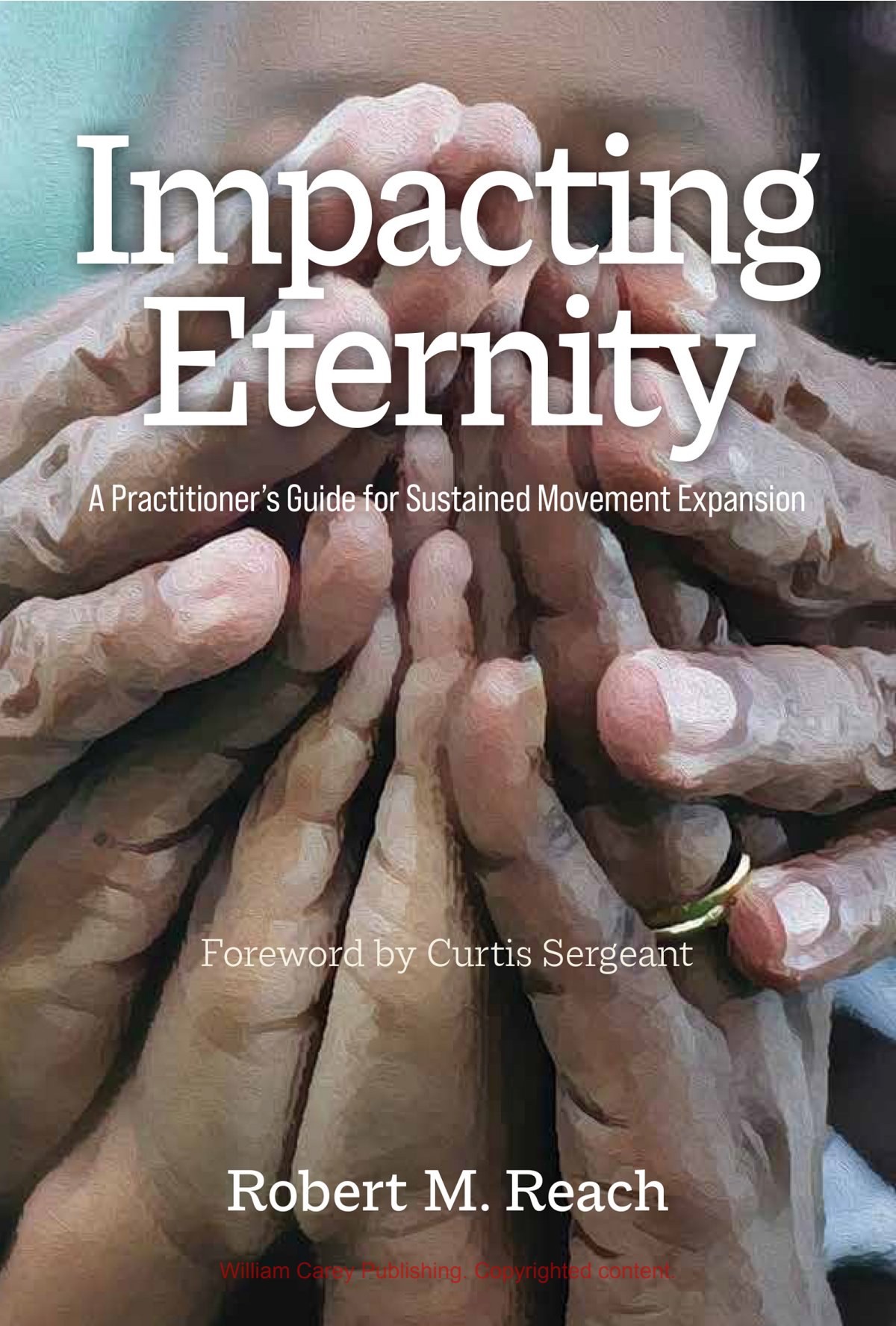


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Impacting Eternity: A Practitioner's Guide for Sustained Movement Expansion
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Chapter 1

A Look Inside Jesus Movements

God's movements are a result of Jesus's life moving through God's people. The evidence is in. If you are willing, look at what God is doing through movements, about how he is changing lives—not by the tens, or even by the hundreds, or even by the thousands. Jesus movements are changing neighborhoods, villages, towns, and cities by the *hundreds of thousands*, each with a unique story of what God is doing.

