

Global Church Planting is not a light read. Those looking for a basic introduction to church planting would want to look elsewhere. But for most Seedbed readers, this would be a good ‘refresher’ course in current ideas and church planting practices that God is using around the globe to establish his church.

Reviewed by L. D. Waterman

Waterman (pseudonym) pastored for ten years in the US before moving to work among Muslims in Southeast Asia, where he has served for the past eighteen years.. He serves as an Area Leader with Pioneers and, with this issue, has begun to assist SEEDBED as associate editor.

T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution

by Steve Smith and Ying Kai

India:WIGTake Resources, 2011 (also available in Kindle format)

In the year 2000, Ying Kai and his wife Grace were deeply burdened by the task before them and spent much time seeking the Lord’s guidance and direction. They were moving to a new country, notorious for its oppressive government, with the task of engaging 20 million people with the gospel. Just ten years later there were 1.7 million baptized believers and over 150,000 new churches. God did an amazing work in calling so many lost into the kingdom through a strategy known as Training for Trainers (T4T).

For those of us who have laboured for years among an Unreached People Group (UPG) and seen annual results (baptisms) measurable with just our fingers (and maybe our toes too if we’re lucky), it’s hard to even fathom what God has done through Ying and Grace. Other movements implementing T4T have also been birthed and continue to grow. While T4T has greatly aided some missionaries, others question its usefulness after trying its 6-10 lessons with little visible fruit. In this book, Steve Smith and Ying Kai break down T4T and demonstrate how it is the process of T4T that is crucial and not merely the 6-10 lessons. The authors reveal that T4T is a simple, life-on-life, biblical, obedience-based discipleship program.

In the opening chapters, Steve and Ying share how they were both driven to their knees in desperation because of the task before them: initiating a Church planting movement (CPM) among a UPG. As a result, their ministries were characterized by an unwavering focus on the end-vision of seeing millions engaged and not on what either man could do, liked to do, or was gifted at doing. By keeping their focus on the end vision, Ying and Steve were driven to Scripture and to prayer. The fact that the authors present a plethora of strategies and practices related to T4T, should not

be misunderstood to imply that T4T is a man-centred approach:

In the old days of sailing ships, when no wind was blowing, ships went nowhere. One thing sailors did in times of calm was to take every square inch of sailcloth and hang it from as many yardarms as possible. *They could not make the wind blow, but they could be ready for the wind when it did blow...* John 3 describes the Spirit of God as a wind. We cannot make Him blow; He blows where He wills. We cannot create movements, only the Spirit of God can. But we *can* align ourselves, raising the sails of kingdom-oriented ministry, so that when the Spirit does blow, we are ready to move forward. T4T is a process that raises the types of ministry sails that can move with the blowing of God's Spirit. [And] the Spirit of God is blowing throughout our world! (73-74).

Another key conviction is a belief that God is at work among every UPG before a missionary ever arrives, so there is a harvest ready to be harvested. Jesus' disciples were chided for failing to see the harvest before them in John 4, and according to the authors we too need to have a harvest strategy and mentality to 'see' those who God has called to start movements (just like he used the women at the well in John 4 to open an entire village to the gospel).

Another key principle gleaned from training thousands of people was that '*the Holy Spirit chooses the person, not us*,' so it's our job to train (biblically, disciple) as many believers as possible. God often chooses to work through the most unlikely people: poor people, ex-cons, illiterate people, adolescents, or even the elderly. Ying recounts how God often uses the least likely person to start a movement. For us to find and empower those unlikely movement starters we must train everyone that is willing and then invest more heavily in those who obey God's word by sharing with others.

In addition to training everyone, Ying and Steve also champion the idea of sharing the gospel with everyone and establishing this in the DNA of all new believers. A missionary who was living among a 'resistant' people group who began seeing rapid growth communicated this principle best when he said, '100% of those I do not share [the gospel] with do not respond' (207). The authors challenge us whenever possible to sift for spiritual openness with the gospel and not some other method, since after all the gospel is the 'power of God' according to Romans 1.16.

Many readers may agree with the previous principles of training all open believers and sharing the gospel with lost persons, but struggle with how to make that a reality in one's ministry location and context. This is where Steve and Ying's book really shines. Because the book is based on real movements in our day and age and not on mere theory, the authors give numerous examples of how to start trainings in a variety of settings and how to share the gospel.

For starting trainings, the key component is the importance of powerful vision casting that stirs up the heart of the listener. Clear, appropriate, repetitive vision casting is often the missing component which God uses to birth a movement. When someone comes to faith, it's important to right away cast vision to them about how God wants to use them. They have been saved by God for a purpose, and God wants to begin using them immediately.

One final paradigm shift proposed by the authors relates to how we grow in our faith. Many churches operate out of a knowledge-based paradigm that correlates spiritual maturity with biblical and theological knowledge. By examining Ephesians 4 (and other passages) the authors show that Scripture teaches something different. In Ephesians 4:11 leaders are given to the church. In verse 12 they equip God's people (to know Christ, serve, etc.). And, also in verse 12, God's people serve or do the work of ministry. In verses 12-13, the result is that they and the body mature through this process. The biblical progression of maturity is NOT 'believe - mature - serve', but RATHER, 'believe - serve - mature' (80).

