

21st Century Missiology: Kingdom Entrepreneurs Paving the Way

By Joel Vestal
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The word Entrepreneur comes from a French word meaning, one who takes into hand. Introduced in the 19th century by French economist Jan-Baptiste Say, “entrepreneur” characterizes a certain kind of economic actor. It is not merely someone who opens a business, but rather someone who, “shifts resources from one area of lower productivity into another area of higher productivity.” Twentieth Century growth economist Joseph Schumpeter characterized the entrepreneur as the source of “creative destruction” necessary for major economic advances. Look at the individuals who re-imagined cars (Henry Ford) and computers (Steven Jobs) into mass-market goods. They “destroyed” the patterns of their industries, paving the way for leaps in productivity and triggering waves of change. The danger of comparing “the mission enterprise of the church” to business enterprise models is a risky one because it does not always allow a quantifiable way of measuring the results, as some want to do. Some regions of the world are very hostile to the Gospel and have been unresponsive for decades. However, important work has gone forth there. There must be some way for the historic global mission enterprise that is often modeled by Western values and culture to be destroyed so new ways that are culturally relevant to people can increase Kingdom innovation, productivity and fruit.

Individuals around the world who desire to advance the Kingdom of God in word and deed need our encouragement, support and friendship. These individuals who want to launch new churches, justice advocacy programs, evangelistic outreaches, micro-enterprise endeavors, orphanages and training centers for local pastors must be encouraged. We in the West must also be willing to embrace, educate and edify local leaders in the process. In turn, local and innovative leaders must know they are not alone. They are critical for paving the way for change, innovation and fruit. ServLife aims to find the Kingdom Entrepreneurs of the world and help them. These men and women of all ages are creatively “destroying” the old patterns of colonial, Western-dominated missions. It is our duty, joy and obligation to support them, encourage them, fund them and journey with them for the sake of God’s glory among all nations of the earth and the advance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are many individuals in the West who possess a sense of idealism, possibility, hope and vision for global Kingdom impact and intervention unlike that ever seen to date. They have a sense of urgency to act instead of simply following traditional models or institutions. They want to make a difference with their lives, their money and their vocations and, consequently, have far less loyalty and trust for the “establishment” of the missionary or relief/development enterprise that currently exists. In addition, there is a growing desire for strong community, multi-cultural teams, incarnation, justice, holistic ministry and indigenous collaboration; basically not going it “solo” as Westerners. People want organic, grass-roots type of involvement. In Joel 2:28, Scripture reads, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” Gifted individuals in many countries have visions and dreams about advancing the Gospel, ending hunger and furthering the Kingdom of God. They are true apostolic leaders, and they are stepping out in faith, sharing their

visions with no help from large missions and ecclesiological structures. This creation of new apostolic structures (sending mechanisms) is spreading around the world and needs to continue. Momentum is growing as a result of and despite:

- *The global cultural realities:* globalization, integration and growth of technology, migration/immigration, post-colonial; economic prosperity, post-dictatorship nations; etc.
- *The church realities:* post-denominational; house/simple church growth (new models); growth of global church; growth of non-Western mission workers; mobilization of Kingdom professionals; etc.

ServLife will enlist, activate, and deploy people working in communal groups to find these Kingdom Entrepreneurs of the world; men and women of all ages who will be the change, innovation and fruit mentioned here. As Americans, it is our duty, joy and obligation to support them, encourage them, fund them and journey with them, not only for their benefit but also for our own as the Western church. We must have global community in order for full transformation to occur. There has been a strong awareness among young leaders and communities about these issues for some time. Although previous generations may have understood these issues to some degree, it is my opinion that they are emerging now as a unique development in today's global body of Christ and the mission movement. When I share these ideas among others, there is an overwhelming sense of affirmation and agreement.

These issues include:

- The historic global mission enterprise, often captured by Western pragmatic values.
- Churches in other cultures that have not been valued or embraced must now be allowed and encouraged to be themselves instead of existing as mere adaptations of Western values, customs and styles.
- The need to deconstruct existing mission models while respecting and honoring them, and creating new ways to increase innovation, productivity and fruit in individuals and societies. There must be innovation in the ways churches and mission organizations have previously operated.
- We must address the major regrets, mistakes and hindrances the Western Christian mission movement has made. These are:
 - o Exporting a Western Gospel aligned with Western ideals and values.
 - o Defining "missions" as solely evangelistic and not holistic in terms of meeting physical and spiritual needs.
 - o Concerning ourselves more with "nationals" who conform to our theology and the way church is done (ecclesiology).

- o Supporting a strategy that says the “Westerner” is the only actor in the play or the only player on the field.
- o Issues of injustice around the world.

My understanding has evolved into a strong conviction that God is working on the “edges” of the Church in ways not previously acknowledged by mainline church bodies. God is at work within the entire body of Christ, just as He is at work within other areas of society. There needs to be more effort in telling the stories and connecting the mainline/historical church with the emerging/newer global models of Kingdom work. I love the Church expressed in all her beauty. We are the bride of Christ, despite our division and lack of unity. Will you join me with your prayers, your giving and your willingness to see the world become a different place in the name of Jesus Christ?