STRUCTURAL AND MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY ISSUES IN CHURCH PLANTING AMONG BUDDHIST PEOPLES

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Introduction

Missionaries involved in church planting among Buddhist populations wrestle with the problem of very slow church planting and church growth among existing congregations. One response to this has been to deal with issues of contextualization to see how the Gospel message and church life can be made to better fit the local context and thus become more relevant to the people. I personally believe that this is a very important piece of the explanatory "puzzle" as to why it is so difficult to plant churches among Buddhist peoples.

However, I have come to see this problem as being much more complex and multidimensional, with issues of contextualization being only one of a series of interrelated factors.[1] I want to argue here that what may be the most significant reason for slow church planting and growth among Buddhist populations comes from the models of evangelism, ministry, church structure, and church life that are employed. I want to suggest that it is less a case of us not making sense to people from Buddhist backgrounds than it is one of perpetuating philosophies and models of ministry and ways of "doing church" that hinder our ability to plant and grow churches capable of multiplying rapidly and over long periods of time. Another way of putting it is to say that our problems lie more in what is normally considered under the topic of discipleship rather than evangelism.

Before discussing this proposition in more detail I want to illustrate how I came to this conclusion by sharing some of my own personal journey in church planting and development in Thailand.

"There has to be a better way!"

Prior to coming to Thailand in 1986 I worked in a large Assemblies of God church in the Seattle area for six years. My experience of ministry, which was quite typical for people coming out of standard church backgrounds, was one primarily defined by directing and running programs through lots of effort by a core of professional staff and a never-large-enough base of volunteer laborers. Although I have many pleasant memories from that time and it was a wonderful experience in terms of training for full-time ministry, some of my main remembrances are always being short of workers, and being very tired.

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[1]Some of the major factors In my thinking include putting the Gospel message and church life in local context, the degree of openness to change that is present in that group, the kinds of models used for ministry and church leadership, and power encounters. Each of these is very important and connected to the others, but my argument here is that issues relating to models, ministry philosophy, and church structure, are probably much more influential as a growth factor than has been previously assumed.

When I got to Thailand, after language school, our family moved to a medium sized province in the heart of central region. Our task was to work with a young Thai pastor and his wife to essentially replant a church that had fallen apart. I vividly remember my first Sunday, with our two families and small children and about six other Christians none of whom actually lived in the city but who all came in from surrounding villages. It did not seem to be a terribly promising core group to begin a new church plant with.

It was quite natural in this setting to use the only "tools" I had in my bag of ministry concepts-programs, event evangelism, and lots of hard work. Over the next two and a half years the pastor and I tried everything we could think of to reach people and incorporate them into the church. We passed out tracts, prayer walked, showed the Jesus film, did special events for Christmas, held open air crusades and revival meetings, taught English, visited people, tried small groups and bible studies, and had a booth at the annual fair. We were constantly busy, worn out and (in retrospect) rather stressed, and had stirred up a lot of dust and spent quite a few baht on these various activities. By the time we left for our one year deputation we had a group of about 35 people meeting that was still far from supporting their own pastor. I remember thinking that two couples worked full time for two and a half years with plenty of finance and we added just under 30 people to our Sunday morning church attendance. That is when I thought to myself, there has to be a better way to do this. By this time in my life I had been in vocational ministry for 11 years and quite frankly I was feeling tired and the glow and excitement was waning in the face of the constant weight of pushing the programs.

When faced with meager results it is always a comfort to say a). nobody else is really growing either, and b). the people are resistant. Yet somehow deep down inside I was not really satisfied with blaming resistance as the sole reason for the slow growth.

Seeking Answers

My first attempts at looking for answers were focused on how to make the message more relevant. I have elsewhere chronicled the journey of how I became sensitized to the issues of message contextualization and the fruit of that research.[2] I discovered that while there has not been an overwhelming amount of material written specifically on Thailand, the issue of contextualizing the message as well as church life has received a great deal of attention in general.

