

It Happened Like This . . .

May/June 2018

Ripples



Bert & Priscilla Baker

The pebble hit the water. Quickly the splash followed. Then a split second later, the ripples began. They grew wider and wider as though nothing could stop them. You can see them can't you? These growing concentric circles are like a picture of how the Gospel works. Like widening concentric circles the Gospel splashes, expands and nothing stops it.

Jesus said, "...You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) And so it has been. The first splash came when Jesus died and rose again. Some who were there for the splash tried to stop it. But God commanded the widening circles. It only started there. The Gospel would ripple throughout the world. The ripples of the Gospel are not only defined by geography, they also cross the barriers of race and culture. The earliest ripples crossed the barrier between Jew and Gentile to become culturally unbound. The church was not to be defined geographically or culturally but by the presence of faith in Jesus Christ. Faith, not DNA, is the heart of the Gospel!

The Bible Fellowship Church has always known that. Our first Gospel splash was primarily among people who identified themselves as German Americans. But the early preachers knew the Gospel was bigger than that. They began to reach into cities and people of different backgrounds.

The need to follow the ripples of culture began growing. One of those who saw this and knew we needed to ride the crest of the ripple was Bert Baker. Growing up in Bethany BFC, Hatfield, he had gone off to do street ministry in Washington, DC.

What he saw made him realize the importance of urban ministry and the demand of such a ministry to cross cultural barriers. So Bert returned with a call to begin ministry in Newark, NJ.

It was a melting pot for culture. Bert determined that God wanted to bring people together, people of different races, languages and traditions. Bert became part of a growing ripple that would move into a wider view of our church planting mission.

Bert, and other like-minded servants, began to study how our denomination needed to change if we were not to be bound by culture. The Inter-cultural Study Committee — as these servants were called — began to point out how we were limiting our ministry by our cultural assumptions. They led us to identify the limitations and move beyond them.

The most dramatic manifestation of the growing ripples of the Gospel was the welcoming of people of color which could best be seen in Newark. We began to see that the Gospel helps to erase the racism that so dogs American culture.

Then, we found the ripples were leading to Spanish speaking peoples. They led us to see fresh and new things. Soon, translations and translators were part of what we were doing.

The Gospel ripples have not ended. We can't even be sure what will come. Our corner of the world is experiencing changes. New languages are going to be

heard in our churches: Middle Eastern, Eastern European, and Asian— who knows what is next?

-Dick Taylor



Church Extension Ministries
PO Box 753
Whitehall, PA 18052
610-769-4337
office@churchplantingbfc.org
www.churchplantingbfc.org