. Efforts will then be made to engage all the remaining unengaged peoples and places with CPM-equipped teams.

The Goal

Justin Long

We need to remember that 24:14's "Finish Line" is not "the gospel for every person" (which is unrealistic in eight years). Neither is it "every group reached." To "reach" a group is missiologically defined as having an indigenous

church able to evangelize the group without cross-cultural (missionary) workers. Only God starts churches, and we can't be sure that there will be a sufficient church presence in each group by 2025 to qualify them as "reached." Rather, 24:14 sees itself as the next step in the process.



Our goal line is a movement catalyst team engaging every people group.



Our goal line is a movement catalyst team engaging every people group. We know that accomplishing this goal is not the end of the Great Commission. Rather, it is "the beginning of the end." Years of work will likely remain following attainment of this starting point. We're just getting racers to the starting line; we will still have a race to run! Yet we believe that until unreached groups are engaged with multiplying strategies, there is very little hope that they can become effectively reached at all.

Why Tracking Data Geographically Matters

Justin Long

24:14's Research Team understands the need to track movement engagement both by people group and by geographic location. While we want to make sure the gospel is not hindered by barriers of language and culture (thus engaging by culture), we know very large people groups can span cities, districts, provinces, and even countries. Within a specific group, political boundaries and distance can create barriers to gospel spread due to underengagement by insufficient teams. We also know we need to track engagement by cities, which have become very large melting pots of ethnicities, and have their own significant strategic challenges including social grouping by affinity rather than by culture, and issues like surveillance. We are counting total movement engagements mainly by people group (651 movements in all), and are now beginning to count by geographic region. Out of 3,846 provinces, 829 are less than 5% Christian, and only 63 of these have movement engagements.

24:14 Diaspora Task Force: Catalyzing Movements among People on the Move

John Becker

The 24:14 Diaspora Task Force is seeking to answer the question: *How can we best catalyze disciple-multiplication among diaspora peoples?*

Diaspora, pronounced di-as-po-ra /dī'aspərə/, is from a Greek word meaning “dispersion or scattering.” It describes ethnic communities and social groups dislocated from their home cultures, on the move, or in a transitional process of being scattered. These individuals are more commonly known as refugees and migrants.

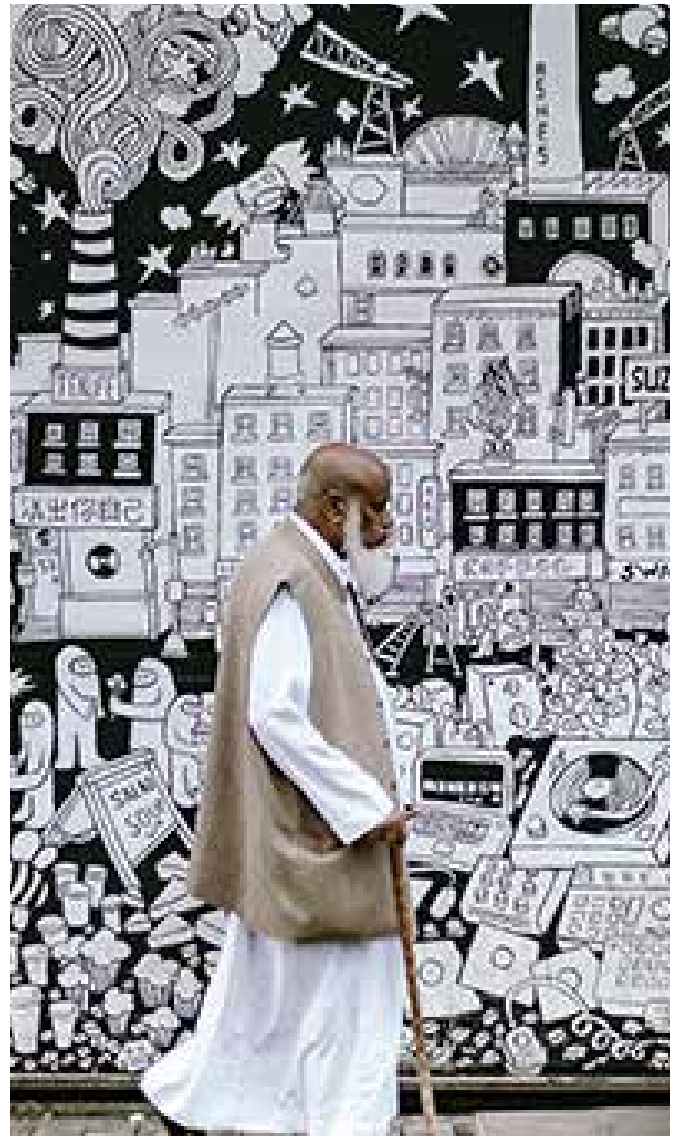
« **How can we best catalyze disciple-multiplication among diaspora peoples?** »


