As my wife and I consider the next steps in our journey with the Lord, I want to offer these thoughts to my pastoral and Christian leader friends. I believe the Lord would have us invest ourselves in international ministry as well as that of investing in leaders and local churches from our life experiences and ministries.

Random Thoughts on Discipleing a Nation

Establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth

Charles McCaul
Random Thoughts on Discipling a Nation

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The goal in evangelism is to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth in a nation, region, and city or among an ethnic group or in a specific location (Matthew 6:9). With Jesus as our Supreme Model and other biblical men and women as further evidence, starting from Adam through John, the Apostle, someone must go to the targeted location and intermingle with the targeted population – becoming one of them as much as possible without partaking of their sin (John 1:14). However, in reality, the apostle (for that’s what one is – a “sent one”) will never be one and the same with the targeted population:

- Abraham was among them, but not one of them
- Noah was among them, but not one of them
- Moses was among them, but not one of them
- Jesus was among them, but not one of them
- Paul was among them, but not one of them

This Cross-Cultural Principle that exists – among them but not one of them – necessitates the need to have a goal of converting, discipling, training and commissioning indigenous people to carry on the work as soon as possible.

Starting With the End in Mind

To be effective, we must know where we’re going – what’s our destination, our goal? What is the end product the Lord has in mind for this assignment?

The Kingdom of God

“...thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” Matthew 6:9

To establish the Kingdom of God means to establish God’s rule and presence in every heart, beginning with personal transformation that will lead to societal transformation. Not revolution, like we’ve seen recently in Egypt and other Middle Eastern Countries, but changing a nation one person at a time by changing hearts, then families, then interpersonal relationships that affect businesses, education and the remaining areas of society.

The Pre-Edenic Mandate

Genesis 1:26-28
God reveals His heart in the first recorded spoken words to Adam:

1. Know God intimately and walk with Him (implied in the verses)
   - Focus on true repentance, character of God, Holy Spirit living hearing the voice of God
2. Live reflecting His image in everything we think, say and do, v. 26a
   • Focus on character and internal transformation and conforming to God’s will in every area of life
3. Exercise dominion over the earth, v. 26b
   • Focus on how to live a Spirit-filled life overcoming the desires of the flesh
   • Focus on authority over the devil, including sickness and infirmities
   • Focus on penetrating the Seven Spheres of Societal Influence
4. Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth with people who will live out this mandate, v. 28
   • Intentional Discipleship, 2 Timothy 2:2
   • Leadership Training

This, I believe, gives us our roadmap for discipling a nation; it shows us where we want to go and where we want to intentionally lead people after their initial birth into the Kingdom. This helps us establish priorities, determine what we will teach and our activities among the targeted population.

So now that we know where we’re going, how do we get there?

Penetrating Society

   2 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” 6 So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

   • The bridge for establishing the Kingdom of God and societal transformation is relationships. We must look for people whom the Holy Spirit has prepared to receive us and build relationships with them. Jesus called the twelve “to be with Him.” Many followed in the crowds, but it was with a small group of men that He built relationships, friendships and ultimately converted them and used them to establish His Kingdom. Therefore, in the beginning stages we should not be concerned about numbers, but about quality of relationships. Find people who are open, build relationships with them, pour in the aforementioned principles of the Kingdom and it will eventually exponentially multiply. 2 Timothy 2:2
   • Look for opportunities to meet needs:
     - Healings
     - Deliverances
     - Answered prayer
     - Felt needs such as Marriage Education, Parenting, Skill-Building, Biblically-based principles of business and management, character studies for children, etc.
   • We can go to the targeted population on a one-on-one friendship basis or we can create something that will draw them to us.
Example:
What I would teach while in Cambodia was to go to a targeted location, find the people with the open heart, and have a pot-luck, health clinic, English class, children’s outreach or something that would help people have an interest in the evangelist. Look for open hearts. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you who is “warming up to you.” Begin to spend more time with those persons, or that individual, building a relationship. Continue to have events that will be of interest to a larger group of people but focus on those whom the Lord has given to you. Jesus ministered to the needs of the multitude, but He focused His attention on the disciples. Eventually this would become the core group of the budding church. These relationships often happened over meals, journeys together, tasks together or something else that was done together with the pre-believer until the opportunity came to share our faith – in a natural way. We saw it happen over and over again and result in true conversations and core groups for the budding church.

