

## THINKING ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT MODEL OF MISSION WORK

By Bob Young

Have you ever spent a lazy afternoon throwing rocks into the water? Finding that “just right” rock that will skip across the water surface—six, seven, maybe ten times? Finding a rock that is big enough, but not too big—one you can throw far enough away from the shore to cause lots of ripples? When I was a boy, I liked throwing rocks into the water at Grandma’s ponds—skipping flat rocks across the water, throwing larger rocks into the water to see how many ripples I could make. The more of us that were throwing rocks into the water, the easier it was to keep the water covered with ripples!

In high school, I learned that the laws of physics involved in rocks and ripples are easily explained. The rock has energy (from gravity) as it falls. The rock slows down abruptly when it hits the water, transferring energy to the surrounding water. The water under the rock goes down and the water next to the rock goes up. Then the down-water rises and the up-water drops, causing the neighboring water to follow suit. OK, Bob! Why the physics lesson? **The point is that the continuing ripples are not caused by the rock, but by water influencing water.** The rock is only the beginning point.

The New Testament model of mission work is much like throwing rocks into the water. Acts 1:8 shows that God expected an ever-widening circle of influence—Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, the ends of the earth. The Book of Acts gives us more detail—Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, Galilee, Cyprus, Antioch, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, on and on. Paul hoped to visit Rome and points beyond.

When Paul was sent out by the Antioch church, he traveled to Cyprus and to Galatia. On a second journey, he retraced his steps before going to Macedonia and Achaia. On a third journey, he stayed in Ephesus for three years and his influence extended into Asia Minor. He later traveled again through Macedonia and Achaia. Eventually, courtesy of the Roman government, he traveled to Rome.

Paul said that from Thessalonica had echoed forth the message into all of Achaia (1 Thess. 1:7). Apparently, those in Asia Minor heard because of Paul’s presence in Ephesus, and churches were established that Paul had never visited (Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis).

**Can you see how Paul was doing mission work? He was throwing rocks into the water, expecting that the influence of the gospel preached would spread from person to person, that one person would influence another person in a continuing chain.**

Throwing rocks into the water—that is the model used in Latin America Leadership Development. I and others whom I am training are tossing rocks in the water all across Latin America—rocks of spiritual growth and maturity, leadership, evangelism, discipleship, church planting. Rocks of commitment and involvement. Rocks of faith, hope, and love.

Here are some examples of where this ministry is throwing rocks in the water, believing that those who are touched will touch others. If we can get enough people talking about Jesus, the “waters” of the countries and cultures of Latin America will be continually impacted with the message of the gospel!

### SOUTH AMERICA

- In Chile, I work in a few places with a few brothers who are working to grow local churches and plant churches in more places. The outstanding growth of the churches in Chile demonstrates what happens when we depend on those whom we touch to touch others.
- In Uruguay, the local church is being equipped to reach out to their own culture and society.
- In Peru, the Peruvian churches are planting more churches. Church planting is in focus in Lima, in Cusco, in Trujillo, in Huamachuco, and in the work of Interamerican Bible Institute.

- In Ecuador, churches are being planted, churches are growing, church leaders are training more leaders, churches are reaching out to establish more churches. As a result of the work of one relatively new church, six additional churches are now meeting. In another place, a brother said, “We have ten places where we should try to plant a church.” The number of workers in development in Ecuador gives great hope for the future.
- In Colombia, the influence of this ministry extends from the southern region, through the Cauca Valley, into the Bogota area, in a church plant in the east, toward the north and the northeast. Churches are being planted and are growing. More workers are being trained.
- In Venezuela, churches and workers are being developed and the members of the churches influence and are teaching others with incredible results.

#### CARIBBEAN

- In the Dominican Republic, elders are being trained and established; elders are taking the lead in church planting; radio programs are effective. The model is the same—to develop churches and leaders through training, modeling and teaching, with the leaders training more leaders.

#### CENTRAL AMERICA

- In Honduras, the work of this ministry has extended from Baxter, to San Pedro Sula churches who shared an area-wide leadership seminar, to Santa Rosa, to the Honduras-El Salvador border. Around Tegucigalpa and toward the east in Olancho, churches are growing, developing leaders, and reaching out. Baxter graduates are going to the ends of earth.
- In Guatemala, the work of this ministry centers in three regions: western, central, and eastern. Contact is maintained with as many as 50 churches across Guatemala. The churches are growing, stabilizing, and reaching out.
- In El Salvador, elderships are being established and the work continues with various churches. The goal is always the same: training those who will train others. In El Salvador, Baxter graduates are sharing Good News in multiple places. (I receive a lot of correspondence with questions and answers from El Salvador.)
- In Nicaragua, the evangelism materials are popular. I recently received a note from a member of a congregation in the Managua area, “God used you to move us forward with elders and deacons.” Many churches are growing, and the work of Baxter graduates is outstanding.
- In Costa Rica, a new system of contacts is being established with the hope of moving forward in effective church planting.
- In Panama, contact is maintained with several churches. The goal is establishing more leaders and more effective churches who will plant national and indigenous churches with little or no outside support necessary.

#### EVERYWHERE

- Encouragement and support for Baxter graduates is paying huge dividends.
- The teaching materials, videos, audios, and evangelism materials that are being provided are warmly received and used again and again.
- Counsel and advice are given by Skype, email, Messenger; the work in answering multiplied questions seems unending.