

# Church Planting Movements

## What is a Church Planting Movement?

In ABWE terminology, a **Church Planting Movement** (from here on CPM) is:

**A critical mass of church networks indigenously reproducing churches.**

ABWE has always been known as a church planting mission. Church planting is at the heart and core of our values as an organization. This is good. At the same time, our world today is light years removed from the world of 75 years ago.

The world population has and is exploding, while the North American missionary force has not come close to matching world growth with its own growth. Additionally, attitudes toward North Americans in the world context are as volatile and unpredictable as the stock market. These and a host of other challenges face missions today. In light such obstacles and many others, is there hope for missions today? How can the Great Commission be accomplished? Is there a solution, and if so, what is it? Enter CPMs.

A CPM is a critical mass of church networks indigenously reproducing churches. CPMs rely not on outside influence, resources, and initiative, but on resources intrinsic to the location of the CPM itself. The resources to gather in the kingdom harvest are in the harvest field. The field is the world, not just North America, as are the resources. The harvest resources are as global in scope and character as is the Great Commission itself. These are some profound truths, with far-reaching ramifications.

## Three Fundamental Principles of CPMs

CPMs are practical outworkings of three fundamental theological principles: ❶ the infinite value of each individual, ❷ the value of working together to accomplish that which we could never do alone, and ❸ humility. It doesn't have to be 'my' idea, or 'our' plan. Movements cannot by definition be controlled. They can be influenced, but not controlled. In fact, if it can be controlled, it is not a movement. It is something much less than a movement. Let's unpack these three principles one by one.

As it relates to the first principle, the infinite value of each individual - missionaries do not typically struggle to believe and practice this principle evangelistically. Missionaries are prepared to go to the literal ends of the earth to 'reach one for Christ.' That is admirable, and is as it should be. That is also biblical (Lu 15:3-7).

Now let's take the next step. Do we value each individual in ministry terms as highly as we value reaching him with the gospel in the first place? Do we truly believe that this same person who has accepted Christ is equally empowered by God Himself to minister effectively, and in many cases more effectively than I am?

He will be more effective in at least two ways. One, no person is given all the gifts. Therefore, this person has in most cases been given some gifts which I do not possess. Additionally, this person functioning in his home culture is in the vast majority of cases going to be much more effective than someone struggling to overcome cultural, linguistic, and any number of other barriers.

Our attitude in this area shows itself in a number of ways. How much do we encourage national partners to become involved in ministry? How much do we actually provide so that they will become more and more effective in ministry? How often do we

ask their opinion on questions? How often do we ask what God is showing them? And if we ask their opinion, how often do we act based on input received from national partners?

How do we respond when national partners are more effective and fruitful in ministry than we, as outside missionaries? Do we celebrate with our national partners, or pout, find fault, or attempt to sabotage their future ministry attempts? Do we attempt to control or unduly influence them via financial resources or other means?

When was the last time we did some joint ministry project initiated by national partners? Has that ever happened in our own context? Valuing each person in ministry terms is no less biblical a concept than is valuing reaching him with the gospel in the first place.

Jesus Himself said in John's gospel, "You will do things greater than these." Do we really believe that about Jesus, and do we truly believe that about our national partners? How can that be true of Jesus? How can that be true of us?

It is true of Jesus because He reproduced Himself in His disciples, who then went throughout the known world sharing the gospel. Jesus in the flesh was limited to one place, while His disciples could be in eleven places simultaneously. The same principle applies today, even more so. If Jesus could in all seriousness say that His disciples would do greater things than these, how much more is that true of us and those with whom we work?

Many missionaries struggle with this principle, primarily out of either pride, fear, or both. Pride enters in because we desire to occupy center stage. The disciples were experts in jockeying for position in the kingdom (see Lu 22:24). Their paradigm was one of a zero sum kingdom. There's only so much glory to go around, and if you get more than your share (in my opinion, of course), that means my slice of the pie just got smaller.

We all want to be at the right or left hand of Jesus, to be 'number one.' In the global context, Americans as a nation have an almost pathological obsession with being number one. This tendency has been noted by many, both Americans and others.

It's a competition-based paradigm, much like the Jehovah's Witnesses, who are all striving to be one of the 144,000 witnesses. Jesus' kingdom is nothing like that. There's room and glory enough for all. All can have crowns and hear words of commendation from their Master, because His expectations are based not on a limited supply of glory, but rather on what we did with that which we were given.