We always asked people if we could pray for them and encouraged them, even as a pre-believer, to pray to Jesus and see if He would answer their prayer. Often the answered prayers of pre-believers were a confirmation that we were dealing with a true, living God who loved them.

2. The Path of Least Resistance
   If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them, v. 5

Look for open doors. There is no need to choose the most difficult people – the skeptic, the persecutor, the hardened sinner – unless the Lord specifically leads you to do so. But look for those whose hearts may be most receptive. Keep knocking on doors, so to speak, until a door or two opens. Matthew 7:7 The Apostle Paul’s standard operating procedure was to go to the Jew first as they would possibly be more open to the Gospel than the Gentile. Acts 16 is a good example: Paul tried this and tried that with no open doors; finally the Lord revealed to him in a dream to go to Macedonia, but there’s no indication he received guidance on exactly where to go in Macedonia. He chooses a leading city – Philippi – and on the Sabbath Day went to what was known as a place of prayer – again, choosing the path of least resistance in hopes of an open door.

Demographics to consider:
- Elderly: Usually more set in tradition and resistant to change, but on the other hand, often those who hold the power
- Young Adults: Usually those who bring reformation to a nation. Open to new ideas. They have lots of energy and can rapidly carry a vision.
- Youth: Similar to young adults. Catholics and Communists always target the youth – that should tell us something!
- Married Couples: Interested in family issues, parenting, and relationships.
- Business People: Possible influencers, but often busy.
- The Poor: “The poor received Him gladly”. Low-income and needy people are often very open to the Gospel and the miraculous, however if you are concerned about how the ministry will be financed you will need to teach them principles of faith, sacrifice and
giving, as well as how to maintain focus on God when the blessing comes, as they are often undisciplined and unskilled.

3. Getting involved with people.

_Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town, v. 4_

Going and penetrating society necessitates getting involved with people. This means finding out where they hang out and going there. It involves becoming involved in their circle of relationships. As mentioned before, this involves the apostle/evangelist creating something that attracts the target population or getting involved in what they’re involved or interested in. This is what will take time as one learns the culture and language. This may mean, (according to what the culture permits):

- Hanging out at the coffee shop or café looking for open hearts
- Joining a class or club
- Attending sporting events with families
- Participating in local festivities
- Working in the fields with them
- Take a class at the local university
- Having people to your home
- Being a learner, letting them educate you as a foreigner to their society

Look for opportunities to share your life and relationship with Jesus informally. Opportunities will arise to go more in depth. Always offer to pray for people as an answered prayer is a powerful form of evangelism.

4. Perpetuity and Sustainability

Perpetuity answers the question, “Will the work carry on by itself when the apostle or leader passes from the scene?” Sustainability answers the question, “Will the work be able to sustain itself financially and through continued evangelism, discipleship and leadership training when the apostle or leader passes from the scene?” In other words, is the foundation laid for the work to continue to grow and carry on after the initial wave of growth and without the founder’s presence?

This is why there must be intentional plans in the heart of the apostle/evangelist from the beginning of working himself out of a job. The apostle/evangelist must have purposed in his heart to reproduce himself and core teachings and practices in the hearts of the indigenous people from the beginning. Unfortunately, many missionaries don’t have this as part of their plan and after they leave the ministry fails. While serving God in Cambodia I knew me and my fellow missionaries could be asked to leave the country at any time – remembering that we were a guest of the Cambodian government. It was for that reason 2 Timothy 2:2 became our “mantra”:

“And the things that you heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

I used Jesus’ method of training and discipleship:
1. Jesus selected faithful men who were not perfect, but were faithful, had a good heart and had some potential
2. Jesus taught them what to do
3. Jesus showed them what to do by His example
4. Jesus did the work together with them
5. Jesus observed them as they did the work and evaluated them
6. Jesus released His disciples to do the work by themselves and they reported back to Him
7. Jesus left them to do the work but kept in touch with them (by prayer and the Holy Spirit)

**The Principle of Simplicity and Consistency:**
We created a simple, consistent message for the new converts to carry to others for evangelism and discipleship and simple, reproducible written materials and concepts that a new believer could understand easily and pass on to others.

