



Charity Christian Missions

Newsletter

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Articles on...



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Charity Christian Missions

"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles;for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts."

Malachi 1:11

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We thank God for all of your interest and support, in finances, letters of encouragement, and prayers.

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A Hinderance to The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches at Home

by Emanuel Esh

The goal of an Apostle is to raise up a vibrant body of believers that will reproduce other vibrant bodies of believers, spontaneously. His aim is two-fold: 1. To make disciples that will immediately go out and find others to disciple, which will in turn train others 2. To gather these disciples together and plant a vibrant New Testament church, that will plant other vibrant New Testament churches, on their own. This may be among an already evangelized people or to an unreached tribe or area.

There are many things that hinder this God-ordained method of planting churches. You can be sure that the devil will attempt to stop this work, if possible. Matthew 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Some think defensively, and say that this means that God will not let the enemy win over the church. Others think offensively, and say it means that the gates of hell will not be able to stop the church from going into enemy territory and delivering those that lie bound in fetters of sin. How we

look at this verse has a lot to do with winning souls and planting churches. If our focus turns from going into the enemy's territory and rescuing the lost, to trying to hold our own and keep the enemy from invading our churches or missions, we have lost sight of the goal.

One of the hindrances that keeps us from spreading out here at home is the fact that we get settled down in life. We allow other things to creep into our lives. Our tendency is to gather together in a nice fellowship, buy a nice home, and establish a prosperous business. We fill the pews and enjoy the challenging messages. To think of up rooting our family and business and moving to another area does not fit our idea of a nice Christian life. We like the security of a stable and solid fellowship, and rightly so.

One of the tendencies in the heart of man is to desire a secure place to rest and stay. This tendency shows forth stronger at

times than what we many realize. As children of God, we are promised a very secure place of rest for all eternity. But this is not to be our goal here on this side of glory. Actually, God's heart for His children is quite the opposite. The examples in scripture are quite plain.

The people in Genesis 11 had a strong desire to stay together in an established place of security and rest. Notice that it was God's desire that they would scatter all across the earth.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, "Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly." And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make

us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

I used to think that the people in Genesis 11 were very wicked and evil, since God dealt so harshly with them. The scripture does not necessarily teach that. But notice the thought pattern that caught the LORD's attention. "Let us build us a city and a tower, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered." So the LORD confounded their language and scattered them.

Israel was chosen by God to be the nation through whom God would send forth His Son to redeem mankind from their sins. They thought that they were God's chosen people, and they were. But they got proud because of God's blessing on their lives and nation. They hoarded the blessing of God instead of spreading it all around to other nations. They trusted in horses and chariots and in their own numbers, instead of depending on God. They thought they were indestructible. They were scattered by the Babylonians who

took some of them captive to Babylon. God's people had lost the vision to go, spread out and make known their great God to all nations and to disciple them. Therefore God scattered them....

John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." This is the opposite of the natural thinking of man. Jesus preached to large crowds, but refused to be crowned their king. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world...." "He that will save his life, shall lose it, but he that will lose his life for my sake, shall find it."

The temple was the ultimate place for the Jews, and their hopes of an earthly kingdom centered on it. In Matthew 24:1 the disciples came to Jesus to show him the buildings of the temple. Jesus said, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The disciples were unable to imagine the scattering that would take place in 70 AD. Not only would the temple stones be scattered, but also the Jews would be scattered across the face of the earth. Not by their own will but by the sovereign will of God.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus told the eleven, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations...." The command is to scatter across the face of this earth and make disciples.

In Acts 1:6, the disciples came together, they asked him, saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus was very patient with them in trying to teach them the principles of the heavenly kingdom. He replied "that they would be witnesses unto Him both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." What a scattering!

Man seems to enjoy being together in groups, especially when the fellowship is sweet. This was the case in Acts 2-6. By the stoning of Stephen, and the persecutions of Saul, the church finally did what God wanted them to do. In Acts 8:1, "...they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." The results are in vs. 4, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word."

The heart of God is that we would spread out across this globe with the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. God has entrusted the church with the responsibility of taking the gospel to all the world.

The church is commanded to GO and make disciples of all nations. God has chosen the foolishness of preaching, whereby to save them that believe. We are to make disciples and plant churches that will in turn also make disciples and plant churches on their own accord. Our tendency is to settle down, and allow our focus to turn to our work, and begin to build an empire for ourselves. No, work and business, houses and lands are not wrong. But the spirit of ease and a good life creeps in so slowly, that most times we fail to notice.

Oh God, open our eyes and heart so that we may clearly understand Your will for our lives. Give us a disdain for wealth and ease of life. Make us willing to sacrifice all for the Kingdom of Christ. And to count all things as lost for Christ. And, to set our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth. Cause us to choose to go willingly, lest we be scattered against our will. Give us a vision of vibrant churches spreading all across this globe. □

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by George Patterson
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George Patterson teaches in the Division of Intercultural Studies at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. He coaches and trains missionaries to multiply churches in many areas of the world. He worked for 21 years in northern Honduras through a program of Theological Education and Evangelism by Extension.

Our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to look on the fields that are ready for harvest (John 4:35). So—let's do it. How many men and women and children, persons with feelings like ours, still know nothing of Jesus' sacrificial death and life-giving resurrection? At least 2.2 billion persons! To shake their hands, at a rate of 60 a minute or 3,600 an hour, for 8 hours each day of the week, would take over 200 years! How painful to see so many unaware of God's pardon!

Our Lord sends us to disciple every "nation" (people group) by training them to obey all His commands, which includes, of course, discipling others (Matt. 28:18-20). This means that we disciple a "nation" only when it is permeated by obedient disciples who also disciple other unevangelized peoples. So we don't simply go and start a church among a people. We, or those we send, must start the kind of church that grows and reproduces spontaneously as churches will, in daughter churches, granddaughter churches, great-granddaughter churches and so on. Spontaneous reproduction of churches means the Holy Spirit moves a church (yours?) to reproduce daughter churches on its own, without outsiders pushing it (Acts 13:1-3).

I began training pastors in Honduras in a traditional theological institution and had the traditional problems for the traditional reasons. I assumed the bright young men I trained were dedicated because they came to our resident Bible school. Our plan was for them to return to their home towns as pastors. But

the graduates found the gold lettering on their diplomas did not go well with the white-washed adobe walls back home. It enabled them, however, to earn more in the office of the Dole Banana Co.

