

Letting Go, Finishing Well, Adding Value: Indigenous Leadership Succession

By Mark Syn

Mark Syn serves as the International Director of Pioneers. Prior to this, he was the Mobilisation Base Director for Asia for a decade, and prior to that, he and his family were involved in church planting ministry in South Asia for a decade. Formally an engineer in the automotive industry in Australia, he has a DMiss from Biola University, and his dissertation research is documented in the book, [On Being the Antioch of Asia](#) (Genesis Books, 2023).



"Effective leaders start with the end in mid. Too many missionaries sow the seeds of ineffectiveness from the very beginning: the time to think through the phase-out process comes before entering the field!" – Robert Logan¹

The two most significant days in our ministry may be the days we arrive and leave. How we prepare for our day of departure and how we entrust what has been established into other hands will probably make it one of our most strategic days. If we are going to depart well, the ministry must first be infused with the capacity for ongoing, *sustainable* growth. Any ministry will only have the potential to become a truly indigenous movement when it is left in the hands of mature, godly and competent indigenous leaders. Sadly, there are countless stories of the baton being dropped between successive generations of leaders.

1 This quote comes from Logan's endorsement of Tom Steffen's (1997) book, *Passing the Baton*.

The important topic of leadership development is included in the familiar CPM models, but what is less often addressed is the critical topic of leadership succession and the need to develop *senior movement leaders* and elders.² Most of the time, models give attention to the dynamics of smaller group leadership. We must help to identify potential movement leaders at the earliest stages of the ministry and continue supporting this development process after we depart. At each stage of the ministry, the expatriate missionary should ask how we add value, where we should be actively involved, and when we should lower our profile.

Background: Think “Exit Strategy”

During the decade in which we served in South Asia, we were privileged to build on the legacy of generations of missionaries who had laboured sacrificially for hundreds of years. It was, however, sad to see how mission drift had crept into so many ministries. We would often be shown the “mission hospital” or “mission school” in a community, only to discover that they had degenerated into secular, money-making enterprises. There was no more “mission” left in them after generations of leadership had been affected by mission drift.

For sustainable growth, the leaders who steward the work in the current season must think deeply about how to pass on the vision and capacity for ongoing growth to future generations of leaders and teams. Our part of the race is not complete until the next runner has a firm grasp of the baton and is running strongly.

I remember our first team leader challenging us with these questions as we discussed how to empower our local partners: “What if we

2 Note that we are not assuming that a movement leader is leading a large organisation. We are using the term “movement leader” to refer to the senior leader of the organisation, whether they are leading a church-planting movement or not. It’s not about the size of the ministry, but the responsibility they bear. They are the people with whom “the buck stops”

intentionally pushed them to the front? What if we never held the reins?" This empowerment and succession process must begin from the very earliest stages of ministry. Leaving the handover process until just before we depart does not leave sufficient time for the new leaders to learn what it feels like to "hold the reins", to experiment and even learn from mistakes.

We ended up serving in South Asia for a decade, but we recall vividly, at the eight-year mark, how the Lord spoke to us about preparing to let go. He showed us that there was strategic value in (eventually) not being there anymore. By the time we left the field two years later, our network had seen about fifteen churches planted, and dozens of communities had been blessed with community development projects. The true test of the work would, however, be whether it would continue to bear fruit after we departed. By God's grace, a dozen years later, a denomination of about 180 churches continues to reach into communities in seven cities, and community development work serves almost 100 communities. Eighty percent of the members are first-generation believers.

If the work is going to be sustained over the generations, "Paul" must pass on the DNA, vision, and capacity to "Timothy", who will pass these things on to faithful men (and women) and others (2 Tim. 2:2). This means that leaders need the personal capacity to lead the ministry, but also have the skills and means to *pass this* on to the next—and next—generation of leaders.

