

The Power of a Decentralized Gospel

By **RICK WOOD**, Editor

In our world today, we are used to hearing about big bureaucratic organizations: Big Tech, Big Pharma, Big Agriculture, Big Government and Big Churches. We tend to think that big problems require big organizations to solve them. But big organizations also come with big negatives as well. Big organizations tend to be impersonal with one-size-fits-all solutions to the needs of people. Big organizations want people to adapt to their policies and procedures rather than adapting to meet the needs of individuals. They tend to be inflexible and slow to adapt in rapidly changing circumstances. When interacting with these big organizations, people often feel like they are not being heard and that they are getting “the run around.” Is there a better way to solve problems, make disciples, plant churches, and deal with crises when they occur?

The Power of Small Groups

For 13 years now, I have talked about the power of Disciple Making Movements to reach the unreached peoples as disciples make disciples and churches plant new churches one generation after another. These churches start out as small “discovery groups” where people are introduced to the Gospel and the Bible. They begin to follow Jesus and learn how to make disciples who will disciple others and start new churches. These discovery groups become churches as they begin to perform all the functions of a healthy church. One of those functions is ministering to the needs of those in the church.

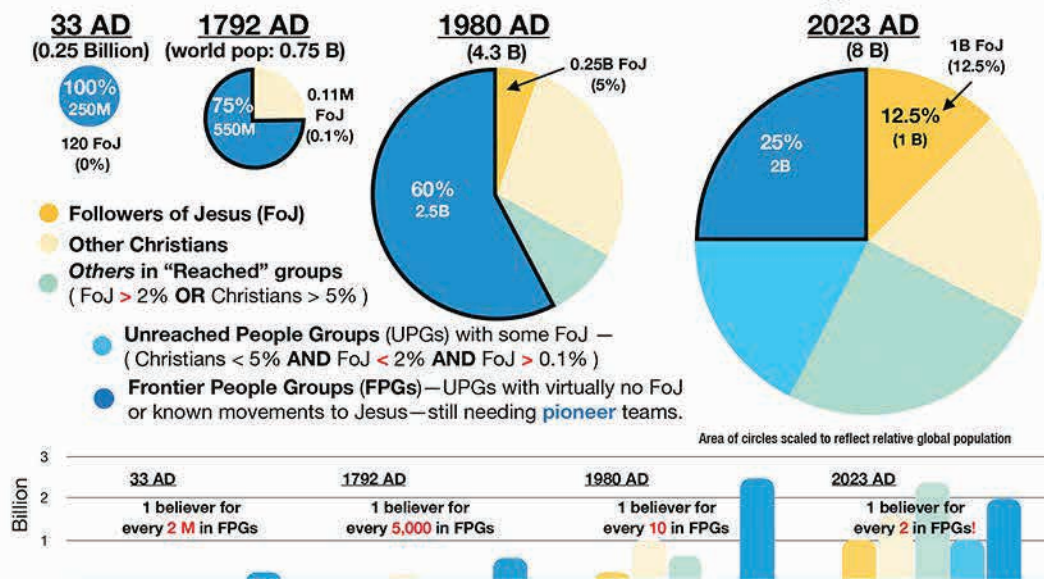
If one member of the group has a need, another member may be able to meet that need or help provide the funds needed. Or someone in the group may know someone who can help. Instead of looking to a big organization to meet this need, they are looking to the Lord and each other. It is a very

personal way to meet needs without the top-down control or bureaucracy of a big organization. If the need is more widespread, as in the case of a crisis or disaster, many groups or churches in a network can come together to help meet the needs within the wider community. These groups possess the love of Christ, a wide range of skills, and a dynamic flexibility that can be employed when disaster strikes.

As seen in our lead article starting on page 8, these small groups are transforming the way people respond to crises. In the process, Jesus is being exalted and lives are being saved, both physically and spiritually. The crises that are occurring around the world, among the unreached peoples, are providing fertile soil for a viral response to the Gospel as these small churches meet the needs of their neighbors during a crisis. In some cases, former persecutors of the Church come to faith in Jesus when they see the loving response of believers to their needs during a crisis. Small churches filled with trained disciples of Jesus are the most effective responders in a crisis, because their response is personally tailored to each person or family. This does not mean there is not a need for a response from larger organizations. It does mean that there is no substitute for trained disciples who are the neighbors and friends of those in need during a crisis. It is more likely that a person who is of the same culture will be able to reach their neighbor with the Gospel than someone from the outside.

This issue is all about how God is using crises of many kinds to soften the hearts of the unreached peoples while using small groups/churches to meet the needs of those who are suffering. In the process, God is causing movements of discipleship and church-planting to grow among the unreached.

The Great Commission Progression



We wish that crises would not occur, but they are a sad reality of living in a fallen world. But God is using these crises to bring people to Himself through the power of multiplying movements of discipleship and church-planting.

The Amazing Progress of the Gospel

With all the bad news that floods the airways each day, it's easy to think that we are losing the struggle to reach every people with the Gospel. The enemies of God seem to be gaining strength and power all over the world. It is easy to lose hope and become discouraged. But if we step back and look at the span of history and not just the last few years, the statistics portray a much brighter picture—one of progress and hope. Carefully study the graphic above from Robby Butler and be encouraged. We still have a lot of work to do, but we know from the Scriptures that God's promise to Abraham, that all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham's seed (Jesus), must be fulfilled. He is in the process of doing just that through movements.

Take note on the graphic that between 1980 and today, the number of Frontier Peoples has gone from 60% of the world population to just 25%. In 1980, there was one believer for every 10 who lived in a Frontier People Group. Now, there is one believer for every two people who live in a Frontier People Group. The remaining task of pioneer work in every Frontier People is easier than ever before.

One of the reasons for this wonderful progress is the revolutionary new focus over the last 20+ years on fostering Disciple Making Movements within every people. The tremendous power of disciples making disciples and churches planting churches one generation after another is key to helping people deal with crises, as well as providing access to the Gospel to every person living within every people group. Movements always have been the way that peoples have been reached and they still are today. If we continue to pursue movements within every people, I believe we will continue to make great progress toward reaching all peoples and fulfilling God's promise to Abraham. 🙌