

PART I: A VIGOROUS DISCUSSION OF WATSON'S CPM MODEL

Exponential Disciple-Making: A Fresh Approach to Church Planting Movements

by Steven Steinhaus

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A church planting work can be considered a movement when the churches in it are consistently multiplying to the fourth generation. That is, churches are planting churches that are planting churches that are planting churches.

Ultimately, Church Planting Movements (CPMs) are about discipleship. In CPMs, believers are not urged to ‘bring new people to church next Sunday’ but to plant more churches. Lay people lead Jesus-centred meetings in homes and other public places (not usually church buildings) and encourage those they are discipling to do the same. This approach mirrors that of the early church, imitating the pattern of 2 Timothy 2:2.

A true CPM is a *discipleship movement* built on leadership development. This is why CPM practitioners talk about ‘training the trainers,’ which simply means ‘discipling the disciple-makers’. Though this is done in a variety of ways, everyone I am aware of in CPMs today is very committed to solid, biblical discipleship.

Today there are at least 80 CPMs happening around the world. These can be found on every continent and, wonderfully, among many UPGs. Significantly, CPMs are also happening in conjunction with a wide variety of traditional churches as they release their members for lay ministry and equip them for harvest.

CPMs are real. Some people dispute the numbers and the results being reported. Nevertheless, the largest CPMs happening around the world today are being reported with ruthless evaluation and accountability. The largest CPM happening today (in India) has been independently verified by four organizations *not involved* in the movement. All four testify that the numbers reported are *less* than what is actually happening.

We have also this recent report from Fred Dimado, Director of Pioneers Africa—a brother many of us know, trust and love. Fred writes:

In March of 2011, I heard some news about CPM work in a nearby country in West Africa. The statistics were staggering and I thought some massaging of

figures was going on, even though I had no doubt about what the Lord could do. So we sent two of our key leaders to check things out on the ground. At least we had a learning posture and were open to gleaning some lessons that we could possibly embrace and apply in our church planting ministry.

After spending just a day out of the planned five days there, I got a call saying 'Brother, everything we heard is true! You need to be here to see what God is doing.' In 2003, the leadership of the NH Church had been exposed to the principles of CPM. Before then, the denomination had planted 75 churches. However, after CPM training and a focus on prayer and other CPM principles, they planted 75 churches in the first year of implementation and have since planted a little over 2,000 churches.

The CPM we observed has a strong prayer commitment, contagious faith and simple obedience to God's Word. The church there operates a prayer house in every district and there is a prayer schedule that runs five times in a day for five days in the week.

Since the CPM training hosted by the Pioneers Africa base in April 2011 for over 50 missionaries in the region, teams in Africa have been working toward CPMs with all they have got. The results they are already seeing are very encouraging. The Togo team scheduled a second generation CPM training¹ in the north of Togo even before the Accra CPM training had begun. Among the participants was a Pioneers missionary I will call 'L,' who has been with Pioneers for about two years. He and his wife serve a people group in northern Togo. After completing the CPM training, he went back to the church he had already planted and trained his converts and disciples. Afterward, twelve of these disciples went out looking for 'People of Peace.'² They have already identified thirteen 'People of Peace' in four different villages, and from this, thirteen Discovery Groups³ have begun.

Exponential Disciple-Making—A Fresh Approach to CPM

Ultimately, CPM is not about a 'model' but about 'process,' or more accurately, processes. These include:

1. A 'second generation' training is when someone who has been through the original training reproduces it by taking others through the training—a practical step that is encouraged for all attendees.

2. As described in Matthew 10:11-13 and Luke 10:5-10, a 'Person of Peace' is someone who welcomes God's messengers and opens the door for the Gospel to be presented to his/her household or network of close relationships.

3. A Discovery Group is a regular gathering of a group of focus people who do chronological Bible study from Genesis to Christ, leading toward faith in Him.

- Evangelizing families and groups
- Discipling these groups to become obedient disciples of Christ (not just converts)
- Training them to do these same things with other groups
- Seeing these groups become baptized believers
- Developing leaders who develop more leaders who do the same.

A CPM happens when these processes occur in contextually appropriate ways that reproduce Bible living, Jesus-loving disciples who transform their world. Broadly affirming varieties of CPM approaches does not exclude noting ‘best practices’ that can be used in these processes. For example, the practice of focusing on families or groups versus individuals is very significant. If evangelists and church planters around the world seriously implemented this one principle, the impact would be incredible. While all CPM practitioners agree to this ‘*oikos* principle,’ its implementation varies.

The remainder of this article will focus on a model of CPM that could be called Exponential Disciple-Making. I am greatly indebted to David Watson of New Generations for this term and also to Stan Parks, PhD. for the concepts elaborated in this article.

Key Questions in Evangelism and Discipleship

When we speak of CPM, it is helpful to consider:

- How did Jesus evangelize?
- How did Jesus make disciples?
- How did the early church operate?
- Have our own cultural presuppositions hindered our understanding?

Jesus did not simply ‘go out and evangelize.’ He focused on making disciples. This focus is quite different from what many modern Christians mean by ‘evangelism’ today: giving a short gospel presentation and hoping for an instantaneous personal decision with no necessary commitment to a church body or to long-term discipleship. Harold Netland correctly assesses modern evangelicalism when he notes, “There has been a tendency to understand the Great Commission primarily in terms of verbal communication of the message of the gospel (information transfer), and there has often been an accompanying reductionism which views the gospel simply as necessary information for “getting to heaven” ’ (Netland 2011, 1).