The Primary Questions

Whether we end up staying short or long, whether we leave in a planned or unplanned manner, we must anticipate the gap our departure will create. We must ensure our leaving is not overly disruptive (or fatal). Whether we call this "letting go," "passing the baton," "leaving the work to be stewarded by other faithful people," or "succession planning," the

expatriate missionary must find and develop capable successors. This is particularly critical if we leave as the pioneering leader of the ministry.

How do we find and develop capable movement leaders who will faithfully champion the mission and vision, run the ministry, and care for the people after we have departed? Related questions include the following:

- How do Scripture and common ministry models inform us about leadership succession, particularly the passing of leadership to indigenous leaders?
- What are some of the characteristics and competencies that a movement leader needs to steward the work after the (pioneering) missionary/leader leaves?
- What hinders, and what helps, the “letting go” process?

Leadership Appointment in Scripture

We can gain some insights about effective senior leader succession from examples in Scripture about the appointment of elders. The book of Acts gives us a variety of examples, both fast and slow, of how the apostles appointed leaders. Apart from the elders present in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30), the first mention of the appointment of elders in the new churches is during Paul and Barnabas’ *second* visit to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts 14:21-23).

We also see an apparent delay in appointing leaders in Acts 17. Within a few weeks of the birth of the church in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas had to flee the persecution, and we do not read of them appointing elders before they left. There is also no subsequent mention of the appointment of elders in Berea, Athens, or Corinth (though he stayed in Corinth for a year and a half). It is not until later in his ministry that we see him writing to Titus to remind him that he left him in Crete to “put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5). It is then that he lists qualifications for elders, perhaps to guide Titus in this task.

While we do not need to draw hard and fast conclusions, we can observe the following:

- **Paul and Barnabas did not seem to be in a hurry to appoint elders.** While there is no hint that they neglected church leadership, they seemed content to allow the fledgling churches to be cared for by the natural leadership structures in the community before spiritual leaders were appointed. Appointing spiritual novices to leadership can be risky.
- **Paul understood follow-up and support from a distance.** He remained in touch in between visits by writing letters and hearing reports from others. In the absence of modern communication, this was the best he could do to guide from a distance.
- **Paul returned to the cities on subsequent journeys and appointed leaders.** Paul retraced his steps to revisit the churches that he had previously planted and appointed leaders.
- **Paul spent longer periods in other cities.** He spent eighteen months in Corinth during the two years of his second missionary journey and three years in Ephesus during the four years of his third missionary journey. He may have been using these as a ministry base, but it certainly provided the opportunity to strengthen the church and its leadership.
- **Paul later refined his ideas of leadership.** The term “elder” occurs in the Pauline letters three times, and mainly in his later letters (1 Tim. 5:17, 19 and Titus 1:5). The more specific guidelines in his later letters may lead us to hypothesise that Paul consolidated the ideas of qualifications of an elder in his letters to guide Timothy and Titus as they laid leadership structures in the churches.³ It was also in his second letter to Timothy that he writes the words of 2 Timothy 2:2 that infuse a generationally reproductive mindset in us.

3 Piper (1976) asks whether “it could well be that he may not have even used the title in his work until near the end of his life when he wrote the pastoral letters.”

We are hypothesising a little from the narrative of Acts, but it is worth pondering about the pace and timing of releasing leaders. There are some models that emphasise the desire for rapid reproduction in our ministry, but it is worth remembering that the process of personal transformation and sanctification progresses at a slower pace than numerical growth. Ministry can expand rapidly, but it takes time to grow quality movement leaders.

Eight Criteria for Movement Leaders

Prinz's (2016) research found that "identifying the right leadership" is a crucial fruitful practice in church-planting movements, but his research concluded that "relatively little consensus has been reached among the research community on what the competencies are that distinguish effective pioneer leaders" (17). Prinz goes on to propose a model to help in the selection of pioneering leaders that includes 33 traits covering the personality profile and competencies to potentially (176–77).

