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May 01, 2022 by Jay Judson

Principles Gleaned from 20 Years of Catalyzing Movements in Myanmar

I had the honor of having Dr. George Patterson as a teacher, mentor, prayer warrior and friend for 23 years. George was strong in the grace of Jesus and the way he modeled "behind the scenes" discipleship to catalyze and sustain house church movements where there weren't any was quite revolutionary.

I knew God had supernaturally called me to preach His word. I became a pretty good preacher during my four years at Union University and I had preaching opportunities all over my native west Tennessee.

During this time my father, also a preacher, invited me to go on a mission trip to the Philippines. After the first trip, I realized that God wanted me to preach in closed countries and unreached peoples where there were no churches as Paul wrote in Romans 15:20. It was then that I realized that I had a problem, "How can I preach in a closed country where preachers are regularly imprisoned?" I knew how to preach very well and lead many to Christ, but I did not know how to make disciples.

I could not see how this would work until I met Dr. George Patterson at a Perspectives class. Patterson's challenges perplexed me when he said, "Preaching crusades don't catalyze sustainable movements." I quickly chirped back, "But I just returned from seeing thousands of Filipinos make professions of faith." George kindly yet firmly pointed out that the Philippines was no longer predominately a pioneer field. I was amazed at not only George's depth of content, but I was even more amazed that he bounced around the room dramatizing, like Tigger, as if the book of Acts was actually supposed to be happening. George invited me to move to Oregon and be trained by him, "If what I tell you doesn't work to start churches where there are no churches, I will make sure you get your money back." I realized that I probably would never hear another offer like that in ministry again.

Over several months in his "Mentoring for Ministry" class, Patterson showed me that greatness in the kingdom was found in John 3:30, "I must decrease so that Jesus might increase." It is not enough to teach but I must train others to preach. The greatest in the kingdom passage found in Matthew 11:11 repeats John's attitude of humility. George kept talking about "behind the scenes" greatness. In Acts 18, Aquila and Pricilla decreased, behind the scenes, so that Jesus could increase through the ministry of Apollos. Patterson challenged me, "What is the purpose of preaching? After a long pause, giving me time to answer, he said, "The purpose of preaching is to make disciples. How many different ways can you make disciples?" He helped me develop a curriculum to make disciples in a decentralized multiplying network behind the scenes in a closed country. I ended up ministering in the "closed country" of Myanmar (Burma) for the past 20 years. We have seen at least 10 different branches of multiplication totaling tens of thousands of new churches with each network baptizing tens of thousands of new believers from Buddhist and Muslim backgrounds.

George modeled an informal theological education based on the Bible in an outline he called L.E.A.P. found in Luke 10:17-24. Christ outlined how to coach others in a Multiplying Movement. Not only does Luke 10 describe how Christ trained His disciples to find a Person of Peace but Luke 10 also outlines Christ's model for continuing to coach leaders behind the scenes in order to sustain an indigenous house church movement.

Christ and His leaders listened to leaders' reports behind the scenes. Coaching behind the scenes was modeled for me by George for a year and a half. He based this model on Luke 10:17–24 and trained me in a temporary Underground Training Church at Western Seminary. I actually received seminary credit for this course and later wrote a paper on what I learned. This simulation was not a game but merely had an element of a game in that a "judge" appointed two secret police to find the time and place of one underground house church meeting. I was a leader and it was revealed on judgment day that I was the one who invited the wife of a secret policeman, so then they were on to me and our network from the very first week of the two-month simulation. During this two months Patterson helped me plan for the worship meetings and we discussed the problems I encountered as I learned how to do house church movements. I was blindfolded and tied to a pole before being "executed" with water balloons at ten paces on a cold February day in Portland, Oregon. This exercise broke me out of the typical ways Americans know how to advertise and do "church." I learned more in this leadership simulation than any book I have ever read on church multiplication movements. Dr. Patterson and his small team of trainers also had me study movements with a computer game that he and Dr. Galen Currah developed called "Come let us disciple the Nations." In this game, Satan would pop out and laugh at the player if they got the church multiplication answers wrong.

