

It is a DAWN strategy if. . .

The Great Commission to us literally is to make disciples of *nations*. God's interest in nations is made abundantly clear throughout the whole Bible. The current reality is that there is a stirring in nations all over the world.

One of the means God is using to maximize these opportunities is what we call a DAWN or DAWN-type strategy. A true DAWN project is a saturation church planting process carried out at a national level and includes eight steps and ingredients.

1. It is a DAWN project if there is a national leader and a national committee with a firm resolve and commitment to work at mobilizing the whole Body of Christ in a whole nation in a long-term repeating strategy that leads most directly to the discipling of the nation including all the people groups within it. Such a leader, along with the national committee, is sometimes referred to as a John Knoxer, a man or woman or small group who embody the prayer of the reformer in Scotland whose life-long cry was "Give me my country or I die."

This leader must not only have the passion and calling but also the spiritual gifts, the experience, the respect of national Church leaders and, significantly, the organizational structure necessary for mobilizing the Church of a nation in a DAWN project.

As DAWN has developed around the world, we have seen an honor roll of such godly men and women rise to the occasion. At least one DAWN project leader has been martyred as a direct result of his role in the growth of the evangelical church in his nation.

Others have risked jail, sold their homes, left their jobs and otherwise sacrificed their security and tranquillity in order to be involved at some level of the process of filling their country with congregations of new converts.

These godly men and women have emerged to take up the cause of the discipling of their nation under a great range of circumstances. The size, strength and spiritual dynamic of the Church varies from place to place. Likewise, the receptivity to the gospel or the degree of repression and persecution is different in each situation. For these creative and persistent leaders, however, a way is usually found to keep the movement alive.

2. It is a DAWN project if it is built on the premise that the most direct way to work at the discipling of a whole nation is to fill it with evangelical congregations so that there is one within easy access both practically and culturally of every person of every class, kind and condition of mankind in that nation. This includes all "reached" and "unreached" people groups.

As explained in detail in the book DAWN 2000: 7 MILLION CHURCHES TO GO, the core idea of the DAWN strategy for world evangelization goes like this:

DAWN aims at mobilizing the whole Body of Christ in whole countries in a determined effort to complete the Great Commission in that country by working toward the goal of providing an evangelical congregation for every village and neighborhood of every class, kind and condition of people in the whole country.

It is concerned that Jesus Christ become incarnate in all his beauty, compassion, power and message in the midst of every small group of people—400 or so to 1,000 or more in number—in a whole country including all its “reached” and “unreached” people groups.

When this is accomplished, it is not assumed the Great Commission for a country has been completed, but that a practical and measurable goal has been reached toward making a disciple of that country and all the “nations” within it.

With a witnessing congregation in every small community of people, it is now possible to communicate the gospel in the most direct, contextualized and productive way to every person in that land.

Every person now has a reasonable opportunity to make an informed, intelligent decision for or against Jesus Christ.

Everyone now has a church within easy access both in a practical as well as cultural sense where he or she can attend and be further trained in discipleship should he or she become a believer.

The penultimate (next to last) step for making a disciple of every “nation” in a country has been reached.

When this happens in *every* country in the world, we can almost hear the trumpet sound. The primary task the Lord gave his Church is close to completion and the Lord can soon return for his bride.

Of all the many affirmations of this DAWN strategy we have heard from around the world, I still like best the comment of a former Methodist bishop in Zimbabwe. “DAWN is a one-word summary of the Great Commission,” he said to Dawn missionary Ted Olsen. “Jesus told his followers to make disciples of all nations. DAWN is the essence of our Lord’s command.

3. It is a DAWN project if there has been adequate research that determines:

- a) the number of denominations in a country,
- b) their respective number of local churches and members and/or average attendance,
- c) the average annual growth rates (AAGR’s) of each denomination.
- d) the methodologies being used by various groups that are producing the best growth,
- e) the ratio of churches to population for the whole nation and for every sub-group of the nation,

and

f) such contextual factors as the history, economy, religion, culture, politics, natural disasters and other societal forces that tend to indicate the relative responsiveness of the population and the methodologies and themes that might best see a response to the gospel.