My raspy supervisor had the gall to blame us teachers; he told us, "Close the school; start discipling the people."

"No," I argued, "that's too hard."

"Excuses! They're poor, semi-literate, subsistence farmers but you teach as though they were educated, middle class Americans."

I wrote my missionary buddies from language school, now spread all over Latin America, fishing for sympathy. They had the same problem!

"I'm a teacher without a classroom!" I complained.

"So," my supervisor rasped, "teach by extension."

"What's that?"

He handed me a smelly old saddle, explaining, "You're promoted. This is the Chair of Evangelism and Church Planting in your new extension Bible institute."

After a few weeks of blisters on my south side I learned to communicate with the mission mule and announced, "Hey, I can do this TEE stuff. It's great."

My supervisor warned me, "Then your students had better raise up and pastor their own churches or we'll close down this Theological Education by Extension, too."

I took the pastoral studies to family men (Biblical "elder" types) in the poverty-ridden villages, mountains and cities. Unlike their single young sons, they had crops, jobs or family responsibilities that kept them from going off to our resident Bible school. They also lacked the education to absorb its intensive teaching. But these older men, with roots in their villages and barrios, could begin pastoring with the respect of their people easier than the single young men could. By God's mercy I slowly learned to evangelize and disciple these elders in a way that enabled them to raise up and pastor their small village churches. As will be the case in many of today's remaining unreached fields, we began to see growth not through any one church growing big or fast, but through the slow, steady reproduction of many small churches.

I could have avoided years of struggle groping for principles of church reproduction had I looked first in the operator's manual. New Testament discipling principles, conscientiously applied, are enabling

churches to reproduce in Honduras and many other fields. We must distinguish between these general *principles* and culture-specific *applications*. Some of the methods cited below, for example, will not fit in your golf bag if you work in Tokyo. But the Biblical principles themselves, if applied with culturally relevant methods, should enable churches to reproduce wherever there is plenty of "good soil." Theologically speaking, good soil for the gospel seed to take root in and multiply is *bad people*, and lots of them (Rom. 5:20-21; Matt. 13:18-23; Eph. 2:1-10). Field testing of programs based on these principles give consistently good results in Latin America and Asia, including hostile fields where evangelism is illegal.

The simplicity of the principles disappoints some educators. They expect something more sophisticated, at least new or expensive. Missionary or not, one can multiply disciples doing these four simple things:

- ✓ Know and love the people you disciple.
- ✓ Mobilize your disciples to edify immediately those they are discipling
- ✓ Teach and practice obedience to Jesus' basic commands, in love, before and above all else.
- ✓ Build loving, edifying accountability relationships between disciples and churches in order to reproduce churches.

1.

kNoW AND l o v e T H e p e o p l e Y o u D I S C I p l e

We must know and love a people before we can disciple them. When Jesus told His disciples to "Look at the fields," they were finding it hard to love the Samaritans around them; they could not see them receiving God's grace.

Limit Your Area of Responsibility to One People or Community

We must focus on one people group, the one God has given us. Paul knew his area of responsibility before God (II Cor.10:12-16; Acts 16:6-10; Gal. 2:8). He knew what kind of churches to plant and

where. For a *movement of church reproduction* a church planting team needs a clear focus from God. My area was “the Spanish speaking people of the Aguan Valley and surrounding mountains.” It helps to be exact.

At home or abroad every discipler needs to ask: “For whom am I responsible?” If a missionary fails to do this, the geographic and ethnic limits of his ministry remain blurred. He will jump from opportunity to opportunity. I asked one of these wandering gold prospectors in Central America what his area of responsibility was. “Oh,” he said, “I am winning the country for Christ.” He goes from city to city preaching in prisons and army camps; he bombs villages with tracts from his Cessna. It’s fun and folks back home eagerly finance it. But he will never plant a reproductive church until he learns to hold the people of a community in his heart.

Choosing your people in a new field needs study and prayer. Confer with other missionaries, nationals and God Himself for guidance.

Knowing a people means touching the heart of individuals. Laughing with those who laugh. Weeping with those who weep. Playing marbles with 2-year old Chimbo and checkers with his grandpa (or whatever they play in the town square). It may help if you let him beat you. This applies to arguing religion, too. It’s dangerous always to be “right” when you’re the new kid on the block. Learn to appreciate the people and their ways, even the toothless old men. Listen and learn until you have discovered those things in their folk religion or culture that help communicate the gospel.

Once you know your area and people, discern which segment among them is most receptive to you and to Jesus Christ. To penetrate restricted, resistant fields, aim *first* at the working class or an oppressed minority. This contradicts some popular church growth theories. We are not dealing with second generation growth in Pasadena, California, however, but the *initial beachhead* where people get a curved blade in their ribs for witnessing. Jesus did not begin His public ministry among the influential middle class and natural leaders in the political nerve centers of Rome or Jerusalem, but with the working class upriver in Galilee where they spoke Hebrew with a backwoods accent—otherwise He would have been crucified prematurely.

Let the Church be of the People

Like most inexperienced church planters I started “preaching points” at first, instead of genuine New Testament churches. Someone went every week to a community where a group gathered to hear their pulpit oratory and sing (well, at least to sing). Converts were not baptized. Local leaders were not trained. The Lord’s Supper was neglected. No one knew for sure who were Christians. Obedient, sacrificial discipling gave way to entertaining (a tradition brought by American missionaries). Preaching points develop a personality of their own; they stubbornly refuse to evolve into obedient, giving, reproductive churches. They become sponges soaking up the time and efforts of outside workers and producing nothing except where God’s sheer mercy overrides our routine.

Find what a church’s people can do and plan that, before planning its structure, forms and organization; I hope it takes you less time than it took me to learn that formal pulpit preaching is ineffective (often illegal) in many of today’s remaining unreached fields. You can preach the Word with power in many other ways, if you know your people. We used dramatic Bible reading, songs with music and lyrics composed by nationals, poems, symbols and story telling. They sang with more enthusiasm when they composed songs in the local style. Each would have croaked (so would the average director of contemporary church music). But the music was theirs. I’d spend days preparing an evangelistic sermon for our first trip to a distant village. They’d listen politely. Then I learned to let them dramatize Bible stories in their own way (one rehearsal fifteen minutes beforehand). They let local non-Christians play the fatted calf and other minor roles in the Prodigal son and the whole community complained for weeks. Not about the terrible acting but about the jerk who was too greedy to wait for his old man to die, to get his hands on his inheritance! Which all led to more conversions than a year of my sermons.

