
Case Study of Multiplying Micro-Church Network. The Nevius Method: A Prophetic Voice and Vision for the Korean Church

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For the past 20 years I have had the pleasure of working with several Korean believers and Korean missionaries who are scatter throughout North America, Asia and the World. While at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary I was one of the very few caucasians who regularly joined in dawn prayer with Korean students. I learned Korean Christians secret for arising so early for prayer. Koreans do not have "quiet time" but pray very loudly in unison. Tongsung kido prayers can be very loud and their volume helped awaken my groggy soul. Most Koreans arise every morning at 4:30 am for prayer. Thankfully my Korean friends met at 5:30am.

In 2012, the 7th Korean World Mission Conference held in Chicago reported that Korean Churches had sent out 20,000 missionaries and that they were projected to surpass the 127,000 the U.S. has sent out by the year 2020. There are Korean missionaries in Afghanistan, China, Myanmar, India and even New Jersey.

Even though South Korea is now 30% Christian this growth has now plateaued. In 2011 group of Korean pastors invited megachurch California Pastor Rick Warren to teach a seminar on church growth Warren replied, "Why do you need me? Koreans pray more than any Christians I know. The pastors reluctantly admitted to Rick Warren, "we are not reaching the next generation." Rick Warren realized that it takes more than prayer to grow a church. Warren went on to quote Eccles. 10:10, "If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success." What happened? How can the Korean church reach the 45% of non-religious and 25% of Korea who are Buddhists? It will take massive

amounts of prayer but as Pastor Warren pointed out, prayer alone is not enough. The Prophet Jeremiah declared “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it.” Jeremiah 6:16

On January 14, 1907 at the Winter Bible Training Class in Pyongyang, in what later became the capital of North Korea the Great Revival sprung forth, “Halfway through the meeting, God began to move. “They knew that the only way to survive was to depend on God,” Rev. Ji Il Bang of North Korean Church said. One by one, the men confessed their sins to each other- sins of racial prejudice, hate, anger, and jealousy.

The pastor was Sun Chu Kil, who in the wake of the revival became the national leader of the prayer movement. A missionary, Graham Lee, opened the service for a few to pray, when “a score or more started to pray.” He responded, “If you want to pray like that, all pray.” The form of praying all at once was modeled in the Welsh revival; Howard Agnew Johnson brought the report of the Welsh revival to Pyongyang in 1906. In response to Lee, the whole church erupted in prayer, confession, and weeping, lasting for days. The revival spread as the men returned to their villages; it spread to women, to the schools to the whole nation, especially through Kil Sun Chu.

Most Evangelical Christians are familiar with the Great Korean Revival but few are aware of the movement that laid the groundwork for that great Revival of the early 1900s. The groundwork for Revival was laid by obedience to the Word of God as it was heard by Korean families in living room Sahrang Bang Bible Groups led by unsalaried volunteer facilitators. It was these living room Bible studies that led to the first multiplying micro-church networks in the homes of Korean believers.

The vision to catalyze these Sahrang Bang men’s Bible groups and women’s Bible groups came through Presbyterian missionaries from North

America via one catalytic trainer Presbyterian trainer based in China. Revival Historians have noted that the "Revival" occurred in three stages, the Initial Sparks, the Revival, and the Great Revival. It is my assertion that Revivals have often been preceded by book of Acts type Spiritual Awakenings in what our organization Global Catalytic Network have termed, Multiplying Micro-Church Networks. For another case study of multiplying micro-church networks see my article about the Sandy Creek Revival <http://globalcatalyticnetwork.org/2016/01/14/sandy-creek-church-multiplication-movement/>

In 1890, when there were only 100 Christian converts in all of Korea, five young Presbyterian missionaries invited a missionary with 36 years experience in China to come to Korea to teach them. His name was Dr. John Livingston Nevius. What Nevius taught them, during his two-week stay in Korea, changed history. Nevius' principles (or "the Nevius Plan") became the guiding principles for Korean missions for the next 50 years. In fact, many have claimed that Nevius' two-weeks of teaching in Korea may well have been the two most influential weeks in Korean Church History. From 1895 to 1910, the Korean church grew from 500 believers to over 200,000.

John L. Nevius labored for 36 years across the Yellow Sea in Shandong Province or China and saw over 50 micro churches begin to multiply among the villages of costal Shandong (Shantung). The famed Shantung Revival later broke out in the same place where these multiplying micro-churches where the North China forty years earlier. Nevius thoughts also influenced North China Southern Baptist mission team led by Dr. T.P. Crawford. This team includ famed Lottie Moon who also embraced the principles of indigeneity in the Nevius Method.

Here are a few Biblical principles from John L. Nevius

Christians should continue to live in their neighborhoods and pursue their occupations, being self-supporting and witnessing to their co-workers and neighbors.

Missions should only develop programs and institutions that the national church desired and could support.

The national churches should call out and support their own pastors.

Churches should be built in the native style with money and materials given by the church members. Nevius was not against building small chapels but also did not encourage new churches to spend excessive amounts on buildings.

Intensive biblical and doctrinal instruction should be provided for church leaders every year.

When trainees attend sahrang bang's bible groups "They come with the understanding that in going back to their homes they are to communicate what they have learned to others."

Both Missionaries and indigenous leaders were encouraged and trained to practically deal with the demonized. Nevis moved beyond developing mere theories of exorcism he trained others in what Christ commanded about driving out evil spirits. Matthew 10:8.

Nevis had carefully investigated these cases and gathered the facts and testimony of missionaries and Chinese Christians on the incidents in which they expelled spirits and set the victims free. The result was his posthumous book, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*. Not only was the "Nevius Method" adopted by the Korean missions, but his theory of demon possession and Christian exorcism also influenced the missionaries in Korea. The people of Shandong Province fully believed in demon possession; the belief was a part of Chinese animism or spirit worship. Physical suffering and violent convulsions attended the victims' ordeal.

Questions to ponder; why did the Korean Church take off so rapidly under missionaries guidance and then plateau? Why did the Chinese church take

off so slow under missionaries and then accelerated after missionaries were kicked out?