Matthew 25:20-23 makes this very clear, when the servant with five talents and the one with two talents received exactly the same commendation from their master. It was based on stewardship of entrusted resources, not on comparison with anyone else.

Fear is a close companion of pride. In the same parable in Mt. 25, the third servant was afraid, and went and hid his talent. He was afraid he would lose that which he had, so he went and hid it.

Missionaries are not immune from this feeling either. If a national partner becomes too 'mature', 'prepared', 'respected', etc., I could lose my ministry! So instead of rejoicing that God is at work expanding the kingdom, we work to squelch the Holy Spirit Himself, all so that 'my job' or 'my ministry' remains intact. Personal professional survival takes precedence over kingdom values.

We then find ourselves fighting not against this person, but against God Himself. We play the role of Saul, who saw in David an evil threat to the kingdom itself, when in fact

David was infinitely more deserving, and God- and kingdom-conscious than was Saul. We cannot win such a confrontation.

The great tragedy is not only that we lose in such a scenario, but others lose as well. The one who is the recipient of our venom is wounded, and the kingdom suffers great harm, as we become a laughing stock in the eyes of a watching world. Fear can be an incredibly powerful force. Unfortunately, it can produce either very godly or very ungodly results, depending on how we respond to it.

The second principle, the value of working together to accomplish that which we could never do alone, is also often problematic. If the Great Commission truly encompasses the entire world, anything less than the entire world reduces the Great Commission to something we can comprehend, manipulate, and control. It results in a shrink-wrapped Great Commission, and in the final analysis a shrink-wrapped God. God is neither flattered nor amused by such thinking.

The Great Commission will never be accomplished by any one person or group. It's too big. We're talking partnership here, quite possibly on two levels - partnership with national partners, and with other ex-pat organizations with whom we find commonality. This is a biggie, to which we'll return later.

The third principle is that of humility. Humility is really a by-product of the first two truths. When a person sees the infinite value of each person, and also values working together to accomplish that which we could never do alone, a natural result is humility, because all are valued, and I realize that this kingdom thing of God's is so much bigger than I am or we are.

Humility does not come naturally. You don't see many contestants lined up to be named 'humble person of the year.' On the other hand, there is simply no limit to what God can do through such humble servants, who desire nothing other than that God's name be lifted up, and His kingdom purposes moved forward.

That is one of the very first requests we see in the Lord's prayer, that Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. There is a reason why this request comes so early in the prayer. Anytime we seek God's will we're seeking kingdom purposes. Anytime we're seeking something else, we're seeking our own kingdom purposes - not good.

So there you have it, a Cliff Notes primer on CPMs. Let's dig a little deeper into both the biblical underpinnings of CPMs, and also into some of the challenges and rewards of CPM thinking and working.

## **CPM Insights from the Gospels and North America**

America's heroes are John Wayne, Zorro, Superman, Rambo, Spiderman, and the Terminator. What do these have in common? They're all lone rangers. They each do it all themselves. They don't need anyone else, and even eschew working with others. They are one-man armies, one-man vigilante posses, one against the world.

America was built on rugged individualism and a can-do pioneer, entrepreneurial spirit. We tamed the wilderness, we overcame great obstacles. No one can stop nor dictate to us. We do what we want, when we want, the way we want. Working together is not a high value for most Americans. As Frank Sinatra sang, "I did it my way."

It's interesting that even in American professional team sports there exists a double standard, a superstar mentality. We give lip service to team values, yet player salaries most often reflect competition and individualism rather than team values. There are team

MVPs, and certain positions are considered glamour positions (high value), while others are considered blue collar (less value).

Independent Baptists have often reflected an American ideal gone absolutely bonkers. If Americans value freedom and space to operate as they see fit, independent Baptists have often turned that into a mantra. We've seen the dangers of hierarchical structures, so we've resorted to the absolute absence of any structure or working together on any level. The problem is that that mentality leaves us all poorer - us personally, those whom we serve, and ultimately, God's kingdom agenda languishes while we either squabble, or equally commonly, simply ignore each other. And that's what happens between missionaries! What about true partnership with national partners?

Rather than idolizing Zorro and company, we need to shift to a Mission Impossible paradigm, in which differing people, each with unique talents and characteristics, work together to accomplish what none of them could do alone. Good teams understand each other, value each other, and communicate with each other. No team can be successful when communication breaks down.