Timothy Tennent argues that common modern theological reductionism leads believers to fallaciously equate salvation with justification. This then creates a preoccupation with what is the absolute minimum an individual has to know or believe in order to be justified instead of considering what is necessary for people to become committed disciples in community.

In a similar vein, Timothy Tennent argues that

common modern theological reductionism leads believers to fallaciously equate salvation with justification. This then creates a preoccupation with what is the absolute minimum an individual has to know or believe in order to be justified *instead of* considering what is necessary for people to become committed disciples in community. Thus to 'be saved' (justified) is seemingly all that matters to many today. However, Tennent clarifies that 'biblically, the doctrine of salvation does include justification, but it also includes the doctrines of sanctification and our final glorification.' Tennent continues, 'True biblical salvation' is in three tenses: 'you *were* saved (justification), you *are being* saved (sanctification), and you *will be* saved (glorification)' (ibid, 376). Undoubtedly, this is why he elucidates the process of evangelism in a seemingly inverted order:

In my experience of working in India, I have found that discipleship often *precedes* conversion by many years. This seems counterintuitive in the West, because Christendom always assumed a larger Christian context making it easy to live as a Christian... However, in India, it often takes many years for someone to comprehend the gospel message and what it means to follow Jesus Christ. Lengthy periods of instruction and modelling often take place long before someone receives Christian baptism. This is closer to Jesus' model exemplified in the Gospels, whereby intensive instruction took place with His disciples for several years before they fully understood and accepted His lordship. (Ibid, 81. Italics his.)

The concept of *discipleship into conversion* is one of the principles often found in CPMs around the world today. A key idea is helping people learn a little and obey a little, that they may - like Jesus' disciples - come to faith over time as they hear the Word of Christ (Rom 10:17) and experience the power of His teaching by doing (John 7:17). To many in the West the concept of discipling into conversion seems not only counterintuitive but an oxymoron. Are we not first to convert then to disciple? While some may see this as simply semantics, I think this distinction actually helps put the emphasis back where Jesus put it.

Jesus' focus was not on evangelism but on disciple-making. Evangelism (literally 'good-news-ing') happens as people give their lives in discipleship to the King; it can never be divorced from Lordship.

In many CPMs today, the moment of salvation is the moment of baptism. This moment is a Lordship decision because, for many, deciding to follow Christ is inviting persecution. Seeing groups come to believe, repent and become disciples involves time for process. This is what Tennent was speaking about above. Yet this is contrary to what most missionaries hope for. David Hesselgrave gives us this warning:

Generally speaking, Western missionaries have assumed too much in asking for

decisions in non-Western cultures. This observation is in no way intended to place limits on the power of the Holy Spirit. But the number of people in these cultures who have responded in one way or another to a gospel invitation only to return to their former way of life is ample testimony that something is amiss...Strictly speaking, respondents can accept only that message which they understand... Many accept something other than salvation. (Hesselgrave 1991, 182)

Hesselgrave continues:

Premature 'decisions for Christ' may not be, in fact, the decision of the respondents to accept Christ at all, but rather a decision to please the evangelist. While it is true that the knowledge sufficient for an intelligent decision to accept Christ will always be something less than complete knowledge, it is also true that Christ himself urged those who would follow him to count the cost of discipleship. A postponed decision may sometimes be the only genuine 'decision', and in some contexts may greatly enhance the discipling of entire families or even larger homogenous cultural groupings. (Hesselgrave 1991, 186)

This is what we see in the New Testament: groups (often families) coming to Christ as they come to understand who He is over time: Andrew brought Peter, James brought John. While there are some examples of sudden, individual conversions in the gospels and Acts, it seems clear that these were not the norm. Rather, the normal way people came to Christ was in groups, as seen with Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30-34) and about twenty-five other conversion stories in Acts.⁴ These groups made decisions together as they got information and had confirming experiences over time. Then the decision was made official through the ritual of baptism. Thus, while we may find exceptions to this pattern both in the Bible and in our own experience, I would propose that the best practice would be to *normally give time for process* instead of hoping for instantaneous, individual conversions. This should inform our goals and strategies for evangelism, especially among previously unevangelized peoples.

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Upon conversion, groups that came into the Body most commonly met in houses. They were not brought into special church buildings or led by professional church leaders; these were organic meetings where 'everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church' (1 Cor. 14:26). There was a

4. In about thirty conversion stories in Acts, it appears that only three were clearly individual (Saul, Sergius Paulus and perhaps the Ethiopian eunuch).

plurality of elders and all the five-fold leadership⁵ was present, not dominated by a single office called ‘pastor.’ People came to Christ in groups and remained in their natural groups as they became disciples of Christ and lights to the world. Their lives were transformed, with radical sharing leading to societal impact (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37).

Overview of the CPM Training Model

Building on these insights, the CPM training offered to PI teams since August 2010 was designed to present an easily-reproducible, biblically-based approach to CP. This approach was modeled after ministries that have borne tremendous fruit in many UPG contexts around the world. It was not presented as a ‘silver bullet,’ a ‘recipe for success’ or ‘the only way to do church planting.’ Many other methods are also valid, biblical and blessed by God.

The heart of the CPM training that has been offered is 10 basic, easily-reproducible lessons. Everything about the model is designed to be reproducible. No high-tech equipment, professional trainers or lengthy theological training are needed for the training to be effective.

Three key ideas from CPM guided the process of assembling the training materials:

1. Everything must be based in the Bible.
2. Everything must be very simple and easily reproducible.
3. Biblical meanings must be able to be discovered without access to the original languages or other academic tools often unavailable in the majority world.

