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The Kingdom Incarnate:

Paul's Strategy for Reaching Large Areas for Christ

The Apostle Paul followed a strategy for reaching cities and through these cities on to larger areas for Christ. This strategy will be reviewed in scripture and a general approach developed based on common theological and practical elements.

This biblical strategy matches some of the 35 city-reaching strategies being used in the U.S. today and in some overseas cities and countries [Church Planting Movements; BILD; U.S. Center for World Missions; Good Cities; Mission America]. A specific case study will be the greater Orlando area (2.2 million residents; 50 million annual visitors from every country on earth).

I. Paul's City Strategy

Paul followed the call of God to go to Antioch. Acts 13: 2, 13-52. He began sharing the gospel with the Jews and later with Gentiles. He met with those who responded and began teaching them how to live the Christian life.

Paul went to eastern Asia minor and worked in the larger cities beginning in Iconium, which is recorded in Acts 14. Paul responded to the Macedonian call and went to Philippi, a Roman trade city in Greece and used the city to begin a work in Greece: Thessalonica, Brea, Athens, Corinth (Acts 16:8ff). He began each work where he thought there would be Jewish or Gentile believers, and helped them develop better theology and deeper faith. Then together with these new believers he began outreach to the non-believers.

Paul then went to Ephesus and used the believers there as a base for reaching western Asia minor (Acts 18:19; 19:9-10; 20:6-12; 17-38) so that everyone in the Asian province heard the gospel and had an opportunity to respond.

Paul eventually went to Rome (Acts 25:11), and from there evangelized part of the army (some who took the gospel to Britain in the first century), had converts in Ceasar's household (Phil. 4:22), and began a work to the whole Roman empire (Romans 15: 22-29).

In all these travels Paul follows a similar methodology and outreach: be committed to following the call of God; go to large cities with larger areas as the eventual target; do evangelism from scripture with those who desire God; disciple new converts in specific Bible study and theology; have the new disciples share with their friends and neighbors; plant house churches and continue to support the churches and have them own the outreach to the larger area.

This six step mission implementation reflects a key city reaching strategy as a step to reaching large areas for Christ. These are the earliest spiritual movements, multi-generational growth of Christianity. Paul also shared the relational strategy he used to expand the work to four generations in 2 Timothy 2:2. His disciple Timothy should find faithful men who will teach others also. Paul followed God and all these missions were successful.

II. Identifying Other Movements

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 fourth generation in II Timothy 2:2. Today almost 1/3 of the people on earth are living in the context of Christian movements. Another 1/4 live in the context of Muslim movements. They are the two largest groups on earth with each one representing more people than the population of China.

III. History of movements

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 Jesus 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 Singapore and Malaysia, and once in Trinidad. The students wanted to know what God has been doing in their areas of the world, not just Europe or the U.S. 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.

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 a large area, 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 spiritual church body) 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. Good training makes this growth much faster.

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 each city the ***natural leaders begin together to make decisions with the whole city in mind***. Eventually, as more leaders in each area of society are brought to Christ and discipled they own the mission and through them more people are reached and disciples leading to the moral transformation of the whole city and eventually the area. The first visible evidence of loss of movement is when the leaders lose vision and the

people become centered on the existing community rather than the mission field around them.

These six 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 new cultural adaptation of church movements to current needs today.

Cities and countries have been spiritually transformed by such 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 spiritually and morally connected through the various community leaders, the whole city sees God's blessings (cf Mission America, and Global Cities).

IV. Steps to Implement the Six Point Strategy

Be clear about God's call of the initial leaders.

Begin in strategic cities with the goal of reaching a larger area for Christ eventually.

The first step is local evangelism and discipleship.

Help the new disciples to initiate with their contacts and spread the movement (cf.

McGavran, Bridges of God).

Use focused training to share the vision and the methodology. Develop leaders for the church and the mission who have the natural and spiritual gifts for such leadership and are sure they are called by God to the task. Keep discipling people, teaching them the way of life (character, compassion, joy) presented in the Bible.

Plant house churches for ongoing local developments.

V. A Case Study in Orlando, FL

Vision Orlando was formed in 1991 by two men who desired to see their whole area reached for Jesus Christ. The two men and begun praying as teenagers when they played baseball together. God continued to lay the greater Orlando area on their hearts. They decided to take a step and make it official. Everything which was done in the first 20 years was accomplished with no full-time staff or payroll.

Significant milestones have included . . .

- 1993 – Break Free Evangelism Campaign with Dr. John Guest (spoke in 30 school assembly’s and five nights at Tinker Field; over 5000 decisions to trust in Jesus Christ
- 1993 – Outreach to two main sites: Valencia College, Disney University
- 1994 – World Cup Orlando Outreach to teams and attendees
- 1998 – Family and Youth Outreach with Josh McDowell with 3000 adults and 5000 youth at University of Central Florida Arena
- 2000 – JESUS Film Outreach to 512,000 residences and 30 churches involved in follow-up; 15,000 indicated conversions
- 2003 – Establish 10 Neighborhood Pastor’s Payer Groups with 4-6 pastors in each group
- 2006, 7, 8 – Cooperated with the Central Florida Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast to host the Breakfast. 25 of 28 mayors attended and average 300 people
- 2008 – Cooperated with the Luis Palau two-day Crusade to 25,000 people
- 2009 – Begin a pastors council for the area
- 2012 – August bring on board the first two full time staff
- 2013 - teaching evangelism and discipleship in churches; work with men’s discipleship groups in churches and marketplace; over 15,000 people contacted
- 2014 - meet with 30 key pastors to form a Pastors’ Network; begin a greater Orlando area faith-based homeless initiative with 340 area leaders

Greater Orlando includes 28 incorporated cities and 2.1 million residents. They have 50 million visitors a year. The potential for regional and world outreach is tremendous. In 2013 Vision Orlando added two full-time staff and in 2015 a third

staff. For ministry purposes the area is being divided into 12 regions, following natural social, political, and geographic boundaries.

Vision Orlando currently has nine strategic areas in which it helps resource community and ministry leadership and assists in helping to create collaborations to expand opportunities to the larger community. These nine areas have been expanded into a Case presentation for the next three years.

The nine areas are:

- 1) Leadership Development: Identify and develop men and women to provide leadership for achieving Vision Orlando's strategic plan.
- 2) Prayer Networks: Identify and raise up prayer networks to provide a prayer covering over the area and ministries.
- 3) Pastor's Network: Identify, motivate and engage pastors to help bring transformation to Greater Orlando.
- 4) Marketplace Networks: Marketplace networks are designed to inspire, train and empower the marketplace to help transform the total community.
- 5) The Evangelism Initiative: Partner with churches and marketplace ministries to equip people to share the gospel with every person in Greater Orlando.
- 6) Discipleship Initiatives: Develop resources and activities to help the region's ministries reinforce the growth of churches and individuals who respond to various evangelistic efforts and desire for spiritual growth.
- 7) Humanitarian & Social Initiatives: The humanitarian and social efforts are designed to engage the faith community in meeting the faith and social needs of

the impoverished peoples of Greater Orlando. The first focus is on the 40,000 homeless.

- 8) Ambassadors: Recruit, train, and empower volunteers to become Vision Orlando Ambassadors at various community events to help move us toward unity in reaching Greater Orlando for Jesus Christ.
- 9) Operations: plan, develop and maintain services for Vision Orlando.

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