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Ouch! It's Indigenous...

Four years ago, Jeanie and I were in Springfield, Missouri, attending the School of Missions. For several weeks we sat and listened to veteran missionaries tell of the wonderful victories and miracles the Lord accomplished through missions. Many were also able to share the struggles and hardships that accompanied those victories. It still remains in my life a real highlight. While at SOM, we were given an arm load of books to be read with reports due throughout the remainder of our iteration. Due to the fact I never know who reads these letters, I'll not comment on whether or not I completed the assignment. I will tell you there is one small book which was referred to over and over during the School. It's entitled, "The Indigenous Church" by missionary Melvin Hodges.

I can honestly tell you that I have read and re-read this book several times while in Scotland...

It proved to be an invaluable resource for me while the new church was developing.

The general thrust of the book describes the goal of our missionary involvement as establishing the indigenous church, meaning it is:

- Self governing
- Self supporting
- Self propagating

In short, the goal of missions is to leave behind a strong, healthy church, able to carry on without you!

(Ouch, it's indigenous) One aspect which was not covered in Mr. Hodges' work is that our work by nature will be Self-agonizing as well! My veteran colleagues forgot to forewarn me on how painful it would be to release this brand new church into the hands of those God had raised up.

To add to this dynamic, when Jeanie and I first moved to Scotland, we went with three teenagers. Eric, Keith and Chelsea were still in high school.

Now that we are back in Texas, both sons are in university and our daughter will be completing her senior year at high school. Often I have reflected on



The Lecture Room at Bell College where Harvest held its first services.

the parallels of parenting and church planting. All joys seem coupled with a tinge of sadness, having invested so much in the development of children and a new church and then having to release them on their own. It can be a moment of truth both for the child/parent and church/pastor. You have either done your job well, or it was all a veneer.



Harvest celebrates its first anniversary!

We are happy to report that the Lord has helped us to raise well-adjusted (not perfect) children and establish a healthy – indigenous church in Scotland by the name of Harvest Christian Fellowship! Now let me tell you a few lessons that we've learned.

Suppose you were going to start a business in a foreign country. And you have 3-4 years to get it established or "indigenous". You would learn a new language, new culture and a new market in record time. You would put together some type of a business plan or strategy that would make sense to your banker. But the over-riding element and perspective would be this 3-4 year window in which all your targets must be reached. It would simplify and intensify your game plan... Here are a few simple points that come in the acrostic of LET GO!

Leading: I'll not take the time to add my small bits of wisdom to the wealth of leadership material... let me just capture one small aspect of leadership; capturing and communicating vision.

When we came to the city of Hamilton, we knew virtually nothing about the culture and dynamic of the area. Every morning I would go early into the city and meet with people to ask them all sorts of

questions. We conducted several thousand community surveys in order to get a feel for what people were thinking. I read the newspaper every morning through the filter of "what is this article telling me about the Scots?". Through all this fact-finding and yes, a little plagiarizing... I came up with a simple plan of action and strategy.

The next step was to capsule and communicate that vision in a manner that people could understand and grasp.

A part of our strategy included many of the Purpose Driven principles. You may recall this is captured in a baseball motif, 1st base etc. Amazingly, though the Scots are completely unfamiliar with the game of baseball, the concept was clear enough and easily adopted even though football (soccer) is still king!

Somehow, the Lord helped us capture and communicate a vision for reaching a community for Christ and change the moral climate of an area one person at a time. Today, an energetic group of Christians exist in Hamilton, who are advancing in a direction God gave us... without me! (Ouch, it's indigenous!) This summer and fall there will be several major outreaches conducted in the city, all without me! A variety of ministries are launching as the result of a simple plan of community involvement and acts of kindness.



Bell College becomes too small...

Empowering: From our first Sunday service, as I would shake the hand of every guest, whether a professing Christian or not, wondering to myself, "Am I looking into the eyes of my future worship

leader, children's worker, etc... Remember, I have 3-4 years to discover, train and release a whole group of people or this is going to be a huge disaster! From the outset of the church we tried to create an atmosphere of releasing people to do the work of the ministry. "Releasing" remains one of the core words in our strategy statement.

Another philosophy which was kept before our growing congregation was "God doesn't send slackers... or pew-potatoes." Everyone God sends to Harvest comes with a purpose. It is our goal to discover this and release that gift into the body of Christ. You can imagine the wonderful sense of significance this created in people whom the world had beaten down and those who were new in their faith.

I'm a worshipper... I've been involved with music and worship from an early age... Several times I recall reluctantly taking my seat on the front row while others led our congregation in worship. Ouch!