People are on the move as never before; this is one of the great global realities of our era. An estimated 200+ million people are living outside their countries of origin – some voluntarily and some involuntarily. There are both push and pull factors causing this. These include environmental disasters caused by war, famine, political and economic instability, religious and ethnic discrimination, population surge, education and labor opportunities, to name a few. Diaspora peoples are a global phenomenon with local implications.

In many cases the diaspora phenomenon creates massive population shifts – such as when 1.6 million Syrian refugees entered Jordan, whose total population is just 9 million. Or consider the 8 million African migrants who now call Europe home. Cities such as Catania in Sicily took in 180,000 new arrivals in 2016! These mass movements of people create immense challenges such as megacities, diverse ethnic communities, and religious and ideological pluralism.

However, these challenges are also creating some of the greatest opportunities for disciple-making the Church has ever had. They are providing access to people groups from hostile environments that offer little or no access to the

good news of Jesus. Believers from gospel-rich regions of the world, such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South America, are now living among those needing new expressions of witness such as in secular Europe.



As we focus our efforts and attention on these trends, we can see the fruit. Thousands of Muslims from North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia have come to faith through faithful disciples offering hospitality and hope to their new neighbors. But we are only at the beginning of harvesting the fruit now just within reach. The 24:14 Diaspora Task Force is bringing together diaspora mission strategy leaders from several networks and organizations. We expect to see a great harvest as we catalyze movements among people on the move! 

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Further Reflections: Rethinking Galatians

BY **GREG PARSONS**
DIRECTOR OF
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
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In the post-reformation era, the evangelical church looks at the book of Galatians as a referendum on *justification by faith*. I would argue that, actually, Paul is building on that well-known truth. Yes, the Galatians were confused by the Judaizers. Many did not have “faith” in their background. So, to all, Paul was saying: Yes—salvation is by grace through faith *and* as the gospel of Christ comes to new cultures, you (Galatians, Jews and us!) should *not* add to it. The book is a strongly worded treatise against Jesus plus anything.

Paul clearly shows the idea of faith alone way back when he says (Gal. 3:8 ESV), “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’”¹ It was not new. Genesis 15:6 tells us that Abram, “believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” I could go on.

Remember, these believers did not have the NT yet. Jews who believed might be tempted to fall back on what they “knew” God wanted in the past. At first, they didn’t trust Paul. He never really was an “insider” with the other Apostles. And, he was called cross-culturally to the Gentiles, who were a very

¹ As a side point we have talked about many times: Paul includes the nations being blessed with the gospel.

different culture—at odds with the Jews. Paul could bridge that gap because of his combined Roman and Jewish upbringing—and the fact that he was transformed by Christ and the power of the gospel.

So, Paul confronted Peter’s actions in Galatia because those actions, and the actions of the Judaizers, meant they were adding to the gospel. It *is* faith that justifies, and it *is* just as important we *not* add anything to that. That is why, post-reformation, we now add the words “alone” to it.

What do *we* add to it? Historically, if we don’t watch ourselves, Christians have mentally “expected” certain behavioral change. And, of course, we do change. Like Paul, our lives are transformed. But sometimes we move those changes into being requirements to coming to Christ instead of something that the Holy Spirit does. Lifestyle changes are the result of people coming into the Kingdom by faith, but they are not conditions for it.