Such lengthy lists would not surprise us. We have high expectations of spiritual depth, character and integrity expected of all Christian leaders in general.⁴ However, what particular mix of gifts and characteristics—above the usual expectations of leaders—will enable an indigenous leader to successfully take the reins of a movement and lead it as the senior leader beyond the pioneering years? Here are eight to consider:

- **They hear from the Lord and lead others in a process of shared discernment.** Even though Moses regularly went into the tent of meeting to hear from the Lord, he also led the whole eldership team to hear in a process of shared discernment (Num 11:24–25). There is no place for one-man bands. *Missionaries can model a posture of unhurried discernment and collective decision-making.*
- **They have shown that they are mission-true.** They understand that they are champions and stewards of the mission. While recognising

4 The qualifications for elders are given in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:5–9 and some of their functions are mentioned in James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1–4, and Hebrews 13:17.

the need to be change agents at times, they maintain a long-term focus on the mission, vision and core values. *Missionaries can add value by regularly initiating missional conversations.*

- **They have the ability to think strategically and organisationally.** All leaders need strategic thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, but senior leaders also need a sense of what season the organisation is in. They don't just lead the day-to-day operations; they must have clarity about what the future organisation needs to look like. *Missionaries can add value by helping to develop their structured strategic and organisational thinking skills.*
- **They are not tied to models; they think strategically to create new pathways.** They need the wisdom to be able to choose from a wide range of methods and approaches to determine which suits their context the best. *Missionaries can help by thinking outside the box.*
- **They have demonstrated the ability to build a great team.** They know how to develop people and harness them towards their mission. There is a difference between a team of talented people and the collective competency of a high-performing team that enables each person to do more than they could as individuals. *Missionaries can add value by modelling teamwork, collaborative decision-making and lifelong learning.*
- **They understand the need to shape the culture of the organisation.** Peter Drucker (2024) allegedly said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast". No matter how excellent our strategies are, the culture of the organisation often determines their eventual success. Great movement leaders understand the need to occasionally reinvigorate the vision, challenge old mindsets and lead the organisation through change. *Missionaries can add value by talking about culture and being courageous to gently challenge the status quo when necessary.*
- **They have demonstrated a willingness to raise other leaders.** Strong leaders have a sense of personal security in their ministry and identity, and they are not threatened by other strong, complementary ministries. They can handle a difference of opinion,

they value diversity of perspective, and they know how to identify emerging talent. Missionaries can add value by helping to identify and raise young, emerging leaders.

- **They value healthy accountability in relationships.** Too often, we observe talented senior leaders who build self-contained fiefdoms that are limited by their own personal capacity. Worse still, when they are the founders, they are unlikely to be challenged, particularly in hierarchical, high-power-distance cultures. Strong leaders seek out other strong leaders who can share mutual accountability. These leaders should have boards that hold them accountable in a structural manner, but healthy accountability is more relational than structural. *Missionaries can add value by modelling vulnerability and teachability.*

This list could be much longer, but we are assuming that the senior leader is chosen from a pool of other mature leaders who have demonstrated spiritual maturity and basic leadership capabilities. These are simply the particular added skills a senior leader needs to lead a movement.

CPM Models and the Role of the Expatriate Missionary

Church planting models are shaped by what has been learned by analysing other fruitful movements, sometimes in a type of reverse-engineering fashion. The *Four Fields of Kingdom Growth* model challenges missionaries with the question: “Are you in control? Should you be in control?” They are encouraged to plan in such a way that “as authority and responsibility are passed, the chain can survive the eventual and potentially *healthy loss of its ‘Paul’* (Shank and Shank 2014, 31; italics added). This is a great way to express the challenge.

Garrison (1999) encourages minimal foreign involvement from the earliest stages of the ministry, alleging that “once a missionary has

established his identity as the primary church planter or pastor, it's difficult for him ever to assume a back-seat profile again" (34). He encourages expatriate missionaries to keep a low profile and draw local believers into leadership activities from an early stage. I agree with this, but not all fledgling movements have what it takes within to raise the next "Paul" and "Timothy". (The next section explores how the expatriate missionary can add value to this process.)