How's communication in your part of the global harvest field? How well do you know the needs, strengths, desires or your teammates? How well do they know yours? How often do you intentionally communicate? Do you have a common team goal, to which all are striving, regardless of the cost or difficulties? If you asked all your other teammates what your team goal is, would you get one answer, or as many as the number of people you asked?

Is your idea of team truly team, or more like détente? "I don't bother you, and you don't bother me. I come to field or team meetings to inform you of what I'm doing, so we can coordinate our schedules and not overbook facilities or overspend pooled ministry funds, for example, but not to seek collective wisdom, nor true collaboration on kingdom projects." It's the dance of the porcupines on a cold day. You really need each other so you can both stay warm, but the moment you start to get close, you needle each other the wrong way (is there a right way to needle each other?)

There is another alternative, but the alternative only makes sense when you have a common, clarified, big, hairy, audacious goal. When you have no overarching goal to which you are all striving, it really makes no ultimate difference what your ministry paradigm is, as long as you are not working at cross-currents to each other. If you can all work by yourselves and accomplish what needs to be done, great. But that raises the question, is it truly possible to work by yourselves and accomplish that which God desires and expects?

The history of world missions is overall one of intermittent spurts of creativity and Spirit-empowered kingdom progress sprinkled among very heavy doses of, how-should-I-put-this, less than stellar examples of creativity and Spirit-empowered kingdom progress, to put it mildly. When one looks at the early church and apostolic period, and sees how much of the then-known world was heavily influenced by the church, it is truly a stunning vista. It takes your breath away. Surely, one would think, the world must have become 'Christianized' several times over, by say, about 500 A.D. or so, at the very latest. Well, that's not exactly what happened.

Rather than focusing on what went wrong with the church following the apostolic period, let's look rather at what went right during the apostolic period. What fueled the radical change the church underwent, from a group of eleven scared, faithless, egotistical,

self-serving, prideful, crushed men in the days immediately following the death of Jesus, to the Spirit-empowered, Sanhedrin-defying lean kingdom machine the church became?

In the gospels Jesus spent an inordinate amount of time refereeing positional wrestling matches between the disciples. You can read all about them in Mt. 18:1, 23:11; Mk. 9:34, 10:35-45, and Lu. 22:24-26. Don't think these guys spent all their time shining their holy halos and singing the Hallelujah chorus in between all night prayer meetings. That simply is not the picture of the disciples which emerges from the pages of the gospels.

These men were by and large looking out for number one in the gospels. What's in it for me? What's my share? They spent far more time in positional sparring matches with each other, each jockeying for kingdom positions of power and prestige, to make sure the other guy didn't get there first, than they did seeing who could be the first to serve.

The entire foot-washing scene of Jn. 13 takes on full significance only in light of the Lukan context (22:24-26), in which even during the Passover itself, the night before which Christ was crucified, the disciples were still at it, bickering and fighting. In the midst of it all, Christ calmly and quietly takes a towel, and, well, you know the rest. That's the disciples we see most commonly in the gospels.

When they weren't fighting each other, they were fighting 'the enemy,' which being interpreted is, anyone who wasn't one of them (Mk. 9:38; Lu. 9:51-56). Ever heard of that? No, surely not among missionaries?! We serve the King. Yeah, right, whatever. But the last two hundred or so years of mission activity are simply drenched with party spirit, pride, and competition among missionaries and mission groups.

## **CPMs and the Book of Acts**

But something radical happened between Ac. 1:12, the ascension of Christ and Ac. 2:1, the Day of Pentecost. What was the change? In Ac. 1:14 we see the disciples and some others joined together in one accord in prayer. It is interesting that the King James expression 'in one accord' does not occur one single time throughout the four gospels.

Yet immediately after Jesus returned to His Father, 'accord' happened, in prayer, with the result eventually being the Day of Pentecost. And this is not the only time in Acts where Luke notes the 'one accord' motif among believers (see also Ac. 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; and 15:25).

Two notes about this phenomenon: firstly, there was unity among the disciples for one of the first times recorded in Scripture. Secondly, the unity evidenced itself in corporate prayer. Both of these notes figure prominently in CPMs.

Personal agendas got pushed aside as people came together to the throne of grace. As has been often stated, the ground is all level at the cross. When God's people most involved in kingdom enterprise come together in unity to seek God's face, watch out.

