

## The Banks of the Movement

by Steve Smith

One of the greatest fears – which becomes an objection – about CPM is that heresy and immorality will develop. When I hear that fear expressed, I remember Proverbs 14:4 about the messy manger and the parable of the tares (Matthew. 13:24-30, 36-43; problems *will* come when the kingdom comes). There is no way around problems in any ministry, especially a church planting *movement* in which so many people are coming to faith, churches being planted and leaders being developed.

The problems that develop in CPMs (heresy, immorality, you name it) are probably no greater than any other ministry context *by proportion* (e.g. 5% of the believers or churches will display problems), but they are greater *in number* due to the increased numbers of new believers, baptisms, discipleship groups, churches and leader<sup>1</sup>. The problems may even be fewer in proportion than non-CPM contexts. This is in part due to the fact that so many believers are being discipled and trained, and a lot of good mentoring is taking place generation by generation. Their vision is so great and the devotion so fervent, that it is harder for heresy and immorality to rear their heads.

Again, an informal observation in CPM contexts is that cults actually seem to make fewer inroads proportionately in CPMs than in other context. This is not to say cults don't make inroads: we all know stories of cults pulling away some key leaders or churches. However, often believers and churches in CPM are not good fodder for cults because of their devotion and rapid maturing process.

But we would be naïve to say that such problems do not exist in CPMs also. The point is that these problems are not greater in proportion than in other contexts, and probably are less in proportion. All ministries have problems. This was a primary factor in Paul writing his churches. They dealt with heresy and immorality in various forms. Thriving, growing churches and movements have lots of problems, because the enemy is attacking. The problems of dying churches are even greater. And the problem of lostness is the greatest impetus of all for rapidly raising up leaders and churches.

One characteristic of CPMs it that they are out of your *personal control* but stay within the control of the King. That sounds fine on paper. We all long for explosive movements of God that bring revival to nations. But the living it out is a challenge for us personally. We are so tempted to take back control, and thereby quench the movements. When we take back control of a movement, it is no different than taking back control of a church service in which the Spirit is powerfully moving. We end up doing what Paul tells us not to do: "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thes 5:19, NASB).

So, a basic premise of CPMs is to exercise proper influence to shape the movement, but not usurp the role of the Spirit to control and be the Teacher of the movement. We learn to be comfortable with the unpredictability of the wind of the Spirit (John 3:8). We must give up control so that He will be in control.

Giving up control, however, does not mean giving up influence. There are critical things you can do to help the raging movement of the streams of CPM to stay within the banks of orthodoxy and morality. How do you help it become a healthy CHURCH planting movement, not a CULT planting movement?

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<sup>1</sup> Are we willing to use the same standards and concerns for heresy in church-culture churches and ministries as in CPMs?

We need not fear heresy and immorality IF we have a plan for dealing with them. If we do not, we should fear them greatly. What plan can keep the movement in the banks of orthodoxy and morality?

### *Two Preliminary Elements: Discipleship and Leadership Training*

In the T4T book we have already discussed two elements that greatly aid in reducing the impact and spread of false teaching, wrong doctrine and immoral behavior: Discipleship and Leadership Training.

#### ***Discipleship***

T4T and other CPM methodologies have greatly improved our success rate against heresy and immorality because in CPMs, especially via T4T, believers are getting frequent, accountable discipleship. Problems (wrong teaching, wrong theology, temptations, sins) become apparent in the small group life very quickly. The group as well as the leader(s) is able to self-correct before problems become large.

Sin and heresy issues tend to develop *in isolation* when believers fall away from frequent accountability for life and godliness. In isolation, strange doctrines and practices can develop. Small groups and house churches of CPMs tend to notice when people withdraw, and generally live more transparently and accountably with one another. Heresies also tend to develop when a dominant leader has the “primary knowledge and power.” The multiplicity of leadership in CPMs tends to mitigate against this becoming a pattern.

#### ***Leadership Training***

The Chapter 17 of the T4T book highlighted that CPMs are leadership multiplication movements. Leaders receive *a lot* of attention from mentors and other colleagues. Because of this, problems are generally spotted quickly before they can affect a large number of people.