The Training for Trainers (T4T) model seems to place less emphasis on minimising expat involvement and has more to say about developing leaders of larger groups. Smith and Kai (2011) state:

An important premise in leadership development is this: what a new leader of a small home church needs in terms of character and skills is very different from what a mature leader of a large church needs. Both are leaders, but the character set and skill set vary significantly. (231)

Taking this one step further, we can say that a leader of a whole movement needs a different level of character and skills than a leader of a small group, small church or large church. T4T does not develop this idea further, preferring instead to focus on the mechanics of smaller group leadership.

The Role of Insiders and Outsiders

The models that emphasise the importance of indigenous leadership do so almost to the extreme of having an aversion to expatriate missionary involvement. There may be valid reasons for this posture. Numerous examples exist around the world where inappropriate foreign involvement has "contaminated" the local work, creating problems of dependency and poor contextualisation. We know of ill-equipped missionaries who either lacked cultural intelligence or did not have the skills to contribute significantly to the growth of the movement. We know of missionaries who tried to take roles that were better released to the

local believers, and we have all heard missionary work being accused of being “colonial,” “paternalistic,” “ethnocentric” or “controlling”.

However, the solution is not to exclude foreign involvement but to send the right people and ask where expatriate missionaries add value (and where they do not). Not all the seeds of maturity will be present in a new movement, and help from other parts of the global body of Christ is often needed.

One of the most crucial roles expatriate missionaries can play is what Smith and Kai call “system building.” They point out that “You must have a *system* in place that results in generations of reproducing leaders” (chap.17, italics added). It is my observation that such a system is generally not created by the insiders of the new movement – insiders will often discover the approaches that work in their context, but outsiders seem to excel at articulating the system and packaging these so that they can be reproduced. (Singaporeans would say they help “to build the runway.”) Whether it is in the articulation of the model, the initial training and modelling, the ongoing mentoring, or the ongoing strategy, there is often a value-adding role for outsiders as the fledgling movement develops.

Among other things, we need believers with decades of experience to guide work, and we need champions of theology to help guard against heresy, which is something that can easily creep in if we isolate a group, trapping the strengths and weaknesses of a culture in the movement.

Just as we advocate for the value of the multiple giftings and perspectives of multicultural teams in our mission organisations, indigenous movements need the perspective of multicultural connections to remain healthy and grow in a balanced manner. The Western church certainly has some weaknesses from which we want to protect indigenous ministries, but fledgling indigenous movements need to develop their ecclesiology in the light of the global church context.

Five Resistor-Challenges to Address

Several common challenges must be overcome in order to successfully raise and release capable indigenous movement leaders:

- **The absence of mature believers to build on.** In some places, even where there has been a church present for a long time, missionaries often complain of the lack of people with the vision, capacity, maturity or availability to lead. South Asia was such a case. It was sad to see missionaries bypass the existing church as they pioneered their work. However, we found that even though the senior pastor may be disinterested in partnering, the people who we eventually partnered with were found in the churches. Missionaries should resist the temptation to bypass the local church.
- **The tendency to not raise leaders in some cultures.** One of the things we noticed in South Asia was that the maturity and capacity gap between the senior leader and the next level of leadership was, more often than not, very large. Whether this is caused by leadership insecurity, the tendency towards group loyalty, obligations to promote members of family and/or tribe, poor education levels, or low-trust environments, there is often a noticeable gap in readiness. Missionaries must act as champions who encourage the current senior leaders to lower the barriers to leadership.
- **The tendency to not think critically or creatively.** Whether this is a symptom of the rote learning education system (which discourages questioning) or hierarchical decision-making (that defers to the “wise elders”), there is often a lack of creativity about problem-solving and future choices. This is certainly where interaction with believers from other parts of the world provides the benefit of a diversity of thinking and approach. Introducing adult-learning approaches and helping partners to reflect critically about issues is also important.
- **The problem of dependency/deference to foreign involvement, money, and methods.** In many cultures, there is a tendency to defer to the expatriates. Whether it is because they see us as

patrons, because of ascribed honour or because we are perceived to have greater skills and maturity, this can stunt the growth of the local team. Even when the local leaders disagree, their indirect communication style may cause the foreign missionary to miss what is being said. It is possible that many CPM models resort to minimising expatriate involvement in an attempt to avoid these problems. Rather than doing this, missionaries should have cultural intelligence conversations to help locals interact confidently in a multicultural environment.