**The Principle of the Teachable Moment:**
We used every opportunity to point out biblical and life principles in “real time” with the hopes of bringing the truth to bear in real-life situations.

**The Principle of Holistic Ministry:**
Believing that the spiritual need of salvation for the soul is not the only need in a person’s life, we began to address the holistic needs of the mind and body as well as we discovered healthcare issues were a huge cause of poverty. We began healthcare outreach, digging water wells in hopes of providing pure water. We began teaching basic nutrition and eventually became involved in micro-enterprise, rice cooperatives and rice banks in order to address the issue of poverty. However, we were addressing the issue of poverty not just for the sake of helping the poor live better, but this was a direct strategy to help the church become self-sustaining. Thus as we assisted in holistic ministry we taught faith and obedience in giving and generosity to others in need.

**The Principle of Fishing:**
The proverb says, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach him to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” This points out the need for perpetuity and sustainability. The goal of the apostle, evangelist, pastor and teacher must be to impart knowledge and skills in a very practical way so the indigenous people will be able to carry on the work in a way compatible with their own culture.

**The Principle of Cross-Training and Depth: Keeping the Pipeline Flowing**
One other principle that we learned is to cross train leaders and staff and believers so we have multiple people who can perform one task, as well as having a leader, an assistant and a trainee for whatever task it was – leading worship, musician, teaching computer, teaching English, casting our demons, praying for the sick, leading a Bible study, working in the office. This insures that the leadership pipeline is continually full and you are preparing leaders and strong Christians for future opportunities for ministry in that locale or in another. It became easy for us to replace someone when they were sick, out of town or moved on, as well as to formulate teams to church plant in other locations.
Importing the Culture of the Apostle/Evangelist

Principles are eternal and cross-cultural, but methods vary according to culture. The challenge for the apostle/evangelist is to import as little of his personal bias, preferences and culture as possible and allow the Gospel find its own expression in the culture. However, it should be recognized that it is probably impossible to not bring in some of the missionary’s culture – we are who we are, and as stated in the opening paragraphs, we will never become one of the indigenous people – we will always be looked at as a foreigner, which in fact we are.

However, here is a problem I see some missionaries falling into: For fear of influencing the local culture with their own, they want to keep the culture in a backwards state – using antiquated methods, dress, music and practices. The fact is we are living in the 21st Century and almost all cultures want to move into the 21st century in terms of entertainment, dress, music, state-of-the-art business practices, church traditions and especially technology. This is especially true with the young generation – they want modernity. I saw this both in Bhutan and Cambodia especially. Examples:

Music and Dress: Some missionaries want to insure their converts learn to play traditional musical instruments and sing traditional-style music in church gatherings. This is generally fine for the older generation but it’s not what the younger generation want. They want to be contemporary with youth around the world. If they haven’t yet, they will be exposed to modernity by television and the internet or a visit to the capitol city. The fact is the traditional music and dress is used almost exclusively during cultural festivities and not in everyday life. Eventually all cultures change. In America we don’t play the same style of music we did 100 years ago, nor do we dress like they did 100 years ago – we go to museums to see how it “used to be” but few people want to return to that.

In Cambodia, living in the capitol city, the people living there wanted western-style clothes, music, even food and traditions; they were leaving their past behind...like most other cultures in history. However, in the provincial villages and among the elderly they still felt comfortable with the old ways. Therefore, we tailored our outreach to the need. However, eventually, the “new ways” began to become more and more popular even in the provincial villages as younger people came to positions of leadership – culture started to change. The challenge for the missionary, apostle, and evangelist is to know what to keep, what to inject as to who, where and when.

The Seven Spheres of Societal Influence

To truly transform a society, we must consciously seek to eventually penetrate every area of society with the presence and principles of the Kingdom of God. Often Christians only focus on the religious or relationship area and leave out the others, but for true transformation, we must eventually seek to penetrate every area of society with Spirit-filled Christians who will have influence.

- **Religion:** We must have people who have a passion for God’s purpose and holiness leading religion. People must be brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This happens by being added to the Universal Church as well as the Local Church.
• **Education**: Education has tremendous influence on society. We must have Christians involved in every aspect of education.

