



JESUS-led movements

*Understanding the Elements
of Spiritual and City
Gospel Movements*

by David M. Robinson



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understanding
a jesus-led
movement

Movement

For many years the word movement has been used to describe the ministry I've been a part of for over 30 years—Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ). Dr. Bill Bright used to give talks on spiritual movements. Steve Douglass coined “movements everywhere” as our mantra when he succeeded Dr. Bright as president of Cru. Today “movement” is the buzzword for missional churches and city transformation efforts.

Some have said that the early Church was a movement that over time became an organization and in some cases has turned into an institution. So, it's a great thing that the Kingdom of God is being re-envisioned today by this word “movement,” as the Church renews her passion to follow Jesus and make much of Him.

The Need

It is crucial for us to focus on the value of “spiritual movements” and understand what one is. For me, there are at least two important reasons for this.

First, the Church must have a transcendent vision of Jesus. I like what Ken Boa once said “For the first three centuries, the idea and person of Jesus transcended all other rivals of the era.” Spiritual movements trumpet the vision of God's goodness and gladly announce that Jesus' way is greater than anyone can possibly imagine. His love and Gospel changes everything and everyone. This vision must drive City

Gospel Movements. We must make much of Jesus and the power of the Gospel. Otherwise our mission, along with a growing sense of stewardship and a lopsided view of organization and accountability (both, however, being very important), will drown out our vision. If mission drowns out this vision, the mission will become something far less—the event, the meeting, the organization (with its systems, policy, directors, strategies, etc.). This is not our mission. These things must serve the transcendent vision of a Jesus-led movement.

Secondly, understanding biblical principles of a spiritual movement will help Kingdom citizens and Church leaders find great focus, wisdom and guidance. Here's why.



Change happens all the time. Challenges confront us. Opportunities beckon from the other side of an open door. Problems press us into a corner and seem to say, “Deal with me or you are dead!” When the challenge of change occurs, it is almost always accompanied by pressure to make good decisions.

Bob Biehl, author and mentoring consultant, said that the leader is the “one who knows what to do next, why it’s important and can bring necessary resources to bear upon the needs at hand.” Therefore, it is crucial for ministry teams and city partners who collaborate together to be biblically principled.

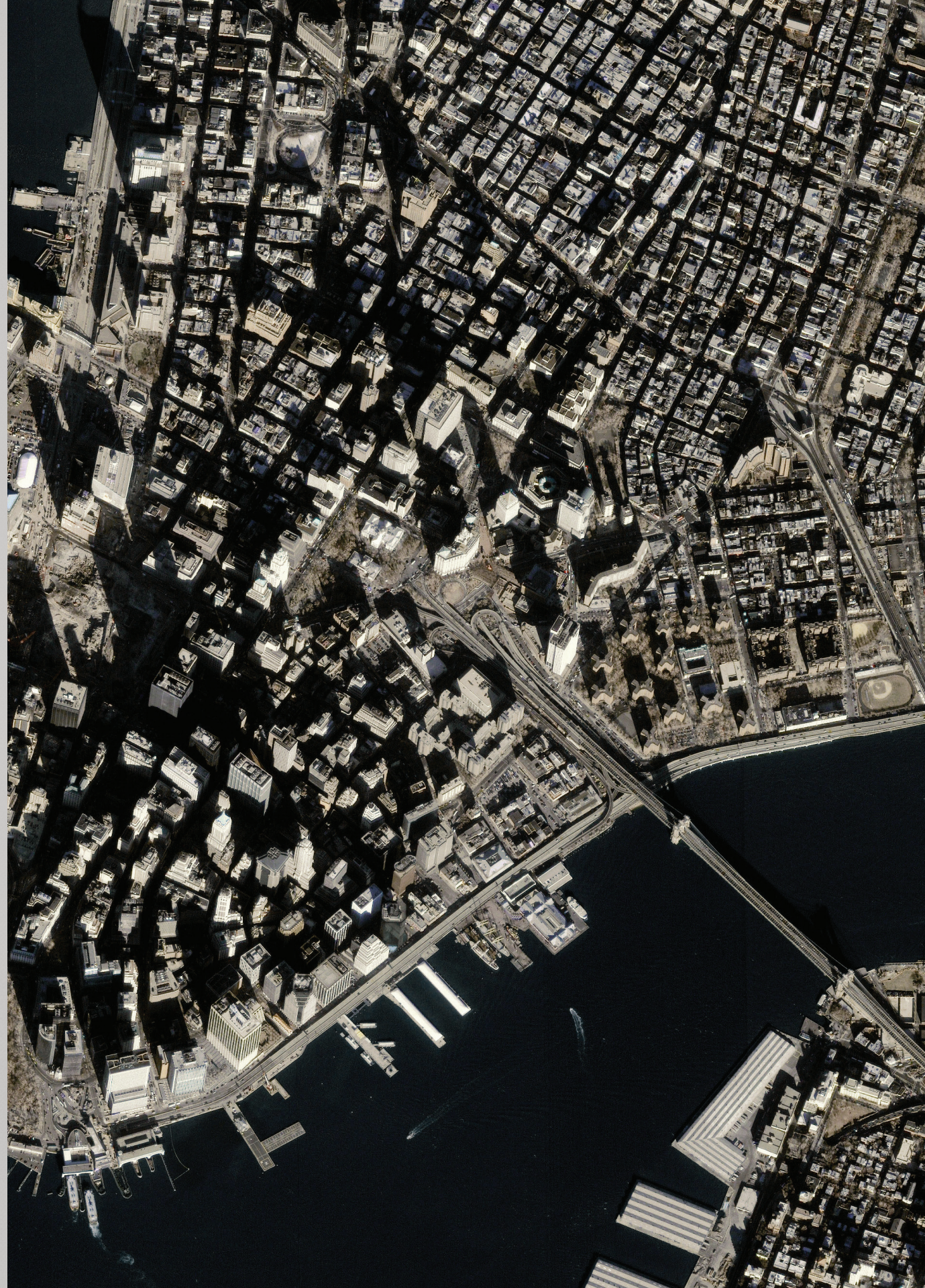
Often “form,” the method or manner in which we do things, is imposed and emphasized. If overemphasized, without the principles that enliven it, the team can become lost after the form fades or the manner in which we do ministry is no longer successful.