The materials intentionally handle in very simple, intuitive fashion the processes of:

1. Pursuing the intent of the biblical authors in their historical/cultural context
2. Considering the genre and place of the writing in salvation history and the canon of Scripture
3. Noting relevant differences between the historical context and the context of the current audience.

Those of us who put together these materials firmly believe that Spirit-led Christians throughout the ages and across the world can understand and apply the Scriptures without specialized knowledge of languages and history (2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12). We believe that some narrative passages in the Gospels and Acts are more than mere records of redemption history; they also illustrate useful principles consistent with the message of didactic passages. We believe God’s Spirit

5. Ephesians 4:11-12 states, ‘So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.’

can and does guide groups of His people to apply these principles effectively as they seek to obey Him in love.

Prayer is crucial in any endeavour expecting great things from God, and reproduction of intercessors is key to this approach to CP. Trainees are encouraged to increase the amount and depth of both personal and corporate prayer, as abundant and fervent prayer is a biblical practice generally present and preceding CPMs. Among prayer points are those such as the Apostle Paul requested: ‘Pray for us, that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you’ (2 Thess. 3:1).

This approach does not try to evangelize everyone nor try to project a ‘secular’ persona for security reasons. Rather, it encourages ‘living out loud’ as a spiritual person, casting widely a net for those people in whom God is already doing something uniquely positive (‘a person of peace’). The goal is not trying to win individuals, but intentionally aiming to win families (the *oikos* or group of reference of a ‘person of peace’). Workers are encouraged not to aim for quick conversions, but rather to aim to make *disciples*, through a process of chronological Bible study (Discovery Groups).

The training uses a simple and concrete adult learning approach that stresses obedience to God’s Word rather than simply learning information and hoping for obedience. At every level, we are always asking, ‘If this is from God, what are you going to do about it?’

The goal is launching a simple, biblical house church model that can quickly reproduce in whatever context it is planted. We aim for independence from outside or foreign influence, through training local leadership. No programs or projects are begun unless local leadership is involved. Reproducing disciples, leaders, groups and churches is part of the ‘DNA’ of this approach.

The role of the cross-cultural worker is to *deculturate* the Gospel—presenting the Gospel without commentary, but with the question, ‘How will we obey what God has said?’ The role of followers *within* a culture is to *contextualize* the Gospel—presenting the Gospel and asking, ‘What must we change in our lives and culture in order to obey all the commands of Christ?’ Thus those saved from within a culture discern how to redeem local culture (a process not controlled by or dependent on outsiders).

In a number of ways, this approach to CP is counterintuitive. It runs counter to the methodology many church planters use—either as an intentional part of

The role of followers within a culture is to contextualize the Gospel – presenting the Gospel and asking, ‘What must we change in our lives and culture in order to obey all the commands of Christ?’

their strategy or because they are simply doing what seems to make sense. Among the counterintuitive elements are:

- Sharing only when and where people are ready to hear
- Viewing a new or inexperienced cultural insider as more effective than a highly trained, mature outsider
- Starting the gospel presentation with creation rather than Christ
- Conveying biblical truth through discovery rather than preaching or teaching
- Considering obedience (to small, incremental gains in biblical knowledge) as more important than rapid gains in knowledge of large amounts of doctrine
- Beginning a process of ‘discipleship’ (obeying what one knows of God’s truth) before conversion, rather than aiming to convert people and then make them into disciples
- Avoiding elements that tend to kill church planting movements, such as church buildings, paid clergy, and outside funding of local leaders
- Focusing training and coaching on ordinary Christians rather than professional or vocational Christians

Many of the counterintuitive aspects of this training occur because of a focus on making disciples (versus converts) in groups that multiply rapidly.

Practical Steps for Implementation

Following is an outline of some essential elements in an Exponential Disciple-Making approach to CPM. This is not a ‘recipe’ for CPM (as though following these steps will automatically cause a CPM to result), but basic elements needed to catalyze an Exponential Disciple-Making CPM.

I. Live in community in a way that builds respect, and reveals that you are a spiritual person.

While there may be room for short-term teams, overall evangelism takes place through incarnational presence—where the evangelist⁶ learns the culture and gains access to it by being a blessing in it. Visiting families in the neighborhood, helping out with community service projects, giving money to community events

6. From this point on, I will use the term ‘evangelist’ to refer to anyone—local or expat—who is seeking to win people to Christ. I do not mean that this person will necessarily be in professional, full-time ministry but simply that he/she intends to obey the commands of Christ and bring the gospel to the unreached.

and needs, praying for the sick, attending funerals, even just driving slowly while nodding and smiling can all help to establish oneself as a socially appropriate and spiritual person. All of these are ways in which God gives us community access and opportunity for power and love encounters—the kind of encounters that can lead us to the People of Peace God has been preparing.

2. Seek ‘People of Peace’ (Matthew 10:6).

Apparently each time Jesus sent out his disciples (whether twelve or seventy), he gave them similar instructions. (See Matt, 10:1-1-16; Mk 6:1-15; Lk 9:1-6; 10:1-16.) A centerpiece of these instructions was to look for ‘a worthy person’ (Luke 10:6) or a ‘person of peace,’ who would bring the evangelist into his household. D.A. Carson states that these passages were both ‘an explicit short-term itinerary and a *paradigm* of the longer mission stretching into the years ahead’ (Carson 1984, 242. *Italics mine*). No doubt this is why we can find aspects of this model in many Acts stories as well (eg. Cornelius, Lydia, and the Philippian jailer).

