

MentorNet #51

SEEING THE HARVEST THROUGH SIMPLE MAPS

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Ex-marine, Ed Aw, offers an apt illustration of the importance of maps. In military operations, a key to success is having accurate maps in hand, not only the commanders but also the front-line soldiers. Maps allow commanders to plan proper strategies. We called them "beans, bullets, and bandages" strategies. You have to know how to supply the front-line troops with food, how to provide fighting equipment, and how to take care of the wounded. The best course of action becomes evident from factors indicated on maps, such as enemy strongholds, geographical terrain, friendly encampments, and prisons where civilians are unjustly imprisoned. Based on these data, you can determine a strategy for battle. As the battle advances, field-level soldiers must update their maps pass them up to the commanders, so that they can make strategic adjustments and lay new plans to move toward the end goals of defeating the enemy and setting captives free.

How much more important are the soldiers of Jesus, who wage battle to recapture territory dominated by the evil one and set his captives free! Maps can help us see the harvest fields, plan for the harvest, assign workers and allocate resources to them. (Matt. 9:35-38, John 4:35)

Some church and mission organisations invest big amounts of time, money and personnel in demographic, cultural and social research, generating reams of statistics, tables and charts. Such information, without question, proves useful in creating vision, laying strategies, co-ordinating efforts, evaluating outcomes and adjusting plans in a timely manner. Even if your organizations cannot afford such big investments, a few of your workers should plan to spend about five percent of their on-going ministry time in research in the field. One practical way to do so is with paper and pencil, drawing and revising maps.

Here is an example of map-making from a ministry in India. The individual involved oversees a church-planting movement across an entire state. As a strategist, he requires a high-level, working map that he draws, showing all the districts of the state, including several items such as these:

- Number of believers at each district.
- Numbers of Hindus, Muslims, etc., according to the level of detail that he needs.
- Numbers of house churches and traditional congregations.+
- Number and names of leaders by district, region, postal code, etc., according to the level of detail that he needs.

Moving down the leadership chain, those at each level of leadership prepare maps showing more details from smaller areas. The leader over a particular village or house church would have a map that might show:

- Geographical features such as streets, rivers, lakes, mountains, rail roads, and highways.
- Mosques (using the crescent moon as a symbol), Hindu temples (use the *om* symbol).
- Traditional congregations (use a triangle with a cross on top); house churches (use a round circle with a cross inside it).
- Potential house churches (use a round circle with NO cross in it, yet).
- Draw arrows from "mother" churches to "daughter and grand-daughter" churches.
- Distances between house churches.
- Dates when house churches were started or are projected to start.

In training and coaching sessions, take workers through a mapping exercise. Doing so helps workers to focus, by faith, on potential house churches by indicating them on their maps, revealing family and friendship networks that already exist. Have workers write down on their own maps:

- Family names.
- Number of people in each home (Noting names can lead to specific prayer).
- Prayer items.
- Date on which they will visit each home or send someone else to do so.

The person who has brought a house church leader to Jesus should help him or her make a neighbourhood map, using the simple, easily reproducible tool that you can download from the site noted below, and freely translate and photocopy it. (We can format your translation for you, if you send it to Ed Aw at edward@acquirewisdom.com.) Notice that both sides of the booklet are exactly the same. A worker can draw his map and make notes on one side, and keep the other side clean to photocopy and share with other workers to draw different maps.

Every leader, from house church leaders on up, should have someone to whom they report (Exodus 18:22 and 2 Timothy 2:2). Leaders should often review workers' maps and consolidate appropriate details into higher-level maps.

You will find maps very helpful in mentoring leaders. Their maps hold a wealth of facts that one cannot learn so easily from conversations. You will be able to see weaknesses in their strategies, both planned ones and implemented ones, and you will be more able to make corrections. Maps provide concrete items to discuss and from which to develop and improve strategies. For instance, knowing where the enemy's strongholds (mosques, temples, etc.) are located is critical to strategy planning. Perhaps you will arrange for prayer walks around these fortresses, asking the Lord to bind the strongman and set his captives free.

Patterson reports, "A turning point in our Honduras work, when pastors began taking serious initiative to plant churches, came when they drew a map of their area on a large piece of cardboard. They noted every village and urban area that lacked churches. They noted 'mother churches' and drew arrows from them to potential 'daughter churches' with names of potential workers beside the arrows. From these they added arrows to granddaughter churches and so on, until they had a plan for reaching every village and neighbourhood. Details changed over the years, but the original vision portrayed by the map remained a major motivating force that God used".

Making maps of this type proves powerful in the battle for souls in which we are engaged. Remember the Israelites who scouted out the Promised Land before they entered it. As a final note, do you remember the research I mentioned above that should take only about five percent of your time? Well, since every leader, down to the house church level, gathers data by making a map, data for strategic research can be easily obtained from their map!

Download Ed Aw's simple map-making guide

http://www.paul-timothy.net/docs/harvest_mapping_a4.pdf (A4-sized paper)

http://www.paul-timothy.net/docs/harvest_mapping_ltr.pdf (letter-sized paper)

Other Resources

Reproducible Pastoral Training, to multiply churches, O'Connor.

<http://missionbooks.org/wcl/customer/product.php?productid=533&cat=1&page=1>

Mentoring tools and sites, visit <<http://www.MentorAndMultiply.com>>.

Train & Multiply®, Pastoral training, church planting. Info: Currah Galen@Currah.us.

Obtain *T&M*® <<http://www.TrainAndMultiply.com>>

Free, reproducible training materials for new leaders & missionaries, visit <<http://www.Paul-Timothy.net>>.

Download "*Come, Let Us Disciple the Nations*" (CD-ROM), visit <<http://www.paul-timothy.net/dn/index.html>>.

Order *Church Multiplication Guide* from a bookshop or via <<http://www.WCLbooks.com>>.

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