We must understand “movement” from a biblical point of view. We must know with certainty the principles—the internal rule, belief, energy, motivational power and conviction—generating the various forms movements can take. With this knowledge we can adapt our form quickly, maintain both tradition (when appropriate) and creative spontaneity in order to succeed and be fruitful.



In this article and the Bible Study that follows we will:

- 1 Define movement from a purely academic and historical point of view, and then apply the Word of God to the discussion by looking at Jesus’ model of ministry—the greatest example of movement in history.
- 2 Look at various passages in the Gospels where Jesus and His disciples are in motion (with momentum) and where the word “multitudes” are recorded. As we explore the characteristics of Jesus’ ministry, we will better define movement while we uncover both the essence of His leadership and the movement He led.
- 3 Discern what should characterize the ministry direction of City Gospel Movements in order to help us arrive at a proper integration of all the elements of movement life so we can face the changes, challenges, problems and opportunities with greater success.





city

gospel

movements

What is a movement?

History is full of examples of movement. What comes to mind as you look at this definition?

“A movement is a groundswell of people committed to the same cause who are significantly affecting their environment [and bringing lasting change]—politically, socially, spiritually, morally and/or culturally.” –Daniel Webster

The environmental movement, the Occupy Wall Street movement, the modern mission’s movement, the anti-slavery movement, the church-planting movement or the pro-life movement may have occurred to you.

Perhaps these five elements identify what is generally true of a movement:

1. People—lots of people—“people momentum” so to speak
2. A cause, idea, transcendent vision and accompanying rally cry (in the form of an envisioning conviction, a burden to lift, problem to solve, need to meet and/or an opportunity to pursue)
3. An inspired community comes together around that cause
4. Lives are changed, along with the story that will be told of the age in which they live
5. A growing number of impassioned leaders sustain the vision, cause and momentum of the movement

What is a city gospel movement?

We could apply this definition to our sense of movement.

“A City Gospel Movement is a multiplying groundswell of people committed to Jesus Christ, His cause and each other, who significantly affect their environment for the glory of God and the good of others by taking the whole Gospel to all and by teaching the Word of God, so as to bless, bring well-being and make disciples of all willing to follow Christ.”

characteristics of a movement

5

As we look at the verses below, the Lord will lead us to a more complete understanding.

Luke 6:12-19 provides a very good example for us (other Gospel passages follow this article):

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.”