Let the new church’s self-identity be evident. Know exactly what you are aiming at within the community: a well defined body of obedient disciples of Jesus Christ. Once I made the mistake of allowing more outside helpers to be present than members of the community during the first baptism and celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The church died at birth. There must be a majority from the community itself,

especially at the first Baptism or worship meetings, or the church is not born as a distinct entity within the community. Our converts felt that they had simply been added to some organization of the outsiders. I robbed them of the thrill of looking at each other and saying, “*We* are now the church here!” They must see the new church being born as a part of their community.

List What You Will Do to Reproduce Disciples Among a People

What you do first often determines the direction of your work, for good or bad, for years to come. Will it lead to reproductive churches? The right steps will vary for each field but will always include teaching the converts first to obey Jesus’ basic commands (Matt. 28:18-20). Take the shortest route possible to start a real church: a group of believers in Christ dedicated to obey His commands. In a pioneer field let it start small, perhaps with only three or four members. It will grow if you disciple the people as Jesus said.

The first question you ask about an unreached people group is, “Who can best reach them?” The answer is often, “Church planters from a people that is culturally closer than we.” You, or the missionaries you send, may need to train and mobilize church planting team members from another people group that is more similar to your target group in race, politics, economic level, education, lifestyle and world view.

Let’s assume you research well all the factors: race, culture, logistics, urban versus rural backgrounds, language similarities, education and economic levels, etc. You learn the language. Then you go in a crowded bus to your new field, with a team of church planters as similar to the local people as possible in every aspect. Some or all of them may be from another developing country. You are happy because they do not have to make that long cultural leap that delays church planting by years (the less responsive the people are to missionaries, the more crucial this cultural fit). Now you finally arrive, unpack your toothbrush, take a deep breath, pray, step out the door and find fifty thousand people living around you who think Jesus was John Wayne’s cousin. Now what?

Avoid institutions if possible at this beachhead stage (community development programs unrelated to church planting, schools, clinics, etc.); they will

come later. In Honduras we developed community development work but it grew out of the churches, not vice versa. We taught obedience to the great commandment of loving our neighbor in a practical way. A poverty program can aid church planting if the two are integrated by the Holy Spirit. But churches dependent on charitable institutions are almost always dominated by the foreign missionary and seldom reproduce.

To start a church that will multiply in the normal way in a *pioneer* field with no experienced pastors nor organized churches, take the following steps (change them where local circumstances require it):

- Witness first to male heads of households. We often told them Bible stories they could pass on immediately, even before saved, to their own family and friends. We went with them to show them how. But why *male* heads of families? We worked in a macho culture (right where the word *macho* came from, where men carried sharpened machetes and used them readily). Female leadership, right or wrong, limited the outreach of brand new works. Later, when a church was established with male pastor and elders, women could take a higher profile. Be sensitive to your community’s norms, especially in the first impressions you give of the church.
- Baptize all repentant believers without delay (entire families when possible). At first I acted as though a big buzzard were perched on my shoulder just waiting to pounce on our converts that fell way; I delayed baptism to make sure they were “safe.” But I soon saw that the very reason many fell away was my distrust. That’s the funny thing about God’s grace; He wants us to let it slop over on the unworthy. (Rom 5:20-21).
- Provide a style of worship that new elders-in-training can lead and teach to others. Don’t invite the *public* until local leaders can lead the services. Celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly as the center of worship, especially until local men are mature enough to preach in an edifying, humble way.
- Organize a provisional board of elders as soon as mature men are converted. Show them how to win and pastor their own people right away. Remember, this is for pioneer fields with no experienced pastors nor well organized churches. We, like Paul, must use the best men God gives us as the churches multiply, or the new disciples have

no leadership at all (Acts 14:23).

- Enroll these new elders in pastoral training on the job. Don't remove them from their people for training. Meet with them every two or three weeks (more often if possible until they are mobilized).
- Provide a list of activities planned for the congregation, starting with the commands of Christ and His Apostles. Let everyone know where he is going and what he needs to learn for each activity. Use this as a check list to monitor the progress of the elders you train, in both their studies and pastoral work, as they mobilize their own people in ministry.

2. MOBILIZE YOUR DISCIPLES IMMEDIATELY TO EDIFY THOSE THEY ARE DISCIPLINING

To build up the church as a living, reproducing body, Paul instructs pastors and teachers to train the members of the church for the ministry, to edify the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).

Build Edifying Relationships With the Leaders You Disciple

Like most new missionaries, I took myself too seriously. I worried about what my disciples were up to. It took me years to learn to sit back with my coconut milk, laugh at my own goofs and trust the Holy Spirit to do His work in my students. How can we enable the leaders we train to edify each other and their people through personal, loving relationships?

Paul left his pastoral disciple Timothy behind to work with the elders in newly planted churches with these instructions: "The things you have heard from me...these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). How dynamic and reproductive this loving "Paul-Timothy" relationship between teacher and student! If you have not yet

tried to teach the way Jesus and His Apostles did, you are in for a blessing. If it frightens you, start with just one or two potential leaders. Train them on the job; take responsibility for their effective ministry. Personal discipling does not mean "one-on-one" (Jesus taught twelve), nor is it just to deal with personal needs (Jesus spent most of His time personally discipling the top level leaders of the Church, the very Apostles).

In Honduras I usually taught from one to three students, in a way they could imitate and pass on to others immediately. I helped each one have an effective ministry. I taught and modeled what he would pass on to his own people and his own pastoral trainees in the daughter or granddaughter churches. These taught other elders who taught still others as Paul instructed Timothy. The chain grew to over a hundred pastors in training, all elders of churches. As soon as a new church was born, the outside worker enrolled a local leader, normally an elder highly respected by his people, and began passing on to him the same doctrine and materials as he was receiving himself. This new "Timothy" taught the rest of the new elders in his young church. It kept multiplying as long as each discipler did *everything* in a way his students could imitate immediately. I stopped teaching and preaching in the professional way in which I was used to (they admired it, but could not imitate it). I stopped using electronic equipment including movies, and anything else that was not available to all our workers. That's hard on a gadget-oriented westerner used to gadgets and conditioned to using the very latest technology for the glory of Christ.