- **The problem of dependency on the founder.** Pioneer ministries naturally become structured around the founder's preferred ideas, structures, and systems. The team continues to look to them for guidance and vision, perhaps to the detriment of the generational change process. Sometimes, in their death or departure, the gap they leave is fatal. New leaders can flounder, lose direction or even feel it would dishonour the founder if they start to make the necessary changes for the next season of growth.

Missionaries need to be aware of the pitfalls and understand how to address the resistors. The next section addresses seven practical suggestions of how to do this, along with critical questions missionaries can ask themselves.

Seven Suggestions for Preparing To Let Go

1. Practice the Ministry of Absence

I once had the privilege of sitting at the same table with Loren Cunningham during a tea break at a conference. As a young leader, I was eager to glean from the wisdom of the founder of YWAM, whose story had been an inspiration to me. Knowing that I probably had the opportunity to ask just one question during the short break, I asked, "Loren, how do you handle the issue of succession planning?" His answer stuck with me: "I lower my profile. As I reduce my presence, I find that

others fill the gaps, and it is always interesting to see who takes the initiative to do this. This also has a way of reducing the team's reliance on me for decisions and input."

In order to develop a competent team, it is necessary to uncover the gaps—whether it is in the team, systems, capacity or culture of the organisation. A leader's absence can help to reveal these. I heard of a company that asks its managers to take their annual leave in a block of one month each year. This tests whether the department can continue running effectively during these absences. Our family's habit of taking a six to eight-week trip back to Australia each year⁵ inadvertently had this same effect of testing how the team functioned without us. It was always interesting to see what questions, crises and problems were waiting for us when we got back. Our absence had a way of uncovering weaknesses in our team and our own leadership.

While still present, we must gradually (occasionally, then more frequently) reduce the day-to-day hands-on operations leadership to allow the team to practice this ahead of time before the actual departure.

Questions to ask ourselves:

- What are some things that I still do that can be handed over to the local team?
- In what situations should I reduce my presence or involvement in a way that gives space for our local leaders to step into the gap?
- Am I comfortable with allowing our local team to regularly engage in their own process of discovery?

5 This was our routine instead of taking long home assignments every few years. It was the easiest way for us to renew our one-year business visas.

2. Developing a Pool of Potential Successors

Not every disciple will become a “Paul”. Identifying people with the potential for greater responsibility may start with the broader group so that we can see which potential leaders rise to the surface. This process may vary in different cultures. When I was a manager in the automotive industry, we liked to see a person show leadership initiative before giving them the title. We felt it was a good test of emerging leadership and initiative. In South India, however, I remember some of my team expressing that it would only feel appropriate to do the work of a leader if they have been given the official title—they did not want to be seen as usurping authority that is not theirs. Hence, while there may be cultural nuances to deal with, it is useful to see who demonstrates servant leadership and a willingness to do whatever it takes to get the job done—something a senior leader needs.

Questions to ask ourselves:

- Are we developing a pool of potential leaders from whom senior movement leaders may emerge?
- Which leaders am I personally intentionally investing in?

3. Take Them on Study Tours

Apart from equipping programs, further education, and increased responsibility, study tours are an excellent way to expose leaders to other fruitful ministries. We did this increasingly in the latter parts of our ministry and have continued to do this since we left the field. We search for relevant fruitful ministries around the world, generally prioritising non-Western contexts and have found that this is a particularly effective learning mode for leaders who do not think conceptually but need concrete examples to learn from. They select from the things they

observe to bring back to their context, and I notice that they even notice things that I may never have even thought of sharing with them. It also gives them the opportunity to build their own networks, which may help sustain them in the future.