What else can be noted about the spread of the gospel in the early church? In Ac. 8 we see a shotgun approach to the Great Commission, as believers went everywhere preaching the gospel due to persecution. Historically there have been times during which God has intentionally stirred the pot to jump start His kingdom agenda. There were some positive results from this step, even though it was a very difficult period. However, this was not the only approach to missions and church planting we see in the book.

In Ac. 13, a whole new chapter in the history of the church and missions opens. God calls two men to specifically share the gospel with people and groups who have never

heard the gospel previously. Please note that God called two people, not one. This was a team effort from the word go, orchestrated by God. Teams were not a totally new concept, as Jesus had previously sent out the disciples by twos. But here again we see God Himself designing not only the overall purpose and direction of His plan, but giving blueprints for the strategy to be employed in the undertaking of this greatest of all tasks ever given to man.

God knew how difficult the task ahead was. He knew the spiritual warfare and heartache which would face all who seriously grappled with the Great Commission on enemy territory. He also knew that each person has his or her strengths and weaknesses. We all need each other. Thus He called two, to be a team. He also called two of the very best, most tested and needed people from the church in Antioch. These were not two newbies, fresh off the cookie cutter missionary assembly line. These were the real deal. The real deal of kingdom advance requires the real deal of prepared and tested servants.

This team of called, empowered, prepared kingdom servants then visited a number of places, spending a limited amount of time in any one location, both seeking unsaved with whom to share the gospel, and then building up both the converts individually, and corporately, as they developed churches.

As the New Testament further develops, the team(s) often changed personnel, depending on various factors. NT teams were not static in their composition nor in their work. They were constantly evolving, responding to new input, circumstances, obstacles, and opportunities.

People both joined teams and dropped out, for various reasons. Others were sent on specific temporary mission assignments, to help right a wrong, develop leadership, and generally facilitate kingdom growth in specific young church settings. They worked on multiple levels concurrently, often on the move. They were some of the original multi-taskers.

For example, Paul would be working in one location, developing a new church. At the same time, he would hear reports from other young churches, and would often either write a letter, send a teammate to work with a church, or come himself to help facilitate the further development of that church. While doing all that, he would be developing leadership for both the church where he was, and for other places as well. Perhaps the clearest example of this is seen in Paul's ministry in Ephesus (Acts chapters 19-20).

The point is this: Paul and company were heart and soul committed to reaching their generation with the gospel. They realized that to accomplish that goal they would have to establish multiple churches, which would necessitate taking multiple approaches, and working on multiple levels simultaneously. They did not have the luxury of taking years and years to fully establish one church, focusing exclusively on it, then fully establish a second church, etc.

The Great Commission required not only full commitment, but also the most creative approaches possible, to make disciples of the entire world. The results of this approach were seen in the rapid spread of the church both geographically and numerically in the early centuries of the church's existence.

One other factor which bears mention is the multiple leadership we see in the New Testament. In the book of Acts there are at least three pivotal leaders, in my estimation. Two of them are no-brainers – Peter and Paul. Peter was the first clear leader seen in the

book. Jesus Himself prophesied that in Mt. 16:19, and the early chapters on Acts describe his seminal role in the life of the early church.

Beginning particularly from Acts chapter 13, attention shifts dramatically and decisively to Paul. Paul, while like Peter also a very strong leader, was different from Peter in that he was a much bigger picture kind of guy. Peter was greatly used of God, yet at times struggled to grasp and/or embrace what God was doing (see Ac. 10:9-16 for but one example of this).

Paul, on the other hand, was very quick to grasp and embrace change, even radical change, as is evidenced by his conversion experience. The very second he understood he was overmatched and barking up the wrong tree (Ac. 9), Paul did a 180 and began speaking well of 'the way,' to the degree that twice within the very first days of his life with Christ certain people wanted to kill him (Ac. 9:23 & 29), a very common response to Paul's ministry later in life.

But in addition to these two colossal leader types, there is at least one other very significant leader in the book of Acts, who differs widely from both Peter and Paul. While both Peter and Paul are larger than life, this person was not often in the limelight. Some might even question whether it is legitimate to call him a leader, because of that. Yet there is no question the man is one of the very key players in the CPM which sprang up in the early church. That man is Barnabas.

Barnabas was a very unique individual. He evidently had some material wealth, at least at one point in his life, with which he parted, for the sake of the gospel (Ac. 4:36-37). Thus he risked his wealth for the kingdom. Later he risked his reputation among the established church leadership by speaking up for Paul, when it was very politically incorrect to do so (Ac. 9:26-27). Strength of conviction is one of the marks of a true leader.