Once we developed loving, Paul-Timothy discipling relationships we seldom had to discuss church planting. The Holy Spirit channeled the Word of God through these relationships to mobilize the Timothies and church reproduction took care of itself. At first I failed to trust the Holy Spirit and pushed the men myself. I dictated rules and prerequisites to keep the doctrine and the church pure and to make sure the men did their job. It stifled the work; one bitter failure followed another. I prayed, "Lord, I don't want a big ministry of my own; just let me help the Hondurans have a good ministry." God answered this prayer. I also learned through disappointments to let the people themselves decide on their own leaders, using I Timothy 3:1-7.

Teach your converts from the beginning to edify one another in love. Building a network of strong

relationships provides for the large number of ministries required in the local church in order for it to grow and reproduce daughter churches.

We learned not to plant the churches first then train the leaders for them; nor did we train the leaders first then tell them to raise up their churches. We married the two efforts in one ministry. My American culture pushed me at first to compartmentalize our organization, isolating its ministries. But I learned to let the Holy Spirit integrate diverse ministries and gifts in the united body (I Cor. 12:4-26).

I also began with education objectives that focused on educating the man. But according to Ephesians 4:11-16, our education should seek only to edify the *church* in love. I had to discipline myself to keep my student's people in view as I taught, and not focus only on my student and the teaching content.

Before I learned to imitate the way Christ and His Apostles discipled, I was satisfied if my student answered test questions correctly and preached good sermons in the classroom. I neither saw nor cared what he did in his church with what he was learning. I slowly learned to see beyond my student to his ministry with his people. I responded to the needs of his church by listening at the beginning of each session to the reports of my students. Then I often set aside what I had prepared, and taught rather what each student's people needed at that time. It was hard at first to let the developing churches' needs and opportunities dictate the order of a functional curriculum. In time much of my discipling, like the teaching of the Epistles, became *problem solving*. Yes, if we start reproductive churches we will have problems. The Apostle did, too. To avoid problems, don't have children and don't have churches.

Build Edifying Teaching Relationships Between Elders and Disciples

The pastor or leading elder sets the example for all the leaders. They in turn enable all the members of an infant congregation to minister to each other in love. A weak pastor dominates his congregation. He tries to do everything, or delegates it in a demanding way. He herds rather than leads (both Jesus and Peter prohibit herding in a demanding way: Matt. 20:25-28; I Peter 5:1-4). Where do you suppose pastors on the mission field pick up the bad practice of herding others? It's not all cultural; they

learned it from us missionaries. I furnished the only model the new pastors had in our pioneer field. Because of my superior education and resources, I made the decisions for my less educated colleagues. At the same time, like most new missionaries, I felt insecure and overprotected the first churches. A strong missionary, like a strong pastor, does not fear to give authority and responsibility to others. He does not force gifted, willing workers into existing slots in his organization, but rather builds ministries around them.

3.

TeACH AND pRACTICe oBeDIeNCe To JeSuS' CommANDS IN l oVe, ABove AND BeFoRe All e l Se

Jesus, after affirming His deity and total authority on earth, commissioned His Church to make disciples who obey all His commands (Matt. 28:1&20). So His commands take priority over all other institutional rules (even that hallowed *Church Constitution and Bylaws*). This obedience is always in love. If we obey God for any other reason, it becomes sheer legalism; God hates that.

Start Right Out With Loving Obedience to Jesus' Basic Commands

To plant churches in a pioneer field, aim for each community to have a group of believers in Christ committed to obey His commands. This definition of a church might get a D minus where you studied theology; but *the more you add to it, the harder it will be for the churches you start to reproduce*. We asked our converts to memorize the following list of Christ's basic commands:

1. Repent and believe: Mark 1:15
2. Be baptized (and continue in the new life it initiates): Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-11

3. Love God and neighbor in a practical way: Matt. 22:37-40
4. Celebrate the Lord's Supper: Luke 22:17-20
5. Pray: Matt. 6:5-15
6. Give: Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 6:38
7. Disciple others: Matt. 28:18-20

Memorize them; you can neither be nor make obedient disciples, unless they are basic to your Christian experience. They are the ABC's of both discipling and church planting.

Define Evangelism Objectives in Terms of Obedience

Do not simply preach for "decisions;" make obedient disciples. Only disciples produce a church that multiplies itself spontaneously within a culture. Consider the two commands: "Repent and believe" and "Be baptized." In western culture a man stands alone before his God and "decides" for Christ. But in other cultures sincere conversion needs interaction with family and friends. Faith, repentance and immediate baptism of the entire family or group—no invitation to make a decision—is the norm (Acts 2:36-41; 8:11; 10:44-48; 16:13-15, 29-34; 18:8). Repentance goes deeper than a decision; it is a permanent change wrought by God's Spirit. We are born all over again. Few purely intellectual decisions in any culture lead to permanent, obedient discipleship.

We found that when we baptized repentant believers reasonably soon, without requiring a long doctrinal course first, the great majority then responded to our training in obedient discipleship. The detailed doctrine came later. Teaching heavy theology *before* one learns loving, childlike obedience is dangerous. It leaves him assuming that Christianity is having Scripturally correct doctrine and he leaves it at that. He becomes a passive learner of the Word rather than an active disciple.

Orient Your Teaching to Loving Obedience

We taught our pastors to orient all church activity to New Testament commands. As they taught the word of God, they accustomed their people to discern three levels of authority for all that they did as a body of disciples:

1. NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS. These carry all the authority of heaven. They include the commands of Jesus which inspired the apostles in the Epistles. They apply only to baptized, more mature Christians who are already members of a church. We don't vote on them nor argue about doing them. They always take precedent over any human organization's rules.
2. APOSTOLIC PRACTICES (NOT COMMANDED). We cannot enforce these as laws because Christ alone has authority to make laws for His own church, His Body. Nor can we prohibit their practice because they have apostolic precedent. Examples include: holding possessions in common, laying hands on converts, celebrating the Lord's Supper frequently in homes using one cup, baptizing the same day of conversion, Sunday worship.
3. HUMAN CUSTOMS. Practices not mentioned in the New Testament have only the authority of a group's voluntary agreement. If it involves discipline, the agreement is recognized in heaven. But only for that congregation; we do not judge another congregation by the customs of our own: Matt. 18:15-20).