Questions to ask ourselves:

- Is there a team of mentors with diverse gifts who can intentionally invest in our members and leaders who have the potential for greater responsibility?
- Which other fruitful ministries can I introduce my leaders to?

4. Allow the Local Team To Do Things Their Way

Many of us quickly learn that our presence impacts the behaviour of the local team. This is not always due to anything we do that is wrong, but simply being in the room often changes the dynamics of the discussion. Our team may defer to us by remaining silent and allowing things to be done in our preferred way. We are often linear thinkers serving in indirect cultures, and we can inappropriately push our local teams to be less “disorganised,” “last minute,” and “inefficient.” We may jump in to provide solutions and may even guide them subtly to our preferred doctrinal preferences in issues of secondary importance.

The catalysts for change often come from outside a culture, but the impetus for ongoing transformation must come from within the culture. Hence, from the earliest stages of our work in South Asia, we tried to allow the work to take on a more local flavour, allowing our team to redesign systems and use methods that they preferred. This was, admittedly, sometimes frustrating—and we were often tempted to intervene when we thought there was a better way of doing things—but this made eventually leaving a lot easier. We must allow our leaders and

teams to engage in their own process of discovery.

Questions to ask ourselves:

- To what degree do your leaders feel they can experiment with different ways of doing things?
- Have you talked to your local team about what effective operations principles are congruent with local approaches, helping them to evaluate whether ideas from outside the culture are helpful or unhelpful?

5. Be Clear About What Your Legacy Will Be in the Process

None of us will be able to take the ministry to its full maturity. We each build on a foundation that others have laid, and we will pass the work on to the next generation after we have played our part. Self-knowledge is important, and knowing our best contribution is also helpful. For us, we knew there was an existing church in South Asia, and we were not going to be the frontline workers. Our best contribution would be to create the systems and scaffolding for church planters to do their ministry effectively. Once we did our part, we saw our local team excel in ways that we could never have hoped to do ourselves.

Questions to ask ourselves:

- Given my giftings, strengths and weaknesses, what is the legacy that I can leave in the ministry?
- What are things I should complete before I hand over to the next leader?
- What are things better left for the indigenous leader to shape?

6. Help the Team Wrestle with “Sustainability” from the Very Beginning

The issue of sustainability is as much a spiritual issue as it is financial, operational, or entrepreneurial. Our leaders have to trust that the Lord is their provider, not foreign foundations, expatriate missionaries, or local business contacts. I was always distressed when a local believer said to me, “I can’t start my ministry until I get my foreign donor.” Helping our local team gain a biblical understanding of God’s provision is an important aspect of discipleship and maturing.

The discipleship of our local leaders also needed to include growing in their ability to resist the temptation that comes with finances. We need to help the leader who has only ever earned \$1,000 a month grow to the point where they are not tempted when they are handling budgets of tens of thousands each month. Teaching our leaders biblical principles in finances is vital for long-term integrity and hence, sustainability.

Questions to ask ourselves:

- To what degree could your local leaders be tempted if the Lord brought in a great flow of funds – do they have the spiritual and financial maturity to handle finances with integrity?
- What local projects and relationships are being built to sustain the work in the future years?

7. Patronage: Letting Go, But Not Leaving

As we journey with our local team in our process of letting go, it is important to keep in mind that, in their eyes, our departure from the field does not mean we stop being their patrons and co-labourers. Our missiology has rightly emphasised the importance of self-sustainability,

but thinking about this with an individualistic worldview can undermine our local relationships. In patron cultures, “the reciprocal generosity of patronage is a moral obligation ... when an affluent person fails to function as a patron, he or she is uncaring and unrighteous” (Georges 2019). This continues even after we leave the field.

People who live in patron-client cultures rely on relationships to meet their needs, and if the missionary has been a primary source of spiritual help, the local team may assume that we will be the ongoing source—directly or indirectly—of support. Similarly, they may assume that since they have given us loyalty over many years, we will continue to provide for their physical and spiritual needs from afar.

