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## Working Together to Advance the Kingdom of God

### An Integrated Strategy for the Total Team<sup>1</sup>

by Rick Brown

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God has called us to **seek first the Kingdom** and its expansion on earth (Matt. 6:10,33). Jesus said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations [ethnic groups]; and then the end will come,” i.e., then the King will return to fully establish the Kingdom (Matthew 24:14). In outreach to unreached people groups (UPGs), the various Great Commission agencies seek increasingly to work together to advance the Kingdom. Like the parts of the body, each has its specialties, but they seek to serve a common head, Jesus, towards a common goal, the inclusion of many people from every ethnic group in the Kingdom of God. But partnership is not practical if there is not agreement on the strategy to be followed (as well as on the core values that will guide methods and decision-making). A common strategy that is emerging in some areas is the development of culturally appropriate church-planting movements among each people group. This in fact is what one finds in the work of the Apostle Paul. The results of his approach are reflected in his first letter, in which he praises the young church in Thessalonica, saying “The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere” (1 Th. 1:8). Paul planted the church by God's grace, and in a short time the church had evangelized the surrounding region. So the sign that a church-planting movement has developed is that there are locally led bodies of believers who are following Christ, using the Scriptures, spreading the faith, and starting more churches. In this way they fulfill the call of Christ, who said, “I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—**fruit that will last**” (John 15:16).

### Background to Mission Work in General

In the past, some Christian workers thought it was adequate to focus on **mass media** and **distribution**, but without direct involvement with the audience, they received little feedback on the suitability of the books and programs they produced and propagated. And unless there were on-the-ground believers witnessing to the truth of the message through their lives and words, those who heard or read the media productions were hesitant to believe the message they heard.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was drawn from a paper written for the International Orality Consultation at Larnaca, Cyprus, in March, 1999.

Some Christian workers focused solely on a strategy of **personal evangelism**; this was effective but it reached only a few people and the workers often failed to find those people who are open, seeking and ripe for harvest. Other workers stressed a shotgun strategy of **mass evangelism**. Some people believed, but if they were not disciplined and incorporated into a fellowship, then they tended to remain immature and confused, unable to deal with the schemes of the enemy and unable to lead others to faith in Christ. In most cases they fell back into their old ways.

Realizing that Christians need discipleship and fellowship in order to mature, other Christian workers focused on **planting churches**, sometimes staying on to pastor or supervise them. But if the people did not have a clear translation of the Scriptures in their own mother-tongue, the language of their heart, then they often failed to mature and the church failed to grow and multiply. If the churches were not lead by local leaders, submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and adapted to the culture, then they tended to remain weak and ineffective in reaching the wider people group, resulting in little growth.

So some missionaries have focused on **translation** into common, spoken language, but that alone does not generally produce a people group movement. It usually needs to be accompanied by personal witness, discipleship, and the promotion of church-planting.

But now these various strategies are becoming complementary roles in a comprehensive strategy that seeks to accomplish the total task.

## **The Need for a Unifying Vision**

In the past, when agencies worked in isolation, the overall effort was sometimes beset with gaps, duplication, disharmony, and other forms of inefficiency. They lacked a unifying vision. But now we experience a movement towards increasing partnership among the various Great Commission agencies, both national and expatriate. We see a growing concept of a total team for the total task in every unreached people group. In the total team, the various agencies exercise complementary roles, as the Lord uses them to build up His local church. Like the parts of the body, each one has its specialties, but they seek to serve a common head, Jesus, towards a common goal, the inclusion of many people from every people group into the Kingdom of God. It was Jesus who said, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations [that is, all ethnic groups]; and then the end will come” [i.e., then Jesus will come] (Matthew 24:14).

“Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?” (Amos 3:3). The first step to teamwork is to come to a common vision of the total task and the overall strategy to reach it. Without a measure of agreement on the total strategy to be followed it is difficult to partner together effectively. For that matter, without some agreement on the core values that guide methods and decision-making, it is difficult to do more than just cooperate. So before groups can achieve an effective partnership, they must come to some agreement on the nature and elements of the total task, the steps to be followed to achieve it, and their various roles in it. If the various Great Commission partners can share an overall vision of the task and agree on the

guiding principles for carrying it out, then their efforts at partnership will be less frustrating and more effective.

## **An Outline of a Total Strategy for the Total Team**

Fortunately an overall strategy is emerging and being widely accepted. This strategy is based in large part on observation of what works, that is, on observation of how God seems to be working to build his Kingdom among many unevangelized people groups. There is growing consensus that the overall purpose of mission, the total task, is **to facilitate culturally appropriate church-planting movements** among each people group.<sup>2</sup> The sign that a church-planting movement has developed is that there are locally led bodies of believers who are following Christ, using the Scriptures, spreading the faith, and starting more churches.