I recognize the many differences between the cultural context of first century Jews doing outreach in Palestine and twenty-first century Christians doing cross-cultural missions work today. Yet in light of Jesus’ multiple commands, examples in Acts and Carson’s description of it as ‘a paradigm,’ I consider it appropriate to consider applications of this approach for outreach in our contexts today. It is not the only method of outreach, but it is certainly one worth careful consideration.

3. Evangelize people together in their *oikos*.

The word *oikos* in the New Testament era denoted the household. The ancient household was far more than the nuclear family, often also including extended family, slaves, freedmen who had been enslaved, and others who associated with the household for mutual benefit (Hesselgrave, 485). In many parts of the world today, people are still living with extended family, maids, helpers, orphans and widows. Thus, talking about significant issues most often still takes place in the household, not alone on the streets or in other public places. When a Person of Peace brings the evangelist into his/her home, entering a family is often not only the appropriate cultural thing to do (as it honours the elders while sitting and chatting, taking unrushed time together), but it is also the safest. Evangelizing people on the street invites confusion, diminishes ability to make real decisions (as they don’t usually make decisions alone) and risks angering anti-Christian radicals. Once in the home, we have access to the family through the person of peace without arousing suspicion, while under the protection of the host family.

Some CPM practitioners speak of evangelizing the Person of Peace anywhere, and then asking him to introduce us to his *oikos*. But this is requesting an individualistic decision, and not giving time for the family to process the deep mysteries

of God over time together. Rad Zdero notes that the *oikos* practice outlined above was the standard practice of the early church. He writes, “They used the “house of peace” approach that Jesus modeled to train future leaders (Mark 3:14; Luke 10:1-11). They would find a contact person in a new area and impact that sphere of influence for God’s kingdom’ (Zdero 2011, 348). Zdero clarifies that a Person of Peace was not equivalent to an open person, but was a ‘contact person’ who would open his or her *oikos* to the evangelist.

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David F. Hunt has written of his experiences using these principles in a burgeoning CPM in Africa: ‘Over and over the pattern of church establishment and even church replication in East Africa has been through the natural web of family relationships. Previously a pattern of extraction of an individual who showed interest in the gospel was followed, which often led to the isolation of that individual from the rest of the community, thus actually hindering the process of church planting. A focus on the family instead may move the process of evangelism ahead more slowly, but will result in a broader acceptance of the gospel later...’ (Hunt 2009, 121).

4. Disciple into conversion through chronological Bible studies using a Discovery Approach.

In an unreached context, evangelism is not best done quickly, aggressively or individually. Such approaches may be more useful in the West, however among the unreached, people need a context in which to understand the gospel. They need to see God’s story from the beginning, then over time to discover about the Fall and God’s remedy for it. To embrace Jesus as the atonement for their sins, people must first realize that sin is a serious problem, and that the way out was for Jesus to die on the cross as the fulfilment of the Old Testament sacrificial system. For those who lack these basic understandings, Jesus’ death on the cross is meaningless.

Some people object that such a long process of studying stories is unbiblical and a needless waste of time.⁷ However, as noted above, it took several years for Jesus to bring his disciples to a true understanding of the gospel, even though they were with him daily. Furthermore, Craig Ott points out that Jesus used a ‘discovery approach’ with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26) and that Paul used a ‘Bible study approach’ with the Bereans (Acts 17:11). Ott goes on to say ‘evangelism must also be understood as a process. Though regeneration occurs at a particular time, there is a process leading up to that point.... Focusing too narrowly on a single decision for Christ often leads to superficial conversions that are rooted in

7. In our model we use thirty stories beginning at Creation and ending at the new birth (John 3).

misunderstanding or are wrongly motivated' (Ott & Wilson 2011, 218).

Those using the CPM model described here meet the Person of Peace in his/her family at least weekly, studying the Bible in his/her home with the family over a period of months. The studies are inductive, not teacher-led. The evangelist only asks questions, allowing the group to discover God's truth themselves. After a time of sharing and prayer, the family is led in a very simple Bible study method that is easily remembered and reproducible:

1. Read the story.
2. Retell the story several times.
3. Ask what this story teaches us about God.
4. Ask what this story teaches us about mankind.
5. Ask what they believe God wants them to do in response to it individually.
6. Ask what they believe God wants them to do in response to it as a group.
7. Ask who they could pass this story on to.

Ideally, after a few times the family has learned these questions and is willing to meet without the evangelist present. The evangelist then continues to 'disciple' the Person of Peace (or other natural leader who arises from within the group) at a different time, getting together before each *oikos* meeting to give the next story, to ask how things are going, and to answer any leadership questions. Keeping the evangelist away from the group meetings helps prevent inadvertently transferring outside culture. Sometimes it is imperative in order to protect the group from hostility.

5. Encourage the group to pass on the stories immediately, and to begin other groups as new People of Peace are discovered.

This is what allows for reproduction. And it is what leads to true discipleship. If people won't act (obey the Word) or talk about it (witness) they aren't becoming disciples. But amazingly, even before conversion, unregenerate people *are* facilitating Discovery Groups. This is not mere theory; it is happening in several places in the world today. Ott notes, 'Storytelling approaches to evangelism and discipleship have the added advantage that new believers can easily continue to tell others the Bible stories they have learned, and as a result, the method is locally reproducible and can easily lead to multiplication' (Ott, 221). This is exactly what's happening: not simply story-telling but inductive studies of Bible stories in affinity groups.