Take Haja, for instance, a town chief in West Africa who was also a devout Muslim. He learned about Jesus from a man from a nearby village who visited his town. Haja knew that Jesus is referred to in the Qur'an. Mentioning Jesus in over ninety verses, Islam corroborates that he was born to a virgin, was sinless, performed miracles, and was superior to other prophets. Yet Islam teaches that Jesus was no more than a prophet.

> "Within twenty-four hours, he had led eight other Muslims to Jesus and baptized them.

Haja learned, from the disciple-maker who shared with him, that none of us can go to heaven unless we put our whole trust in Jesus. After considering the matter, Haja eventually received Jesus as his Savior and was baptized a few days later. Within twenty-four hours, he had led eight other Muslims to Jesus and baptized them, along with most of his household. A church currently meets in Haja's home three times a week.

We are living in a time when the rate of people being reached with the gospel exceeds what is recorded in the book of Acts. When I share with church leaders about these results, I've yet to find one who does not want to experience them firsthand. However, most fail—for various reasons—to come anywhere close to movement life. I want to suggest that there are times and seasons when the Spirit of God sovereignly blesses a people or nations. In the US, we experienced the well-documented Jesus Movement in the 1960s

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to 80s. Another Jesus movement, which surpasses our hopes and dreams, is happening around the world today.

We pray for the harvest and for more workers and fruit in the Western world; and many leaders are trying to apply movement principles, with some success. This takes wisdom and strategic insight, along with prayer and hard work. Perhaps this book can add to the literature seeking to empower workers in all walks of life and in all interested nations to become more adept at working with the Holy Spirit to reap the harvest of God.

The challenge of understanding how movements work became clear to me in a conversation with a missions pastor from a large church here in the US. He was an experienced missionary who had served for two decades in Africa. As we talked over lunch, I shared with him some of the data about our movement growth in Southeast Asia. His eyes grew large as he learned of the numbers of people who were being baptized each month. At that time, we were averaging about twenty thousand baptisms and starting over three thousand new house churches per month.

His brain swirled with what this might mean for the missionaries that his church supports. He dove into his questions, trying to understand what we were experiencing. He eventually asked the potent question: "What kind of seminary training are you providing for your pastors?"

I responded with, "Well, we don't have seminaries or ordained church leaders like you have in your church tradition. Movement leadership is developed in a different way."

I could see his confusion bubbling, but he had more questions: "What about discipleship curriculum? Since your leaders don't go to school, what kind of comprehensive biblical training manuals do you give them?"

> "Movement leadership is developed in a different way.

I'm afraid that my next response only added to his confusion. "Our training is focused on our disciple-makers, often an oral learner who connects with someone in their household or in their house church who can read. We provide lessons that draw from the Word of God and applications in their own life and context. We don't have written products like you might buy from a denominational publisher," I added, "because we focus on providing easily reproducible lessons that reflect the realities of people in our world. Our people, primarily oral learners, are much the same as the peoples in the New Testament—not impacted as much by books or scrolls as much as life-on-life discipleship."

"What about church buildings?" he dropped in the middle of the conversation.

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"We don't have any," I said, without explaining.

"Where do you celebrate the Lord's Supper, then?"

I replied that we do so in homes, when they meet as a church—again, just as was done in the New Testament.

"Who leads these house churches if you don't have any ordained pastors?" I could tell that his frustration was coming to a crescendo. I responded with a story about Aabad, who had recently given his life to Jesus, having had a dream in which a man came to him and told him to pay attention to what his friend Mahib was sharing with him about eternal life through Jesus Christ. He said that the man in the dream had holes in his hands.

After receiving Christ and being baptized, Aabad had led his family and five others in his village to Christ. He had started a 5-5-5 network (comprised of at least 155 people, which I will explain in chapter 8) and was leading a

What is a 5-5-5 Network?

Throughout this book, I will tell stories about people who have developed a 5-5-5 network. The details of how such a network operates will be fully explained in chapter 8. However, the basic system is easy to grasp. Here's how it works: One person shares the Gospel with a family member or friend, and when they find someone receptive to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, they baptize them. After baptism, the new believer is challenged to share his or her new faith with people in their social network until they personally baptize 5 people. This is the first 5. As he or she baptizes them, each of the 5 are challenged to do what was done with them and baptize 5 each, for a total of 25. This is the second 5.