During my year long deputation I began to examine other ways to reach and incorporate people into the Body of Christ. The two things that I ran into repeatedly in my early readings that were new to me and radically different than my first term work had to do with the concept of reaching personal networks, also referred to by its Greek term oikos[3], and that of non-

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[2] Alan R Johnson, *Wrapping the Good News for the Thai* (2002).
[3] Alan R Johnson, "The Power of the Oikos," *Enrichment* 7, no. 1 (2002).

professional leadership, more popularly known as "lay" leadership.[4] Our evangelism had been completely based on winning separate individuals, ignoring families and natural social connections. Consequently new believers were cut off from sharing back into their closest relationships. In addition to this the model of church life and evangelism was one that was driven by the trained professionals and was programmatic in nature. We had the sneaking suspicion that lay people were supposed to do "the work of the ministry", but did not have the slightest idea how to structure things so that they could. I was rather stunned to hear the Thai pastor I worked with actually say out loud that it takes five years for a person to be a believer before they can do anything.

So as I returned to Thailand for a second term I resolved to experiment with evangelism based totally in relationships and working through personal networks and that would be led by a bi-vocational leader without very limited financial assistance if any. Right as I was at the front end of this experiment, in God's providential timing, I was exposed to ideas and literature about cell churches and small-group driven ministry from a couple of pastor friends in the states who graciously sent me my first copies of these books.[5] The ideas I found there meshed completely with my new vision for empowering non-professionals to do ministry and doing evangelism through personal networks. Over the next seven years of ministry I found several opportunities to experiment with these principles first hand and also to teach them to others and observe the results.

The first experiment came in a ground up church plant attempt. We had a bible school trained couple who moved to a province and began working to support themselves. We worked at different forms of outreach and our first convert was a woman in her 80's whose hand was healed after prayer. We used this as our first entrance into an oikos. One by one people began to come to faith until we had a group of about 15 believers who for the most part were connected in a couple of networks in one area of the city. This was quite a difference from my first term's work. In the space of a couple of years we had added 15 people, with no outside finance, no programs, a bi-vocational worker, only a little bit of participation on my part, and meeting in homes. What is more is these Christians did everything on their own, if they wanted to do something they paid for it and gave their own offerings, whereas in my former place everyone expected that the church would provide for them.

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[4]Some of the materials that were influential in my thinking at the time include Charles Arn, Donald McGavran, and Win Arn, *Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1980); F. Ross Kinsler, ed. *Ministry by the People: Theological Education by Extension* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983); Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970); Lois McKinney, "Leadership: Key to the Growth of the Church," in *Discipling through Theological Education*, ed. Vergil Gerber (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980); Lawrence O. Richards and Martin Gib, *A Theology of Personal Ministry: Spiritual Giftedness in the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981); Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke, *Church Leadership: Following the Example of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980); Lyle Schaller, *Activating the Passive Church: Diagnosis and Treatment* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981) and Frank R. Tillapaugh, *The Church Unleashed* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982).
[5] Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1991); Ralph W. Jr. Neighbour, *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990).

Seeing a Pattern

In my third term I began work in a very different setting from my previous upcountry locations and circumstances. I connected with an existing Thai church plant that was three years old and had about 50 adherents. The pastor also shared a vision for small-group driven ministry led by lay people. One of my main jobs was to help in small group development and multiplication. The first group I worked with went from seven to 20 people in a few weeks as we worked on reaching personal networks and making the small group "outward" focused. But after a time it was apparent there was no leader ready to start a new cell so the pastor asked that I help another group. Eventually this cell group became a house church that now is connected to the mother church but meets separately.

The second group was led by a housewife with a few high school students attending. We started working the principles and very soon had our first convert from a house just a few doors down from our meeting place. After two years we counted just over 20 converts all who attended Sunday service and the cell, meeting in a total of 5 different groups and these groups were coached by this housewife.