Later yet he sought Paul out and brought him to Antioch (Ac. 11:22-26). It says in Ac. 11:24 that a great number of people were brought to the Lord in Antioch (before Paul ever appeared on the scene), and the distinct inference is that Barnabas played a leading role in that process. Barnabas then goes to seek out Paul. He here displays yet another risk. He risks his own ministry status in the church. Ouch!

Barnabas had a good gig going (try saying that three times fast). Yet he intentionally seeks out someone else who had already shown great faith and speaking ability, someone who could come in and potentially win the hearts of some of these young believers, who were Barnabas's fruit in the Lord. He evidently realized there was something Paul could add to the picture, and he was not afraid of losing 'his' ministry for the sake of 'the' ministry, i.e., the kingdom.

The result of this humility and team-centered approach was God's further blessing on the entire church (verse 26). In 13:2, God called Barnabas and Saul (notice the order of the names) to be the first missionary team. In 13:13 we read, "Paul and his companions." Paul is mentioned first, and in fact Barnabas is not even mentioned by name period. Whoah, what happened? Changing of the guard - both were leaders, and continued to be such, but the spotlight from here on out is on Paul, hands down.

Barnabas showed an incredible amount of both humility, spiritual perceptivity, and grace in this entire process. He displayed a kingdom mindset. That's another key ingredient of CPMs. It wasn't about Barnabas. It was all about God. And when Barnabas saw someone who could meet a pressing kingdom need, he went out of his way to get him on board, no matter what it might mean to him or his personal ministry.

Acts 11:24 gives us a glimpse into what made Barnabas tick. It says he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. That's a powerful combination for CPMs - people full of the Holy Spirit and faith. We are more used to thinking of faith as that which moves mountains. How about faith to see beyond my own ministry comfort zone and my own ministry period? Now that's faith of a different stripe altogether.

Barnabas was quite content to be either up front, or in the shadows of others. It made no difference to him, as long as God got the glory and the church was edified.

The kind of leadership Barnabas displayed is a key factor in CPMs. He was willing to take whatever role was necessary to further kingdom growth. Sometimes that meant being in front, or being in someone's face. Often that meant playing second fiddle.

That contentment and even joy at being second fiddle is a major factor in missionaries desiring to facilitate CPMs. In order for a movement to materialize, it must be owned hook, line, and sinker by national partners. There is no movement until it reaches that stage. Even if a lot of churches are being planted, as long as the spotlight and most of the major decisions are made by outsiders, it isn't a movement.

Anyone with an inordinate need to be seen and appreciated, to get his or her strokes by being the center of attention, and look indispensable, is blocking a CPM. Barnabas would have blocked God's blessing in both the church in Antioch and potentially affected the entire course of church history if he had not gone out on a limb and sought out Paul to help in the church in Antioch.

Of course God in His sovereignty can always override man's feeble attempts to derail or sidetrack God's plans, but the fact remains that God chose to use a person willing to be used of God to make a connection. That was Barnabas's main role in this process, to serve as the connector between Paul and the larger church body.

CPM missionaries are connectors. They both see potential and are not afraid to fan the flames, make introductions, even go against the accepted flow in helping people get their ministry start. They rejoice when God's kingdom is advanced, even when that advancement means getting out of the way personally, or not getting the credit, or not even being mentioned by name. It's not about them. It's all about God, and His glory. The kingdom goes far with such servants.

In terms of strategy, Paul and his companions followed a set regimen in their travels. They sought more densely settled cities. Upon entering the town, they looked for the Jewish synagogue, if there was one, or the Jewish meeting place, if no synagogue was present. Depending on the response of the Jews, they either stayed with the Jews, or more commonly, found other places to meet, and opened the gospel to any and all comers.

They had a plan clearly in view, yet were also very conscious of the Spirit's leading, and made adjustments as necessary based on His leading (Ac. 16:6-10). Planning and the Holy Spirit's leading were not incompatible for the NT church, and were in fact both integral to kingdom advance.

To summarize, the early church pattern we see in the New Testament is a CPM model. It is high teamwork, multi-tasking, high creativity and flexibility, yet very methodically prosecuted agenda.