There are a number of roles to be played in the different stages of this strategy, and the stages follow a natural progression. These stages can be described using an analogy drawn from traditional farming practices, but we should remember that in fact the stages overlap a great deal.<sup>3</sup>

## **Key Stages in the Process of Fostering Church-Planting Movements (CPMs) among Unevangelized People Groups (UPGs)**

1. **Praying for good weather and good crops** — Prayer support
2. **Stone-Clearing** — Preparing the way for the Word
3. **Seed-Gathering** — Preparing the Word in the heart language
4. **Sowing** — Propagation of Scripture items in suitable ways
5. **Watering** — Follow-up
6. **Germination** — God opening hearts to believe in Christ, resulting in regeneration and salvation
7. **Cultivation (watering, weeding, aerating, fertilizing)** — Nurture of new believers
8. **Gathering the harvest into barns** — Church Planting
9. **Sowing the harvest seeds** — Church-planting movement

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<sup>2</sup> See *Church Planting Movements* by David Garrison (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> The agricultural analogy is based on one used in *Communication Bridges to Oral Cultures II*, by James and Carla Bowman (11 Konnur High Rd., Ayanavaram, Chennai 600023, India: Mission Educational Books: 2000)

It is important to note that these stages involve different roles, and the roles are usually filled by different people. Prayer supporters usually focus on the first role—prayer. Translation specialists focus on stages two and three, but they are also concerned to see that the other stages are undertaken. Media people usually focus on stages 4 and 5 but sometimes they try to foster 7 and 8 over the air. Church-planters usually focus on stages 5 to 9, and they are often pivotal for the decision in stage 6.

Now let's look at these stages in more detail.

### ***1. "Praying for good weather and good crops" — Prayer support***

The main tool of missions is prayer, both praying for the target people and mobilizing others to pray. Jesus said to "pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2 RSV). Paul often ended his epistles with requests for prayer support.<sup>4</sup> He even presented this as the highest priority for Christians:

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1 NIV)

John Piper recognizes prayer as the key factor in missions. He notes that everyone who prays for the advancement of the Kingdom has "the significance of front-line forces and gives God the glory of a limitless Provider."<sup>5</sup> It is quite possible that God puts particular nations in the news so that people will pray for them, and that he sends missionaries overseas in large part so that their supporters will pray for those places.

### ***2. "Stone-Clearing" — Preparing the way for the Word***

Before a farm crew can develop a plot of land into a fruitful field, they need to examine the condition of the land, determine where the fields will be, and remove the stumps, stones, and sticks. Similarly, before a kingdom team can foster a church-planting movement within a people group, they need to do research to find out the key physical, cultural, political, and linguistic factors that could affect the work. On the basis of these strategic factors they can develop a strategy for the total task. Among the factors to be identified are misconceptions that act as stones in the ground. Many of these can be corrected by pre-evangelistic media and personal lifestyle witness. Below are some examples of "stones" commonly found among "special audiences" in the 10/40 Window, together with some corrections that can remove them during pre-evangelism:

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<sup>4</sup> See 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; Phil. 1:19; 2 Thess. 3:1.

<sup>5</sup> *Let the Nations be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, by John Piper (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), p. 41.

<b>Stones</b>	<b>Stone-dissolvers</b>
Christian culture and behavior is amoral and irreligious like the western films and programs.	Christian culture and behavior is that described in the NT and exhibited by true disciples of Christ. It is very different from the culture that is depicted in the western media.
A “Christian” is anyone from the West who is not a Jew.	A true Christian is a follower of Christ, who has accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior.
Christians worship three gods, including Mary.	Christians believe that God is one and that they should worship him alone. The Gospel says that this is the most important commandment (Mark 12:29–30).
Christians believe that Jesus is another god.	The Gospel says that Jesus is the Word of God descended from heaven into Mary and born as a sinless man.
People are basically good and God-fearing but they are weak or ignorant of God’s law.	People are unable to lead the sinless life that God requires for applicants to heaven. This can be seen even in the lives of the holy prophets. Only Jesus is without sin of any kind.
A fear of hell is needed to ensure that people follow God’s law. Therefore the Christian claim to have forgiveness and salvation apart from law can only encourage worldly, immoral and criminal behavior, as seen in western media.	Laws cannot make people good; laws can only make them fearful of being caught. Christians are called to exceed the law and follow the example of Jesus. To this end they need to be born again and cleansed by the Holy Spirit. This gives them a desire not to sin and a power to resist sin. God also disciplines them to teach them a fear of sin.
The Bible is corrupted and the original text is lost; only “translations” remain.	The Bible is reliable. Ancient manuscripts of the text exist in the original languages.

In addition to pre-evangelism, the preparation stage involves relationship-building, networking, research into language and culture, vision-building in the local church (if one exists), training and capacity building. If literacy will be needed for access to Scripture, then doing literacy work is another way of preparing the field for the seed. But before the seed can take root there needs to be a hunger for it, and that is something God alone can do. Only God can put spiritual hunger in people’s hearts and open their minds to hear His Word or to find out about Christ. Sometimes God allows turmoil and instability in a people group to encourage people to seek that which is faithful and eternal.