In both of these cases there was no finance, no programs, and no professional leaders other than me helping them with implanting basic principles. As I began to reflect on these experiences there were a number of lessons I learned, but two that are relevant for our discussion here. First, when we started doing evangelism based in people's relational networks rather than isolating individuals and giving them a "presentation" we found that people were more receptive. Second, when we structured around face-to-face meetings led by lay people and that were focused on reaching lost people, three things happened. First, people came to faith more rapidly, they became active believers rather than passive in worship and sharing their faith, and many of them went on to become leaders of other groups.

What really caught my attention as I observed these small Bangkok cells, was that I was watching Thai people share the Gospel in a very zealous and passionate manner but in what I considered to be very inelegant and certainly not-contextualized terms. Yet people were coming to Christ. This led me to develop what I called the "viral theory" of evangelism. Just as you cannot be "taught" to catch a cold, but must come into contact with the virus, in the same way we cannot "teach" people into becoming Christians. First you have to have someone with the virus of new life in Christ and just get them close enough to get into contact with the dynamic of that new life, and there will be people who come to faith. Getting lost people in close enough proximity with people who really have been changed by Christ made even the inelegant and inarticulate presentation of the Gospel make sense because they were seeing it lived out in front of them . It was not disembodied words, but a living incarnation of Jesus' power in a person's life that made the picture clear. The expression of new life in Christ provides the interpretational context of the message to begin to make sense and to begin to be seen as a life option for

them. This is when I first began to understand that structure and context-both social and church-was even more important than message contextualization.

Further reflection help me to see that in my initial church planting experience our evangelistic model kept us from utilizing the natural social structure to share the Gospel through relationships, and our models of church made for a structure that effectively isolated those who have new life in Christ from those who do not. Hybels and Mittleberg[6] have a nicer sounding formula than my viral theory that goes like this:

High Potency + Close Proximity + Clear Communication = Maximum Impact

This formula, like my viral analogy, addresses the issues of potency, that you must have Christians who have the real thing, a dynamic relationship with Christ; and the structural issue of proximity, where you have to be close to people to communicate the message.

This leads me back to my original thesis. I have watched Thai people come to faith not because of a contextualized message, as important as that is, but because what they did hear started to make sense in the context of a changed life. I propose that our problems in planting the church among Buddhist peoples have more to do with our assumptions and models of evangelism, church life, ministry and church structure that keep us from providing an interpretational context for our message and suppress the most natural carriers and conduits for the Gospel.[7]

Assumptions of the 1+1+1 Model and Associated Problems

As I started comparing the different ways of thinking about and doing ministry and evangelism I began to summarize the model that I grew up with and had been involved with in Thailand as 1+1+1. It consists of one building that is the "church" and the hub of activities, one full-time Bible school trained vocational minister whose job is to run the programs and care for the people, and one congregation or group of people who are to fit into the programs and receive spiritual nurture from the pastor. All of this equals "the way we do church."

By making a critique of this model I am not saying that it has not been used by God to produce much fruit, nor is it a structure that God is not using today. What I am suggesting is that in Buddhist contexts where there is a resistance to the message as being something outside and foreign, and where there is

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[6] Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).
[7] John Davis has made a similar argument in his call for a theology of structure in the final chapter of Poles Apart. He believes that churches need to by dynamically equivalent to New Testament churches and culturally appropriate He also notes that while the New Testament structures of servant leadership, plurality of leadership, releasing believers in ministry, facilitating the use of spiritual gifts, and an organic not institutional approach may not have been the cause of the growth of the early church, but such structures "enabled, facilitated and contributed toward such phenomenal growth" John R. Davis, *Poles Apart: Contextualizing the Gospel in Asia (Revised Edition)* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1998), pp. 253, 261.

strong social solidarity in the society, this model has severe limitations.[8] One reason why I think that church planters in Buddhist contexts have been slow to adopt new models of church is because the traditional model does work to a degree in places where there is receptivity to the Gospel and large numbers of Christians in the society. So there is the tendency to think that because this model worked in our homelands to a degree that it should also be fruitful in a new setting. However, for reasons that will be discussed below, I feel that among a resistant population the traditional model will not be effective and will generate a kind of Christian that is incapable of reaching their society and will not allow for church multiplication.

