

EDITORIAL

CPMs and the Initiative of the Spirit

This issue of SEEDBED presents a vigorous debate on whether we can, or should, learn principles and approaches from church planting movements (CPMs) happening in certain parts of the world, including in parts of the Muslim World, in order to employ them in other Muslim contexts. Several writers believe that with much prayer and apostolic intentionality, church planters can ‘prepare the way’ and invite God’s Spirit to birth CPMs of hundreds of churches in very resistant Muslim lands. They believe a valuable part of the church planter’s role is to correctly implement (with appropriate local modification) the CPM practices being used of God to begin movements in numerous regions of the world. Others, writing in this issue, believe that such expectation is unbiblical and that, in particular, one should not seek to reproduce the *Watson* model of CPMs. They argue that we should stick to approaches that they believe are better attested in the New Testament and throughout church history.

When I began ministry thirty-five years ago it was still a relatively new idea, *in North Africa*, that one should seek to *plant a church* rather than simply evangelize. In my generation, we strove to plant healthy churches that would *naturally* reproduce. Now church planting teams seek to catalyse church planting *movements*. All of these expectations share the same conviction that it is *the Spirit of God* who brings fruit in churches planted.

A central question explored here is: *should* we study what God is doing in certain fruitful ministries in order to extract principles and approaches to apply elsewhere in the hope of seeing similar fruit? In this issue, some argue that such an approach is not appropriate—God does not work in response to correct ‘technique’. Yet, others argue that these principles are consistent with biblical commands and examples, and in using them they are following the *initiative of the Spirit* who is himself launching CPMs in unprecedented ways in our generation.

There is a profound mystery of the Spirit in the ‘task’ of launching CPMs. How does the mystery of divine initiative interface with our human efforts in church planting? The reality of *God* working *through our* efforts is normal in our experience as Christians. When undertaken with the Spirit’s guidance, God’s transforming work is not at odds with our vigorous labours.

It is our prayer that this spirited, yet gracious, debate about CPMs will help you as you minister under the Holy Spirit’s guidance and anointing. No matter what we think of a CPM model, we all agree that we want *God* to build the house.

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N.B. Let me warmly welcome and thank L.D. Waterman who has joined SEEDBED as associate editor and has contributed significantly to this issue.