In one CPM, a leader of a violent, fanatical cult infiltrated the ranks of the leadership. His apparent goal was to seize control of the house church network. This man posed as a growing believer and turned in glowing reports during his T4T time. In an Absalom-like way, he gradually tried to turn the hearts of everyday believers and house church leaders toward his personal control.

However, in the leadership training and accountability, it became apparent early on that there were many inconsistencies. Eventually, the CPM facilitators and a few key national leaders confronted this man, and the truth came out. Because the leaders caught this quickly, the damage was fairly well contained. Without a strong leadership training plan in place, it could have been months before this problem surfaced. By that time, it would have been very difficult to recover the streams of churches affected.

### **Banks of a Movement: Obedience to the Word Alone as Authority**

Ultimately, you cannot control a CPM or any other movement of God as long as you want it to continue to grow as movement of God. What you can do is nudge and shape it, and put parameters in place that enable you to call back believers and churches when they get off-track. These are the

banks of the channels through which the movement will flow. The banks keep it in the channel of orthodoxy, orthopraxy and holiness.

Introducing strict control of a movement is similar to the old brittle wineskins of Matthew 9:14-17. In the movement of God's Spirit, even our methods and practices have to remain flexible, not slavish and rote. Jesus condemned the heavy burden of the rituals the Jewish leaders had imposed on the people of God; they were inflexible and slavish. Jesus prophesied that in His kingdom, the wineskins (new ways of living the life of the Spirit) would remain flexible.

This is true in "innovative" CPMs of today. Today's innovation can be tomorrow inflexible law. It is easy to get stuck at a certain stage of a movement ("we have the perfect tool"; "this is the way we do leadership development"; "this is our view on \_\_\_\_"). It is impossible to impose methods and laws on a movement without losing both the movement and the Spirit behind the movement (Matt 9:17).

In CPMs, what is essential is that you give emerging believers, churches and leaders a way to hear God speak in His Word (authority), a value to obey what He says (obedience), and the discipline to self-correct the movement no matter the consequences (discipline).

### *AUTHORITY: Authority of God's Word Alone*

Martin Luther and the other Reformers probably had some inkling of the implications of where their views might take them in reforming the church or separating from the church of the time. The guiding factor for their disagreements as well as their reforms was the view that Scripture alone provides the final authority for all we need for salvation and life in the kingdom: *Sola Scriptura*. This has been a value upheld believers for hundreds of years.

Yet *in practice* it is easy to move away from *Sola Scriptura* by adding additional or competing functional authorities for new believers and churches. Theologically, we would say: "Scripture is their final authority." Practically, it is easy for the CPM initiator *or his interpretation of Scripture* rather than Scripture alone to become the final authority. It is easy for the pastor or church planter *or his interpretation of Scripture* rather than Scripture alone to become the final authority. It is easy for statements of faith, church traditions and denominational values compete and functionally usurp Scripture as the final authority. It is easy for "words for the Lord" or "dreams or visions" to supplant the authority of Scripture in the lives of new believers.

Handing them Bibles and telling them to study them does not make Scripture their final authority. You must teach them how to approach God's Word so that it becomes their authority. You must reinforce the value of God's Word, not any man's word, as the final authority. This is not to downplay that God uses other authorities in our lives: pastors, employers, government, parents, etc. But all of them are subject to the final authority of the Scripture which is God's written revelation of Himself and His ways.

In CPMs or new church starts, you set the DNA for almost all of the new believers' understanding and practice. Therefore, you must carefully watch your attitudes, words and actions from the moment you begin contact with persons of peace and all the way through withdrawing from your active involvement in a CPM. You must build in a proper value for the authority of God's Word. It will

not come automatically. The young believers look to you, naturally, as a spiritual parent or mentor. Don't let that healthy respect replace the role the Scripture should have.

Eventually, the believers, the churches and the movement will spread beyond your direct influence and mentoring. What authority will they follow when questions or disputes arise? Your opinion, their opinion or the Word? If you set them up to value the Word PLUS your opinion, what will happen when another teacher comes in (orthodox or false teacher) whose opinions contradict yours? How will you call them back when they get off track?

***If you have not given them a value that Scripture is the final authority, you have no way to call them back when they err.*** If you have set up your word as an authority (even unconsciously), then you are setting the movement up for failure.