Xolisani Dlamini of Zimbabwe is representative of that special breed that, in some circumstances at least, risks life and limb to get the data needed for a successful DAWN project.

In completing the research for one region of Zimbabwe, Xolisani hiked hundreds of kilometers, wore out five pair of shoes, interviewed scores of Church leaders and spoke with dozens of government officials. In the process he encountered lions, deadly cobras, angry elephants and even killers wielding machetes and witches breathing satanic curses.

But even more important, Xolisani helped gather the data that led the participants in a DAWN Congress to set a goal of planting 10,000 more churches, a goal that many are successfully working towards.

On completion of his first round of data gathering, Xolisani said, “Now I know that the research I undertook was a divine appointment. Research is a most important thing! Without it, we simply will not know how strong or how weak the church is or where we need to plant new churches.”

Or, as Ross Campbell, now with the AD200 Movement, said after their first round of research in Ghana, “Nothing was the way we imagined it. We have had to change our whole strategy for ‘churching’ this country.”

4. It is a DAWN project if a national congress is held where the primary leaders of all denominations and other para church organizations along with leading pastors gather to consider the discipling of their whole nation and analyze the data that has been collected.

This is, obviously, the most visible aspect of a DAWN-type project. It is the event where anywhere from 50 to 1,500 delegates representing every stripe of evangelical are gathered in unity and commitment to a long-range strategy of working towards a common goal.

Putting together such a congress requires great persistence in finding and gathering just the right mix of leaders, brilliance and spiritual insight in developing the prophetic message and a program to communicate it, skill in gathering and supervising a strong team of workers, ability to cut costs and raise large amounts of money—and much more! Committees are needed for selection of delegates, finances, site selection and arrangements, housing of delegates, congress program, communications and so on.

Tom Houston, International Director for the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization, warns that it will be disastrous “...to move ahead before the whole Body is ready.” The unity of the Church in some countries makes it possible to start a project almost as soon as it is presented. In Finland it took eight years before such unity came. In Japan, at this writing, there is such division between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals that the time is still not ripe for a true DAWN project.

Sometimes there is need for a major spiritual breakthrough. Such was the case in Argentina in September 1994, when leaders were gathered for an initial meeting to consider whether to proceed with a DAWN project or not. Bob Smart, who first experienced DAWN in his native England, broke down all barriers with his humble approach.

“I come in the name of the English Church to apologize for what my country did in the Falklands war,” he said. “I confess also the pride that we as a Church felt.”

At this point, Dawn missionary Berna Salcedo heard someone cry. It turned out to be one of the pastors who had participated in that hostility. Soon other pastors were weeping all around the room. Someone asked Alberto De Luca, leader of the meeting, to give brother Smart a hug as a sign of forgiveness. From that point on, it was not difficult for the Church to come together for a DAWN Congress and national strategy.

5. It is a DAWN project if the delegation gathered at the national congress collectively commits itself to a specific number of churches to be planted by a specific date. This goal can either be suggested by the national committee based on the research done or can be the collective goal of all the denominations, missions and other para church organizations. (See next point.)

One of the best ways to set a national church-planting goal—and get commitment to it by all denominations in a country—is the way they did it in England.

In England, the national Challenge 2000 (DAWN) committee spent many hours praying and poring over the data that had been gathered through their research project. They concluded that a goal of 20,000 new churches by AD 2000 seemed to be what the Spirit was saying.

But they shared this goal with no one. Instead, they had each denomination set their own goals at the Congress held in February, 1993. When these individual goals were added together, the total came to almost exactly 20,000!

It was great confirmation to all that this represented the mind of Christ. With this conviction, the multiplication of churches throughout England is overcoming many years of decline.