Looking at this text we see that first, a movement Jesus leads is accompanied by ...

Prayer: Jesus purposefully prayed! He “went out to pray, and prayed all night.”

Movements are led by spiritual leaders who extraordinarily display their dependence on God. Prayer fuels a spiritual movement! It was once said, “Only the Holy Spirit can build the Church, deliver the lost from Satan’s power, and repair broken lives, as He applies the power and presence of Christ through the Church constantly awakened through prayer and speaking clearly the Word of God.”

Prayer—not strategies, tools, and coalitions—should be foremost in our lives and ministries. Without prayer there is no real advancement and no hope for lasting change—for God shares His power with broken, humble and praying people. In John 14:12-17 Jesus clearly points out that His outrageous promise to do “greater works” through us is conditioned on prayer, and that the Holy Spirit must empower, encourage and lead us. From this observation we learn...

PRINCIPLE 1: Spiritual Movements begin with spiritual dependence because we can do nothing apart from abiding in Christ!

Second, a movement Jesus leads ...

Reaches, teaches and helps lots of different people, creating a type of people momentum, and many of those people change the world.

Momentum and movement are inseparable. A city movement has momentum when it is on the move so much so that it would take some



effort to stop it. Momentum refers to the quantity of motion that an object has.

Physics 101 teaches us that momentum is mass in motion. Ministry teams are like objects, and therefore have mass. So if a team is moving, it has momentum—mass in motion. The amount of momentum depends on how much *ministry stuff* is moving and how fast the *stuff* is moving (mass times velocity).

What is moving in Jesus’ ministry? What is the substance of His ministry? Where is it moving and how is its influence unstoppable?

In Luke 6 there is a groundswell of people that are coming from everywhere! There is a “multitude” and “a great throng of people” (6:17, 19). There are “apostles.” There are faithful “disciples.” There are masses of curiously interested people. Why is He so popular?

His credibility is built on love. His commitment to loving others was the attraction. He moves to the lost and the lost move to Him. He moves to them with love, the Gospel and Himself. They move to Him with interest, needs, questions, response and hope. Some came to hear. Others came to be healed. All were taught and

m o v e m e n t s

begin with dependence



touched! Many experienced “power coming from Christ.” Oh, that this would typify our movements—that through us, as we are filled with His power, people might come to Christ and be changed completely by Him!

Jesus brings peace and well-being. Jesus is about helping others. Of all the questions He was asked, most often it was “Can you help me?” (See Matthew 8:5; 15: 25; 25:31-46; Mark 9:21, 22, Luke 4:38, John 5:7.) In Luke 4:16, 17, at the beginning of His ministry, the scroll of Isaiah was handed to Him. He purposefully turned to Isaiah 61 because it not only defines and describes His mission, but the mission of those who follow Him—proclaiming the Gospel and ministering to those who suffer (see Isaiah 61:1-6). The Lord has always opposed

the proud who overlook needs and defened those needing help. Psalm 10:17-18 says, “O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear to vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.”

Great crowds are coming to Jesus and His disciples for help, and great crowds are listening to Him teach... listening to His Word. These two features stand out. In Luke 6:12-19 you see multitudes coming to Christ because the Gospel is proclaimed and demonstrated. Many in the crowd are committed to Christ, but others are just hanging around. In our movements we will have the same. When the energy of people in motion (those trying to meet needs and live for His cause) reaches a certain tipping point, there is momentum. That kind of momentum will carry us to people and people to us. Some will show up because they are simply curious. Some will show up because they are teachable and thirsty. Some will come to stir debate (that happened to Jesus with regularity). Some will commit themselves to our highest cause—serving Jesus in the Spirit with a glad and grateful heart. So, a movement will experience the presence of both believers and non-believers because those committed to Him and His cause will affect their environment *significantly*.

In a movement people are there for different reasons. Some who run with us may say (even subconsciously) things like, “*You met a need! You gave me the truth in love. You are changing me.*” (They feel cared for.) Others may say, “*You all are making an impact and going somewhere. I want to dedicate myself to the highest cause of this movement. I want to help change the world!*” (They love our cause.) Others may say, “*I am needed.*” (They grow confident that they can make a contribution.) Note that a non-Christian can say some of the above.

A few of the many disciples will be in an intensified discipleship relationship with Jesus—like the apostles were. But all are learning from Christ and experiencing His love personally and practically! The result is growth and expansion of the Kingdom of God. Again, movements make much of Jesus; dreaming that all in a city might be taught, touched, led and loved by Him!