### ***A Biblical Precedent: 1 CORINTHIANS 5***

Even Paul, an Apostle of Christ, who had Scripture-giving authority under the inspiration of the Spirit, was very leery of setting up his opinion as the authority. Instead, he referred his churches back to the Scripture. He made it very clear to them that God's revealed revelation was the final authority, not any man or angel:

*<sup>6</sup>I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— <sup>7</sup>which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! <sup>9</sup>As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (Gal 1:6-9, NIV)*

Heresy and immorality infiltrated the churches that Paul helped to establish. There was no way to **avoid** it. But Paul built into the churches a way to **address** it. One example is found in 1 Corinthians 5.

*It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. (1 Cor 1:5, NASB)*

This sin was so heinous that Paul said even Gentiles (non-believers) don't do this. For many of us, if we heard of a CPM being plagued with such a sin, we would discount it as a movement of God. Paul, as a realist however, recognized that the enemy would sow tares. He didn't let this shake his faith that God was moving, but rather responded to it as part of the kingdom dynamic.

The answer to the situation was to remove this offending person from their midst until he repented:

*I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor 5:5, NASB)*

At this point, Paul could have said under his authority as the church planter and apostle: "I, Paul, therefore tell you to remove this man from your midst." It appears from the statement above that he is coming close to setting himself up as the authority, but he didn't.

There were two problems if he set himself up as the authority:

1. Paul would not always be there to answer each situation in the future. It wouldn't really help for the Corinthians to respond: "What would Paul do?"
2. Paul would be setting the movement up for divisiveness: his opinion against another person's opinion (even a "super-apostle"). Whose opinion would be right? The most eloquent or logical speaker? The one who claimed the most authority or experience?

*<sup>3</sup>But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup>For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. <sup>5</sup>But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." <sup>6</sup>I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. (2 Cor 11:3-6, NASB)*

So what did Paul do with the 1 Corinthians 5 immorality problem? He refused to set himself up as the final authority, but instead pointed them to God's Word.

The reason Paul gives for removing the man from their midst is given in verse 11:

*But those who are outside, God judges. **REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.** (1 Cor 5:11, NASB)*

In your Bible, the last phrase is probably in small caps or italicized. That's because Paul was **quoting the Old Testament as the guide for this decision**. Deuteronomy 22 gives a list of prohibitions and the consequences for them:

*If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; **thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.** (Deut 22:22, NASB)*

As if that was not clear enough, Deuteronomy even lists the specific sin of 1 Corinthians 5 as a sub-set of this prohibition:

***A man shall not take his father's wife** so that he will not uncover his father's skirt. (Deut 22:30, NASB)*

Do you see what Paul was doing? He was referring the congregation back to the written Scripture as the guideline for their actions. Of course, in Paul's case, he could have given them directly what God told him as Scripture, given that he was an Apostle of Christ. But in this situation, Paul resisted even that legitimate authority he had. If Paul did this, how much more we need to!

How do you develop this value of Scripture alone as final authority? **One of the best ways is to refuse to answer important questions but rather refer the believers to the appropriate Scripture to meditate on for a decision.**

**How do you develop this value of Scripture alone as final authority? One of the best ways is to refuse to answer important questions but rather refer the believers to the appropriate Scripture to meditate on for a decision.**

This is not quick or easy, but if you rush to answer their questions, you set up your opinions and interpretations of the Scripture as the way for them to find answers. ***Rather, you must train them to become self-feeders from the Scripture and to accurately interpret the Word as the guide for their lives.***

### **Step 1: Teach them how to read and interpret the Word.**

We will not give a method here for doing this, but rather strongly admonish that you need a ***simple method*** for your believers to use in their devotions, in their churches and in their leadership meetings to learn how to read or listen to the Bible and interpret it accurately.

We've always taught simple inductive Bible study questions that help them unlock the meaning of the Scripture. Despite our complex commentaries, the majority of the Scripture is very straightforward. As disciples approach the Word with open hearts and a healthy hermeneutic, they will progressively grow in Biblical understanding. They will find more than enough to obey, and will find plenty of answers to the basic questions they face.