6. As the group decides to follow Christ together, coach them into becoming a church by obeying the ordinances along with all the other commands of Christ.

The culmination of weeks or months of Bible study is the challenge to be born-again and receive baptism together. Sometimes this preparation stage requires additional Bible studies and time. The baptismal event is not done in secret, but with the evan-

gelist and the *oikos* present. It is often an emotional moment for it connotes serious moral and identity commitments (Rom 6:16-19; Gal 3:26-29). Following the baptism there is often opposition which necessitates increased follow-up.

In CPM models, baptism is expected to happen immediately at the time of initial profession and life commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord. Steve Smith in *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (2011) argues passionately for immediate water baptism as the sign of publicly professing faith in Christ. He states that baptism is ‘the sign that you are sure, not mature, in your faith. It is the sign to the new believer and to others around him that he is sure he wants to follow Christ’ (S. Smith, 238).

Continuing in an inductive, discovery format, we encourage these study groups that have now become believer groups, to continue to study the Word by focusing on one of the Gospels. As they move along in the Word, they soon discover additional elements of worship that need to be incorporated into their fledgling church. Thus the end goal of our evangelistic efforts is planting churches that are biblically sound, culturally relevant, rapidly reproducing and able to keep on evangelizing the rest of their group. Ultimately this leads to community transformation.

Conclusion

In this article, we have presented some of the timeless principles behind CPM, and have given the basics of the model we use. These principles are biblical door-openers for potential church planting movements. We encourage use of these principles not only for practical reasons (as this approach is bearing fruit in many places) but also because they are a biblically sound way to do ministry. While God is using other models and will continue to do so, this is a model he is using powerfully today, especially among the unreached in the developing world. CPM is *not* a ‘silver bullet.’ Nothing replaces the hard work and suffering of missions. It is not easy. Discipleship involves much more than just getting people to profess faith, and seeking to catalyze a church planting movement is more involved than trying to plant a single church.

In presenting a CPM paradigm of ministry, we offer a way of ‘working smarter.’ Around the world, God is bringing rapid multiplication of churches among groups who have had little or no Christian witness. The Exponential Disciple-Making pattern of CPM is one way to open our lives and ministries to a powerful work of God’s Spirit in reaching the unreached. May Jesus alone get all the glory, as His church expands to the ends of the earth!

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A Response to 'Exponential Disciple-Making'

by Roland Muller

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CPMs are real, and they are making an impact on the world, so they deserve our careful observation. In his article, *Exponential Disciple-Making: A Fresh Approach to Church Planting Movements*, Steinhaus gives us a good overview of church-planting basics, which he equates with CPMs, and seems to assume that CPMs should be the goal of every missionary.

He begins by emphasising that CPMs are all about discipleship. This is a concept that has been with us since biblical time, but it has gained a new life in the last two decades. Back in the 70s I was told that my main role as a new missionary was to train one or two nationals who would do the job of evangelism and discipleship that I only dreamed of doing. So this has been my model for the last 30 years. Prayerfully picking nationals and discipling and training them as the leaders of the new churches that we helped plant around them. This allowed us and our team to plant churches every few years with a new national leader, and it allowed those leaders to pick others to disciple and turn into leaders of new churches. After thirty years, we have seen some of these churches start other churches and ministries, but some did not, and a few even ceased to exist.

The problem with CPMs is that they are a work of God, not of man. Therefore, making CPM our exclusive goal and then reducing CPMs down to a set of steps or strategies can ultimately restrict what God is doing, or not doing. As I have travelled around the world, I have observed many teams trying to start CPMs using various strategies. Only a few succeed.

In my opinion, most CPM teachers, (Steinhaus included) seem to have four basic steps:

1. Choose and disciple new leaders
2. Develop a community around them that is easily reproducible
3. Empower the participants in that community
4. The leaders should choose and train new leaders to build new communities around.

Most of this is straight forward, and has always been a part of missionary teaching in some form or other. But there are three areas where people disagree: 1) the meaning of some of the terms 2) the speed this process should take, and 3) the makeup and role of the community.

1. Terms

What is really meant when words like discipleship, teaching, reproducible, community, and church are used? These conjure up different images in the minds of different people. For some, discipleship means meeting with someone once a week for a Bible study, for others it means daily face to face contact. For some teaching means dictating previously acquired knowledge, for others it means gently leading people as they discover the Bible for themselves. Reproducible is a difficult word. It is very hard for western missionaries to live a life that is reproducible by the nationals, let alone form community that embraces the communal aspects that the nationals appreciate. Steinhaus tries to help us understand some of these terms, but more needs to be done by those writing about CPMs.

2. Speed

The emphasis in CPM teaching is to move quickly. Therefore discipleship and teaching models are designed around quick development, rather than deep development. Most people who struggle with CPM teaching struggle with the speed that this is supposed to happen. In my observation of several CPMs, there is a time of rapid growth, and then a slowing of growth while teaching and structure catch up; then, hopefully a burst of growth again. Most CPM advocates are disappointed when the momentum slows because they feel they are failing in some way.

3. Makeup and Role of Community

There are huge questions about the communities or churches that form. Interestingly these look different in different CPMs. In my mind the key here is not

When I first read the eight points of counterintuitive elements in Steinhaus' article I was shocked. I was diligently taught these principles 30 years ago, and did not think them new or counterintuitive. They are simply cross-cultural church-planting basics that have been part of what has been taught within my own organization for many decades.

the structure, practice or form that the community takes, but rather that it is an acceptable form of community for the participants. While Steinhaus touches on a few issues, CPM advocates need to do much more research on this aspect before dogmatically teaching in this area. CPM advocates differ themselves here, some emphasising teaching, some emphasising finding 'people of peace'; some emphasising working within in family units or *oikos*. Here we westerners need to learn from

others, for it is our weakest area. I believe that community is actually the secret of CPMs but it is seldom studied and taught about in western circles.