Nevius’ Four-Self principles have been iconic in our missiology, and we have possibly read “self-supporting,” “self-governing,” “self-theologising” and “self-propagating” as arms-length detachment. However, collective cultures never say a permanent goodbye to their missionaries—after all, they are family and spiritual parents. As one Nigerian leader reminded us publicly, being a senior leader of a 120-year-old historical organisational relationship: “You can never forget your eldest son.”

In places like Africa, Papua, and the Pacific, we have been reminded by indigenous leaders that because our organisation once sent missionaries who helped to birth their movements, we now have legacy relational obligations that continue into the present and the future. They have even complained to us that the original pioneering missionaries “abandoned” them as they left decades ago. At a time when there were no means of modern communication and travel, there were probably many valid reasons for the separation, but according to the current leaders of the now mature indigenous movements, it felt like abandonment.

Perhaps, in hindsight and in the grace and purpose of the Lord, we may rationalise that this period of separation was necessary so the local work could grow in the local soil. Thankfully, after many years, some

of these relationships are being rebuilt, but on a more mature, equal footing. In some cases, they want us to help them begin to build the capacity and processes to send their own missionaries to the nations.

This is a complex issue with which missionary practitioners continue to struggle. We must work together to find a harmonious, mutually honouring balance between relationship expectations and what is most helpful for the maturing of the indigenous movement. Dialogue is needed. Balancing issues of patronage and support with the risk of dependence and control must be worked out sensitively, and hopefully, the trusting relationships we have fostered over the years will result in honest and transparent conversations.

Conclusions

Jesus' succession plan was not all smooth sailing. In human terms, can we dare suggest that it did not go to plan? In the natural, we may conclude that none of the disciples seemed ready to have the work handed over to them at the time of the crucifixion. After all, his closest circle fled at the moment Jesus needed them the most. The path towards our end goal of ministry maturity and fruitfulness is never a straight line. The journey has twists and turns, but some of these are, in God's sovereignty, for our own maturing. The Holy Spirit will guide people to the Lord, and His church will be established.

Ultimately, every movement and revival is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Any fruit that our ministry bears will not be the result of effort, but it flows out of our ability to discern the purpose of the Holy Spirit in each season, in the middle of the context in which we serve. We must allow unexpected setbacks to strengthen and deepen the faith and resilience of our team rather than discourage them. We must allow the team to experiment in ways we may not intuitively think are correct. Then we may find a serendipitous joy in seeing a truly indigenous work birthed and flourish.

Questions for Conversation

1. How is training senior movement leaders different from training small-group and house-church leaders?
2. When is the best time to begin developing an exit strategy? Have you started working on one?
3. What are some of the challenges to succession planning and leadership development in your context?

Bibliography

Drucker, Peter. 2024. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Drucker

Garrison, David. 1999. *Church Planting Movements*. Richmond, VA: Office of Overseas Operations, International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Georges, Jayson. 2019. "The Morality of Patronage." *Honor Shame*. <https://honorshame.com/the-morality-of-patronage/>

Piper, John. 1976. "Christian Elders in the New Testament." *Desiring God*, Nov 1, 1976. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/christian-elders-in-the-new-testament>.

Prinz, Emanuel. 2016. "The Leadership Factor in Church Planting Movements: An Examination of the Leader Traits and Transformational Leadership Competencies of Pioneer Leaders Effective in Catalyzing a Church Planting Movement Among a Muslim People Group." D.Min diss, European School of Culture & Technology. Korntal, Germany.

Shank, Nathan and Kari. 2014. "Four Fields of Kingdom Growth." Rev. and updated. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/588ada483a0411af1a-b3e7ca/t/58a40ef11b631bcb49c88c0/1487146760589/4-Fields-Nathan-Shank-2014.pdf>

Smith and Kai. 2011. *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*. WIGTake Resources.

Steffen, Tom A. 1997. *Passing the Baton: Church Planting that Empowers*. Rev. ed. Center for Organization & Ministry.