In the beginning, you may have to serve as a sort of human concordance, but be careful. This too can become a crutch for them. There are two ways to get around this. Ying has used them very effectively:

- *Train every believer to make a habit of reading 2 OT and 1 NT chapters every day.* In this manner, they will read through the whole Bible in a little over a year. Very quickly you will find that when questions arise, members in the group recall a passage they read that has bearing on that.
- *Help leaders to obtain a good reference Bible.* If they get a Bible that has a good concordance and perhaps a topical dictionary, they can begin to use their Bibles more effectively to find answers.

### **Step 2: Teach them to value the Word over other authorities: Refuse to answer their questions but rather help them turn to the Bible as interpreted through the Holy Spirit and one another.**

When questions arise, make your default answer: "What does the Bible say? Or, what did this passage say?" By repeatedly defaulting to this, the believers quickly realize that they must value the Bible as the final authority, not you the teacher, church planter or missionary. To make this really work, you must exercise great discipline.

This does not mean that you ***never*** answer questions, but you will find that if you can resist the temptation to answer their questions, you will find that the group has amazing ability to come up with Biblical answers from the leadership of the Spirit.

Ying has another solution to this: advise believers to use only the Bible, not commentaries or other Christian books. This sounds a little extreme, but here is what he means. In his CPM hundreds and thousands of small groups and house churches were starting. Frequently believers would bring to him a Christian book someone had given them. Ying did not have time to read all of the books to find out which ones were healthy and which were not healthy for the movement. Instead, he basically said: "Look, for right now, all of the answers you need are found in the Bible. You don't need to read

other books to find out what to do. Just read your Bibles!" This was another way of helping young churches value the Bible as the final authority.

*The power of the group:* I have been personally doing this for over 20 years – letting groups of believers come up with the answer from Scripture and muzzling my desire to give them the answers. I have observed a remarkable phenomenon: when groups submit to the Holy Spirit by calling on Him for help, then examine the text of the Scripture for an answer, sometimes with guidance by myself or others, they invariably come up with a valid interpretation and application of Scripture. In fact, in over twenty years, I can recall no example of a group coming up with an invalid interpretation and application of Scripture. I am not saying it is impossible. But the self-correcting power of the body is amazing.

Frequently *individuals* come up with some pretty quirky or even heretical ideas and practices. But when a *group* understands how to interpret Scripture, they admonish and correct quirky ideas in a group. Sometimes you have to remind the group "what does *this passage* say, or other passages you have read?" to help them self-correct. Sometimes the nudge is: "Really, where do you find that idea in *this passage*?"

Regardless, Jesus' presence reigns:

*"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."  
(Matt 18:20, NASB)*

### *OBEDIENCE: Value to Obey Whatever the Word Says*

Helping them value the Word as their authority is meaningless if they do not have a value to actually obey what it says. To make sure the movement stays within the banks of orthodoxy, you must build in a **value to obey whatever the Word says**.

In the 1 Corinthians 5 passage above, Paul clearly guided the Corinthians to a solution by pointing to the authority of the Word. But did the Corinthians obey it?

*But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree--in order not to say too much--to all of you. <sup>6</sup>Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, <sup>7</sup>so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>8</sup>Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. <sup>9</sup>For to this end also I wrote, so **that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.** (2 Cor 2:5-9, NASB, emphasis mine)*

They obeyed and passed with flying colors! What a difficult step for them to take, yet they obeyed. Why? This was their basic value as followers of Jesus. Followers obey whatever the King says.

Only obedience-based discipleship will keep the CPM in the banks of orthodoxy and morality. But it must be Scripture-obedience, not obedience to the opinions of teachers. In your training, you frequently ask people to be obedient to something. Then you hold them accountable, and vice versa, for obedience when you get together the next time. This is what reinforces obedience.

Yet you must ask yourself this question frequently: “Am I asking them to obey me or the Scripture?” When you find yourself subtly shifting to asking them to obey what you want rather than what God says, repent – sometimes to them as well as to God.

Teaching a value to *obey* Scripture gives you a way to call errant believers and churches back. It is so easy for the enemy to come in and deceive. It happens before you blink sometimes. But if you have built in this value, then you have a way to call them back: “Remember, brothers and sisters, what the Scripture says. We must obey this.” If they have the value to obey Scripture, then they bow their heads in repentance, mourn the sin and return to God. If they have not value to obey the Scripture, they may continue on in their errant ways, hardened by sins deceitfulness and desires.