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not think them new or counterintuitive. They are simply cross-cultural church-planting basics that have been part of what has been taught within my own organization for many decades.

On the other hand, Steinhaus is right. Our western theological schools have tended to turn out people who want to teach theology rather than evangelise and form community. Most western Christians have never been part of a close knit community of believers that functions like a true biblical community, caring for one another and always reaching out to others. Therefore western missionaries tend to be ‘community challenged’ and ‘theologically dominated.’ Most of Steinhaus’ article seems to be aimed at these people.

In the end, my biggest concern with all CPM teaching is that despite their efforts to not produce strategy, models and steps, they all end up doing so, claiming that this or that is the ‘key’ to getting a CPM started. I have no problem with most of what Steinhaus and others are promoting, I just wonder how many new workers embrace these teachings as the new ‘how to keys’ that must be applied.

I believe we can do everything right, and still not get a CPM. As I stated earlier, this is because CPMs are a work of God not man. In the end, missionary service and church planting should be all about following the Holy Spirit and the teaching of Scripture in every situation. It’s all about having a personal, deep, relationship with God and discipling others into a similar relationship with God where they learn to follow the Scriptures and the leading of the Holy Spirit in every situation. If we are true to the leading of God in our lives, then we will be successful, whether or not a CPM develops from our ministry.

The Drunken Swagger of CPM Methodology: A Response to Steinhaus' Exponential Disciple-Making

by Paul Mullins

Paul Mullins (pen name) and his wife Lisa have been serving among Muslims in East Asia with Pioneers for 10 years. Paul holds a Th.M. with an emphasis on New Testament and Cross-cultural Ministry and is a doctoral student in anthropology. He resides in his host country as a business man. Paul can be reached at paulwmullins@gmail.com.

Balance is difficult to attain. Martin Luther said that we are like a drunken man who has fallen off his horse and who remounts only to fall off the other side. We all come into something like Church Planting Movement training on different sides of the horse. For those who have been overly worried about security issues, for example, the exhortation to 'live out loud' has been very helpful. It is my conviction however that the core missiology, implicit pneumatology, and hermeneutic are in error and in danger of not only not getting us back on the horse but actually knocking us right into the gutter.

Removing Proclamation from Church Planting

The CPM training, according to Steven Steinhaus' article, advocates 'Conveying biblical truth through discovery rather than preaching or teaching.' Further, 'The evangelist only asks questions, allowing the group to discover God's truth themselves.' Steven says that it is 'helpful' to evaluate how Jesus and the early church did evangelism and discipleship and yet somehow preaching and teaching, which are clearly thematic in the gospels and Acts,¹ are discarded as a means to church planting. It is concerning that the phrase 'man of peace' or a few mentions of a 'household' coming to faith can be seen as so instructive while the thing that Jesus and the apostles got up every day to do can be discarded so easily.

Arguably, the closest thing to a church planting seminar in the Bible would be the Pastoral Epistles (perhaps better called the Church Planting Epistles). Timothy and Titus are to finish the work of establishing the church in their given areas. Titus' field of Crete is clearly cross-cultural (Titus 1:12). Surely we would expect to see here an exhortation for Titus and Timothy to avoid teaching and preaching and simply to facilitate studies with questions so that the re-

1. The words 'teaching' and 'preaching' occur around 140 times in the gospels and Acts not to mention the large sections from these books that are in fact recordings of teachings and sermons.

sulting group could rapidly reproduce. Instead we see Paul's exhortation 'Until I come, devote yourself to...preaching and to teaching' (1 Tim 3:16).

Steinhaus says that replacing teaching and preaching with a discovery process is 'counter-intuitive' but I feel that this has actually become very intuitive in much of missions. This teaching is not so much counterintuitive as it is counter-bible.

The CPM model advocates a simple obedience response to the Bible but in denying the role of proclamation in church planting it becomes self-defeating. You must actually give up an inductive reading of Scripture in order to remove proclamation from your arsenal as a church planter. Steinhaus says that replacing teaching and preaching with a discovery process is 'counter-intuitive' but I feel that this has actually become *very intuitive* in much of missions. This teaching is not so much counterintuitive as it is counter-bible.

I also find it ironic that the CPM model, meant to filter out Western contamination, is itself a Western import. In much of Asia teaching is highly valued and sought after and the idea of a flat learning environment where everyone is the teacher is quite foreign. In short, this core distinctive of the CPM model is neither biblical nor in most cases culturally appropriate.

Is Less from Me Really More from the Holy Spirit?

Deeper below the surface of the CPM method lurks a deficient view of the Holy Spirit's normative way of working to build his church. Notice how the CPM model is optimistic about the Holy Spirit's workings among seekers but only to the degree that missionaries stay quiet and out of His way. Methods are trusted over the gifts of the Spirit; non-believers trusted over equipped believers. However, should not trusting the Holy Spirit mean that we should trust the inspired accounts in the New Testament about what his normal means of church building are?

Ephesians 4 speaks of a plurality of gifts not a singularity of method for the building of the church. Being 'mature' in Christ means we are no longer like 'infants, tossed back and forth by the waves' of false teaching (vs. 14). Not all believers are equally trusted for guidance of a group. The passage is even less optimistic about non-believers when it says they are 'darkened in their understanding' and in the 'futility of their thinking' and the 'hardening of their hearts' (vs. 17-18). Trusting the insights of non-believers and immature believers over the proclamations of mature believers does not reflect biblical balance.