Following are some seminal points of the New Testament church planting model which emerge:

- ① Unity of purpose was paramount - private agendas got pushed aside



- ② Prayer was both private and corporate, and ubiquitous
- ③ God chose to work primarily through teams of called, empowered, prepared kingdom servants
- ④ The teams changed personnel often - long-term team composition was rarely if ever achieved - high intensity, high impact, short to medium length was the most common characteristics of these teams
- ⑤ There was a clear, methodical strategy employed in deciding both where to plant churches, and in how to go about the actual process in specific locations
- ⑥ Work went on simultaneously in various places and on various levels - there were elements of both method, strategy and chaos at times - kingdom growth is messy
- ⑦ Creativity, flexibility, and openness to the Holy Spirit's direction were all front and center in their thinking
- ⑧ There was multiple leadership in the CPM of the early church
- ⑨ Second chair leadership played a key role in the advances of the early church

## **CPMs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Two thousand years have passed since the church was birthed. While God's purpose has never changed, methods have, and will continue to do so until Jesus returns. What is different today when we think of CPMs?

One of the differences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are the incredible collaboration tools never even dreamed of previously. It is so much more both possible and essential to be multi-task oriented, connected, and to partner than ever before.

With tools such as e-mail, internet, video conferencing, cell phones, voice mail, digital cell phone images, wireless internet and wireless data projection, etc., the world is not only shrinking, but fundamentally changing the way it grasps and processes reality.

It is also more essential because our world is now also flatter than ever before. Don't believe the hype about Columbus. He's overrated. The world is in fact more and more flat, literally day-by-day, as technology flattens it. Access to information and knowledge is the global leveling factor, spurred by the internet.

Any company, church, or government which fails to understand and account for this, is doomed to failure in today's global environment. In Eurasia, where I live, three governments were toppled within a year and half, in large part due to the availability of information and knowledge, something which the previous governments failed to understand and account for.

On the other hand, churches which take this into account, are finding great blessing, as they labor in the greatest spiritual harvest field the world has ever known.

A second difference today is a different spirit of cooperation and unity among believers of like faith, much more so than even a few years ago. While much remains yet to be done in this arena, both discussions and productive partnerships are now happening which would have been impossible even very recently.

A third difference is the leveling of the playing field in terms of the educational level of kingdom players. Many places in our world have at least some seminary-trained church leaders. It is not uncommon to be working with national partners as if not more educated than the missionaries. Others may not have seminary training, but have other advanced degrees in various fields. Partnership with such national partners is not only preferred, it is expected and absolutely essential.

A fourth difference in our world today is its complexity. As global emigration heats up to unprecedented levels, the world begins to look much more similar than different. In the past, you had to go somewhere halfway around the world to see certain cultures. Today you just go to the nearest urban megacity.

Reaching cities today is at once both more needed, since so much of the world's population lives in major metropolitan areas, and much more complicated than in the past, since cities are often microcosms of the world itself. They are often little kingdoms of isolated subgroups of various cultures, often with little interaction between themselves.

Issues like Muslims in France, Asians in North America, Africans in Portugal and Spain, etc., make partnerships more critical than ever, as we may not be in the best place to minister to a particular people group, but someone else might, or vice versa. Effective urban ministry requires partnerships and working together. The obstacles are simply daunting.

A fifth difference is nationalism. The early church did not have to face this issue, thanks to the heavy hand of the Roman Empire. Subjected peoples may not have liked Rome, but Pax Romana and the Roman army certainly made some aspects of kingdom advance significantly easier than at some other periods of human history. Nationalism and the resulting global polarism is a rising force in our world today.

This affects missions by making national partnerships even more critical, as there are increasing regional pockets where North Americans, especially US citizens, are not welcomed nor in some cases even tolerated.

A sixth difference is the increasing maturation of many national churches around the world. Strong, mature churches can be found in many parts of the globe. This simply has never in history been as true as it is today.

Other differences could be noted, but these should suffice to show that we are living and ministering in a unique time. Quite honestly, the above differences, and some others which were not noted, should by and large excite the kingdom believer, seeking to partner with God in what He is doing in our world.

God is shaking the nations, including the nations of North America. There has never been a better time in history to be on task with God in His kingdom enterprise. CPMs are springing up in many regions of our world, and are a critical ingredient in 21<sup>st</sup> century Great Commission and kingdom advance. During the CORE course we will look at CPMs from the inside, what they look like, how they are initiated and developed, and factors which either accelerate or deter CPMs.