

How It Begins

by K.P. Yohannan

A fresh movement of God is marked by radical behavior, transformational leadership, and relational ministry.

Scripture: Psalm 51:6, Matthew 16:24, Luke 10:1, John 13:35, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:45, Acts 5:41, Acts 9:27, Romans 12:10, Philippians 2:4

Topics: "Transformation", "Radical Faith", "Relationships in Christ"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the three distinct characteristics of movements initiated by God, as seen in the early church: radical commitment, transformational growth, and relational dynamics. He highlights how early Christians were fearless and willing to take risks for their faith, viewing their mission as a one-way trip with no turning back. Yohannan also discusses the transformative power of God in the lives of believers, illustrating how Jesus focused on potential rather than perfection, and how relationships were central to the early church's growth. He encourages the church today to embrace these principles to foster a vibrant and impactful faith community.

Transcript

If you look at any movement that God begins, you will see three distinct characteristics. You will find these in the early church. Let us take some time and go back to the book of Acts, to the very beginnings of the Church. If we can live with these believers for a while and feel what they felt, I believe we can return to our own situations and circumstances with some timeless principles. It is Radical It does not take long when reading through Acts to discover that these believers were radical--they were willing to take all kinds of risks.

To the rest of the world they were crazy people, blind to reality--nuts! But this is what Jesus was after--radical, fearless men and women. These were the kinds of people He was looking for when He told them: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). When the early Christians understood that Christ had risen, victorious over sin and death, they readily burned all their bridges behind them and said, in essence, "There's nothing to go back to.

This is a one-way trip" (see Acts 2:45; 4:19-20; 5:29-32; 7:51-60). At this time in history, the city of Jerusalem was completely anti-Christian. Imagine trying to preach the Gospel out in the open today in the nation of Afghanistan or in a Hindu temple--believe me, that would be easier than doing so in Jerusalem in A.D. 33. The early Christians knew they would be beaten up and put in prison if they preached the Gospel

(see Acts 8:3). It did not matter to them--they did it anyway, considering it an honor to suffer for Christ's sake (Acts 5:41).

These people were so radical that nothing would stop them. They were not concerned with preserving their lives. They were bold and adventurous. They were open to new ideas. They wouldn't take "no" for an answer. They were motivated from within rather than from tradition. They were willing to endure any hardship, but they wouldn't keep their mouths shut. And ultimately these characteristics earned them the reputation of being "world revolutionaries" (see Acts 17:6). When I think back to the beginnings of our movement, I see that same radical attitude in our early days.

I can honestly tell you, I don't know how on earth we did what we did! The way so many of our programs developed was not through planning, scheming or figuring. They just happened out of spontaneity, love, dreams, hopes and ambitions rather than out of rules or regulations. We were not on any kind of schedule or timetable. Today I carry a planner with me to help me remember my appointments--but I had nothing of the sort then. I did not know just what was going to happen, but it did--amazingly and radically so.

It Is Transformational The people involved in the tremendous growth of the early church were not considered to be tools used to get things done. Rather, they threw their lives into their calling, and all the while God was using them to impact the world and carry out His plan, they themselves were actually being continually transformed and changed in the process. Jesus focused on people's potential instead of on weakness. He did not recruit perfect people, but people who could change, who would have a heart commitment.

You've read enough of the Gospels to know that His disciples came from the dregs of society. (Gayle Erwin talks about this in detail in *The Jesus Style*.¹) Just imagine the scenario that surrounded Jesus in just the last 48 hours of His life: 12 men fighting among themselves over who was greatest . . . one of His closest followers betraying Him . . . and the rest running away when the danger got too close. Yet He entrusted these men, in whom He had invested three years of His life, to carry on the calling God had given Him.

It was unto Peter, who denied His Master three times, that Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom (see Matthew 26:75; 16:18-19)! Think about the apostle Paul after he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Most believers did not want to have anything to do with him. "He's dangerous," they believed (see Acts 9:21, 26). But then you see Barnabas enter the scene, put his arm around Paul and vouch for his integrity to the early church (Acts 9:27). And Paul, who had once worked tirelessly to persecute believers in Jesus and eradicate all traces of Christianity, becomes totally transformed into one of the greatest apostles who ever lived.

How did this happen? Not all in one day, but in a process that took time, starting with 14 years out in the wilderness. In our early days, when we thought about recruiting staff members, we had no application form or interview process. I'll never forget the day when one couple just showed up on our doorstep with their little baby in their arms, ready to serve God with us. I never even thought to ask him for references! It was all so fresh and amazing. You'll find that same wonder, awe and fear of God in the beginnings of any organization.

God just brings people--no forms to be filled out--He works in their lives and changes them, and then uses them to change others. It is a continuous, perpetual motion in which somehow things just keep happening. Nobody stops to think about how! You see, God is always more concerned about people than about what

they can do. And if we follow Him, He will make sure that we keep this in mind. God's approach is always from the inside out (Luke 11:39-40; Psalm 51:6). Character is the important thing.

If this is taken care of, the rest will follow. Jesus' only requirement for those who wanted to be His disciples was that they obey and follow (Matthew 16:24). He did not ask about anything else. He knew, like a potter, that if the clay would submit, He could mold and transform it to become the most precious vessel to be used for His kingdom. It Is Relational The third characteristic that marks the beginning of any movement of God is that everything happens through relationship, just as we see in the book of Acts (Acts 2:42, 44-47).

When Jesus sent the disciples out to the villages, He sent them two by two, not one by one (Luke 10:1). If you look in the Gospel of John, beginning with chapter 13, Jesus gives His disciples some final instructions before He goes to the cross. But the crux of His message has nothing to do with world evangelism, changing the world, the reality of hell, how to start an organization or a list of rules. All He simply said was, "If you love one another, the world will know you are My disciples."

His prayers, His concern had everything to do with this one truth. And how did Paul do his work? Read his epistles, and you will find such phrases as these: "This brother greets you," or "this sister greets you," or "the church in your house..." (see Romans 16:23, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15). And at the end of each letter there always seems to be a list of names tagged on. You will always find relationships working here. Paul's life and ministry have everything to do with working with others.

We are commanded to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens. Look at Romans 12 and Philippians 2, as well as other Scripture portions that deal with our relationship toward one another in the Body of Christ. You will see clearly that this is how God works. This is His plan to get things done. As time passes, unfortunately, these three natural distinctives that mark a fresh movement of God will naturally degrade. Let us look at these changes in the next chapter. Notes: 1 Gayle Erwin, *The Jesus Style* (California: YASHUA Publishing, 1997), pp. 24-26.

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