### ***3. “Seed-Gathering” — Preparing the Word in the heart language***

This stage involves the preparation of the Word to be sown. This involves several sub-steps:

- a. Identifying those portions which will be most appropriate to address the basic spiritual needs of the community, and the sequence in which to present them. In recent years most church-planting groups have embraced some form of chronological Bible storying as their basic strategy, and they want Scripture portions that will facilitate this. (See the chart in Appendix A for an overview).
- b. Translating or retranslating the Word, if needed, taking care with appropriate dialects, worldview differences, key terms, etc. (See Appendix B for more details.) Since the overall goal is to foster a locally sustainable church planting movement, the translation itself should be carried out by local believers if possible. This requires training, mentoring, and on-going consultant services.
- c. Packaging the Word in suitable forms and media, such as books, booklets, cassettes, videos (including the Jesus Film), radio and television programs, correspondence courses, drama, songs, poetry, art, chronological biographical stories, web sites, audio CDs, CD-ROMs, etc. (In the 10/40 Window, the most effective small portion has been the Sermon on the Mount!)
- d. Testing the materials with a sample audience and revising the translation and packaging as needed.
- e. Producing the materials by print or by duplication, either centrally or by making equipment available locally.

### ***4. “Sowing” — Propagation of selected Scripture products in suitable ways***

The initial goals of sowing the Word are that as seekers read it or listen to it they will (1) be attracted to the Word, (2) develop confidence in its truthfulness and relevance, (3) want to read or listen to it often, (4) respond to follow-up ministries, and (5) seek out committed Christians to explain the Biblical message and the Christian faith. Subsequent goals include the impartation of faith (which comes from hearing the word of Christ), discipleship and incorporation into a body of believers.

Depending on the situation, portions of the Word may be propagated through bookshops, newsstands, book fairs, door-to-door sales, mail-order advertisements, call-in advertisements (with direct home delivery or with postal delivery), gift coupons, personal gifts, public readings, serial publication in newspapers, radio broadcasts, television broadcasts, internet webcasts, or mass distribution. (Note that it is not usually a bad idea to mass distribute Scripture products anonymously or unsolicited, such as hanging them on doorknobs or mailing them to addresses in a telephone directory. It is usually more effective to offer the materials and wait for a response. If the offer cannot be made personally, then one can distribute coupons which the recipients can redeem if they want for a portions of the Scriptures.)

### ***5. “Watering” — Follow-up***

Just as seed in the field needs to be watered and cultivated, so the Word planted in people’s hearts benefits from follow-up. “Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God” (Heb. 6:7 NRSV). In the context of the passage from Hebrews quoted above, the rain seems to represent the Holy Spirit, who can water the Word in many ways.

There are three main factors that lead a person to faith in Christ in resistant communities. Foremost is the Word itself, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Word may come in the form of tapes, videos, broadcasts, storytelling, books, booklets, or correspondence courses. But it needs confirmation. It often happens, as seekers read or listen to the Word with some degree of receptivity, that the Holy Spirit opens their minds to hear the message and assures their hearts that this is the truth from God. He helps them to realize the beauty of God’s holiness and to contrast this with their own sinfulness and need. And the message itself changes their outlook on the world, their view of God and man, God’s purpose for man, the obstacles to that purpose and the solution.

Secondly, in much of the 10/40 Window, the Lord also confirms the message by giving seekers visions or dreams. For example one man kept asking God which book he should follow. He had a dream on which there were two pillars, each with a book on it. A strong wind came up and blew the other book away, leaving the Bible. Another man I know read the Bible and attended church for 15 years but was never sure. He prayed regularly and asked God to show him where the truth lay. One evening as he was praying, he saw Jesus come into his room and lay a Bible on his bed. It was just like his own Bible, and that convinced him. Others have heard a voice speaking a verse of Scripture to them or seen a verse in a dream. Yet other seekers have seen a vision of Jesus and seen the nail prints in his hands, which convinces them that the biblical account is true.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit confirms the Word through the lives and fellowship of believers. Most seekers in resistant communities are reluctant to become disciples of Jesus Christ until they have met one or two people who have become disciples themselves or at least hear their testimonies on the radio. A constant refrain in the book of Revelation is “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (cf. 1:9). The testimonies of true believers are a powerful testimony to the love of God and the reality of the new life promised in the Bible. Seekers need to see the truth of God’s grace in the lives of believers. Even if the believers cannot share the Gospel itself, they can exhibit their love for God in Christ, their trust in his love and grace, the relevance of the Bible to their lives, and the guidance they receive from the Holy Spirit. Mature believers can also study and discuss the Bible with seekers dialogue with them to clear up some of their misconceptions, prejudices, and fears. This prepares the way for a decision to accept Christ.

### ***6. “Germination” — God opening hearts to believe in Christ, resulting in regeneration and salvation***

“As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying” (Acts 16:14 NLT). “God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God” (Eph. 2:8 NLT). Only God can save someone. Only God can give him

the faith to trust in Christ. But God often uses people at the point of decision. When the Soviet Union opened up, IBRA Radio began receiving thousands of letters from people who had been listening to them for years and wanted a personal visit. In the new climate believers were about to visit listeners and discuss their questions, as described above. They were also able to help them pray to receive Christ. And people did pray, in an astonishing 80% of the homes visited!