As we see the gospel spreading to the Unreached Peoples, we can do the same. Do new believers need to call themselves “Christians?” Is it okay if Muslims who believe in Jesus Christ still pray 5 times a day (or more!)? Or that Hindus worship at different, special times of the week, month or year? Some of these are not things that must change—they are not clear biblical directives for believers. The hard thing to ask for a worker out in a culture where the gospel is just penetrating is: How should I come alongside these new, Holy Spirit directed believers and help them

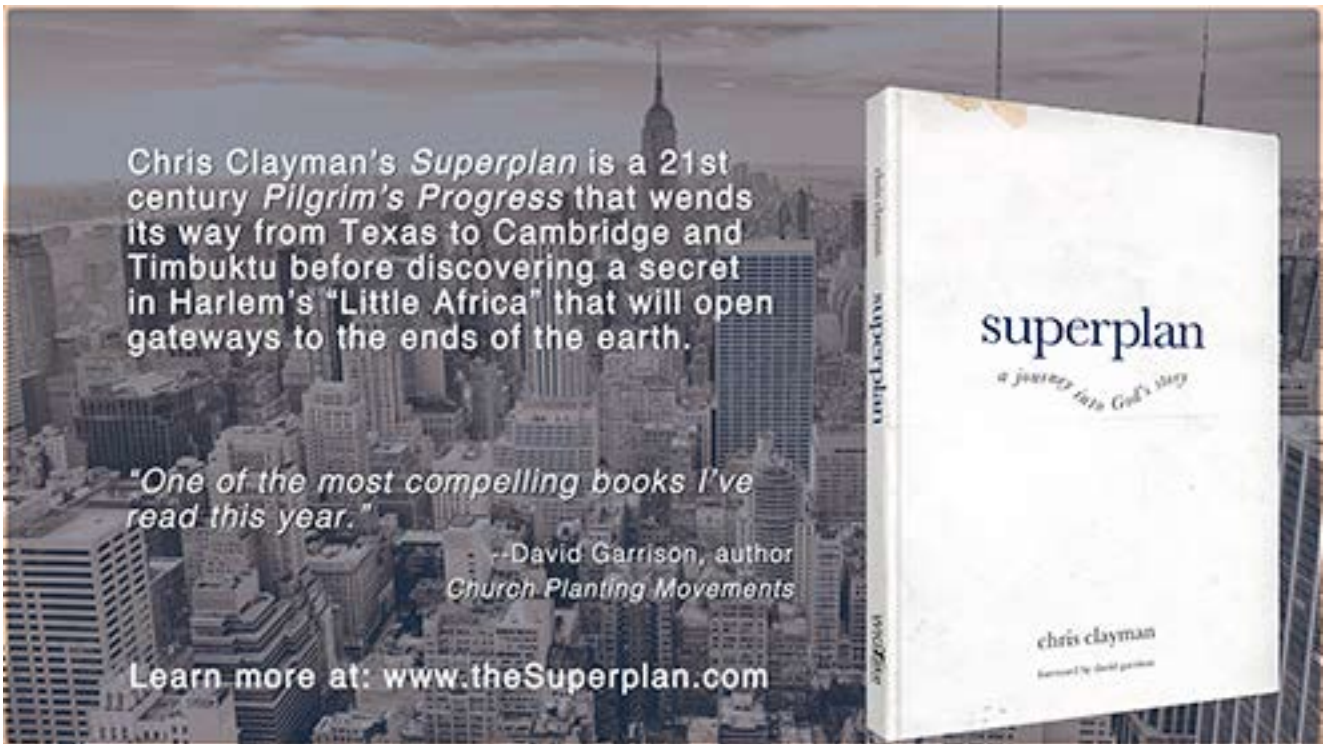
without adding to their load like the Judaizers were doing when they tried to “help” the Galatians.

In our individualized world in the West, we tend to think that certain activities will demonstrate faith, and sometimes for good reason. But, we don’t really know people that well, so we don’t know what is happening in their lives, home, business—or when they are alone.

And, after we come to faith having seen what a mess our lives were, we tend to extrapolate those on every new believer. We want those coming to faith after us to go through the same process we did. Since our identity and significance are so closely tied to faith in the Lord, we can’t always see how that identity might be lived out in another culture.

People, all of us, are always in a process in their movement towards God and His kingdom. What are the characteristics of those who are true believers? What would we want to see? One simple way to look at it is that we want to see people: (1) living under the Lordship of Christ, (2) affirming the authority of the Word of God and (3) living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that regulating other things they do or don’t do can easily move into “adding to” the gospel with our own standards.

I encourage you to take a fresh look at Galatians, as I did with one of our boards recently. Then, let me know what you think at: www.missionfrontiers.org (Just click on this issue and my page to make your comments/suggestions). 



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