When I got to Burma, I listened to local leaders explain how we should help Buddhist Background Believers feel comfortable worshipping Christ. I listened to "the Major's" highly unusual gospel bridges for sharing truths of the Bible with Buddhists. I helped the Major summarize his long gospel bridge presentation for Buddhists. Dr. Thom Wolf calls this the napkinization of ideas. We must help new leaders make everything easily reproducible.

The Major was the exact type of leader that George encouraged me to prioritize. The Major, a spry 68-year-old, was an educated responsible Buddhist Background Believer with a military career who wanted to reach his people for Christ but didn't need a salary, like many pastors. On top of all that he already spoke English. Thank God for the British Empire and their influence on Burmese to know a little English.

Leadership Principles Learned:

1. Leaders Evaluate Multiplication of New Churches through Link Analysis Reports (L.A.)

These L.A. Reports help track and evaluate a movement's quantitative and qualitative fruit. We got an outside independent assessment with the help of Dr. Bill Smith. You can read Drs. Patterson's and Smith's assessment on our team of coaches at the website http://www.Obedience.life We&nb.sp; used the 8 Commands of Christ as the 8 Marks of a healthy church taken from Acts 2:37–47. Several years ago, Sister Than Thans started a network of multiplying churches that flowed out of her house like a cascading waterfall. This former prostitute along with another leader started 14 house churches in four months after coming to Christ. We trained her to ask: 1) Who is Jesus? And 2) What does Jesus want you to do?: 10 Stories to allow people to start Experience God Groups (E.G.G.) and 8 Commands of Christ curriculum for new house churches. We did not start to see many miraculous healings until I changed my attitude about healing and started teaching that healing the sick, raising the dead and driving out demons is a basic command of Christ (Matt. 10:8). We have seen every miracle in the book of Acts including three people raised from the dead.

2. Leaders Assign New Tasks and New Studies to Trainees Who Obey

Jesus did not continue to train leaders who did not obey Him. It creates arrogant leaders. He only gave His disciples deeper doctrinal insight into who He was, after they obeyed His commands. "I saw Satan fall like lightening from Heaven." Luke 10:18. After leaders are familiar and repeating 10 E.G.G. and 8 Commands of Christ stories we get leaders into the Train and Multiply program. TM is a Theological Education and Evangelism by Extension curriculum that Dr. Patterson called Obedience Oriented Education which uses cartoon booklets to train house church leaders behind the scenes systematically. www. TrainandMultiply.com Director Mike Dragon.

3. Pray For and Praise Trainees as Christ Did

Jesus bragged on His disciples to the Father. Sometimes a leader does not meet personal goals. I have erred in that I have doggedly hounded trainees for results. One night after a long hard coaching session the Holy Spirit slapped me, "These people are obeying me. They did not meet their goals to see thousands of new house churches start, but they are obeying My commands. Praise them for obedience to Jesus, not for their numbers."

4. Yourself in the Lord as David Did

Protect new leaders from the ruthless attacks of naysayers, as Nehemiah did. Second Great Awakening leader Charles G. Finney once encouraged his leaders, "Don't get down in the plains of Ono"(Ono sounds like Oh No, woe is me, self-wallowing pity party). You can walk through the furnace of affliction but try not to smell like the smoke. Let go of the resentment and find your sanity in Church history. Every move of God led by a godly leader has been opposed and there is an interesting record of what happens to those who oppose moves of God. Jonathan Edwards' opponent, Charles Chauncy started the Unitarianist/Universalist Church.

5. Identify Capable Leaders

Rajkumar was a Hindu seeker of Jesus. He founded a small church of 15 Indian Christians who worshipped together for 15 years. I met Raj and he asked me for a Hindi Bible which I brought back to him from India. I gave this Hindi Bible to his pastor who couldn't read Hindi but assured me that he would give the Bible to Raj. A month later I met Raj and learned that his pastor had not given him the Bible. The reason was because Raj "had sin in his life." When I met Raj a few weeks later for a translation project he was doing for me, I asked Raj if he wanted to be baptized. When he affirmed yes, I told him, "I will baptize you, and you must start to baptize others. If I find out that you allowed a pastor or someone else to baptize people that you lead to Christ, then I am going to take back my baptism." Raj baptized 400 Hindu Background Believers who now meet in 30 house churches on the Road to Mandalay in central Burma. We do not clean ourselves before taking a bath. We take a bath because we are dirty. We don't get baptized because we have become good, we take baptism because we are sinners saved by grace through faith. This is not of ourselves lest any man could boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

6. Equip Leaders to Rise to a Greater Fruitfulness

We need to help leaders identify the hindrances to movements. We also need to help them confront these hinderances with seriousness, yet with humor. The "velvet hammer" approach is much more grace-filled and reproducible than the stomp and snort, heavy-handed condemning way that many preachers employ to drive congregations to change.