### ***7. “Cultivation” (watering, weeding, aerating, fertilizing) — Nurture of new believers***

A seedling is very fragile and its roots are shallow. It may need watering and fertilizing, and the ground around it might need to be loosened up and aerated. It faces the dangers of weeds, which need to be removed. The Holy Spirit does much of this through the Word by enlightening the mind and changing the believer’s worldview. The Holy Spirit also works at cleansing the heart and sanctifying the soul, helping the receptive believer to grow in spiritual maturity.

The Holy Spirit can also work through mature believers to disciple the new believers via personal contact, email, correspondence, and even the media. In the absence of personal disciplers, radio programs have been used to model discipleship training appropriate for the cultural context and to model the founding and conduct of house churches. Listeners even write to the radio stations about issues of concern, and the radio station reads their letter over the air and then responds to the issues it raises. Besides answering questions, disciplers pray for new believers and encourage them

- to begin praying for the salvation of their family and friends,
- to read or listen to the Word with a heart ready to trust and obey,
- to praise God, give thanks, confess sin, pray for needs, trust the Lord, listen for guidance,
- to exemplify Christian life in ways appropriate to the culture,
- to share the Word wisely, through booklets, tapes, video, etc.,
- to seek the support of the extended family leader or village elder,
- to seek long-term witness, discussion, and decision by family units,
- to persevere in the face of persecution.

Jesus warned us to expect persecution, and told Paul he would have to suffer many trials. Paul and Barnabas told the new believers, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22 NIV). In turn said that In Acts 4 we see that God allowed James to be killed but he sent his angels to rescue Peter. James and 1 Peter 4–5 say that God can bring good from persecution and that believers should not waver or lose heart but get their strength from God. Today there are many stories of God protecting and saving believers out of the midst of persecution, and there are many stories of believers maintaining their testimony in the face of persecution and death. It is estimated that at least 100 million believers face persecution, that several million of them have suffered imprisonment for their faith, and that over 160,000



are killed every year because they refuse to renounce Christ.<sup>6</sup> An important role for disciplers is to help new believers be wise in the face of danger, to be true to Christ in the face of persecution, and to trust the love and wisdom of God at all times. “In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28 NIV).

"Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!" Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" The LORD opened his servant's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire. (2 Kings 6:16-17 NIV)

In a well-documented event for which I have interviewed several witnesses, three village house churches totalling seventy believers arranged to meet together for a special event in honor of a guest. A hall was arranged for the purpose and preparations were made. But word of the event reached a group of frustrated terrorists; they had vowed to kill all believers in Jesus but had not had any success. The terrorists came to the place fully armed and stationed themselves discreetly in positions outside the building. But God had been orchestrating events behind the scenes such that something hindered the attendance of every single guest. Not one person arrived—not the organizers, not the owner of the hall, not even the guest of honor—only the terrorists. Finally there came...the army, who arrested all of the terrorists and locked them up. Their interrogation brought to light the intentions of the terrorists, and the story of God's unseen intervention became a source of great encouragement to all the believers.

### ***8. “Gathering the harvest into barns” — Church Planting***

Just as crops are gathered into barns to keep them from spoiling, so believers are gathered into fellowships. We see in the Scriptures that the local church is God's plan for the nurture of his people, the praise of his name, and the expansion of his kingdom. One part of the total task is the work of church planters, who encourage believers to gather into churches or join existing ones. In places where persecution is rife, new believers are not usually brought into a church until they have been discipled in the faith and can be trusted, and baptisms might not take place until the whole community has a certain number of believers. Church planters encourage believers to learn the Word and to be prepared to share it with others, and to pray for their friends and relatives—and “for all who are in authority” (1 Tim. 2:1–4). When God raises up leaders for the emerging church, the church planters give advice and help provide training, encouraging them to memorize Scripture and to find culturally appropriate forms of fellowship, worship and witness. But in the final analysis it is Jesus who builds his church and who leads it through the Holy Spirit, Matt. 16:18; 23:10.

In restricted regions where outsiders cannot meet the believers, it has been possible plant churches with radio dramas such as “Church in my home.” Such programs encourage house church formation by modeling worship, fellowship, and discipleship training. Radio IBRA ran a

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<sup>6</sup> See David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, “Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2002” in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Vol. 26, No. 1).

dramatic series of this source, alternating it with dramatized translations of key biblical narratives. The combination resulted in a doubling of the number of reported house churches in just a year's time.

### ***9. "Sowing the harvest seeds" — Church-planting movement (CPM)***

The crops do not remain in the barn. The farmer sows many of them into new soil. The chief strategy of the total mission task, as exemplified in the New Testament, is that new churches would soon be spreading the Word and starting newer churches that will expand the Kingdom of God. From the first day that people receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior, they should be encouraged to start praying for their friends, relatives, and communities. They should have a vision for building the church. And the new church should have a vision for praying for the lost, spreading the Word, being a testimony in their lives, discipling new believers, and starting new churches. In other words, they—not outsiders— should be doing steps 1 – 8.