Nearly all church divisions and quarrels originate when a power hungry person seeking followers puts mere apostolic practices or human customs (levels 2 or 3 above) at the top level as law.

We developed a "Congregation Activities Register" listing 49 activities for the churches, based on the seven general commands of Christ listed above, and other commands in the Epistles. Under each activity in this chart we listed related studies. It became our pastoral training curriculum guide. We brought in all major areas of Bible, doctrine and church history, precisely where they best aided a church activity. Theological education paralleled church development. The activities, besides the basic commands of Jesus, include: counsel, mobilize youth for ministry, train elders in the daughter church, develop public worship, etc. Each activity includes reading in the relevant areas of Bible, doctrine, church history and pastoral work (all the essential elements of a traditional pastoral training curriculum) as well as questions to verify that the practical work was done. (An example of materials using this functional discipling curriculum is SEAN's *Train and Multiply* program. Casilla 561, Vina DelMar, Chile.)

4. BuIlD lOvING, eDIFYING ACCouNTABILITy RelATIOnSHIpS BeTWEEn INDIVIDuAl DISCIPleS AND CHURCHeS

Healthy daughter churches need loving, edifying discipling relationships within themselves and with the mother church (Acts 11:19-30; 14:21-28 and 15:1-2, 28-31). If your church, church planting or training organization is already formed, add this personal discipling to it; don't insist on ruthless changes.

Help Each New Church to Reproduce

Each church should send extension workers to reproduce daughter churches, as did the Antioch church (Acts 13:1-3). The longer you wait to mobilize a church for multiplication, the harder it is to reprogram its thinking. Teach your elders the joy of sacrificing to separate their strongest tithers and leaders, in the power of the Holy Spirit as in Antioch, to extend Christ's kingdom. After prayer, perhaps fasting, hold a formal separation service with laying on of hands, as they did. Remember, it is not the individuals that reproduce but congregations that pray and are moved by the Holy Spirit. Let each new church be a link in the chain. The individual extension worker is only an arm of his church.

Ask the new church leaders to chart their own plans. They must take the initiative (don't push your plans on them; simply teach them what the Word says about their task and let them respond). For example, we asked our pastors to draw a large map, with arrows to the villages which they planned for their church to reach directly or through their daughter or granddaughter churches. Their church workers then signed their names by those towns or neighborhoods for which they would pray and plan.

Show Each New Believer How to Witness to Friends and Relatives

The Holy Spirit flows readily through the bonds that exist between family members and close friends (Acts 10:24, 44). Keep new converts in a loving relationship with them (don't pull them out of their circle to put them in a safe Christian environment, or those very bonds which aid the spread of the gospel become barriers).

We prepared simple gospel studies (mostly Bible stories) that even illiterates could use at once to share their new faith. We accompanied them to show them how to do it, modeling it all in a way they could immediately imitate.

Build Edifying Inter-church Discipling Relationships

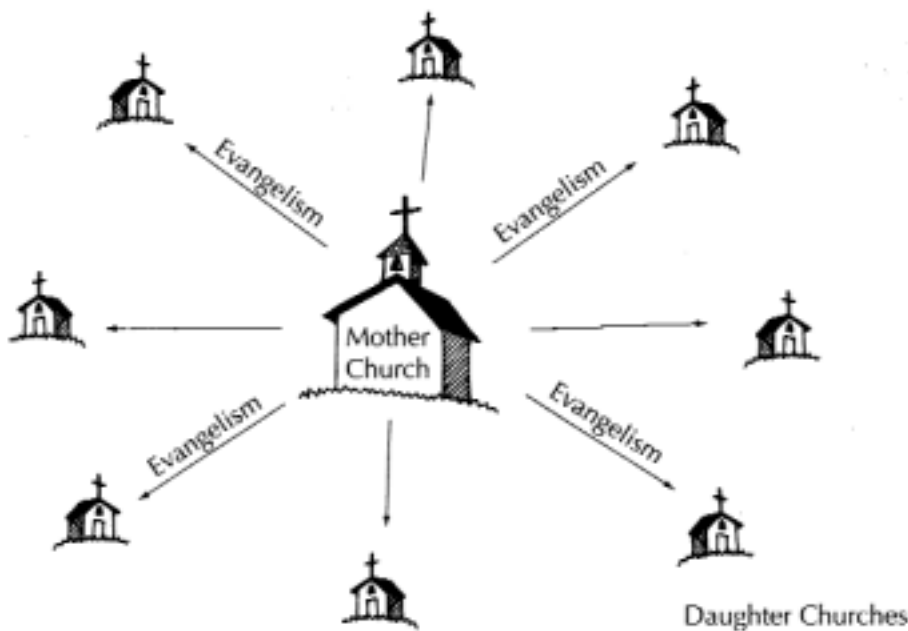
At first I applied church "body life" only to local congregations. Then I learned to build interchurch discipling relationships with accountability. Elders in one church sacrificially disciplined less experienced pastors in the daughter or granddaughter churches.

Sometimes travel was difficult for an older elder, and the main worker from the daughter church rode his horse to the mother church every two weeks or so. Where the churches were one or two days' walk apart the teacher and student took turns slogging through the muddy trails.

Beware of the bad strategy of a mother church sending workers to several daughter churches at once, as though she were the only church with God's reproductive power.

The "hub" strategy (top of next page) wears out the workers and discourages the mother church. God's power, inherent in all churches in which His Spirit dwells, enables a mother church to start a daughter church and train its new elders to help it develop *and* reproduce in granddaughter churches. Just disciple the disciplers and watch it happen! The primary links in the chain of churches in Honduras were volunteer extension teachers from the mother church.