Each of the 25 are then challenged to do the same and another 125 are baptized, for the third 5. This completes the 5-5-5 and a network is formed. As this organic method is worked out, house churches are formed with at least six baptized believers in each one, with 20-25 house churches in a 5-5-5 network. The person who started the network and helped coach and train each generation is considered the network leader and is the focus of training and teaching. They start Learning Communities of six to eight persons, usually comprised of the individuals house churches leaders who meet with them once a month to receive biblical and practical training to be passed along to the house church. There are about 155 people in each 5-5-5 network.

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house church in his home, worshiping Jesus, and learning from the Word of God. Aabad was replicating what he had experienced in the home of Mahib, who had led him to Christ, focusing on obeying the teachings of Jesus and sharing communion in his house church.

My response to this American pastor's questions was almost more than he could bare. "Then what do our donations fund if you don't have church buildings, seminaries, or salaried pastors?"

I said, "Well, I don't actively do that type of fundraising because the organization of the churches is self-funding. We don't need Western funds for the maintenance of church life. Most donations that we seek are for the sake of training events, flood and food relief, and caring for the poorest of the poor."

> "I don't want our churches dependent upon Western money, and I have learned that how you start is how you finish.

I continued, "I don't want our churches dependent upon Western money, and I have learned that how you start is how you finish. That is why the churches are self-funding from the beginning, and all pastoral care and teaching in the house churches are funded by the indigenous churches. We don't pay anyone for doing what Jesus taught us to do, and we have no church planters."

Why Movements Produce Fruit

For over two decades I have been paying attention to the inner workings of movement life, to look beyond the fruit to ascertain why movements grow as they do. In the mid-1960s, I committed my life to mission work, subsequently traveling the world, including twenty-five trips to Russia, and the former Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe, along with more than sixty mission trips all over China, Tibet, and Southeast Asia. I led teams twenty-five times to teach and equip pastors and leaders across South America, Cuba, Brazil, and the Amazon River region.

As I was training pastors and Christian leaders during this time, I began to pray about how my life and ministry efforts could have the greatest impact on where the largest number of people spend eternity. This prayer was my continual focus for many years, and the answer from the Lord served as the foundation for the work of this book.

The Spirit led me to conduct research around the question of what model of church would have the greatest impact on where the greatest number of people spend eternity. My initial research led me to conclude that the cell-

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church model has the most potential to have this kind of impact. Therefore, I began to analyze cell churches in twenty countries to determine the key drivers of growth, using both statistical models and qualitative assessment tools. Dr. Jim Egli and I were able to identify the key factors that result in conversion growth through small groups.[1]

Around the year 2000, I met Ying Kai in Hong Kong and heard about an extraordinary work that was producing tens of thousands of new converts every month in China.[2] Subsequently, my attention shifted from the cell-church strategy to understanding the dynamics of movements. I interviewed extensively and read all of the seminal thinkers in this space, including David Garrison, David Watson, and Curtis Sergeant, along with national leaders that I am not free to name here.

My wife Linda and I spent a week in Singapore, sitting in Bill Smith's International Mission Board training event for their missionaries who wanted to catalyze movements. I then studied and personally researched movements in Northern India, China, Southeast Asia, and Cuba, using the same analytical tools that I used in studying cell churches. I surveyed over five thousand house-church leaders, followed by qualitative interviews of movement leaders. From this academic-level research, and with the help of professionals in this space, we determined that seven root principles drive movement growth, which I detailed in my book *Movements That Move*. I will also introduce these principles in chapter 6 of this book.

> "We are approaching 1.5 million baptized disciple-makers and well over 150,000 house churches.

After identifying these root principles, I felt led by the Lord in 2006 to initiate a pilot project to determine if what I learned through my research was functional and would produce a mass movement of disciples who make disciples. I began working with leaders in Southeast Asia, where the church's impact had been minimal, as less than 1 percent of the population identified as Christian.

This initial group of leaders that I began to train had about 250 house churches under their care, which has served as the seedbed for what has now surpassed even my grandest expectations. We are approaching 1.5 million baptized disciple-makers and well over 150,000 house churches.

1 This method of statistical research has served as the standard for many church research projects, including those reported in works like Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*.

2 Smith and Kai, *T4T*.

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