### *DISCIPLINE: Discipline to Implement No Matter the Consequences*

The value of Scripture as final authority and the value to obey it are the banks of a CPM. Yet one more step is needed. You have to show believers that it is better to obey the Word and suffer any consequences for correction than to continue in sin.

It would have been much easier for the Corinthians to simply ignore the immorality situation or quietly sweep it under the carpet. Instead they demonstrated the *discipline* to walk through the corrective steps. Corrective steps are not easy. How painful to bring the subject before the whole church, read the letter from Paul, and publicly dismiss this man from their midst!

The implications from the Word of God for our lives are like spiritual surgery: deeply painful sometimes, yet completely healing. Going through with the appropriate steps is difficult. Discipline to receive the Father’s discipline and walk through repentance or change is crucial.

Discipline to exercise church discipline (e.g. Matt 18:15-20) is also crucial. In the Ina CPM, a false teaching was spread through one of the streams of CPM. A false teacher had come through teaching the believers that the Great Commission was no longer valid for today. He encouraged the young churches to stop sharing the gospel so they wouldn’t be persecuted so badly. This sounded awfully appealing, and many followed this false teaching.

As soon as my teammates, national partners and I found about this, we prayed about a course of action. It was obvious that we were in a church discipline situation in which we had to confront the false teacher and expose the false teaching. It had already spread to many churches. Key national partners, teammates and Ina leaders intervened. They took the affected Ina leaders and churches through the Word and helped them see the error of the teaching. The implication was clear: we must continue to obey the Great Commission. Yet this would mean increased persecution. Most of the churches and leaders sided with the Scriptural teaching, though a few did not. Those that did not had to be excluded from fellowship.

The intervention was painful from every perspective: the loss of face, increased persecution if you obey the Great Commission, excluded if you continue in the false teaching, separation of fellowships. This one false teaching severely curtailed the CPM in that county; it took 2-3 years to fully recover. Yet, the consequences of *not* following through with the church discipline would have been greater: false teaching, disobedience to God, complete loss of evangelistic momentum and reaping God’s discipline. The last report from this county is that they are again leading the Ina CPM in church planting vision!

## *A Case Study: Wife-beaters*

I knew the importance of this article before ever stepping foot into Ina-land. I knew that my attitudes, word and actions would create unspoken explanations from the point of discipling and training our first national partners and first Ina believers. Therefore, I resolved to teach these churches to always value God's Word as the authority and obey it above all else, not matter what it cost. I tried to share testimonies of how I tried to do this personally.

In Chapter 1 of the T4T book, I described my first personal involvement in training new Ina leaders. It was a watershed moment for me. I knew that training the 12 representative so of the first 80 churches would be a watershed moment in the life of the Ina church.

I planned to spend one week with these first 12 leaders training them in their oversight of the Ina churches, and equipping them to pass on these lessons to other Ina churches and leaders. To assist me, I had two Singaporean teammates, several national partners and a dear pastor friend from the USA. My friend, Mike Fritscher<sup>2</sup>, is a great Bible expositor. He lives the Word and challenges his Texas church to do the same. God is mightily moving there. In invited Mike to help me train these first 12 pastors and leaders.

As Mike and I flew into our country, I briefed him on how we would interact with the Ina leaders. I told him: "Mike, these leaders are really young in their faith. They need to learn to depend on God to give them answers from the Word. Therefore we have one ground rule: No matter what, we don't answer their questions. We always ask, 'What does the Bible say?'" Mike agreed, and off we went.

But it is so much easier to agree to this in your head then to do it in practice. One afternoon, as we are all huddled in a secret training apartment, Mike spent a good hour teaching the twelve from Ephesians 5: Husbands love your wives; wives submit to your husbands. Mike did a great job, and it appeared to be crystal clear: love your wife just like Christ loved the church.

After Mike finished teaching, I asked the group if they had any questions. One 62-year old man in the back of the huddle nervously raised his hand. This was the same man who had previously asked the baptism question: "When they come into your house and drag you away and throw you in prison and threaten to kill you, will you still follow Jesus?" He was a deep thinker, so I figured his question would be a good one. I had no idea.