### ***The Total Team for the Total Task***

That summarizes the total task. It is not usually the job of one person. God has created us as a team, each of us with different roles, members of the "body of Christ."

[Christ] is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ. (Eph. 4:11–13 NLT)

Each member of the body needs to play its part in harmony with the others; otherwise they are not functioning as a body. Our Lord has placed prayer partners, researchers, pre-evangelists, translators, publishers, distributors, literacy workers, broadcasters, evangelists, disciplers, and church-planters in the total team. Each one on the total team has a vital role in the total task of sowing, planting, and strengthening the church in every people group, so that it may become a church planting movement. They may happen as God blesses their working together by his grace and to his glory.

### ***Working Together as the Total Team in the Face of Different Values***

God is honored when the various Christian agencies and workers cooperate as partners, and it serves as an example to the local church. So what is partnering? In their book Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz define a partnership as "an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfilled agreed upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Partnering in Ministry: The Direction of World Evangelism*, by Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

There are many potential benefits from efforts to partner with other agencies. There is a synergy and efficiency that comes from working together in a complementary way. There is an opportunity to share vision and skills with one another. And there is a greater likelihood that this will result in fruit that lasts.

There are also many obstacles to forming effective partnerships. One obstacle is the fact that separate organizations and churches have their traditions, their own goals, and their own concerns. We are also human, so in some cases there is competition for funds or credit (sometimes called “gold and glory”). Sometimes leaders of churches and parachurch organizations, if they are not democratic or congregational in structure, become somewhat possessive and either isolate their group from others or seek to expand their control to others. Many Christian workers are also very individualistic and want to do what is right in their own eyes without submitting to a team. But the rising generation is more team-oriented, so individualism might not be such an obstacle for them. We need to keep reminding ourselves that we are all part of the same body, serving the same Lord, to further His kingdom, not ours, and that all the credit goes to him.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

(Ephesians 42-7 NIV)

### ***Differences in core values among Great Commission agencies***

Not everyone has it in mind that the main objective of the overall mission effort is the fostering and nurturing of sustainable church-planting movements. A few agencies are still doing their own thing without trying to fit it into the larger strategy, and sometimes they end up doing the right thing at the wrong place or time. But even when agencies want to cooperate to achieve the common goal, they can be hindered by differences in the values that guide their work. Sometimes they are not aware of the values they seem to be following, so it is good if all partners can discuss them. Below are some of the values that are held by many Great Commission agencies.

### ***The priority of the Kingdom of God, with personal and organizational goals subservient to the advancement of the Kingdom.***

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33)

“And [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18)

It has been more traditional for each agency to have a particular product or service that was applied to every situation, without considering what would be the most strategic thing to do in each situation to advance the kingdom. For example, some people have said that distribution of

the Jesus Film is necessary and sufficient for the evangelism of every people group. There is a need for the workers and especially the local believers to seek the Lord quite earnestly with regard to how He wants to build His church there. For example, it might be assumed that every people groups needs a printed New Testament as their first scripture, even though some groups would be better served with non-print Scriptures or by beginning with important books of the Old Testament before trying to understand the New Testament.

### *The commission to call and disciple to Christ people of every ethnic group.*

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ...” (Matthew 28:19)

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations ...” (Matthew 24:14)

There are some who think that discipleship can be adequately achieved in a few days or weeks, while others spend years at it. Some studies show that disciples in UPGs do not usually persevere if they lack the Scriptures in their language or if they are not integrated into a caring church community.

### *The transforming power of the Word of God*

“... faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

Most Christian workers agree to the importance of the Word of God. Amsterdam 2000, a convocation of 10,000 evangelists from around the world, passed a resolution that included the following affirmation regarding the Bible:

The Bible is indispensable to true evangelism. The Word of God itself provides both the content and authority for all evangelism. Without it there is no message to preach to the lost. People must be brought to an understanding of at least some of the basic truths contained in the Scriptures before they can make a meaningful response to the Gospel. Thus we must proclaim and disseminate the Holy Scriptures in the heart language of all those we are called to evangelize and disciple.

Studies have shown that reading or hearing portions of Scripture is the single most important factor in people coming to faith in the 10/40 Window. But some workers use just a few passages repeatedly, while others think everyone needs a whole Bible in the mother tongue, and yet others see a mini-Bible as a sufficient minimum. The growing emphasis on chronological Bible storying, however, has led to the widespread use of a broader selection of Scripture passages.