Is God glorified when we teach a group of church planters that they should all use the same method for building up the church regardless of their unique spiritual gifting? Romans 12:6-7 says, 'We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it...if it is serving, let him serve;

if it is teaching, let him teach...' I see no exhortation or hint in Scripture that I am to focus my attention on keeping the bar low when practicing my gifts (or to not practice them at all) so that new believers and seekers can feel that they can easily do what I do. People are edified by seeing Spirit-empowered people minister in ways that no human could ever do on their own, not by seeing things that any human could do even without the indwelling of the Spirit. The CPM methodology of Steinhaus is brilliantly reproducible but blatantly unbiblical.

There are a few in our mission who may be on the other side of the horse, trying to be the long term pastor of their churches, but in general I believe we are already too far on the side of timidity and cultural self-loathing. Potential cross-cultural contamination and Hollywood stereotypes of missionaries as neo-colonialists should not prevent us from proudly opening our mouths to proclaim the gospel. 'Now Lord embolden your servants to speak your word with great boldness' (Acts 4:29).

Exegeting While Intoxicated

When I attended the CPM training in the spring of 2011 we were introduced to an inductive study method called CPA (Copy, Paraphrase, Apply). We were told to fold a blank sheet of paper into four columns. The fourth column was added for CPM applications. After each of the 10 lessons were introduced a passage was given to each small group to copy onto the paper, paraphrase into their own words, and list applications in a 'I will...' format. In one lesson, for instance, we were told that God wants us to have a specific plan for our ministries and the passage given was Luke 14:28-32 about counting the cost before building a tower. After a few minutes of copying, paraphrasing and applying most of the participants had indeed gotten from the passage to the point of the CPM lesson. But notice the danger! We were instructed to take the passage literally out of its context and into our topic and to paraphrase without asking the basic interpretive question of the original author's intent. A passage about being prepared to give up all to become a disciple suddenly is teaching us that we are supposed to have a ministry plan.

It may be a good idea to have a ministry plan but this passage comes nowhere close to teaching this. I can normally be gracious when I agree with where people are going but not how they are getting there, but in this situation we must see that how we are getting there IS where we are going. Many hours of the training were spent practicing the CPA study method and we were asked to all commit to return to our fields and pass the CPM training on to other expat and national workers. How sadly ironic that we are on one side of the horse saying that we must not teach seekers because we are so concerned about cultural contamination and yet we are so unreflectively instructing western missionaries to go home from their

training and immediately gather national leaders to show them how to abandon teaching, context, and a basic interpretative process when using the Word of God. In this case the CPM training actually falls off both sides of the horse: phobically removing teaching as a supposed safeguard on the one side and unreflectively modelling an atrocious handling of God's Word to people who look to us for guidance on the other.

We must remember that the gospel is reproducible because it is the gospel not because we make it so through compromise and reduction. Must we really choose between biblical faithfulness and missionary success? I believe not.²

2. As an alternative to the CPM training I highly recommend the book *A Vision of the Possible: Pioneer Church Planting in Teams* by Daniel Sinclair. The author takes his experience of supervising over 300 teams in Muslim contexts and an honest reading of Scripture to give a more balanced approach to CPing and CPM. Cf. SEEDBED 2008, Vol XXII, No 1 for a review of Sinclair's book.

Response to Roland Muller and Paul Mullins

by Stephen Steinhaus

Good missiology is done in community. For that reason, I am grateful to Mullins and Muller who wrote thoughtful responses to my article. Such discussions are best had face to face, not in academic journals. My fear is that this issue may become politicized like the ‘C-scale’ wars in years past. I pray the battle lines have not already been drawn and that we will spend at least as much time with the lost as we do spilling ink that will not necessarily mean more souls saved or churches begun.

I will comment on just a few points. After a few more stiff drinks, I am ready to get back on my horse and swagger again. Too bad Mullins is not here to drink with me; we would likely get a lot more accomplished!

As Muller suggests, we must always remember that a CPM is a sovereign work of God. The fact is that X may be doing all the same things as Y and yet the latter sees no fruit while the former sees a CPM. This is indisputable yet went unstated in my initial article. Thank you for reminding us of this. For those who attend the CPM training we offer, this is our initial topic and a continued emphasis throughout the week.

Nevertheless, there are things that we as humans can do. This was the main thrust of my article: ‘What is the apostolic (or missionary) role in CPM?’ We do these things not to try to make something happen quickly, but to bring depth of discipleship. If people are discipled well to hear and obey the Word, they will also make disciples of others. David Watson is quick to point out that this approach is actually *not* a quick way to plant a church, but a slow one. However, once groups of people learn to hear and obey God’s word, things can take off quickly. Rapid multiplication can and does often occur. Surely the Lord is pleased with both quality and quantity; it does not have to be an either/or.

However, once groups of people learn to hear and obey God’s word, things can take off quickly. Rapid multiplication can and does often occur. Surely the Lord is pleased with both quality and quantity; it does not have to be an either/or.

Mullins has raised several points that he has misunderstood. I will attempt to treat some of his concerns. First, Mullins puts great stress on the importance of ‘proclamation.’ By this, it appears he actually means the teaching gift, and wondering how teaching occurs in a discovery-based CPM. To answer, proclamation is a huge part of CPM. It occurs in many ways, including preaching sermons, lectures in secular and public forums, and through good works matched with loving explanations of those good works. In CPM, we speak of ‘abundant gospel sowing’ as a key. So we proclaim via stories, parables, testimonies and other means. And we proclaim a lot!