Sister Nee Nee, the daughter of the Major, was a widow and school teacher who started a house church movement in the cyclone devastated Delta region. In 2012, fighting erupted among Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims when the two sides started slaughtering each other with machetes. While thousands of people were dying at the hands of their neighbors, I coached Nee Nee in what to say to the Muslims when she provided food for them. I gave her a phone number of some Rohingya I had met. She walked into these villages with bags of rice, and I showed her how to pray in a way Rohingya could understand and to use the Arabic word for Jesus, Isa Al Masih. I also gave her several copies of the Injil, New Testament, in the Muslim language. This little Buddhist background widow witnessed to a Muslim man whom she quietly baptized. This Rohingya man became the Apostle for his people —those the U.N. calls the most oppressed people in the world.

7. Leaders Learn the Language

Learning the language is not an end in itself and often those who learn well are prideful and do not empower others to lead. If you love your trainees, then you will learn their language. I can effectively share the gospel with Buddhists, and I am growing in my proficiency, even though I am not yet fluent in Burmese.

8. Leaders Invest Funds in Fruitful Workers

We have used resources like relief supplies and funds for trainings to strengthen relationships between house church leaders. Enhancing ties between churches is just as important as strengthening ties within churches. Whenever these resources have diminished, the multiplication of new churches has suffered.

We have witnessed the best practice of a "Handful of Rice" in our region that has led to a breakthrough in communicating the vision for a self-sustaining movement. The churches we coach have distributed one ton of rice to displaced people in western Burma in the past two months through house church networks. We do not want to rob the leaders of house churches of the joy of giving for Christ's mission, but many times the networks need outside help in times of crisis.

9. Don't Focus Too Much on Methodology

Don't get overly focused on how to do a meeting. Many Westerners have shown great eagerness to practice the correct method for having a house church. I encourage trainees to focus on the new trainee reproducing the word of God to others. "And the word of God increased and multiplied more and more" (Acts 12:24). If you can get the Word of God being discussed and spreading like gossip then you can expect a significant harvest. We got the Word of God multiplying through story-telling but primarily through picture Bibles. These black and white pictures drawn in an indigenous Asian manner allow seekers to get the truths of Christ discussed among their families and friends without the common roadblock of "we can't learn from a foreign god." Buddhist temples are covered with pictures of Buddhist scriptures. Another trend I have noticed when coaching others is an over- reliance on technology. This over-reliance doesn't work to catalyze movements.

10. Prepare Leaders for Spiritual Warfare that Is Constant and Vicious and Equip Them in All the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

It has been enlightening to witness other Westerners—whom I have trained to multiply house church movements—undergo the same intensity of spiritual counter attacks from the evil one. Heinous things start to happen when leaders are empowered to simply obey Jesus. Satan doesn't really care about how many people you get to receive Christ or how many people's homes you get into, but his claws come out when you allow lay people to baptize newer believers. When leaders are raising up other leaders who walk, talk and move in the power and all the authority Christ promised in Luke 10:17-18 it seems like all the forces of Hades will come out in battle formations against Christ's warriors. "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power."

Note that this is not your own power to "just hold on." Wrap yourself in the promises of God.

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After meeting Dr. George Patterson at a Perspectives class in 1999, Jay Judson was mentored by George for a year at Western Seminary where he learned the dynamics of worship in small house churches as well as how to multiply them in a two-month underground church training simulation. In July 2002 Jay moved to Myanmar, serving as Strategy Coordinator for a Buddhist people group numbering 2.8 million. Within three years he established 252 churches. The movements have now spilled across the borders into surrounding countries.

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