



YWAM is planting movements by Kevin Sutter

Kevin Sutter, head of YWAM's Church Planting Coaches talks about how YWAM is transforming nations through church planting movements. Reprinted from the February 2001 International YWAMer, published in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA.

IY: Are church planting movements happening in YWAM?

KEVIN: Yes. A YWAM church planting work in Mongolia is becoming a church planting movement. They not only have the original church but it has reproduced dozens of daughter churches and those daughter churches have reproduced granddaughter churches. They are scattered throughout the region, all locally led. Some of these churches are springing up relatively quickly. Last July, these churches sent a missionary team out of Mongolia to another country. For westerners to get into this particular Muslim country would be virtually impossible at this point. These Mongolians can get in, without a problem. In fact, God has given this church movement in Mongolia a vision to re-take the former empire of Genghis Khan, to take it for Jesus.

And then one other example that I'd like to mention is actually written up in the Church Planting Movements booklet. It's in India, so anybody who reads this booklet will come across the story of a people group in India, where a church planting movement is just bursting forth. YWAM and other organizations are involved there. YWAM has been involved for probably eight years or so. Lots of Indian, Pacific Islander and western YWAMers have been involved in it. One of the unique things about YWAM is we have international teams, as we all know, and they can make some headway sometimes that other teams aren't able to. They have seen, as they've worked together, churches begin to multiply. Rapid multiplication is happening right now. When I talked to the leader of that team I asked, "Well how's it going now, how many churches?" He said, "I don't know. We've lost track. We can't count them."

There's been a lot of stuff produced on church planting. Why is this booklet such a big deal? I think it's that the booklet shares this vision of church planting movements. I've been saying for all the years that I've been involved in church planting, that if we go out and plant a single church among an unreached people group, we'll have gained almost no ground at all. What it's going to take to reach the remaining unreached peoples is multiplication, rapid multiplication.

IY: It's not a theoretical book* either, is it? Isn't that part of it's appeal, that it's based on research on actual church planting movements?

Kevin: That's what excited me so much about it myself. I started reading it and I just wanted to jump up and down and shout and dance around. Maybe I did, I can't remember. Because, this was written



based on observation of these unique movements of multiplying churches. This booklet was written after the fact in a sense, looking at what's happening. David Garrison just breaks it down based on what he's observed as already happening, not as a theory: "maybe if we try this it could work." What really launched me out into church planting 15 years ago, is that I was trained by somebody who had already started a movement of multiplying churches. He invited me to join one of his teams and taught me how to do it. So the fact that these things are already happening really gives validity to it. Then the reason that I wanted to jump up and down and dance around like a fool was because what Garrison is describing here are the very things we have been emphasizing with so many of our teams for many, many years. And we're starting to see the same thing happen. As much as I can, I'd like to shout to all of YWAM, let's do this! Let's do more of this. We've already been doing it. Let's do a whole lot more. If we want to see Jesus come back, an important part of it is getting these movements happening among the unreached. That's what it takes to disciple all the nations. Those that have not yet had the gospel need to see this happen.

IY: What is it about church planting movements that ought to excite everybody in YWAM, whether from mercy ministry, U of N or whatever?

Kevin: We want to impact a whole community. We want to see the kingdom of God established in a community that was previously unreached. The church in the unreached areas should become a "beachhead" that will transform and disciple the nation. It's different when you are working in an area that is already evangelized. In those cases, you can work with existing churches or work alongside local believers to impact society, but among the unreached we must start with these beachheads. As foreigners, I don't feel we should have a big say in how they transform their society. We should let them learn from God's Word, understand what God's intentions are for their people and begin to implement it themselves. We should take the role of encouragement and support and helping them to go do it. We encourage them to just obey Jesus and see what He does to transform their whole nation.

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IY: Isn't it also that a group of believers is like a living organism that can grow on its own, rather than something that needs to be sustained constantly from the outside?

Kevin: Yes. They'll be learning as they go, by stepping out in faith and seeing how God blesses them through their obedience. In Mongolia, after the YWAMers passed complete leadership of the whole movement on to the Mongolian leaders they disciplined, the church began to grow in a new understanding of how to impact their communities, they began feeding programs for street children, a cell group among people that lived in a garbage dump, and they started visiting the prison. This was all their idea. It didn't come from the foreigners at all. God will speak to them. The Holy Spirit is living within them, they have God's Word, and they'll learn with proper training and discipling just like we have learned that we must address the needs of the whole community.

IY: How can YWAM start more church planting movements?

Kevin: Church planting movements do not just happen. You have to be intentional about it. You can't go into an unreached field and think it's going to happen just because you're there. You have to have a clear goal and be able to say something like: "Our goal is to start an indigenous church planting movement among this people group and here's how we're going to do it and we'll evaluate our progress in light of these goals." It's really important to be intentional.



IY: The booklet* also talks about response filtering. It says that mass evangelism often goes hand in hand with church planting movements. If the church planter intentionally finds people who are responsive and collects them, this is a quicker way to get it going. Is that something that struck you?

Kevin: If you look at the stories in this booklet, the value of mass evangelism is pretty clear. I was recently talking to a YWAM team leader in a Muslim country. He said there have been evangelistic broadcasts into this country for several years on a particular radio station. A local believer got permission from the government to do a survey and find out what radio stations people listen. If they said they listen to this particular radio station that broadcasts the gospel in their own language, then he would ask if he could talk to the head of the household. Next, he'd ask, "Are you interested in talking to somebody further about Jesus?" This man went to I think it was 20,000 homes—who knows how long it took him to do it—and he compiled a list of heads of Muslim households who would like to talk to somebody more about who Jesus is. There were 6,000! And this in a country we would think of as being resistant to the gospel. Not only are they not resistant, they are open and they wanted somebody to come and talk to them. So now the YWAM team leader has been talking to the local believer who has done this work. The aim is to raise up a team of national believers, putting together maybe teams of two who will start to visit some of these homes and introduce themselves as familiar with this radio station. If they can start to find some of these men who really want to talk about Jesus, that would be the way to start new fellowships right in their homes.

IY: Can short-termers help with this?

Kevin: The booklet* gave me fresh ideas on how short term teams can help facilitate movements of multiplying churches. I heard of a missionary working in China with another organization who, in kind of a humorous way, calls short-term outreach teams expendable. They can come into a city and saturate it with scripture and tracts in the local language. They can be as public about it as they want to be. The worst that could happen is they would get kicked out of the country. The long termers orient them before they get there but once they're there, the long-termers have no connection with them. In reading the booklet, I felt re-invigorated with how much we could do with getting our short-term outreach teams into unreached areas, with just a little bit of advanced planning. So I'd encourage those short termers to make contact if they can with somebody on the field and see how they can work together.

**[Ed.note: The booklet Kevin refers to is "Church Planting Movements," by David Garrison, published by the Southern Baptists' International Mission Board. To get a free copy of this booklet, you can order one at: www.imb.org/cpm/default.htm]*