• **Government**: It goes without saying the power of influence of government. We need Christians involved in all aspects of government.

• **Entertainment**: Entertainment includes sports, music, drama and the arts in every form, including writing and publishing books.

• **Media**: Media includes radio, TV, newspaper, internet and any other form of communicating information to the world.

• **Societal Relationships**: Social relationships involve how families relate to one another, workers relate to one another as well as how society relates to one another in every way.

• **Business**: God is the God of innovation and success. We need Christians in every aspect of business and open to God giving them creative business ideas.

**What Did Jesus Do?**

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. 25 Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, [6] Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Jesus did very little more than these activities:

1. He taught in the synagogues (church, family of God)
2. Preached the Gospel (evangelized pre-believers)
3. Healed the sick
4. Cast out demons
5. Did various kinds of miracles as the occasion demanded it

This should give us our own standard operating procedures in every situation where we find ourselves. Take every occasion to teach the way of God, share Christ in every way whenever possible, pray for people to be healed and delivered – physically and emotionally – and expect God to do miracles for us and those He is connecting us to.

**Lessons from the Apostle Paul**

1. He used his natural knowledge of the region to target cities. I find it interesting that Paul chose to target large populated areas rather than smaller villages. I have found the same to be useful to me in Cambodia.
   - If you can establish a stronghold for the Kingdom of God in a city it will naturally go out to the surrounding areas.
   - There are lots of people in the city which will give a greater target group to draw on
• There is less peer pressure in a city than in a village
• There are usually more resources in the city than in a village
• There are usually more educated people in the city that will be able to grasp the concepts and multiply them
• There is a natural flow back and forth between the city and outlying areas that provide a highway for the Gospel

This is not to say villages or neglected, however, if the goal is transforming society, the Apostle Paul’s strategy was to target cities initially.

2. He made attempts and failed until he discerned the leading of the Holy Spirit. A failed attempt is not a complete failure – it’s simply an indication of the wrong methods, the wrong timing or the wrong people/place. Keep seeking until you find what the Holy Spirit is doing.

3. If at all possible, he went to people who were most open first. (See previous comments) Keep in mind that the person whom God initially leads you to may not be the actual person God may want to connect you with. He/she may be a “bridge person” who leads you to another person or situation. This means we must be open to every person we meet as a potential divine encounter. We should also not be disappointed if our initial contact closes the door.

4. Paul met publically and in homes.

5. Paul, like Jesus, did not address every need in society – orphans, trafficking, economic development, healthcare, corruption. He was focused on what needed to be done at the time. That’s not to say these other areas are not important, but we must understand that we cannot spread ourselves too thin or we will not do well at any of them. We must focus on the priority for this stage of the outreach and not be distracted by “good” opportunities as opposed to the “best” opportunities. Similar to giving attention to the “urgent” rather than the “important.”

6. Paul focused on the basic Gospel: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. He knew the value of laying a solid foundation before trying to build a super-structure.
   • Not in excellence of speech
   • Not in wisdom, philosophy or debating
   • Jesus Christ: His Crucifixion and Resurrection
   • Personal fear and trembling – not trusting in his own abilities but that of the Holy Spirit
   • Demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power of God

7. Paul met with government officials when the opportunity arose

8. Paul focused on developing indigenous leaders
   • If you train leaders you can reach the masses
   • If you invest yourself into potential leaders you can multiply yourself many times over as they meet with their circle of influence
   • The intentional process must be: 1) Evangelism and true conversion, 2) Making Disciples, 3) Training Leaders

9. Interestingly enough, Paul preached and taught the Second Coming of Christ to new converts. 1 & 2 Thessalonians

What Can Be Learned From Peter’s First Sermons?

Acts 2, 3, 10
1. Peter referenced fulfilled prophecies, thus invoking the supernatural testimony of his message.
2. Peter focused on Jesus’ miraculous life, God’s predetermined plan, Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection (as did Paul).
3. Peter addressed the personal sins of his listeners and called them to repentance. He didn’t argue doctrine or allow them to shift the blame: “What about your sin – how is that atoned for?”
4. He connected the history of his listeners to Jesus. (I believe chronological evangelism is very valid – begin with the Beginning, Genesis, and follow the line of history – Creation, Eden, The Fall, Lineage of the Families of the Earth, The Flood, Tower of Babel and False Religions and how that affects the history of the targeted population.)
5. He pointed to the miraculous.
6. He offered remission of sins through faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection.
7. He preached there is salvation in no other.
8. He gave his listeners in Caesarea a sense of destiny that God has been working in their hearts and history to bring them to Himself.
9. He gave his personal testimony.
10. He pointed out that Jesus, Himself, is and will be the Judge for all mankind.

