

CONVENTIONAL WON'T CUT IT

BY JERRY D. PORTER



OUR LORD GAVE US a Great Commission, not a great suggestion! “Go and make disciples of all nations,” He commanded (Matthew 28:18). Evangelism and discipleship are not optional; our mandate remains unchanged. But in creative access areas today, missional Joshuas face political, social, and/or cultural realities that require creative and innovative methods—and the courage to use them.

Our God is not nervously worrying about 21st-century missionary challenges. Every century has presented unique opposition to the Church, but our Lord promised to build “a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out” (Matthew 16:18, TM). In the grace-name of Jesus we will open the very gates of hell to set many captives free. The global Body of Christ is proclaiming hope, deliverance, and new beginnings in a world that is often openly hostile to the gospel, so the eternal, invariable message is being packaged in new practices.

But what happens if we refuse to release traditional methods that are no longer effective? Why is it so difficult for us to embrace new Spirit strategies?

Normally we prefer the comfort zone of our past experiences. New approaches seem risky. We don't know if these new tools will actually be better, and we fear we may lose our message in the process. Thus we are tempted to settle for meager, status quo results in the illusory safety of our comfort zone.

In addition, if we dare adopt big dreams, we feel fear and uncertainty. Satan would convince us that these feelings mean God has abandoned us. In reality, however, until we feel some fear we probably have not yet

been obedient to the heavenly vision.

“*Do not be terrified*; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you,” God said to the man who would lead Israel across the Jordan (Joshua 1:9, emphasis added). In specific obedience, Joshua was moving outside his comfort zone, attempting things for God that he knew he could not do. Trepidation may be good evidence that we too have finally moved out of our comfort zone and into the radical obedience missional zone! That is when we hear, “Fear not!”

We are called to do whatever it takes to reach a lost world. Are we satisfied with the results we are presenting to the Savior? What roadblocks keep us from effectively multiplying Christlike disciples and congregations? Will the Lord reward us for evasive, cowardly acts of passivity? Can we call ourselves cross-carrying disciples if we cower in the shadow of our status quo comfort zone?

If we insist on being comfort zone Christians, we actually could become anti-Kingdom by asking the wrong questions. The Kingdom is not about our preferences or comfort. It is simply about humbly learning again to be obediently flexible and creative to fulfill the mission of our innovative Lord. May we understand once more that we dare not change the essence but that we must find new God-methods to reach our changing world. May we all learn from contemporary missional Joshuas who prayerfully serve in creative access areas. May they teach us again to be bold.

“Do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11). ♦

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