

Lessons for Reaching Cities from Spiritual Movements

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Ronald Enroth, in *New Religious Movements* (2005), describes a movement as a group of people offering a new set of values to people, bringing them a new way of life, and promising to fulfill their needs. If this new group meets some needs and the group spreads the word about their values and expands quickly, it becomes a movement. Enroth says that America and the world, have a rising group of semi-spiritual movements.

Christianity itself is a spiritual movement. It has been one since Jesus walked on the earth and sent out the 12 to make disciples in all the world. Paul showed us how to take it to the third generation in II Timothy 2:2. Today almost 1/3 of the people on earth are living in the context of a Christian movement. Another 1/4 live in the context of a Muslim movement. They are the two largest and the two fastest growing groups on earth.

Let me give a definition of spiritual movement from a Christian perspective and then tell a brief story.

A Spiritual Movement is an expanding group of Christ-centered disciples who are committed to glorifying God and being obedient to help fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in the power of the Holy Spirit. The eventual result of their ministry is the spiritual and moral transformation of a neighborhood or city and, if the movement matures, a nation. Revival of the spiritual life of churches and awakening of the non-Christians will usually be involved.

I have been teaching Church History for many years. I had the opportunity to teach this class twice in Kenya, twice in Asia: Singapore and Malaysia, and in Trinidad. They want to know what God has been doing in their areas of the world. I always assign the

students to take a movement from the first 1500 years of Christianity in their region and a movement from the past two hundred years in their region and write a report on how the movements developed. Over my career I have accumulate about 130 such reports.

Ten years ago I had a particularly sharp group of graduate students and ask them to do something different. They each took five of the reports and studied them to find common principles in development the movements. Then we looked across all the reports to find common principles in almost all of them. We ended up with six principles, which I will give below.

The *first* principle in beginning a movement is God puts in someone's heart the **desire** to reach a group of people for Christ. This can be a general call, as when Paul was led to a ministry of evangelism or Billy Graham dedicating his life to preaching the gospel. Without such a Godly focus people are doing ministry because it seems good to them.

The *second* principle is some specific area of need (their own community or a mission field) becomes an audience/area where the conviction needs to be applied. It can be local, like John Knox who desired to see Christ glorified in the whole nation of Scotland. One or more individuals feels **called** to go and meet the need; to lead people to spiritual life and moral transformation.

The *third* principle is the person proclaims the gospel, doing evangelism, and discipling those who respond. There are some converts, and some Christians who respond to the vision as they see it being lived out. These people are formed into small groups (Bible study, home group, cell group) and they begin to learn how to follow Christ and obey him. They learn to read the Bible, pray, and share their faith. The groups **multiply** using natural, relational bridges (Bridges of God, Donald McGavran), and soon

the disciples learn to put Christ first in all areas of life. The ministry is built using a multiplication philosophy (II Tim. 2:2).

The *fourth* principle is a ***community of spirit*** (a new church) is formed within the new converts. These may be house churches or larger congregations and focus on gathering for worship, and going into the community for service. ***Training*** is used to prepare workers to quickly extend the work to a wider target area. The failure to follow these two principles stops many movements at the local level. The principles of worship & spiritual growth must stay at the heart of the church in ministry to each other. The practice of compassion and evangelism must stay in the members of the community as they go about their daily lives. Outside the churches, ***moral transformation*** begins to take place as people obey Christ, often in one area or one domain of the city at a time.

The *fifth* principle is the area (***a neighborhood or city or a domain***) ***is thoroughly evangelized*** and either a broader mission is chosen (some other neighborhood, city or nation) or the movement levels out into a stable church and moral environment and becomes ***multi-generational***.

Sixth, eventually 1) a mission, 2) a multi-church organization, and 3) a leadership training methodology (training program or school) are established and institutionalized. In the city the ***natural leaders begin to make decisions together with the whole city in mind***. Eventually, as more leaders in each area of society are brought to Christ and disciplined, moral transformation affects the whole city.

These steps led to the first movement in Antioch and Asia Minor (Acts 19 Paul in Ephesus), and throughout history these have been the common elements in building spiritual movements, from John Wesley (the Methodists) and William Booth (Salvation

Army) to Campus Crusade for Christ (a million churches planted) and the emerging church movement today.

Cities and countries have been changed by these leaders and ministries. When the separate parts of the community, sometimes called domains of the city, (social leaders, government, communication, marketplace, churches, and education) are morally connected through the various community leaders, the whole city sees God's blessings (cf Mission America, and Global Cities).

Let me share with you the model which is being developed in the Orlando area. Greater Orlando is a government identified Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) about 900 miles square. In 1900 there were about 50,000 people in this area. By 1960 it grew to about 400,000. Today it is 2,000,000. The projections by the city, state and federal government are that by 2050 it will be 4,000,000. The demographics include large groups of Hispanic, African-American, Muslim, Hindu, Korean, and Anglo. There are 28 cities in this area, but it feels like one big town. There are approximately 1100 churches with an attendance of about 300,000 on a Sunday. The mission statement of Vision Orlando is on the next page.

Vision Orlando

Praying, Caring, and Sharing with Greater Orlando

Our **mission** is to pray for every person in greater Orlando, meet the needs of the hurting, and offer everyone the gift of eternal life through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Gathering leaders for praying, learning and collaborating

Vision Orlando sponsors communication for connecting pastors, ministry leaders and community leaders to build relationships. This involves prayer and developing strategic plans and partnerships to work toward spiritual and moral transformation of the community.

Honorary Co-Chairs:

Vonette Bright
Richard Crotty
Mel Martinez
Belvin Perry

Encouraging local churches in their mission philosophy and practice

Vision Orlando encourages church leaders to connect with one another and learn from one another as they develop effective philosophies and practices of service and compassion that help their congregations take the whole gospel to the whole city. The Pastor's Council is key to this effort.

Board of Directors:

Randy Alligood
Steve Clinton
Bruce O'Donoghue
Robert Stuart

Developing tools to pray, serve, and share

Vision Orlando has web tools to be resources to churches and ministries, such as:

- Help coordinate service organizations in greater Orlando
- Coordinate pastoral information in greater Orlando
- Calendar of Events 12 months in advance
- Online prayer helps
- A searchable web list of Christian nonprofit ministries and churches
- Training materials for six levels of ministry activity up to associate pastor

Pastoral Leaders:

Anthony Clark
George Cope
Joel Hunter
David Uth

Executive Director:

Stephen M. Clinton

At present we have six ongoing activities.

1. network of prayer intercessors
2. network of social service providers
3. pastors' council for communication and joint action
4. network of marketplace ministry leaders
5. web-site for news, prayer requests, calendar, information
6. training for ministry and Bible, focused on discipleship and multiplication

We also lead area-wide activities such as BreakFree 1993 (John Guest), Josh McDowell in 1998, the JESUS film distribution in 2000. We lend materials, personnel, and cooperate with effort of other outreaches, for example the Louis Palau Festival, and Purpose Orlando. We are not a direct ministry but are building networks to help all the ministries reach the two million people in the area.

In 2012-13 we plan to add multiple training functions and a mentor program. We also are talking about how to reach the 40 million visitors each year to Orlando. We want to help plant 1000 new churches in greater Orlando in the next 15 years. Join us in any of these efforts to help reach greater Orlando for Christ. Visit our web site at www.visionorlando.org