The chain was not a hierarchy to control; volunteer teachers with no organizational authority worked with volunteer students. It took sweat and guts to build these loving ties between churches, helping men to know, love and train each other for immediate pastoral ministry. In the process men



to start a daughter church that would reproduce in each region. The pastoral students of the Honduras Extension Bible Institute have for many years been starting an average of five new churches a year, each of which has from one to three new pastors in training. After turning the leadership of this program over to Hondurans, it has continued to reproduce in spite of other missionaries' pressure to revert to traditional pastoral training methods.

were shot, put to death by machete, weakened by disease and almost drowned. It was worth it.

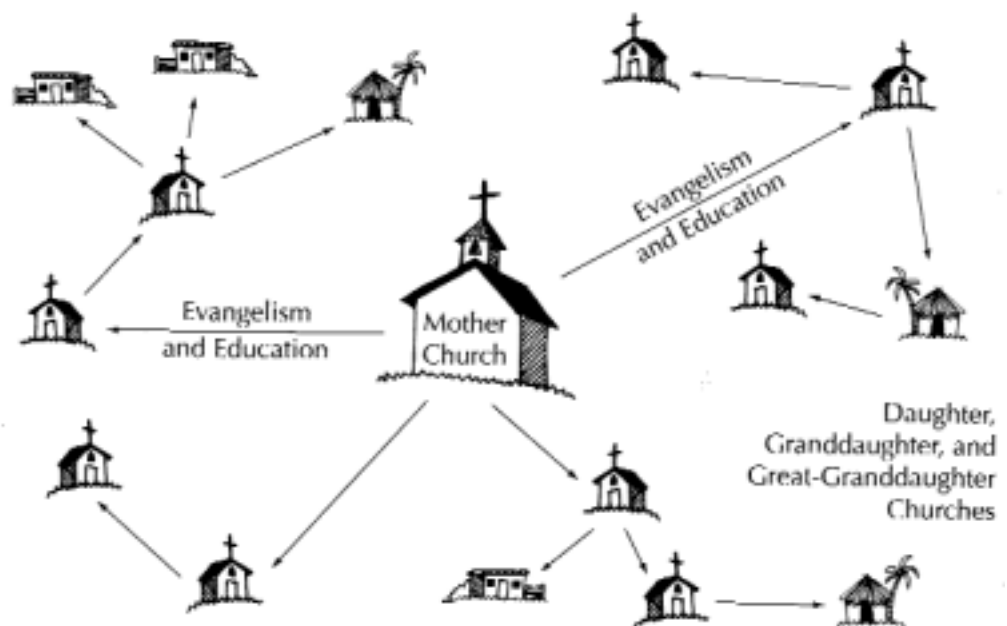
The modern western missionary's most common sin is controlling the national churches. I had to learn to keep out of the way and let the Spirit's power inherent in the churches produce the ministries by which the churches were edified and reproduced. I guided, encouraged, taught the Word and counseled, but I no longer pushed. Then we saw the chain reaction; one of the extension networks produced five generations and over twenty churches (diagram on right).

We met occasionally to reaffirm our plans and decide which church would reach certain villages or communities. We divided our entire area of responsibility into nine regions and planned the steps

Pray for Reproduction Power

Each new church in a chain, like a grain of wheat, has the same potential to start the reproduction all over again. Christ's parables in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and John 15 compare the growth and reproduction of His churches to that of plants. Like all

continued on page 23



“The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches”; you may ask, “Is that a biblical term, or is it maybe a new idea in missions, or just some big words that sound impressive when strung together?” Maybe to help some for whom this concept, or the title at least, is a new thought, we should break it down somewhat by looking at the words individually. If we look up the word “spontaneous” in the thesaurus we find that its meaning is similar to these words: Automatic, Voluntary, Impulsive, Instinctive, Natural, and Unconscious. A similar search on the word “multiply” yields these synonyms: To Double, Increase, Propagate, Spread, and Expand. We are more familiar with the word “church,” at least in the way that we use it in the States, but to clarify the meaning we intend as it applies to the parts of the world where Christ is unknown or little-known, we are referring here to a group of people who believe in, love, and obey Jesus Christ. So taking all of these together, the title above refers to the automatic, natural, and instinctive, increase, spread, and expansion of groups of believers who love and obey Jesus as their Master!

So we are dealing with the growth of God’s body, the church. Sounds simple enough, and like something that we all agree with, so why the fancy terminology? Well, the specific name used here is not the important issue, though the wording is carefully chosen, but I believe that as you read over this and other articles in this newsletter, you will not only see that this is a biblical norm, but that it is a goal that our mission outreach should strive towards. It is my desire that you will also get some sense of the far-reaching possibilities of this outlook and would join with us in an excited anticipation (which breeds motivated,

faith-filled prayers) of what God desires to do among this and other tribes! This theme deals with an area of ministry we could call strategy, and it is our strategy that helps us to form the framework for our whole ministry among our people. Strategy, if is God-inspired and is followed through under His direction, is nothing more than that all essential vision, without which, the Bible says, the people perish.

We mentioned above that we are talking about the growth of the church, then I went on to say that we are dealing with the strategy or grid through which we work out our ministry. Let’s link those two thoughts together; When Jesus left us on the earth, He left us with one clear mandate, that of preaching the gospel and making disciples among all the peoples of the world. I believe that all would agree that given the thousands who fall into a Christless eternity on a daily basis and the value of one soul, we should use the best possible means of spreading the Church of Jesus Christ in places where it is still nonexistent. That is what this strategy is all about, finding and utilizing the methods and approaches that will yield the most fruit and the best fruit for God’s glory. The fruit that we seek is churches full of people who have “turned from idols to serve the Living God”! In learning to be effective for God in this ministry, God has had to take us back to His word, which we say is our guide book, for some very practical lessons in the methods and strategies that the apostles used in the fastest growth, geographically speaking, that the church has ever experienced. It has been an exercise in laying down some of our preconceived ideas and carefully orchestrated plans and allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work, being content to take the position of a student and an under-shepherd and learn by watching



Practicing Principles and Learning Lessons in the Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches

by Daniel Kenaston

what God is doing in HIS program of reaching the Konkombas. I am so grateful that we are co-laborers with the One who knows infinitely best what will make His church grow both in numbers and maturity, and who loves every lost Konkomba with a love that was willing to die. Needless to say, we have a long way to go!