Assumption # 1 The Building Is The Center Of Activity For The Believer

Even though we know theologically the church is not the building, in practice everything happens there. What this means is that very soon after conversion without ever even saying anything people begin to build a new social center around the activities in this building and soon are incapable of relating back to their own social structures to share Christ. In fact, the persecution they receive for their new affiliations drives them even closer to the "church" and away from their personal network.

Assumption # 2 Ministry is Done by Trained Professionals

The pastor must have professional bible school training and be full-time in vocational ministry. She cares for the flock and runs the programs and basically directs all of the things that happen at the building.

Assumption # 3 The Congregation are Consumers of Ministry

Since the people do not have training they cannot do anything. This is unconsciously and unintentionally modeled to them by everything that happens in a Sunday service. They are taught to be passive consumers of the presentation. Thus churches are rated on "how good the product to be consumed is." Better worship, better preaching, means more people willing to come.

The problem of blindness created by socialization processes

I believe that the socialization forces of what we say through what we are doing in this model are so powerful that they virtually nullify all of the theological concepts that we talk about that are diametrically opposed to

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[8]For a more detailed critique in a similar vein that I develop here see the discussion by Wofgang Simson in *Houses That Change the World: The Return of the House Churches*(pre-publication draft copy (to be published in 2000 by STL Paternoster Press), 2001, accessed January 2001); available from http://www.dawn.ch/HOUSE_~1/HOUSES~1/hcf.pdf, pp. 33-35.

these three assumptions.[9] Church leaders who have grown up in churches like this, gone to bible school and interned in churches like this, and who have worked in planting or leading churches like this uniformly cannot "see" how all of this appears to the new believer, because it is so natural to them.

One of the exercises I use in teaching pastors or bible school students is to get them to role play making a "video" of their church service. I make them rearrange the chairs like in the church and we choose a song leader, speaker etc. While someone "videos" the others briefly act out their parts and I attend the service as a pre-Christian. When I ask them to run the video back and analyze it for what I learn as a first-time I can only get responses based on what I <u>heard</u> in the service and never based on what I have <u>seen</u> and experienced.

Finally after I prompt them with questions about thinking in terms of who has the power, who is in charge, who is up front, what are the different roles occupied, they start to see things in terms of the very passive nature of the attendee's church experience. People who come to this church model can sing, listen, and give, but there is not a whole lot after that. This is why even in the face of massive recruiting efforts and constant exhortation about "serving" and "using gifts" that there are very few takers. The structure and assumptions of this model completely undermine and subvert the verbal messages and teach something radically different.

When all the important stuff is done by trained professionals with the mystical bible school degree, there are very few connections with Christian service as it is conceived of as an up-front activity for people who are mechanics, housewives, salespeople, teachers, drivers, food vendors, or secretaries. In their minds they would have to leave their livelihoods to get professional training to do ministry.

In talking with one pastor about the cell groups in their church, she admitted that she actually has to lie to people in order to get them to do anything. She would call and say she was sick so they would lead the cell. If she attended they would automatically make her do everything and refuse any involvement because their pastor is there.

Another downside is that since everything happens at the building, people have no time or ability to make relationships with non-believers. Even if there is not explicit teaching about forsaking worldly friends, there is a strong tendency for the church to become the new social center. Over time people become increasingly uncomfortable with the unbelieving friends and vice versa. Evangelism then is reduced to inviting people to come to the building so the professionals can share the message with them.

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[9]For a sociological perspective on the power of the processes of habitualization, institutionalization, and socialization see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1966), pp. 53-67; 129-147.

The problem of Christians barriered off from those without Christ

What you have in the end with this model is a pool of people who are philosophically and structurally barriered off from non-Christians and who do not see personal ministry to others as a part of their calling in Christ. Those who have the message of Christ are physically and mentally separated from the world of unbelievers and even when they do rub elbows with the lost world they are predisposed by the modeling given to think that only a trained ministry can share Christ with these people.