From these observations we learn Principle Two & Three:



movements connect the lost to jesus

PRINCIPLE 2: Movements connect the lost to Jesus and His Gospel; they help others in the name of Christ and lead them to surrender gladly to His lordship.

Movements both proclaim the Gospel and offer real help to troubled people. When the Church is alive—when love is in action—it is magnetizing (6:17-19). People come, because needs are being met while truth is being told and love is authentic. Huge problems are solved. Opportunities for the well-being of others are created. It has so much momentum it would take great effort to stop it.

Sharing our faith is essential. The Gospel must be proclaimed personally, wisely, freely, in real life situations, simply, creatively and broadly—to individuals and multitudes. Interestingly, Jesus continued going to multitudes and individuals after He selected the apostles. He never ceased doing personal evangelism. In Mark 1:38-45 Jesus walked away from an open door that church growth people would relish. Instead He went to other towns to preach stating, “for that is what I came for.” As he went, he healed a leper (Mark 1:40-45)—completely changing his life. Immediately the leper went out and began to testify about Jesus “freely

and to spread the news around.” Jesus-led movements do the same—those who experience His love and truth share Him with others.

One drawback to giving ourselves solely to the spiritual work of evangelism is that the souls we are saving, as Amy Carmichael noted, “are firmly attached to bodies.” She felt that great efforts of love in action had to accompany the proclamation of the Gospel. She said, “One cannot save and then pitchfork souls to heaven. There are times when I heartily wish we could. But souls are more or less securely fastened to bodies—at least in India. Bodies can’t be left to lie about in the open, and you can’t get souls out, and deal with them separately, you have to take them both together.”

We have to be clear and careful here. By “help” we do not mean creating a welfare system, handouts or simple charitable responses to various needs. The Body of Christ is led by the Holy Spirit whose very name is Helper (see John 14:16-18, 26; John 15:26; John 16:7). The

WHOEVER
BELIEVES
IN ME HAS
ETERNAL
LIFE

JOHN
6:47

Greek word for helper (*paracletos*) doesn’t simply refer to one who has the capacity to give aid. A helper is an advocate or intercessor who pleads another person’s cause; it is a person who comes alongside to help see someone through a difficulty, providing needed strength and encouragement.

In Luke 10:30-37 Jesus teaches us what it looks like to love our neighbor. We must remember that the Good Samaritan didn’t make excuses and stand idly by when confronting someone in need. He sought the other person’s good. He gave sacrificially. In fact, he gave a lot. But there is no notion of caring for the man he was helping indefinitely. There is a balance here. We don’t want to give a man a fish, but teach him how to fish and then how to sell them and employ many. “Toxic charity” is only giving a charitable response. We need to help empower people to succeed on their own.

In Gospel City Movements we value the spectrum of helping others. Helping includes

movements are messy

4

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all three responses (here's the spectrum): “giving a man a fish” (a charitable response); “teaching a man how to fish” (a developmental response —committed to relationships and long-term solutions) and “creating a fishing business” (a response that leads to empowerment, sustainability and high impact).

PRINCIPLE 3: We must admit that Movements are messy.

They are beyond our control, but not beyond focus. Movements begin with followers of Christ experiencing the love of God personally. Then, being filled with His love, they move

toward the lost and the hurting. They go where problems exist, where the afflicted need comfort and strength, where things need to change.

Leaders of movements must expect chaos. They must remain gracious in the fray, pray, be filled with His Spirit and stay focused on loving people, getting the Gospel out and developing multiplying disciples.

A movement Jesus leads also experiences life-changing community where the following are true:

› **There is a cause and rally cry that constantly mobi-**

lizes and blesses people. A groundswell of people bring others to Jesus, His people and His Word. They are “significantly affecting their environment.” The power, help and love of Christ is experienced broadly and deeply.

› **There is a community around that cause.** They are with Jesus and each other constantly.

› **There is discipleship.** Followers of Jesus help others put their trust in Jesus, become established in their faith, fall in love with the Word and engage in His mission. From these observations we learn...

PRINCIPLE 4: Movements radically change lives.