### *The communicative power of heart language and familiar culture*

“...each one heard them speaking in his own language” (Acts 2:6)

“... the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev 14:6)

God’s goal for his Kingdom is to include within it people from every language and culture. Piper writes that “The beauty of praise that will come to the Lord from the diversity of the nations is greater than the beauty that would come to him if the chorus of the redeemed were culturally uniform or limited.”<sup>8</sup> There is increasing recognition among missiologists of the importance of communicating in the language of the heart, as opposed to using a second language known only by those who are educated or traveled. There is also widespread agreement that Christ will build a church that fits the culture if we do not get in his way by trying to import a model of church from our own cultures. So most Christian workers take an “incarnational” approach, so that the Word can take on flesh in the language and culture of the NPG. But there is often resistance to this among outside Christian workers who want to use familiar forms of worship and familiar religious terms. They feel uncomfortable and almost hypocritical using language, terms, and songs that are outside their own tradition, and some may view it compromise. The local people, on the other hand, usually view this attitude as a kind of ethnic arrogance. To them the use of imported terms, tunes, and customs makes Christianity seem distant and foreign.

On the other extreme, there have been those who thought they were contextualizing Christianity when in fact they were trying to christianize the existing cultural context, resulting in a kind of syncretism. One of the many interesting points made by Leslie Newbigin is that Western Evangelical Christianity is itself highly compromised with Western worldview and values but poorly contextualized to Western culture.<sup>9</sup> So the challenge is not only to learn and use the language and customs of the people appropriately, but to use them in a way that accurately reflects the intended message, so that Christ can build a church that will be effective and appropriate to its context.

### *Excellence in the task, working as to the Lord*

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:23).

The quest for excellence usually requires investments in training, preliminary research, quality work, and follow-up testing. It is only in this way that Christian workers can develop a fruitful strategy for their role in fostering church-planting movements. Through regular review and evaluation, they can discover whether their strategy is leading to long-term positive outcomes, and they can modify their strategy as needed. Not everyone, however, is willing to invest the

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<sup>8</sup> *Let the Nations be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, by John Piper (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), p. 222.

<sup>9</sup> *Foolishness to the Greek; the Gospel and Western Culture*, by Lesslie Newbigin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

time required for this. The modern western desire for instant results leads donors, churches and organizations to skip the foundational steps and follow-up and just seek an immediate response. They become obsessed with statistics of distribution, coverage, or response as the measure of their success. As a result, some Christian workers and organizations become more activity-oriented than outcome-oriented, and they don't conduct follow-up studies on the long-term effectiveness of their activities. Thus they continue with plans of action that produce good publicity but poor long-term outcomes, and they end up wasting resources.

### *Urgency and Productivity*

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples ... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (John 15:8, 16)

There is a tension between the quest for excellence and the goal of higher productivity. It is the tension between quantity versus quality. Not everyone resolves this in the same way, and it is easy to slide to one extreme or the other. We need to seek God's will for the balance he wants.

### *Interpersonal relationships that honor God, encourage one another, and bear witness.*

"Take care of my sheep." (John 21:16)

"... As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35)

Some people are more task-oriented, while others are more people-oriented. Achieving a good balance is a challenge. It is tempting for task-oriented workers to do the task for the people group rather than train them to do it themselves, but this does not build capacity in the local church.

### *Impartiality*

"Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." (Colossians 3:11)

"My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism ... Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?" (James 2:1,5)

The Christian workers are all part of the one body of Christ, in which there are no national distinctions. This is not to belittle ethnic differences, because God has set it as the goal of mission that there would be saved people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. What this means is that no culture or ethnic group should be set up as the norm to which others must adapt or be relegated to a second-class status. So all partners from outside the UPG should be considered equal partners, with no value distinction between "national" and "expatriate", nor between those who have funds and those who need them. Partners from within the UPG are equal partners as well, but they are due special consideration because they have inside knowledge of the people group, they have a special responsibility to their own

people, they bear the greatest cost of any persecution, and their growth in ability and ministry is a prime goal of the mission effort.

### *The priority of the local body of believers and its authority in regard to ministry*

... All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

“... to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:13)

“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:21-22)

Since the goal of mission is to encourage a CPM in every UPG, it follows that priority must be given to the development of the local church, meaning the body of believers from the UPG itself. To this end they should be involved as much as possible in the conduct and guidance of the ministry. The local church, if it shares the vision for a CPM, should choose or approve members to receive training for ministry and for increasing responsibility for the work. At every step, the local believers should seek God's guidance for how His Word should best be prepared and propagated, how the follow-up and discipleship should be conducted, and how the church should operate. Ultimately we must all acknowledge that Christ is head of each local church (Eph. 5:23), and Christ said that He is the one who will build His church (Matt. 16:18). It is clear that on many matters the local church, as the body of believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has the final authority (Matt. 18:17; Acts 13:2). Where multiple churches were concerned, the Apostles, elders, and church made the decision together (Acts 15:22). If local churches from the receptor people share the goals of the CPM process and understand the principles, then they should have the final decision on how to implement it for their own people. The local church will not grow under the weight of outside impositions nor on the crutch of outside dependency. Rather, as the local body grows, the outside partners can transfer more responsibility to them and progressively disengage from full-time involvement, as Peter and Paul did.

### *Partnering with others in service to the Kingdom of Christ*

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. (Matthew 18:20)

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:16)

We are called to “work together for the truth” (3 John 1:8) as “fellow workers for the kingdom of God” (Col 4:11). This is the request of Jesus recorded in John 17 throughout his high-priestly prayer for his followers. In verse 23 he prays, “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). God is honored when the various Christian churches, agencies and workers cooperate as partners, and it serves as an example to the local believers.