Proclamation also occurs as exhortation when people interact over the Word in a DBS. People who are given gifts like exhortation, prophecy and teaching will naturally

say more and say it forthrightly. This happens spontaneously in DBSs much as it happened in the early church. See Colossians 3:16 and I Corinthians 14:26.

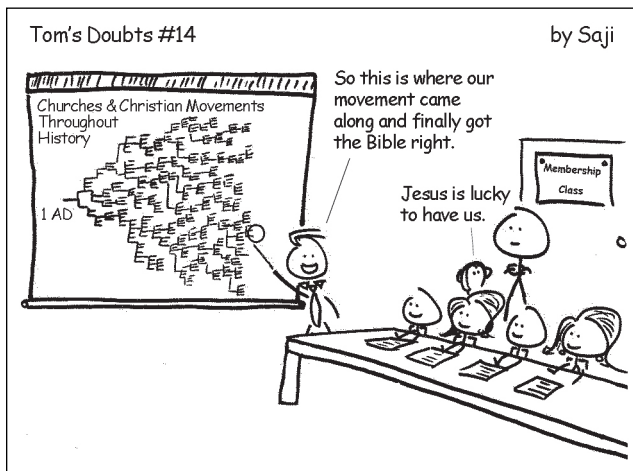
However, a problem in much of the Christian world is that preaching has been elevated as the pinnacle of Christian ministry. Thus, many Christian leaders have perfected the Aristotelian art of rhetoric (preaching) and are very skilled in it. They are therefore committed to it and tend to read this one-way communication back into the New Testament. But this was not really what was happening in the early church. Rather, much of the teaching and preaching described in the New Testament was interactive, where the Word was read and people discussed it, following the guidance and gifting of the Holy Spirit. (For more details, see Zdero in my reference list). Lecture-style preaching is fine, but a big problem is that it is not easily reproducible, especially among the uneducated in the developing world. In fact, in other journal articles, many have lamented the problem of poor discipleship in the developing world and accused the West of creating a Christianity that is ‘a mile wide and an inch deep.’ This CPM model was developed more out of concern for deep discipleship than out of a concern for rapidity.

In the commonly understood pattern of ‘preaching,’ the preacher tries to do everything for people: read the Word, explain it to them and make suggested applications for them. And while he does these, much of the congregation falls asleep. But in Discovery model CPMs, everyone is active, as the process is much more engaging and exciting. Moreover, we ensure that people understand the message, by having them retell it and discuss it. If they do not understand, we take the time to discuss it more, or even discuss the same passage in the following meeting. After they discuss it and know it well enough to discuss it with others, they are called to obedience: each person is asked how they will obey. This creates do-ers of the Word (Jam 1:22) and serious disciples who really focus on the Word (Jam 3:1), rather than praising (or criticizing) the rhetorical skills of a preacher.

So as churches emerge, people with the spiritual gift of teaching will naturally do a lot more of the talking and answering the questions in the DBS. Their answers will be deeper and more edifying than people lacking the gift. Also, in every healthy CPM (which is what everyone is striving for) there is also a concerted attempt to give just-in-time training for generational leaders of the movement. Thus group (church) leaders receive more training in specific areas of need as they are invited out to special seminars or trainings. As the movement grows, the trainers and speakers at these events will mostly be insiders from within the CPM who have the gift of teaching (though healthy CPMs also invite others in to speak to their leaders for cross-pollination).

Thus I would say that there is in fact a validation of *all* the gifts in CPM, as

opposed to what Mullins suggests. It is ironic that Mullins suggests that the gifts are not allowed to be present in CPMs. In fact, the presence of all the gifts might be the main thing that many find so threatening about CPMs. Lay people—appropriately gifted and called—can lead everything. The Word is studied in such simple ways that everyone can apply for himself and so applications are made in line with a person's calling and gifting (instead of needing someone to tell everyone the 'right way' to interpret). The Holy Spirit is given free reign and the DNA of obedience is set so people get used to lifestyles of simply 'hearing and obeying.' Everyone in a congregation is sharing what they are learning; everyone is giving, testifying and being a witness. Thus as outsiders see the power of God and His manifest presence, they are attracted and the Church grows.



"Tom's Doubts #14" by Saji George (Sept. 2, 2011). Used by permission.

I appreciate Mullins' concern for sound exegesis and not taking verses out of context. The point of the four-column approach is that the *third* column is an application specifically related to the main point of the text, whereas the fourth column asks the further question, 'Is there any (secondary) principle we can draw from this passage, related to CPM?' If there were no third column, I would join in Mullins' criticism. But after the primary application of a text has been made, I do not consider it 'atrocious' to ask, 'Is there anything this text might tell us about the subject we're currently discussing?'

I began my original article stating that I believe God is doing a new thing in our day. For those inclined to share the concerns of Mr. Mullins, I would suggest applying the wise counsel of Gamaliel: 'Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourself fighting against

God' (Acts 5:38-39). I appeal to Mr. Mullins and all other readers: please consider what I am saying and do not reject it out of hand. Get a personal look at a CPM if you can. I believe you will find that your fears are unwarranted and you will rejoice with me in what God is doing for, as Muller points out, 'CPMs are real, and they are making an impact on the world, so they deserve our careful observation.' CPMs are a work of God and *he* is on the move!

Soli deo Gloria!