

Things we know that aren't necessarily so: Part 1

Author: John Scott

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I begin by stating the obvious:

What we don't yet know far exceeds what we already know.

Put more bluntly, our ignorance far exceeds our knowledge.

And not everything we "know" is actually true; i.e. the things we know aren't necessarily so, just because we believe them, or because millions of other people believe them. God is the only one who gets it right the first time, every time.

So this and subsequent blogs on the subject of "things we know that aren't necessarily so" are written in the conviction that there is much we can yet learn about how to be effective in ministry. And sometimes what we learn may go against conventional mission wisdom and practice.

Our starting point will be what practitioners working among a particularly challenging group "the world's least-reached missing peoples" have been learning. Consider the following:

Go slow to go fast. Focus on a few (or even one) to win many.

Plant churches by not planting churches. New/inexperienced insiders are more effective than highly trained, mature outsiders.

Start with creation, not Christ. Disciple to conversion, don't convert to make disciples.

These learnings didn't just happen. They are borne out of the frustration and failure of trying to implement models of ministry that didn't work. They are equally borne out of a fresh study of the Scripture to re-discover how Jesus went about his ministry.

Those who have been learning these counter-intuitive lessons share at least six qualities in common: Desperation: to find a more effective way to reach the unreached. Prayerfulness: to seek God's heart and His wisdom for a way forward where nothing has worked and darkness prevails. Humility: to recognize how much they have to unlearn, and to create a readiness for God to speak in fresh ways. Curiosity: to wonder if there's a better way, and to read the Scriptures more like a detective novel than a legal document or rule book. Courage: to risk obeying God when he speaks and to try unconventional approaches when they are called for. Perseverance: to continue in the face of uncertainty and failure.

This is a work-in-progress. Our ignorance still far exceeds our knowledge. But it makes one wonder?

Could it be that these counter-intuitive lessons being learned among the often forgotten missing peoples of the world are a gift from God to the worldwide Church today?

The purpose in sharing these lessons is to stimulate fresh thinking that goes beyond simply hearing what's happening in someone else's ministry.

?In what ways might these approaches shed light on how we can be more effective in our ministry, wherever we are serving??

In the next blog, we'll start exploring specific counter-intuitive lessons.