I used the words *practicing* and *learning* in the title to denote the fact that we are very young in our experience with applying these principles and methods, and the reality is that we are learning as we minister, trying to follow the examples we see in the Bible and listening to God's specific direction in our situation. I wish that we had someone on the field with 20 years more experience to write these articles, but since we do not, we are willing to endeavor to explain to you some of the things that we are learning and the specific ways that we are working it out in our tribe, only asking you to allow us to put a sign up above it all that reads, "Still under construction." Indeed, that is the truth, both in our personal walk with God and in our understanding of the way He desires to do His work among our people. Maybe if we agree to be learners together at the feet of the One who is our great Master Teacher, we will both be blessed by the insights He gives to us. With those details clear and the ground work laid above, I would like to try to lay out for you some of the guiding principles of this strategy and give you some of the verses that affirm these principles.

So then, what are the major principles of and scriptural basis for a strategy which focuses on encouraging the spontaneous multiplication of churches? I will list here what I see as the three most important. A strategy of spontaneous church multiplication is:

A Commitment to Allowing Christ to be the Head of His Church

This entails trusting Him to be the Chief Shepherd, guiding the new churches that we plant in the same way that He has lovingly led the rest of His bride all over the world for the last 2000 years. This commitment to Christ's leadership of His church also includes a commitment to allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work through the word of God, not through man-made and enforced laws. There are many portions of God's word that hold forth this truth, but to list just a few:

Matthew 16:18 "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Ephesians 2:20 "...Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone...."

I Peter 5:4 "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

An Expectation That Those Who Have Truly Met Jesus Will Tell Others About Him

That this is a very basic biblical expectation should be obvious to us all, but we have become so accustomed to a silent Christianity in America that at times we recreate the same problems overseas through the unbiblically low standards that we hold up and expect from our converts. This ties into the next point, but we have had a focus change away from the bible pattern of churches growing through new believer's testimonies and now feel more comfortable with missionary-grown churches, though we might not say it. In this switch of focus, we feel that we have gained a greater handle on the direction and standards of the church, but we have sacrificed an absolutely essential ingredient for real, living, church growth, that of a verbal witness to what Christ has done from the mouth of the newly saved! Another factor that works against seeing each believer fulfill his or her obligation to bear witness to the power of Christ's blood, is that in bringing them into our church we sometimes remove them culturally so far from their people that they are greatly hindered if not impeded altogether from being able to be a meaningful witness in word or deed. This leads us into the next point, but before we look at it, let's look at a couple of verses from the veritable mine of places in God's word where this basic responsibility of every believer is mentioned or enjoined:

Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Matthew 10:32 "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

Acts 4:20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Mark 1:40-45 "And there came a leper to him...and Jesus, moved with compassion...saith unto him, 'I will, be thou clean.' And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him...and saith unto him, 'See thou say nothing to any man'...But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter...and they came to him (Jesus) from every quarter." Hallelujah!!!

A Commitment to Being Teachers of the Bible Way, Not the American Way

Once again, on this point as with all of the others, we would all verbally agree, but the reality in practice is that it takes more than a verbal assent to see that this is worked out in the lives of those that we minister to. I speak from the difficulties that we ourselves have encountered in maintaining a proper focus and system of priority in our teaching. It is so easy to teach applications to God's word instead of giving the word of God in all of its simplicity and power. Included in the above commitment is the belief that God's word has applications in every culture and that the Holy Spirit who inspired the word will also inspire the hearts of our converts to find and apply the truths to their lives. This commitment also reflects the belief that converts who live up to our standards in an effort to please us will be inherently weak Christians, and only those who live their lives according to the truths that have been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit will be able to stand, as true believers should, against the wickedness of their own culture. We recognize that one of the avenues that God uses to speak into the hearts of our converts is our teaching, but feel that we will be infinitely further ahead in the long run if we teach God's word, then assist them to apply it rather than forcing quick acceptance of our ideals through focusing on applications. Focusing on teaching the Bible also gives them the opportunity to strengthen their spiritual muscles by learning to apply the scripture to their own lives, while at the same time it helps to insure that in the end the church will be a Konkomba church— The living Christ lived out in the daily lives and culture of the Konkombas!!! Now, just a few verses to note the Bible precedent on this issue:

Matthew 28:19-20 "Go ye therefore, and teach all

nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you....."

Matthew 15:9 "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

II Corinthians 11:3 "But I fear, lest by any means...your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Acts 15:28-29 "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."

Applications and Outworkings

Now that we have looked at the principles and scriptures that support this strategy, I would like to spend the rest of this article looking at the way that this multiplication is occurring among the Konkombas, and the ways in which we are endeavoring to foster this growth. I should mention here as I have in previous articles, that many of the things that we are doing now to encourage this type of church growth, and much of what was done earlier to prepare the church for this growth, is a direct result of God forcing us into situations where we had no option but to push forward following the principles listed above. We know that God knows our desire for a vibrant church spreading among this tribe, and we can only thank Him that in His mercy He has been guiding us into lessons that we might not have learned if the circumstances of life had not forced us to look for new options. How comforting to know that we are only helpers in the great work that God is doing in the world, and that in His love for us and for the lost world He plants His church, sometimes in spite of us, as He continually nudges us along the right path!!

Probably one of the greatest examples of both a lesson that God has taught us through watching Him work, and a method that has since become an important part of the strategy we are following, is in the area of who pastors the local churches. When the Konkombas of this area first came in contact with the missionaries at Gushiegu and then began to come to Christ, we were not here and the staff at Gushiegu was not able to directly oversee the church that began to grow in the village of Bilisinga. After several had come to Christ, Mel began to hold teach-

ings for them twice a month on Saturdays, but that was about all the input that we had in the early days of the work there. When eventually the brothers decided on their own to start holding services on Sundays, we did not have anyone, black or white, that we could spare to send down to hold the service for them so they did it on their own. They just found a tree, put a few sticks in the ground for benches, and then those who had come to Christ first began to teach the others! As far as I know, we as missionaries were not ever there for their Sunday morning services for the first year after they began meeting! This absence of someone to “do the Sunday morning service” for them forced the men there to grow into leaders in their own little church much faster than would have occurred if we had been able to be there every week. The church was not left entirely alone, as there were teaching sessions held every Saturday, but in the day-to-day affairs of church life, these men were forced into learning how to conduct their services and lead their people. This early leadership as it applies to the Bilisinga church was the source of much blessing both in stability and growth for the church there, but many of the blessings for the work at large were still hidden. These blessings became apparent as the church began to reach out.