Where does this leave us with church planting among Buddhist peoples? In many places where there are already existing church movements that are small minorities in large seas of Buddhists it is this kind of church and ministry philosophy in one degree or another that is there already. I am not sure that people are rejecting Christ so much as they are rejecting a disembodied message connected to a social structure that places those who believe outside of their families and communities. Institutionalized Christianity or "Churchianity" makes very little sense, and they are quick to perceive, (as the evangelists are correspondingly slow to realize) the social implications for them if they were to become a Christian.

The leadership problem of "looking for the magic answer"

What has been interesting to observe is how all of the literature and seminars sharing new models relating to meta-church, cell church, G-12 churches, training and multiplying leaders, house churches and church planting movements has been received by those using this traditional model. It takes very little reading at all to see that the fastest growing movements around the world have radically different ministry assumptions and models than what I have described above. The problem I find is that people coming from this background read the books and go to the seminars predisposed to look for "the magic answer" that will lead to growth and view it as a methodology, when in reality it is a complete new DNA code for making Christians and living the Christian life.

Part of the problem lies in the nature of seminars and teachings as well. I have realized that there are three types of "data" you can get in a seminar: a). low level concrete practices-"we did this," b). mid-level principles that usually wrapped in some kind of method-"you must release lay people by training them like this", and c). high-level abstract principles, values and assumptions. Oftentimes people who have been very successful as practitioners cannot fully explain the kinds of deep underlying assumptions and values that drive their methods. So pastors come looking for low-level concrete things to do when the real power is with the abstract principles. When they try to implement the concrete practices or principles at the mid-level they get frustrated because it did not work. But it did not work because those practices and principles were deeply embedded in a social context and value system both in the church and the society where it happened. When you strip that away the practice may not work at all.

What traditional leaders have trouble doing is taking the very abstract and powerful general principles such as reaching networks and releasing non-professional ministry and developing their own values and assumptions and seeking how to apply it in their social context.

Church Planting Among Buddhists: Values for Building Dynamic Christian Communities

There is a mass of literature dealing with the nature of church and ministry.[10] Some of it is quite abstract and principled in nature while much of it is embedded in specific contexts and practices. In addition to this there is much debate among practitioners and scholars of church growth and missiology as to what are the best ways to plant and develop churches. Is it cell, meta, G-12, house church, do you use buildings, not use buildings, use paid pastors, not use paid pastors, etc.? I do not want to try and reproduce or rehash the literature nor do I want to enter into the debate. Two considerations underlie the approach that I will explain below. First, I do not believe there is a single right way or single best way or magic answer. Second, I believe in both/and thinking and believe that there is room for all of these pieces in the bigger picture. Principles need to be worked out in their specific local contexts.

What follows here are some concepts that I think can be helpful in developing forms that facilitate biblical functions. They focus on assumptions, values, structures, and ministry philosophy rather than on concrete activities. These are not "steps" that are to be done in some kind of order, but rather should be thought of as principles that inform action. These ideas and concepts do not "look" like anything, they can be enacted in many different forms and social settings and will look unique in terms of their forms in each one. Part of the big lesson that all of this is based on is that how you get to your goal is important as the goal itself because how you do it may introduce an ethos into the life of the church that hampers ever reaching the final goal.

For discussion purposes I have separated the principles that follow into the major categories of church planting goals, training values and ministry values. However, it is important to note that these are not stand-alone principles but are deeply interwoven together and in real-life settings they will impact all the activities in church life.

Goals: Beginning with the End in Mind

Church planting movements are the goal.