Finally, a movement Jesus leads... **is committed to leadership development.**

There are leaders intentionally and continually developed. Jesus pulled away from the crowds, even from a “large crowd of His disciples,” to be with the twelve apostles. So, in terms of relationships, not all were given equal time. Jesus utilized time to gather, interact and encourage all in the movement, while maintaining His commitment to the twelve. Lastly, we observe principle number five...



m o v e m e n t s
r a d i c a l l y
c h a n g e l i v e s

PRINCIPLE 5: Movements reproduce leaders and are filled with disciples who follow Jesus and multiply themselves.

In summary, drawing from Luke 6:12-19 and accompanying passages, we glean the following. Spiritual movements are characterized by...

- > Extraordinary prayer (6:12).
- > Gospel proclamation (this is implied in the context of His ministry and in 6:18).
- > Loving service, along with practical and developmental help – His power was making people whole (6:19; Mark 2:17 and other passages cited).
- > People momentum. Multitudes engage at various levels for various reasons: people are being brought to Christ by those who follow Him; some are seeking Christ and others are just showing up and hanging out. The momentum is magnetizing (6:17-19). Needs are being met. Truth is being told. Love is authentic.
- > Leaders and disciples committed to Christ and His cause (6:12, 13, 17).
- > The Word of God being taught (6:18 “...came to hear Him”).
- > Lives being changed by the personal touch, power and teachings of Jesus Christ from a missional community of those who abide in Him and live in glad surrender to Him.

Therefore, with utter dependence on God, City Gospel Movements exist to help and empower the hurting, win the lost, build and equip relational and creative multiplying disciple-making evangelists, send spiritual leaders out and accelerate strategic collaboration for the Gospel transformation and well-being of cities—that every man, woman and child may know His Gospel and experience His love.

we long to see spiritual
movements multiply every-
where to transform cities

and envelop the globe
for the glory of God



JESUS led movements bible study

Study the following passages to identify and describe what was characteristic of the movement Jesus led. What did He do, emphasize, teach, etc.? Please use only a single word or a brief sentence to describe these characteristics. Be prepared to discuss your answers.

Mark 1:32-45 (See Luke 4:42-44)

Mark 2:13-17 and Mark 3:7-11

Luke 5:1-3

Luke 6:12-19

Luke 9:57-62

Luke 10:1-11

John 4:7-10 and John 8:1-11

b i b l e s t u d y

What do you notice from these passages? What ties them together?

Matthew 8:1-7

Matthew 15:25

Matthew 25:31-46

Mark 9:21, 22

Luke 4:38, 39

John 5:7

What do these verses suggest must be true of Gospel Movements?

Romans 1:14-17

Ephesians 6:19

Colossians 4:2-6

Acts 10:36-38 (also Romans 1:15 and Galatians 2:10)

In Your City, Your Ministry, Your Gospel Movement:

> Where do you see good deeds and partnering with others opening doors for evangelism and discipleship opportunities? What is God already doing – where has He been at work for years?

> What should we strive in the power of the Holy Spirit to do, teach, plan, etc.?

> Identify tensions and questions regarding movement philosophy, strategic projects and activities you currently engage in and how to better integrate all that is going on in your ministry or city movement. What is the proper balance between movement planning, activities and time needed to develop more disciples of Jesus and servant-leaders for City Gospel Movements?

Unlocking Other Thoughts/Looking for Breakthrough Ideas

> What increases the Kingdom's light in a city? (In other words, what makes darkness retreat?)

> What would a City Gospel Movement want the following groups to experience as a result of knowing/working with us?

- The Lost?
- Partners (mission owners/volunteers we run with)?
- City Leaders (Kingdom, Not-yet Kingdom)?
- What actions/changes are needed for this to become a reality?

Our Need for Prayer

As we seek to glorify God in our mission of “movements everywhere” let’s continue to spiritually depend upon Him. Prayer must saturate all we do. Our master modeled this consistently. Let’s walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. One movement that helped give birth to student movements worldwide in the 20th century was the Student Volunteer Movement. One of its leaders, Robert Speers, provides needed emphasis. He wrote, “In this supernatural cause (world missions), which rests on a supernatural charter (agreement) and is led by an omnipotent leader with all His power pledged to support it, a neglect of prayer is actually a denial that God is leading. Neglect of prayer is a willful limitation of success.”



kingdom citizens
advancing the mission
of jesus

*Cru City: our passion is seeing people living ...wholly surrendered to Jesus
...in community ...on mission everyday.*

for the well-being
of the city

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