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Once again, most missionaries will not disagree with obedience-based discipleship in theory, but many will struggle to actually implement obedience-based discipleship since it is foreign to our own experience as westerners. In section two, the authors devote five chapters to explaining how to facilitate the T4T process. A T4T meeting is broken into 3 parts of equal length (30-40 minutes per part). The first third of the meeting is focused on looking back at the week or two that have just passed, and it consists of 4 elements: pastoral care, worship, accountability, and vision casting. The second third of the meeting is focused on looking up to God, so a passage of Scripture is read and studied inductively with some simple questions like 'what does **say**?', 'what do I need to **obey**?', and 'who is someone that I can **share** this with?' (nicely packaged with the acronym, **SOS**). The final third of the T4T meeting is focused on looking forward to the coming week(s) and consists of two activities: practicing the lesson just studied so the disciple is confident and qualified to disciple others and making goals for the week which will be used in the accountability section of the next meeting. The authors stress that it is the most important parts of the training process that are easily left out.

The third and final part of the book explains how the T4T process fits within the larger framework of CPM and troubleshoots some of the common roadblocks or points where movements often get stuck, like baptism. I will mention just one provocative idea from this section, which relates to evangelism. The authors warn

CPM practitioners not to use more than one way of sharing the gospel. They suggest choosing only one method with proven results in one's context or in a similar context to one's UPG. Then, everyone who comes to faith can be trained to share the same gospel presentation. According to the authors, most documented CPMs have just one simple way to share the gospel, whereas having multiple approaches rarely gets beyond first or second generation growth.

In our team we have been implementing T4T contextualized for a Muslim UPG for the past year and half. We have trained hundreds of Christians how to simply and sensitively share their faith in Jesus Christ. Just as we expected, based on Ying's experience, only about 10-20% of those we have trained have shared with others. However, in the last 6 months hundreds of Muslims have heard the gospel for the first time, scores of Muslim's have expressed interest in the gospel, many have made professions of faith, and 6 have been baptized. These MBBs are being disciplined using the T4T process and we are to the point where they are beginning to share with their 'okios' (network of family and friends). We are still far from seeing a movement, but we have been greatly aided by the T4T process. Before we started implementing T4T we lacked boldness, trained only a few nationals, rarely got to the gospel but spent lots of time investing in relationships, and saw even less fruit. T4T has really sharpened us and helped us to keep our eyes focused on a God sized vision! Thanks to T4T, we are consistently putting aside 'good' CP activities as we press on towards God's *best* and the *highest value* activities.

The T4T process is currently being implemented among hundreds of UPGs and as a result scores of CPMs have been birthed by God's Spirit. The book is very optimistic about how God's Spirit wants to use us, His Body, to birth movements for God's glory, but this could perhaps be the greatest point of concern as well. Some readers may find it a stretch to believe that there is a harvest ready to be harvested among all peoples. Aren't there some UPGs that are blinded by our enemy to the point that we must till the soil and sow seeds for a generation or more before the harvest is ready? What about godly men and women who have laboured for a lifetime and seen almost no fruit?

Another point of concern is that some of the Kingdom kernels presented in chapter 4 seem to be taken a bit out of context and might not withstand rigorous exegesis. Occasionally it feels as if there is a good missiological principle or church planting strategy that the authors felt they needed to prove from Scripture thus making it a 'biblical principle' or 'biblical strategy'. I am not convinced that all of the Kingdom parables can be applied to a CPM strategy in the 21st century, but I will leave it to the reader to decide for himself which points warrant the label of 'biblical' and which do not.

In summary, Steve and Ying have done the missions community a great service in writing this book with its countless practical insights drawn from several of the most explosive CPMs in recent history. Anyone who teaches or implements missions or church planting should read this book. Veteran workers will undoubtedly be sharpened by the focus on vision casting and the practical vignettes sprinkled throughout its pages. Newer personnel, struggling to find a clear strategy and wondering how to make national partners, will likely find this book to be a trusty guide. Only our great God can accomplish a church planting movement, but insofar as he chooses to work through his bride to accomplish that purpose, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* helps us get our sails up and correctly positioned so that we are ready for when God's Spirit blows.

Reviewed by Matt Blake

Matt (pseudonym) and his family have lived and worked with Muslims in Indonesia since 2006.

Engaging Islam

by Georges Houssney

Port Angeles, WA: Treeline Publishing, 2010, 208 pages

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Georges' heart for Muslims shines through on every page of this compelling book. It is not surprising to find so much wisdom packed into such a small and readable book, given that it is written by someone with so much experience sharing Christ with Muslims and training others to do the same. The richness of Georges' diverse experience, and his years spent training people how to engage with Muslims all shine through beautifully here.

Last year I took a dozen students through a four month course entitled 'Engaging the World of Islam.' It was a struggle to choose what texts to have as required reading. Now that I have read *Engaging Islam*, it is a natural choice as one of the core texts for this course the next time I teach it.

In my own accumulated experience of 30 years spent living in the Arab world, leading in ministry to Muslims, mentoring and teaching colleagues across the Arab world and now also teaching college students, I resonate with everything that Georges shares in his book and find it to be right on. I was particularly struck by two things that come through so well in this book: (1) Georges' love for God and for Muslims and his desire to see them come to know and love Christ, and (2) his holy boldness to witness fearlessly as the Apostle Paul modelled so well for us.