It is one thing to plant a single indigenous church, but it is quite another to start a movement of rapidly multiplying indigenous churches. If we have this

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[10]Anthony Ware, an Australian Assemblies of God Missionary in Thailand for a number of years has written a master's thesis entitled <u>Analysis and Development of a Church Structure to Facilitate Saturation Church Planting in Bangkok</u>. He has an extensive literature review that covers many of the major works on church planting and growth. I have used his work as the basis for the topical bibliography at the end of the paper.   A pdf version of his thesis is available upon request by emailing Anthony at a_ware@ozemail.com.au

end goal in mind it will radically restructure the way we do things from the very beginning. Too often we have been encumbered by building-centered visions of what the church is like and with finding leaders capable of handling all that goes with it. A CPM is going to be facilitated by Christians who have dynamic new life in Christ, and who are mobilized to reach their networks and envisioned to take the Gospel to other localities who have never heard. Building and professionally oriented ministry does not do these things well.

Consider the idea that people are hardwired by God to lead-and the cream rises to the top.

A church planting movement requires that there be a continual flow of new leaders. Traditional thinking sees leaders going through a long process of training, and much of what is implicit in church growth thinking is that "better" leaders lead bigger groups. An unintended effect of this is that we gear our training to producing people who can lead and manage large groups, and this becomes a bottleneck in leadership development.

A pastor friend shared a fascinating idea about Exodus 18. I had always heard this passage used in terms of cell and leadership structure. But he suggested another angle, that people are hardwired by God to be able to lead different size groups. When I thought about this I realized that a corollary of this principle is that those with giftings to lead larger groups of people do not start leading large groups but work their way up as their skills and giftings emerge and are recognized. Perhaps rather than trying to train a few who can who can lead large groups, we should be training lots of people to lead groups of 10 and then watch their giftings. The cream will rise to the top and these people can become key catalysts for further growth, leaders of networks of groups, and leaders of movements. The other corollary is that the kind of leader that God made the most of is leaders of groups of 10. Very few can lead thousands, but God has made lots of people who can love and care for a group of 10. It is a fascinating thought with huge implications for what the leadership structure and training methodology would look like in a church planting movement.

Trust that the Holy Spirit can raise up dynamic believers and Christian communities in their local contexts-Refuse to settle for anything less.

I used to look at social contexts and think, how can people here ever fit into church life? That assumed that we were going to wrest converts out of their context and put them into our version of church life. Now I see social context and pray that the Holy Spirit will raise up His expression of a dynamic Christian community there that will fit their time frames and economic circumstances, and network of relationships. It may look radically different from 1+1+1 but it will be a true expression of the life and power of Christ to those people. Do not settle for extraction, set your heart on powerful Christians that will be used by the Spirit to transform their world.

Others will be content with less and be willing to splash money around in order to get quick results and some of your hard earned work may rush off looking for a better deal. Do not compromise the goals of an indigenous movement, this is where we have to trust and believe in the Lordship of Christ in the church.

Training Values

Everything we do teaches.

I like to say that the national church starts with the first Christian. It is imperative to realize that <u>absolutely everything</u> that will be done, from evangelism to group meetings to leadership will become the standard for all believers who follow. Make sure they get the right message from the beginning. Look at what you are doing not in terms of what you are saying but what they are learning from what they see and experience.

Use no structure or method that takes away from the core principles and heart of ministry.

No structure will work without the right heart and passion. Many pastors try to bring in new concepts like small groups and relational evangelism and the believers hate non-believers and cannot stand to be around them. They have no heart, so the structure will never work. Jettison what hinders heart and compromises principles. If we believe in empowering others for ministry and something disempowers, then get rid of it. This is where brutal honesty and the ability to self-evaluate must be applied. We are often handed "toolkits" of things that do not work and feel obligated to use them because they were passed on to us. In planting churches among the least reached the advantage is you are starting from scratch. Use what facilitates your values.

Shoot for being reproducible in everything you do.

Do not saddle the new church or movement with things that they cannot do. We do this all the time with our use of technologies and finance and then wonder why the local church is not doing anything. Again, if it is going to "send the wrong message" do not do it.

Train leaders on the job in the skill sets to do direct ministry as well as the skills to train others to do ministry.

We talk about Ephesians 4:11-12 but then proceed to teach pastors who to do ministry but not train others to do ministry. It is a different skill set and philosophy of ministry all together. They need to know how to do direct ministry but they need to know that their primary task is equipping others.