Rather than arguing points of doctrine we see the first apostles simply preached the truth and let the Holy Spirit do the work.

The Basics of the Gospel

1. There is one true God, Creator of everything and everyone.
2. Man was holy and in right relationship with God but he fell into sin.
3. The essence of sin is self – doing what we want rather than what God wants.
4. When our forefathers sinned it corrupted their nature; that nature of sin has been passed down to every person who has ever lived on earth...except Jesus Christ.
5. The sinful nature of mankind expresses itself in acts of various kinds of sin.
6. Acts of sin include sins of thought, attitude and words.
7. Angels are the servants of God and His creation.
8. Satan is the enemy of God and man.
9. Demons are the servants of Satan.
10. God’s only method to deal with sin is death: “The soul that sins shall die.”
11. However, God has provided a way of escape: The shedding of blood of an innocent sacrifice.
12. God became a man and lived among us – Jesus.
13. Jesus was born in a unique way so the sinful nature of our ancestors was not passed on to Him – He was born of a virgin. He was holy, blameless and pure.
14. Jesus gave His life and body as the final sacrifice for the sins of all people.
15. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead to confirm that His sacrifice was accepted by God.
16. If we believe that we are sinners and accept that the death of Jesus was for our sins, we are forgiven and born again. Thus dealing with both a sinful nature and sinful acts.

Foundational Teaching for New Believers
Acts 2:40-42
With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- Don’t be like the people of this generation, v. 40
- Be baptized, v. 41
- Be added to the congregation of believers, v. 41
- Obey the teaching of the church leaders, v. 42
- Fellowship with one another, v. 42
- Partake of communion, the Lord’s Supper, v. 42
- Pray, v. 42
- Expect signs and wonders to be exhibited, v. 43
- Meet together from time to time, v. 44
- Share with one another as one may have a need, v. 44
- Meet in larger congregations and in homes and small groups, v. 46
- Praise the Lord, v. 47
- Expect God to give you favor with people, v. 47
- Expect the Lord to add more to your budding church, v. 47

Conclusion
I’m afraid that many evangelists and missionary’s visions – local church pastors for that matter – fall far short of God’s mission for this planet. We are all the Body of Christ and not all have the same function, but we all have the same mission – societal transformation: Establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. This was my vision, and what I felt was my mission from God when we went to Cambodia in April 1995. The result is fifteen years later we have a 1,000-member strong church in the capitol city, mostly self-sustained, more than 80 churches planted in provincial villages and many humanitarian ministries almost entirely led by Cambodians, as well as having disciples from our ministry leading significant national non-profit ministries in the country and many of the formerly impoverished Cambodians gainfully employed. These random thoughts have proceeded from my experience as a pastor before going to Cambodia, working with my experienced church-planter friend, Eric Dooley, from what the Holy Spirit led us in while establishing a work in Cambodia, and what I have learned about through study, prayer and relationships during and since that time.

Therefore, when we feel the Lord leading us to a nation, city, people group, we should look at God’s overall plan. We should have an understanding and strategy of how we fit into that overall purpose. Methods will vary, but principles remain the same. The specifics of how we penetrate a nation or ethnic group will be somewhat different from one situation to another, but I believe the general principles I’ve tried to outline here are biblical and should be considered when trying to reach a locale, city, region, nation or ethnic group.
Final Thoughts

1. Evangelize through every method: signs and wonders, relational evangelism, “felt-needs” evangelism and bringing a clear message of the One True God and His purpose for mankind.
2. Insure that a clear message of sin, depravity and redemption are communicated
3. Be intentional in making disciples
4. Be intentional in training leaders
5. Be intentional in releasing people to minister
6. Build faith and expectation for the miraculous
7. Ask the Holy Spirit how you can penetrate the Seven Spheres of Influence