Part of empowering is allowing others to do marginally well, what you know you could do better. The aim for excellence has to be balanced with the intent of encouraging and releasing those whom God has sent to replace you. (Ouch!) We had to keep in mind; in a few months; we won't even be here! (Ouch, it's indigenous!) Today, a young man leads our worship who has just released his first worship CD, which is being promoted in Christian bookstores throughout Scotland... all without me!

Here's a demanding question... "How do you empower people whom you are just getting to know?" It can be scary when you could be making a huge mistake. Many have learned the hard way... "It takes 5 minutes to promote them and 5 years to remove them!" Which takes me to my third point...

Trusting: This is where the trouble really begins! If you don't/can't believe in people God has given, you will be only marginally successful and you'll

certainly be quite lonely at the top of whatever hill you climb.

I'll never forget experiencing the long flight back to Scotland from Texas after having dropped off two sons at a university. "Can I trust them?" Maybe I had a few skeletons rattling in some back closet, but I couldn't help thinking of my own "college days"... yikes! And then to drop off a couple of my most prized possessions and fly several thousands of miles away, leaving them to make their own decisions in this crazy world... During the flight I kept arguing the point... "Have I done the right thing?", "Are they

ready for this responsibility?" All I can say, you enter into a new intensity of "Tis' so sweet to trust in Jesus!" Learning to let go, and leave brings a new level to trust.

The final weeks in Scotland... frankly I struggled! I didn't want to let go. I didn't want to come home. I wanted to tell Mr. Hodges... "surely there is an exception..."

Jeanie tried to comfort me by saying, "Ken, you're too controlling!" I was hardly comforted...

During this period of agony I think I must have read Acts 20, 20 times... Each time I would arrive at verse 32 and wonder, "Paul, how did you do it?" How could you just commend them to God and climb aboard the ship, knowing all that could go wrong?"

I remember reading and re-reading this passage in a variety of translations thinking to myself, "Paul did you really believe what you said in verse 29... "grievous wolves"?"

Listen to this passage taken from The Message: "I know that as soon as I'm gone, vicious wolves are going to show up and rip into this flock, men from your very own ranks twisting words so as to seduce disciples into following them instead of Jesus. So stay awake and keep up your guard. Remember those three years I kept at it with you, never letting up, pouring my heart out with you, one after another." How can someone not cease for the space



of three years ... and then say, "Boys, it's up to you now!"?

If you ever get the chance to read Melvin Hodges "The Indigenous Church", you will find it time well spent. Throughout the chapters there is a re-occurring theme which suggests, as missionaries, we must know that the power of God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly more than we could ever comprehend. We must know that indeed Christ is the Head of the Church. It was His life that birthed the church! It is His life that flows through this young church, not mine! We must believe and know that His purposes are being fulfilled in Scotland, not my dreams and ambitions. We must trust the Holy Spirit to take this newly planted seed, and watch, protect and nurture it to the full life for which it was created.



Harvest Christian Fellowship last Sunday!

Now my acrostic said, LET GO... and I really don't have anything yet for GO... so take the outline and finish for me!

As Jeanie and I are adapting to the new stage of parenthood, watching our teens turn into twenties and moving into young adulthood. Simultaneously, we are adjusting to life in the USA... while a young indigenous church carries on without us! Believing God has helped us to lead, empower and trust them to make wise, godly choices. Though the wolves are lurking, we remain confident that God's word is able to build them up and give them an inheritance among the sanctified.

The Lord graciously gave us two wonderful couples who have taken up the work in Scotland.

Tony & Yvonne Foley – Interim Pastors
Paul & Heini Euliano – Youth Pastors.

The Foleys have just returned from missionary work in Taiwan. Though their gifts are much different from Jeanie and mine, I know they will be a

tremendous blessing to the young congregation. Both couples have proven ministries and we anticipate the church to continue to grow and prosper even in our absence... (Ouch!)

What Lies Ahead?

Jeanie and I are enjoying getting settled again in Texas. We have looked forward to spending time with our families and catching up on all the local news.

Within a few days we will begin the process of contacting many of the churches and individuals who have financially and prayerfully supported us over the last four years. We anticipate the opportunity to thank you personally and share the wonderful news of what the Lord has

accomplished in Scotland! **We did not**

do this on our own! I believe you were right there with us...

Jesus said, "...both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together!" (John 4:36)

Out of space and so much to say...

I'm out of space... so I'll close by saying, you can contact us! Our websites are in need of major revision. Be patient, we'll get there...

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