It is increasingly the case that field workers are working in local partnerships, but this trend is hindered by the fact that different organizations have their own agendas, goals, values, and reporting relationships. People are heavily influenced by their reporting relationships, and it is not usually the local partnership or local church to which they are reporting. It can happen, for example, that the workers serving a particular UPG all agree on the needs and the appropriate strategy and their roles in that strategy, but the people at someone's headquarters have a set agenda for their personnel that does not fit the need in every case. The headquarters people are sometimes so caught up in global programs, goals, and schedules, that they are unable to accommodate the particular needs of each situation.

A further hindrance to partnership, which was prominent in the past but fading at present, is the presence of competitiveness among the different churches and agencies. This was especially noticeable in denominational missions, and one still finds it among local churches in some regions.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (Matthew 20:25-26)

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (1 Corinthians 12:24-25)

Service to the Kingdom requires a servant mentality. But many cultures in Africa and Asia, like the culture in which Jesus lived, have a very authoritarian structure. As a result, one can find that some of the pastors of local churches or national leaders of parachurch organizations expect unquestioning obedience and honor from those under them. This demand for loyalty leads them to keep their flocks away from other pastors and leaders, who are seen as competitors for the people's loyalty and respect. This competitive fear often leads to criticism of other pastors rather than to cooperation with them. So a key to developing cooperation among the believers is to promote brotherhood and body ministry at the local level. If the believers can perceive themselves as different but equally valued members of the body, in which all have a contribution to make, and in which Jesus Himself is the head served by all, then it will be easier for them to cooperate with one another. (Note: In countries where churches are not officially recognized, concerns for security lead to isolation as well, but this is a different matter.)

The expatriate workers are usually cooperative, but sometimes their organizations compete to get credit for what God is doing, and there are always a few individuals who are simply independent and uncooperative. More problematic is the partnership of expatriates with nationals. Some serve the local church in a patronizing way, often without realizing it, and they end up making the decisions for them. Others serve as slaves, doing whatever the local pastor or national leader says, regardless of his wisdom or personal agenda. The scriptural pattern, however, is to serve as partners and share our gifts as members of the same body without favoritism:



In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. (Romans 12:5-6)

Acts 14 gives the example of the leaders of local churches coming together to make policy decisions, and gaining the consensus of the church members as well:

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers. (Acts 15:22)

### ***Local ownership of the language, and local authority over translation choices, within the limits of what is acceptable to a translation consultant***

The language belongs to those who have inherited it as their mother tongue. They are the ones with the ultimate responsibility to decide about the forms that names should take and the terms and expressions that should be used. But since they usually know their language subconsciously (tacitly), without a conscious awareness of its grammar, structure, and semantics, they can usually benefit from a formal introduction to the language's linguistic and cultural features and how they correspond to features in languages from which (or into which) they are translating. Leaders of the community are then in a better position to make the decisions regarding choice of orthography (how the language is written) and terminology (how new concepts will be expressed). Imposition of decisions on these matters by foreigners would, of course, be morally reprehensible. At the same time, local leaders should be made fully aware of the advantages to making their orthography and terminology harmonious with those of related languages.

### ***The Power of prayer***

All things are possible with God, but without Him we can do nothing. Prayer is an essential element of the ministry, not only spending time with God but also mobilizing many others to prayer for the audience and the ministry to them.

“They all joined together constantly in prayer.” Acts 1:14

“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19)

John Piper writes that “When missions moves forward by prayer it magnifies the power of God. When it moves by human management it magnifies man.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Let the Nations be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, by John Piper (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), p. 67.