Never stop at one group.

To me one of the biggest downsides that has come with the emphasis on large mega-churches is the discouragement that people with different giftings have felt. The mistake that we have all bought into is that if you have the ability to lead a group of 40, we assume that forever we just lead the <u>same group of 40</u>. But if we apply the principles above about multiplication and empower leadership the leader of 40 can turn her work over to someone and then go out and reproduce another group of 40. Rather than letting people feel badly we should fill them with vision for starting new groups over and over again. Let the Holy Spirit raise up the leadership necessary to network these groups together.

Ministry Values

Reach people in their social networks, use social structure as a bridge and not a barrier.

When you have no believers you have to make your own oikos in the beginning. But as you reach people immediately work on their personal network and create understanding, acceptance and wherever possible bring other members to faith. Everything should be geared around building bridges into the personal networks that people have.

Make the heart of the Christian life loving and obeying God and reaching your personal network for Christ.

My last statement above leads me to this one. From before people come to faith they should be told that their life in Christ is not for them, it is to give it away to Christ and to bring others to know him. We cut the legs out of our multiplicative capacity by creating Christians who want to get something. From the first day let people know that as God heals, and moves in their lives that they are blessed to be a blessing. Keep everything focused on loving and obeying Christ and bringing Him glory by leading others to worship him starting in their personal network.

Make meetings of God's people participatory, outwardly focused, and places where Jesus is in the midst.

I Corinthians 14:26 shows a very participatory meeting. When you get believers together from the beginning you must avoid creating the impression that you are "the teacher" and they are the "students." This will take serious work and creativity on the part of the church planter, but it is foundational for empowering ministry. You connect your meeting times with outreach into the oikos. This gives people a place to bring friends and relatives that is safe and non-threatening and gives them their first taste of Christian community. Teach them that when they gather that Jesus is in their midst, and believe that He will touch people and reveal Himself to them. To help keep the outward

focus have prayer in every meeting for people in attendees personal networks.

Teach emerging groups to be responsible for themselves-refuse to do it for them.

Let people know before they come to Christ what you expect a Christian community to look like, what they will do together. You are the facilitator and helper but they must do the work and be responsible.

Train people who are responsible and who have jobs and can take care of themselves to be leaders.

It is always amazing to me to go somewhere and see that people even in the most dire of circumstances are surviving. Then suddenly the church comes to the community and now they can do nothing, it is all on the pastor. In the beginning it will be much better to start with responsible people and enable them to lead while still maintaining their livelihood.

Make the primary skill of ministry reaching personal networks and leading a small group.

Focus on the skill sets that will bring growth and multiplication. Leaders need to demonstrate they can reach people in their network, disciple them, and that they can lead and multiply a small group. These are the fundamental basics that are so often assumed and other forms of training at higher levels are brought in. There always needs to be ongoing and higher training for those so gifted, but make sure all leaders can do the basics.

Love pre-processed Christians and take them with you.

Christians and leaders already socialized into the old model will not feel comfortable at all with relational evangelism, face to face relationships, releasing people for ministry, and the lack of structure that these assumptions about ministry and evangelism will lead to. If in your work of church planting you are connected with such people, rule one is love them. God loves pre-processed Christians who are stuck in these models. Second, the best way by far to move towards change is not to teach or talk about what you are doing but to take them by the hand and ask them to join you. Many of these people really want to do something but do not know how and have nobody to help them learn.

Conclusion

There is nothing new here at all. If anything I am suggesting that one of our biggest barriers to church planting in the Buddhist world is in our heads-in the assumptions, values and philosophies that shape our practices about evangelism, ministry and church. Even when we know better theologically the

power of old practices still shapes our efforts. I hope that reading through the journey of how I reached certain conclusions and then considering these concepts in a more abstract fashion may be helpful working out new ways to apply them to produce powerful reproducing Christian communities among Buddhist peoples.

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