6. It is a DAWN project if each evangelical denomination, mission agency and other group sets its own goals for number of churches to be planted by a certain date and develops and implements plans to reach that goal. It is expected that all para church organizations that do not plant churches themselves will so orient their ministries that they truly work “alongside” churches and denominations in their church-multiplication projects.

All the activities of a DAWN process are useless if the participants do not make specific commitments to national and organizational goals for massive church-planting efforts

In Guatemala, for example, 15 individual denominations set goals and developed plans for church-multiplication efforts. Under such names as “Vision 90,” “Faith Projection,” “Advance,” “One by One

by One,” and so on, goals were set to double or triple their number of churches, have each church start a new church or reach a total of 1,000 churches. Most of these were five-year goals.

These individual denominational efforts kept a growth movement alive without a national focus and strong committee. Effective denominational projects of this nature include the same components as the national DAWN project.

7. It is a DAWN project if there is a national committee formed to keep the movement alive.

One of the most crucial tasks of a DAWN committee is the continual communication of the vision to saturate a nation with churches. This committee sees that the research process continues, helps denomination leaders develop their plans for church multiplication, sees that regional DAWN seminars are held throughout the nation, encourages continued prayer for the movement, plans for the second DAWN congress and in general keeps the vision alive.

Many committees are finding that they can keep in contact with large numbers of Christian leaders through the regular distribution of a publication. Through this they are able to foster interest in and commitment to the national church-planting strategy in all its many facets.

A good communication model is the newspaper-style publication called the *Philippine Challenge*, published by Philippine Challenge. With a circulation of 9000 going to pastors and lay leaders throughout the Philippines, it has been chronicling the development and growth of the Philippine DAWN movement begun in 1974.

This publication is full of good news — churches being planted, new strategies being tried, denominational growth programs that are underway. You catch the encouraging flavor when you read some of the headlines: “Local church plants 13 churches in 1992;” “Foursquare plants 126 churches in ’88;” “Mindanao owns half of DAWN 2000 goals;” “Cebu church sends missionaries to Thailand;” “23 thousand churches found;” “Church planting institute opens in ’92.”

This kind of reporting gives readers a bigger picture of what’s going on in their nation. As they read issue after issue about what God is accomplishing through the church, it also becomes a source of vision and creative thinking. People have models to follow and adapt to their situation.

8. It will be a truly powerful DAWN project if it is undergirded by effective prayer movements on national, regional, denominational and local church levels.

As the current proliferation of books on world revival emphasize, prayer is the key. “The evangelical scholar J. Edwin Orr,” writes David Bryant, “summarized into one simple statement his sixty years of historical study on great prayer movements preceding major spiritual awakenings: *‘Whenever God is ready to do something new with his people, he always sets them to praying.’*”

If God indeed is “about to do something new” in mobilizing his Body in nation after nation and in the whole world to complete his 2,000-year-old command, surely this also will come about as he sets us to praying.

Where would we be without intercessors like Jean Lim?

God raised her up from a family of idol worshippers in Indonesia and from a life of gambling and greed. She came through a series of deaths of loved ones, attempted suicides, enslavement to Japanese Buddhism and attendance with mediums and witch doctors.

“Now,” she says, “I just love to pray and wait upon the Lord in His presence for hours and hours.”

God has also used her to lead one of the most powerful prayer ministries connected with any DAWN project in the world. Her extended times of intercession, her small prayer group, her constant travels around the nation to organize prayer cells and her organizing of special seasons of prayer all mightily empower the Malaysia DAWN vision of planting 4,000 new churches.

I think there are two sides of the prayer coin that need equal emphasis. One is the spiritual warfare aspect of breaking down strongholds of the enemy in individuals, in cities, in people groups, in nations or wherever they occur. When satanic forces are bound or scattered, there is then entrance for the gospel. This, rightfully, is receiving a lot of attention and is another indication of the world-wide revival we are in. It is a significant factor in being able to complete the Great Commission in our time.