One of the challenges that churches or missions always face during times of growth is that of finding leaders for all of the new outreaches or churches. As the church at Bilisinga began to reach out to other villages, there was never a thought that the missionaries needed to come and hold services for these people. Instead they began to go and hold services in the new villages, giving them Bible teaching and helping them to get to the place where they could hold their own services. This natural raising up of leaders has made no small contribution to the spread of the work there, because they are not forced to wait on the missionary to have time in his schedule for another church. When there is an open door they are able to go through it, and they do. It is not uncommon for them to inform me at one of our gatherings of a new place where they are holding Bible studies, or later on of the fact that they decided to start Sunday services in the same place. To be honest, even at the current number of little churches that we have here, if I was responsible for the day-to-day care of all of them, we would not be able to be reaching out to new villages as we are because I would not have the time. Hopefully from this you can see that allowing, forcing, and encouraging the local men in each vil-

lage to lead their own churches has fostered the spread of the church to new areas. We are now working to see that the local leaders continue this pattern of truly local leadership, so that the growth of the churches will not be inhibited by a lack of leaders.

Another outworking of the principles above is in the area of the importance placed on sharing the gospel with others, both on an individual and corporate level. The importance of this we all affirm, but at times I think that we have placed such a high focus on “being” everything in the Bible before we will share its truth that we can easily hinder new believers from simply sharing their faith. While we recognize that Christians are to be Christ in the world, in all of His perfect character, this does not eliminate the fact that the first step in walking out a trust in Jesus for salvation is to share it!! We feel that by putting a heavy focus on this in our teaching, we are following the pattern of the Bible and are also able to maximize the potential for witnessing that is so strong in every new believer. If we immediately begin to push for other outward signs of growth (besides the Biblical ones of repentance and witness) we quickly switch the focus of the new believer or church onto other things, which, while important, are not the first steps of Christian experience. We all know that grace flows into our lives when we share our faith, and I see this as the super-important first milk that a baby Christian or church needs. We have many proofs all around us of people and churches who have been unable to motivate their converts to get out and share the gospel, and I wonder if at times it is not because we have not allowed, or at least not encouraged that initial flow of grace that comes through telling “what we have seen and heard” of Christ, simple as it may be. We recognize that the Bible is full of things that every believer must go on to, but none of these is listed as a prerequisite to witnessing and so we are trying to maintain this as our standard. What this has meant in the churches here is that they are spreading while they are still young in the faith themselves.

The reality of this in an area where Christ is so little known can be stretching at times, as the believers who go out to share their faith are still so very far from living out some of what we might call basic Bible principles. I am loath to use any examples for fear of offending or shocking you, for that is not my point, but suffice it to say that some of the theology and doctrine, along with much of the practical side like modesty, etc., still falls far below the standard of

the Bible. But though WE may have our theology straight, and we would never dream of dressing as they do, we very possibly have never shown the same fervor to reach our people that some of them do as they walk or ride bicycle for 10 miles one way to share with another village about Christ!! Some would say that what is happening here is akin to babies having babies, and that the truth will be watered down, but this is the pattern laid out in scripture and we are following it in faith, trusting God that as He leads and we teach His word, maturity will come. We do recognize the dangers of this kind of fast growth of the church, and many times are burdened in prayer over these things, but only feel that we must trust God in these new waters for us, and certainly do not feel clear to do anything but encourage the ongoing testimony of the church through witnessing. We are choosing to trust that if we build on the right foundation with "Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone," then "all the building fitly framed together will grow into an holy temple in the Lord". Eph. 2:20-21 Applied

So we stand in faith, looking to see God fulfill His word, both in the spreading of His church and in the maturing of those who accept Him as Savior. We are, with our little group of 4 small churches (some of which are very young), gazing at the scores of villages around us that do not have a church or witness of Christ in them. All of us feel the need for more maturity in our own lives, but also hear the call of the many villages that have come begging for someone to share with them the words of life. We are reaching out to answer these pleas; some they answer, some are left for me, but in all of our hearts is a vision of this whole area filled with lots of tiny churches in all of these small farming villages. We look to the day when all across this tribe, little fellowships will gather under their tree or in their huts to praise the only true God and His son Jesus. It is toward this that we are working; this is what consumes our thoughts, plans, and prayers. This is also what motivates the local brothers here to walk and ride from village to village sharing with those who are hungry, the words of Salvation that have so changed their lives. Its true, much growth still needs to occur in so many areas of Christian maturity and Biblical living, and we labor towards that end trying to keep step with what God is doing in their lives. But the church is spreading, not being forced to take root, but truly spreading in the hearts and lives of the Konkombas here. There is not a lot of noise as it

spreads, not a lot of fanfare as each new church begins, for it spreads in a natural way, just the simple sharing of one (oftentimes illiterate) person to another (equally simple) person. But in the songs that the church sings, in the stories that they tell, in the lives that are changed, the church is spontaneously spreading and becoming a Konkomba force for God!! How we praise Him, and how assuredly does He deserve all the praise, for it is His church, His work, and His grace!!!

We hope that as you read this article, your heart would once again focus on the world-wide responsibility and work of the church, and that you would possibly be able to refocus your heart on its forward growth. In all of our desire to see that the faith is preserved for the future, may God help us not to lose the essential focus on the basics, especially in light of the world that has waited in darkness for so long and is only now coming to the light of Christ. We also hope that as you read you will sense that we are excited about what God is doing, and that you will join in this excitement, so that together we will express ourselves in praise to God for what He is doing. You may also feel a bit of the uncertainty that we feel, and we would ask that you join with us in prayer to God for His wisdom and ongoing direction as we face somewhat uncharted waters as the work expands. Thank you for your ongoing interest in the work, expressed through your continuing prayers and the fact that you waded through this lengthy article to try to understand what we are doing here. We appreciate it!

We would like to personalize a couple of verses that so perfectly reflect the burden and strategy that we have expressed here, along with the trust that we have in God for the future. Join with us in carrying this burden and faith-filled outlook for the Konkombas!

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make the Konkomba church perfect in every good work to do his will, working in the Konkomba church that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever." Amen!

*Expectantly looking to Jesus,
Daniel & Christy Kenaston*

□



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