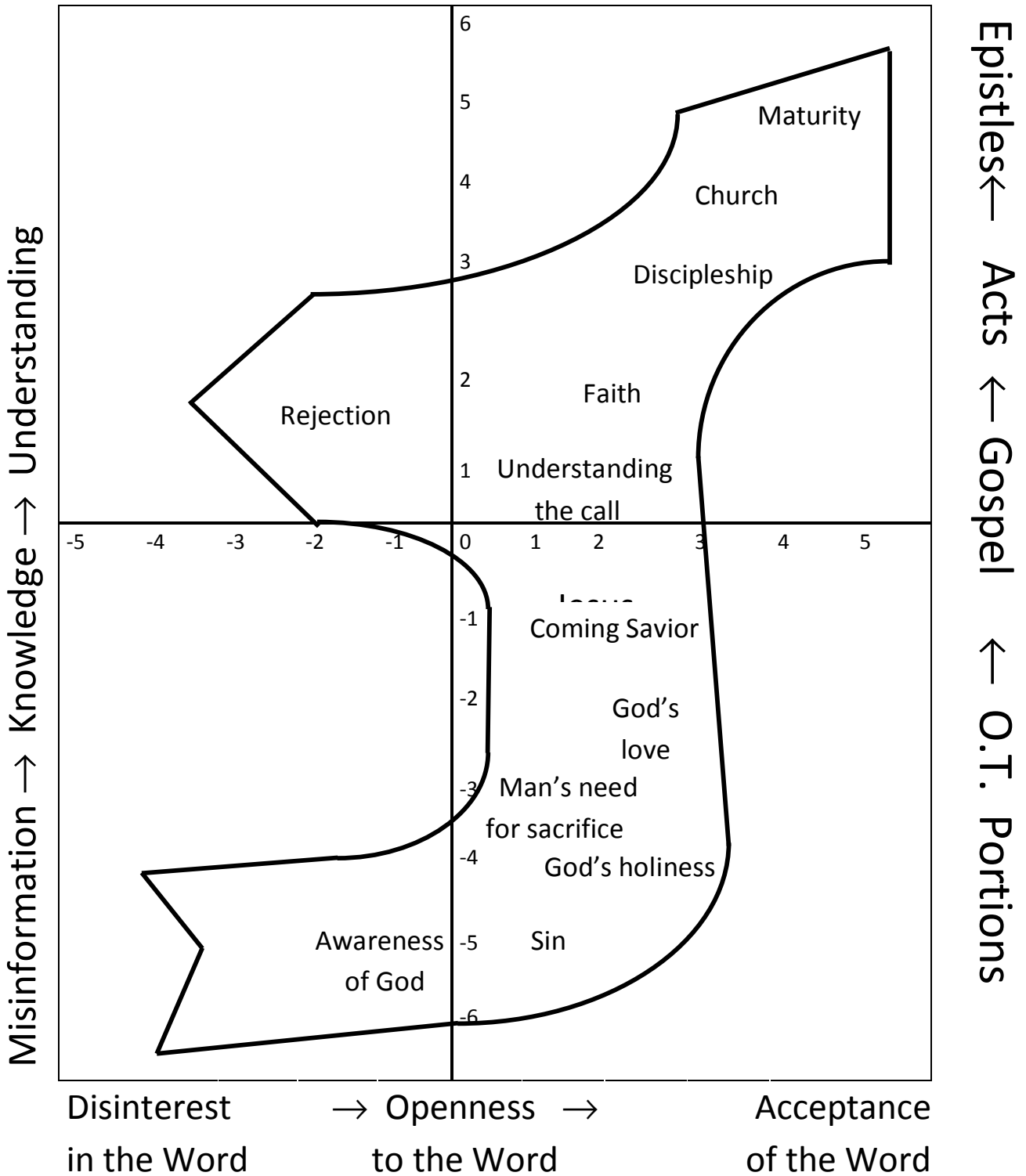
### *Trusting in God for the impossible*

We are not limited by what is practical or humanly possible, but whatever God calls us to do, he will provide the grace to accomplish it.

“What is impossible with men is possible with God.” (Luke 18:27)

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

**Appendix A: Plot of Chronological Portions in a “Gray” Matrix,  
Showing Anticipated Audience Response along an “Engel’s Scale”**



## **Appendix B: Considerations on Translating and Packaging the Word (Step 3a-b)**

Program planning should be based on solid communication principles:

- Knowing the audience and the factors that affect communication of the Word, such as
  - Showing respect for them and for good things in their culture
  - Understanding their suspicion of the Bible and their misunderstanding of Christianity
  - Building on their respect for prophets and their scriptures (where appropriate)
  - Addressing differences between their worldview and the Scriptural worldview

- By being sensitive to differences that present barriers to understanding, such as
    - The fallen state of mankind and the world, resulting in evil and death
    - Mankind's hopeless sinfulness and need for regeneration
    - God's holiness and intolerance of sin, his consistency/integrity
    - The need for a perfect sacrificial substitute to bear sin's consequences
    - The lordship and divinity of Christ, who is the Word incarnate

- And by focusing on differences that are attractive (i.e., points of appeal)
    - Personal forgiveness and acceptance (saving grace)
    - Inner cleansing and renewal through the Holy Spirit
    - A personal relationship with God, fully realized in the next life
    - Assurance of salvation, assurance of God's love
    - God's management of events toward good ends for His people
    - Grace to live through the strengthening and guidance of the Spirit
    - Power to resist and repel Satan and evil spirits

- Using their learning style (oral, concrete, relational, experiential)
  - Revising their worldview with a chronological series of Bible narratives
  - Revising their worldview with personal testimonies of the love and grace of Christ and testimonies of the relevant application of the Bible

- Using the media they use
  - The media they use for information and entertainment (mostly non-print)
  - The media available for spreading the word

- Using the most effective languages/dialects of the people
  - The language and dialect used in the appropriate media
  - The language and dialect with which they identify and which moves them
  - The language and dialect which they understand

- Using clear and natural terminology
  - Taking care with key terms that are often misunderstood:
    - Holy Spirit, Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, Kingdom of God, grace, salvation, justification, holiness, sanctification, saint, spiritual, the flesh, gospel, preaching, prayer, baptism, church, fellowship, eternal life.