"Yes, brother, you have a question? What is it?" I asked in anticipation.

He stood up and said: "I would like to know if this means we have to stop beating our wives!"

I was so appalled that I wanted to shout out "No, you idiot!" and throw my Bible at him. How could he *possibly* dream there was room for wife-beating after such a clear teaching from the Word? Mike couldn't figure out my response until I translated the interchange for him. He was appalled also!

Back to our training: how were we supposed to respond? "What does the Bible say?" Boy, it sure sounded good on the plane, but didn't feel very comforting in this small apartment. I had visions of them coming up with the wrong answer and starting a CPM filled with wife-beaters! It was at this point that my faith in the power of the Holy Spirit was put to the test.

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor of Cottonwood Baptist Church, Dublin, Texas.

I consulted with Mike, and encouraged him to pray, then carefully shared with the whole group:

*If we pray, the Holy Spirit will be our Teacher. If we go to His Word, He will give us a clear answer about beating wives. So right now we will do that. We are asking God: "What does the Bible say?"*

*First, I want you to stop as a group and cry out to the Holy Spirit: "Holy Spirit, be our Teacher! We want to rely on You! We need You to give us understanding!"*

Together, in unison, we bowed our heads and cried out that prayer to God several times. When we were through praying, I then said to the group:

*Now, with the Holy Spirit as your Teacher, I want you to open your Bibles back up to the Ephesians 5. Together you need to read it and ask God to help you answer this question. When you have come to agreement, let us know.*

The group of 12 Ina leaders huddled together and began talking rapidly in the Ina dialect which none of rest of us in the room could understand, not even our national partners. Meanwhile, the rest of us huddled together in prayer. I remember crying out to God: "Lord, please let them get this right! We don't need a movement of wife-beaters!" We prayed and prayed. We had to trust that the Spirit of God in the group could overcome the confusion or objections of one or two people.

Meanwhile the commotion in the Ina group rose and fell and rose and fell. One person would get up and apparently air an idea, then the others would admonish him. Then another would voice an opinion and some would agree. This went on for 15-20 minutes.

I couldn't figure out what was taking so long. The passage was very straightforward. Finally, after an interminable wait, the Ina leaders came back to our group. One of the leaders stood up solemnly and pronounced with import worthy of the Council of Chalcedon their decision:

*After studying the Scripture, we have decided - - - to STOP beating our wives!*

The rest of us were incredibly relieved, but I remember thinking: "Man, what took so long?!"

It was a day or two later that one of the twelve, a Ina man who was a close friend of mine, pulled me aside to explain to me more behind the episode.

"Steve, we have a saying in the Ina language: 'To be a real man, every day you must hit your wife.'"

Immediately I realized the gravity of the 62-year-old man's question and the reason it took so long. In fact, I was amazed they decided this in such a short time. What was the man's real question? It was not, "Do we have to stop beating our wives." Rather, after a startling discovery at the perfection of God's ways and the clash with their own culture, the real question was:

*Can I be a follower of Jesus and still be a real man in my culture?*

If I had short-circuited the process by shouting, "Of course, you idiot" and threw my Bible at him, or if I had dismissed their concerns and answered their question, I would have *missed God's deeper lesson for them*. Thank God, that day my colleagues and I had the discipline to step back and let the Word of God and the Spirit of God do their perfect work.

To me, this story will forever be an example of the banks of God's Word. That day, and in many other scenarios like it later, three things occurred:

1. God's Word was reinforced as the final authority, not culture or any Bible teacher.
2. A group of young believers trusted the Spirit to guide them in truth, and then heeded the admonition to obey whatever answer He gave them.
3. The group took a collective deep breath and exercised the discipline to re-define manhood in their society despite the ridicule they would receive.

Brothers and sisters, embark upon the path of seeing God's kingdom come fully in your people group. Pursue kingdom movements – CPMs. But don't pray for rain to flood the land with rivers until you have determined to erect banks to guide the channels of CPM waters!

### **Be a Doer, not just a Hearer!**

Write down how God has spoken to you and what you need to obey as a result: