

# **Grow**

Reproducing through Organic  
Discipleship

Winfield Bevins

*Grow: Reproducing Through Organic Discipleship*  
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“Winfield Bevins provides pastors and church planters with a great tool for developing an organic discipleship process that is gospel centered and missional. Organic Discipleship will help your church rediscover the lost art of disciple making for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If you want to help transition your church from programs to a natural process for disciple making this book is for you.”

-Ed Stetzer  
President, Life Way Research

“In this short but powerful book the weaknesses of modern discipleship are exposed. But, far from being a mere deconstruction of past failures, a new way is forged that honors both what the Scripture says and what the Spirit is doing in the 21st century.”

-Darren Patrick  
Lead Pastor, The Journey  
Vice President, Acts 29 Network

“The day of discipleship a la automaker is over – you know, the assemble line approach where you get enough people in enough classrooms with enough curriculum pieces and suddenly you have assembled a disciple. That approach has failed dramatically. Enter a more biblical approach, that which Winfield Bevins calls Organic Discipleship. We are witnessing a growing movement that brings discipleship and evangelism together in a missional, gospel-centered manner. This is a good thing, and is far more consistent with the New Testament. Thank you Winfield for giving us a tool which will grow the Christ follower and reach out to an unchurched culture.”

-Alvin Reid, PhD  
Author, *Join the Movement*  
Professor of Evangelism and Student Ministry  
Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Discipleship is the Great Commission. I am grateful for a fresh, theologically grounded look at cross-centered growth by a young pastor with a great mind.”

-J.D. Greear  
Lead Pastor, The Summit Church

“Thank you, Winfield for being one of the new voices calling us back to the old model of discipleship - the organic model of Jesus.”

-Dean Plumlee  
National Director, Christian Surfers USA

**To Church of the Outer Banks  
Thanks for helping me discover  
the organic nature of discipleship.  
You have helped me write the pages of this book  
through your lives and love for Christ.**



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# **Introduction**

## **Why Organic?**

Many churches have a linear discipleship program where they try to funnel everyone through the same process. Sadly, many times churches simply use the latest program or book in hopes that what works for a large church across the country in a different context will work for them. I have learned that discipleship is usually the opposite. What works in California or New York might not work in Tennessee. You need to find out what works in your culture and context. Being organic means that you begin with the gospel and let the people grow naturally, right where they are. This is growing disciples naturally.

## **The Organic Nature of the Church**

You may be asking yourself the question, “Why organic?” The answer is in the Bible. The Old and New Testaments are based on an organic worldview. The Bible uses various organic metaphors to describe spiritual growth such as sowing and reaping (John 4:37; 2 Cor. 9:6) planting and watering (1 Cor. 3:6), growing (1 Pt. 2:2; 2 Pt. 3:18) and bearing fruit (Mt. 7:17-20; John 15:1-16; Gal. 5:22). The church is spoken of as a family (for example the use of terms such as brother, sister, mother, father, bride, etc.). The church is also the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Paul talks about the whole body as a distinct metaphor for

Christ's church. In Paul's body metaphor, every part has an important role to play in the whole.

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find the word church referring to a building. In its earliest expression, the *church* meant a group of individuals who had come together in the name of Jesus Christ. The Greek word for church is *ecclesia*, which literally means "the called out ones." Interestingly enough, the English dictionary describes *church* as, "A place of public worship." Over the ages, the concept of church has shifted from being a body to becoming a building. People have gotten it backwards. Followers of Jesus must get back to an organic understanding of what it means to be the church.

The church is the spiritual and living Body of Christ. Like all healthy organisms, it requires numerous systems and structures that work together to fulfill its intended purpose and overall health. Just as the physical body has to have an organic structure to hold it together while allowing it to grow and develop, likewise the body of Christ must have an organic structure that can do the same. As a new church continues to grow and change, it will outgrow its old systems and structures. Leonard Sweet says, "We must develop ministries that continually adjust and change with our continually changing culture."<sup>1</sup> In a similar way, a church's discipleship strategy must be structured enough to maintain order, but organic enough to change with the ongoing needs of the church as it grows or it will hinder its growth. Therefore, the church's discipleship strategy must be organic.

Organic Discipleship is an organic understanding of the spiritual formation that begins and ends with the gospel. Organic means growing or developing in a manner of living organisms. An organic understanding of the discipleship will

require church leaders to rethink current church systems and structures in Biblical terms. Alan Hirsch argues that an organic image of the church and mission is theologically richer than any mechanistic and institutional conceptions of church that we can devise.<sup>2</sup> Organic discipleship is not a program or curriculum; rather it is about learning the natural rhythms of discipleship within your church context.

## **Why I Wrote This Book**

This book grew out of the process of developing an organic discipleship strategy within the context of my local church that takes new believers and develops them into fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ. It is the result of trial and error and countless hours of prayer and study. I have made many mistakes and I do not claim to have found all of the answers. A lot of the material developed from my doctoral research on discipleship at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. This little book is my humble attempt at sharing some of the insights and golden nuggets that I have found along the way.

I am currently serving as the founding pastor of Church of the Outer Banks in Nags Head, North Carolina; a growing, and innovative church that is a little over a few years old. The Outer Banks is a creative beach community on the coast of North Carolina. Church of the Outer Banks is a very dynamic mix of people from different backgrounds.

We began meeting in a home with only five people. Within a short time, the church grew to several hundred people and there were many new challenges and opportunities facing our church because of our growth. Discipleship quickly became one of the biggest challenges facing our new church because we were a rapidly growing church. Therefore, we began to focus on growing from the

inside by developing disciples instead of just growing our church numerically. As we quickly found out, discipleship is particularly essential for the health and survival of a new church. The result was an organic discipleship process.

The purpose of this book is to present an organic model of discipleship for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Organic Discipleship focuses on making disciples with four essentials. It is gospel-centered, missional, community, and reproductive. The organic process begins by sowing the gospel seed of Jesus Christ through intentional personal evangelism and missional living. It seeks to connect new believers to biblical community through small groups, bible studies, and serving. Lastly, it seeks to reproduce disciples through leadership development and church planting. Discipleship and spiritual formation are rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ from beginning to end.

I invite you to turn the page and begin a journey to rediscover the lost art of disciple making. My prayer is that this book will challenge and encourage you to rethink the way you do discipleship. The essential elements of organic discipleship are not a program or curriculum, but can be adapted to both new and existing churches. No matter what your church context, organic discipleship can unleash a disciple making revolution in your church, community, and changing world where you live. Let's begin the journey.

# 1

## The Problem

*The leading assumption in the American church is that you can be a Christian but not a disciple... We need to clear our heads about what discipleship is - Dallas Willard*

Discipleship is one of the primary functions of the local church. According to Mark Dever, Christian discipleship and spiritual growth are one of the distinguishing marks of a healthy church. The church should not simply be concerned with growing numbers, but with growing members.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the church plays an important role in the process of discipleship of new believers. Recent development of trends in North America such as mega-churches, seeker churches, and emerging churches has brought the issue of ecclesiology to the forefront of debate/discussion for church leaders.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the importance of discipleship, there is an apparent lack of biblical discipleship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church. Dallas Willard calls nondiscipleship the “elephant of the church.”<sup>5</sup> The problem is huge and there are no easy answers. Alan Hirsch warns, “if we fail at this point (discipleship) then we fail in all the others.”<sup>6</sup> Lack of discipleship has far-reaching implication for the church in North America and around the world. Thousands of the

professing Christians in North America are not disciples according to the New Testament definition. One survey concludes that only 25% of Evangelicals meet the biblical standard for a disciple.<sup>7</sup> In *Growing True Disciples*, researcher George Barna reports that the church in America is comprised of "many converts, but shockingly few disciples."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that we rediscover what a disciple of Jesus Christ actually is and is not.

## **Roadblocks to Discipleship**

In an effort to understand the current state of discipleship in North America, this chapter will look at the roadblocks to discipleship. There are several major contributing factors to the lack of authentic gospel centered discipleship in North America including the radically unchurched, evangelism at the expense of discipleship, and institutionalization.

### **Radically Unchurched**

There is a growing number of people within Europe and North America who are radically unchurched. Alvin Reid defines the radically unchurched as, "people who have no clear personal understanding of the message of the gospel, and who have had little or no contact with a Bible teaching, Christ honoring church."<sup>9</sup> There are 120 million unchurched people in the United States making it the largest mission field in the Western hemisphere and the fifth largest mission field on earth.<sup>10</sup> Non-believers can be divided into two groups of people; nominally churched, which make up 30% of U.S. population and the radically unchurched, which makes up 40% of the U.S. population.<sup>11</sup>

There is no shortage of spirituality in our new postmodern world. The postmodern world that we live in is a very spiritual place where people are looking for a

spirituality that is real and relevant; a spirituality that is not dead and outdated. Many people in North America are increasingly seeking spirituality outside of the traditional church by looking to alternative religions. Buddhism and other eastern religions are experiencing explosive growth in North America and around the world. In the marketplace of consumer spirituality, individuals are not choosing one religion over the other; rather they are weaving together their own patchwork spirituality.

The sad fact is that the church is one of the last places that people look for authentic spirituality. Most people say that church is boring, irrelevant, dry, complicated, even domesticated. Part of the problem stems from the fact that many churches are still functioning the same way they were in the 1940's. At the turn of the century, the church became more rational than relational, more organizational than organic, more political than prayerful, and more structural than spiritual. Today, many of the churches in North America are anything but relevant.

The changes of the postmodern world are real, but the church has been slow to address them. The church is one of the last institutions to acknowledge and engage the new world of postmodernism. Many churches have chosen to respond to the changes in our culture with apathy and denial.

### **Evangelism at the Expense of Discipleship**

Some churches focus on evangelism at the expense of discipleship by seeking to win converts instead of making disciples. The goal of evangelism is disciple making. The Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28 is to make disciples who will follow Christ rather than simply win converts. When Jesus said, "make disciples" the disciples

understood it to mean more than simply getting someone to believe in Jesus and they interpreted it to mean that they should make out of others what Jesus made out of them. Robert Coleman explains the Great Commission in the following way:

“The Great Commission is not merely to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15), nor to baptize a lot of converts into the name of the triune God, nor to teach them the precepts of Christ, but to ‘make disciples’- to build people like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ that they not only follow, but also led others to follow his way.”<sup>12</sup>

The Great Commission compels Christians to focus on keeping people through discipleship as much as they focus on reaching people through evangelism. With the rise of the modern evangelical movement in North America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, came an over emphasis on evangelism at the expense of discipleship. At the First International Consultation on Discipleship, John R.W. Stott called attention to the “strange and disturbing paradox” of the contemporary Christian situation. He warned, “We have experienced enormous statistical growth without corresponding growth in discipleship. God is not pleased with superficial discipleship.”<sup>13</sup>

Bill Hull also addresses this issue by saying, “The church has tried to get world evangelization without disciple making.”<sup>14</sup> The church must once again make discipleship a priority for a new generation of believers. The consequences are evident. Statistics show that the average church in North America loses 74 percent of people between the ages 18-24.<sup>15</sup> According to one of the most recent statistical surveys

of the top 25 churches, many of the denominations in North America are in decline rather than growing.<sup>16</sup>

Not only are churches in North America not growing through evangelism, they are not keeping believers through discipleship. One example is The Southern Baptist Convention. In 2004, they reported more than sixteen million members. Only 6,024,289 or 37 percent of their membership are present for the average Sunday morning worship service.<sup>17</sup> Where are the other ten million people? Lack of discipleship and not just evangelism is one of the growing contributing factors for church decline in North America.

The church needs to bring evangelism and discipleship together. Christians have viewed discipleship as something they do on one hand and evangelism on the other, which is a false dichotomy. The church needs to rediscover the integration of evangelism and discipleship in order to fulfill the Great Commission and 21<sup>st</sup> century disciples of Christ.

## **Institutionalization**

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to discipleship is when churches have become institutionalized. If Christians are not careful, institutionalization will eventually keep the church from fulfilling the call to make disciples. C.S. Lewis said, “there exists in every church something that sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence. So we must strive very hard, by the grace of God to keep the church focused on the mission that Christ originally gave it.”<sup>18</sup> The thing that Lewis is warning against is institutionalization. The cure is to constantly remain faithful to the original mission of the church, which is the call to make disciples.

Many of the great revivals of the past began as disciple making movements; however, over time they became secular institutions. One of the best examples of this is the modern university. Many colleges, including the state universities, started out as Christian institutions. Schools like Harvard (Puritan), William and Mary (Anglican), Yale (Congregational), and Princeton (Presbyterian) were created for Christian higher education. Great Awakenings led to the founding of Princeton, Brown, Rutgers and Dartmouth in the mid-eighteenth century and to the single most prolific period of college founding in American history. Over time, these former Christian colleges and universities gradually became secular institutions with little or no religious affiliation.

Methodism was one of the great discipleship movements of history. As Methodism continued to grow, Wesley observed that the movement was following similar patterns of institutionalization. He lamented that this was the natural course for them to follow. He felt that a grim fate might befall the Methodists if they ever lost their zeal.

He wrote:

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.<sup>19</sup>

History shows that the church is susceptible to institutionalization whenever it loses focus on the mission and message of Christ. Alvin Reid and Mark Liederbach say, “When the church loses, forgets, or fails to emphasize the

missional thrust of its purpose...it is a move away from a movement mentality toward what we would describe as “institutionalism.”<sup>20</sup> The church needs to guard against institutionalization by remaining committed to being a disciple making movement.

In conclusion, we need to take a hard look in the mirror and ask ourselves some tough questions in light of our current situation. This chapter demonstrates that there is a serious problem in North America. Thousands of churches are dying and closing every year. Many Evangelicals think that the answer is that we need to be more evangelistic. Some may say, “We need to win more souls for Jesus!” I would argue that we need to make more disciples who will follow Jesus and answer the call of discipleship.

The church in North America has become an institution. When men and women, husbands and wives, boys and girls get serious about discipleship we will see a disciple making revolution take place across our country and around the world. We need to strip away all of the fluff and unnecessary baggage and get back to the basics of fulfilling the Great Commission and making disciples. The rest of this book is dedicated to exploring the radical implications of becoming a disciple making movement.



## 2

# Gospel-Centered

## The Foundation of It All

*The gospel has been described as a pool in which a toddler can wade and yet an elephant can swim. It is both simple enough to tell to a child and profound enough for the greatest minds to explore.*

—Tim Keller

The theological foundation of organic discipleship and the entire Christian faith is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Churches fall into error whenever they move away from the gospel as their foundation. Alan Hirsch reminds us that, “Discipleship, becoming like Jesus our Lord and Founder, lies at the epicenter of the church’s task. It means that Christology must define all that we do and say...It will mean taking the Gospels seriously as the primary texts that define us.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves individuals is also the gospel that grows individuals through discipleship.

An Organic Discipleship strategy draws from the parable of the seed and the sower in Matthew 13:1-23. Larry Osborne also sees the importance of this parable for the local church. He says, “I realize that most biblical scholars see the soil in this parable as representing the condition of

individual hearts- and I agree. But the underlining principles are not only true for individuals; they are also true for the ministry of a local church.”<sup>22</sup>

The heart of this passage is found in Matthew 13:23, “As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” The gospel is the seed of the Word that plays a fundamental role in each of the stages of the overall discipleship process. The gospel is the seed that is sown in reaching people in evangelism and missional ministry; new believers are connected through assimilation; believers grow through small groups, bible studies, and serving; and disciples are reproduced through mentoring and leadership development. Discipleship and spiritual formation are rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ from beginning to end.

## **Understanding the Gospel**

Many Christians have a watered down, man-centered version of the gospel. The result of not having a solid grasp on the gospel is a dysfunctional and fragmented faith. C.J. Mahaney warns that three things result when we move away from the gospel: legalism, condemnation, and subjectivism.<sup>23</sup> There is a need for a clear understanding and a rediscovery of the gospel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jerry Bridges says, “The gospel is not the most important message in history; it is the only essential message in all of history. Yet we allow thousands of professing Christians to live their entire lives without clearly understanding it and experience the joy of living their lives by it.”<sup>24</sup>

What is the gospel? The gospel is the declaration of the good news that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died for our sins on the cross of cavalry. Simply put,

there is no gospel without the sinless life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Tim Keller beautifully describes the gospel as, “The person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with him forever.”<sup>25</sup>

## **Doctrines of Grace**

To be gospel centered requires that one knows the doctrines of grace. Men like Martin Luther and John Calvin fought to bring a reformation to the church that would put faith back into the hands of the people. Arising out of the period of the Protestant Reformation were five foundations which summarized in part what the Reformers were trying to do. These banners were known as the "Five Solas" (Latin for 'only' or 'alone') of the Reformation: the authority of scripture, salvation in Christ alone, by Grace alone, through faith alone, and to God Alone Be Glory. These five solas of the faith are as important now as they were then.<sup>26</sup>

A gospel centered view of salvation is completely Christocentric. Christianity begins and ends with Jesus Christ. The word *Christian* literally means “Christ-like.” Therefore, a proper Christology is the place to start if we are really going to talk about salvation. Gospel centered theology distinguishes between man centered and God centered views of salvation.

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is freely offered to all who repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. By His blood, Jesus has obtained eternal redemption for every believer. We are “saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore, salvation is the

work of God from beginning to end. Salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifying them in His sight.

## **Gospel Centered Discipleship**

The gospel has far-reaching implications for every Christian believer beyond salvation. Christians should live gospel-centered lives. Believers are saved by the gospel and called to live by the gospel. The gospel is for all of life. Not only should every Christian have a clear understanding of the gospel but they should also apply it to every area of the Christian life. The gospel is to be applied to every area of thinking, feeling, relating, working, and behaving.<sup>27</sup> Christians must never move beyond the gospel. C.J. Mahaney writes that believers should memorize the gospel, pray the gospel, sing the gospel, review how the gospel has changed your life, and finally we should continually study the gospel.<sup>28</sup> This is the reason why the gospel is the foundation for discipleship.

There is an important connection between the gospel and discipleship. Our theology has a direct effect on our ministry and discipleship. In many ways, our discipleship is the fruit of our theology. Therefore, Church leaders can use church growth principles to add people to the church; however, only the gospel can grow people into disciples of Jesus Christ.

In a recent sermon address, Southeastern Seminary President Dr. Daniel Akin declared that we must be gospel centered in all our endeavors for the glory of God. He went on to say the following about the need for Christians to be gospel centered:

- The Lordship of Jesus Christ and His gospel is what it is all about. It is why we exist as the people of God.
- Being “gospel centered” means we are “grace centered.” It means loving the people Jesus loves and reaching out to those rejected and even scorned by the Pharisees of our day. Legalism by the Pharisees of our day embedded in our traditions to which we are often blind must be exposed, confessed, and repented of. A gospel-centered agenda can make this happen.
- Being gospel centered means we proclaim His victory over death, hell, the grave, and sin by His substitutionary atonement and glorious resurrection. We must be gospel centered for our justification, our sanctification and our glorification. We must be gospel-centered from beginning to end.
- Pursuing in all things the “glory of God” means we will be theocentric and not anthropocentric in our worship and work. The supremacy of God in Christ thru the Spirit in all things must be the engine that drives us.
- A radically gospel-centered life will ensure that the bloody cross of a crucified King is the offense to non-believers not our styles, traditions, legalisms, moralisms, preferences and sourpuss attitudes!
- A radically gospel-centered life will promote a grace-filled salvation from beginning to end putting on display the beauty of the gospel in all of life’s aspects. It will remind us that we do not obey in order to be accepted; we obey because we are accepted by God in Christ!
- Once more an attractive and contagious joy in Jesus will draw people to the Savior whose glory radiates through transformed lives made new in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
- Too many of our pulpits have jettisoned the proclamation of the gospel. Too many of our people have lost the meaning and therefore the wonder of the gospel. We must get it right once again if we are to experience a Great Commission Resurgence. No gospel, no Great Commission Resurgence. It really is that simple.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, a Gospel-centered church does not only preach the gospel. The gospel is not an addition to our ministry or even a beginning point; rather, the gospel must saturate every part of our church's life. Each stage of our discipleship process should also be gospel-centered. From assimilation, to preaching and teaching, to counseling, to leadership development, the gospel must be central. Even our worship should be gospel-centered.

The church should reach lost people with the gospel through community outreaches, personal evangelism, and missional living. The church should develop and grow disciples with the gospel through small groups, Bible study, service, and the teaching of spiritual disciplines. It should seek to reproduce disciples grounded in the gospel through leadership development and the mentoring of godly men who will become elders and deacons. Let the gospel be the heart of your church from beginning to end.

# 3

## Mission

### Living the Mission

*The church exists by mission just as fire exists by burning.*

– Emil Brunner

The second part of organic discipleship is mission. It is impossible to grasp the true heart and soul of Christianity without understanding the mission of the church. Christians have been sent as missionaries to share the Gospel in our present culture and to fulfill the Great Commission. The church is rooted in the concept of the *Missio Dei*, which recognizes that there is one mission and it is God's mission. The *Missio Dei* is a Latin theological term that can be translated as "Mission of God." The word *missio* literally means sent. The church is not an end in itself; the church is sent into the world to fulfill the mission of God. Robert Webber reminds us, "The calling of the church in every culture is to be mission."<sup>30</sup>

To understand what it means to be a part of the mission of God begins with understanding that God is a missionary God. The very being of God is the basis for the missionary enterprise. God is a sending God, with a desire to see humankind and creation reconciled, redeemed, and

healed. God's mission can be seen throughout the pages of the Bible and history. Nowhere is the mission of God better understood than in the person and work of Jesus Christ. John 3:16 tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Many Christians and churches teach and preach that missions are something we support or do, such as sending or supporting missionaries in other countries. This was the case 20 to 30 years ago. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the mission field has come to us. We live in a post Christian world where people simply don't know the gospel anymore. Therefore we are all called to be missional and share in the mission of God. Ed Stetzer says, "Being *Missional* means actually *doing mission* right where you are. *Missional* means adopting the *posture of a missionary*, learning and adapting to the culture around you while remaining biblically sound."<sup>31</sup>

There is a healthy shift happening in the church toward a missional mindset. In *Breaking the Missional Code*, Ed Stetzer explains how the church has shifted to missional thinking in the following way:

- From programs to processes
- From demographics to discernment
- From models to missions
- From attractional to incarnational
- From uniformity to diversity
- From professional to passionate
- From seating to sending
- From decisions to disciples
- From additional to exponential
- From monuments to movements<sup>32</sup>

## Jesus: The First Missionary

Being a missional Christian is simply following the way of Jesus. Jesus Christ was the first and greatest missionary. The Bible tells us that He came from heaven to earth to die for a lost and dying world. The following scriptures reveal how the mission of God was fulfilled through Jesus Christ and how we are called to continue and complete the *Missio Dei* in our culture.

- Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who *sent* Me, and to accomplish His work." John 4:34
- "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who *sent* Me." John 5:30
- "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who *sent* Me." John 6:38
- "I know Him; because I am from Him, and He *sent* Me." John 7:29
- "And He who *sent* Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." John 8:29
- "We must work the works of Him who *sent* Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work." John 9:4
- And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who *sent* Me. And he who beholds Me beholds the One who *sent* Me." John 12:44-45
- "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who *sent* Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak." John 12:49
- "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who *sent* Me." John 13:20
- "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast *sent*." John 17:3

- "For the words which Thou gave Me I have given to them; and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst *send* Me." John 17:8
- "As Thou didst *send* Me into the world, I also have *sent* them into the world." John 17:18
- Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has *sent* Me, I also *send* you." John 20:21

As the Father sent Jesus, He also sends us into our time and culture. Mark Driscoll says, "It is imperative that Christians be like Jesus, by living freely within the culture as missionaries who are as faithful to the Father and his gospel as Jesus was in his own time and place."<sup>33</sup> We have been chosen by God to live in this time and place in order to fulfill the mission of God.

Acts 17: 26-27 tells us that God has determined the exact place and time where we should live so that that men may find Him. It is truly awesome to realize that you have been chosen by God to be His representative to this world. It is both a great privilege and great responsibility. Paul describes our calling in the following way, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Being missional is God's way of showing the love of His Son Jesus through His church. Christians must strive to always be like Jesus, our perfect example. Jesus said, "the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) This scripture beautifully embodies the task of Christian ministry. To be a minister is to be a servant. We are to serve and give our lives for others. Serving is the example that Jesus gave; therefore we should follow it.

As the church we are called to care for a lost and dying world that is in desperate need of a savior. Too many times we compartmentalize the different ministries of the church. God is calling the church to rediscover the biblical model of holistic ministry that infuses both the evangelical and the social. Jesus met both the physical and spiritual needs of the people He ministered to. As the Body of Christ on earth we are His representatives to a lost world. Therefore what we do and say are of eternal importance.

There are two primary ways that every Christian can become a missional disciple. The first is by sharing a verbal witness. This is also known as the evangelical witness or more commonly called evangelism. This is when you share the gospel message with your words. The second is the second way we can fulfill the mission of God is called the social witness. It is universally true that people don't care how much you know till they know how much you care.

## **Evangelical Witness**

Once we firmly trust and believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, we must make His name known to the entire world. This is also called the Great Commission. His name is beautiful, wonderful, and all together lovely. The Bible tells us that one day, "every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of God." (Philippians 2:10) Jesus' last words to his disciples were: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

Sharing our faith is the duty of every believer. This is commonly called evangelism. The word *evangelism* comes from the Greek word *evangelion*, which means gospel or good news. We are all called to share the good news of

Jesus' love and forgiveness with the world. It is not as important how we share our faith but if we share our faith. There are many different ways that Christians can share their faith with others.

Sharing our faith with others begins with prayer. Pray that God will give you the right opportunity and words to say to others. You would be surprised how many opportunities there are to share your faith with others. The Holy Spirit will open the hearts and the doors when the time is right. Many times people never share their faith because of fear, but the Bible says that, "God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7). The Holy Spirit will help you move past all of your fears and share your faith with boldness. It's like fishing, you don't know what the fish are biting until you cast your line into the water.

The best way to share the faith with friends and family is by personal evangelism and missional living. Being an authentic Christian day after day is the best way to lead somebody to Jesus Christ. To be a living witness does not remove a Christian's responsibility to share the faith; rather it gives the opportunity. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 to let your light shine before men. A Christian's life becomes a light for others to see God. Therefore, believers should show the world that our God is real through actions and deeds. In the words of St. Francis, "Preach at all times but if you must use words."

## **Social Justice**

Every day in United States, there are literally millions of people who are living in poverty in the shadow of our nation's great wealth. Hunger and poverty are quickly becoming a serious epidemic in U.S. Every month close to

twenty million Americans go hungry. According to the census, over 35 million people live below the poverty line, up 1.3 million from 2002. Most of our nations poor are children and elderly. There are over 50,000-orphaned children in America. There are many more people in every city of our nation who are homeless and can't even provide basic needs such as food and clothing. In addition, drugs, domestic violence, and illiteracy are harsh realities for many people.

Who are these people in need? Where do they live? Where can we find them? They are in our cities, communities, and small towns. They are our neighbors, fellow church members, and even family members. They are not numbers or mere statistics, but they have names, faces, and feelings. More importantly they have real needs that can be helped by the church.

Government organizations alone cannot reform or solve the problem. The problem usually has a spiritual root. Rather than giving up on the problem, the church is already equipped with the answer. We are called of Jesus Christ to go beyond the gate and minister to a lost and hurting world. The church must build up the waste places and become repairers of the breach! (Isaiah 58:12). We have a scriptural mandate to touch our cities and communities with the love and compassion of Christ. Our churches can make a difference one person and one family at a time through care ministry.

God is bringing about a renewed awareness for social ministries in the church. For too long the church has focused solely on numerical conversions while forgetting about the need to minister to the whole person. In the past social ministry has been looked at as something that only liberal Christians do because they lack the spiritual aspect of the

Christian faith. There may have been some abuse, but that is no excuse for us to neglect social ministry all together.

God is concerned about the needy, destitute, hurting, poor, and orphans of the world. The word of the Lord tells us that we are commissioned to care for those around us who cannot care for themselves. Too long we've tried to stick band-aids on wounds that will not heal over night. Being missional is going into places where the world doesn't want to go. Ministry is very dirty. If we are going to make a difference we must roll up our sleeves and join in the work of Jesus among the poor and disenfranchised of this world. Find the needs of your community and begin to fill them by being a missionary to your city and community.

Church of the Outer Banks has taught me the powerful meaning of being a missional community. The church is currently involved in several community outreaches to reach the unchurched people in our community. The church has sought to share the message of Christ in a number of creative ways. We have adopted beach cleanups, which the church clean once a month to show the community that the church cares about the beaches. The church began an art-mentoring program that has reached hundreds of at-risk youth in our community and in South America. The church also host quarterly art shows that infuse art, music, and coffee. These community art shows draw hundreds of people from the community. We eventually opened an art gallery that hosts art shows and concerts to build bridges between the church and community.

## **Becoming a Missional Church**

Being missional means that we are both evangelistic and social minded. It means that we care about people's

souls and their bodies. It means that because we care about the gospel we should care about social and environmental issues. Being missional brings all of live together under the banner of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every church can be missional. The key is thinking outside of the box. We need to think of new ways to reach our communities for Christ. There are a number of ways that you can do effective community ministry that is missional. Depending upon the need in your community, your church can start an art ministry to reach local artists, start a food pantry, serve meals to the elderly, offer literacy training, or start an after school program for at-risk youth. Community ministry shows people in the community that you care.

### **Recognize the Needs of Your Community**

It begins by recognizing the needs in your community. We will never know what the needs of our community are until we begin to get outside of the four walls of the church. It is amazing how little church people actually interact with non-churchgoers. Matthew 9:35, tells us that when Jesus went out into all the cities and villages he saw that the multitudes were weary and had compassion on them. As Jesus went into the community, He saw the needs of the people.

When you get into the community, you will begin to see what the needs of the people are. We began to canvas our city and assess the needs of the people. When we began to look around our city we saw many people with tremendous needs. Make a personal inventory of the needs, and then you will be able to start a ministry that meets the needs of your community.

## **Communicate the Needs to Others**

If you are going to be a missional church, you must also effectively communicate the needs of your community to your church. Let people know the facts about the needs in your community. Tell others how they can help. I have learned that people want to help if they are properly informed. Communication is the key. You will be amazed how willing people are to join the cause of reaching your city. Compelled by a vision to rebuild the city, Nehemiah saw the need to rebuild the city

## **Don't Do It Alone**

Do not try to do it all alone. Do not forget to communicate with other organizations outside of your church that are already doing ministry in your area. One of the smartest things that we did was to network with other agencies in our area. The church can and should work with secular agencies for community impact. For too long we have had a false dichotomy between the secular and the sacred. You can work with secular organizations without compromising your beliefs. We regularly collaborate with the local arts council and other community groups to host art shows and music events.

The needs are great, but if we begin to work with others, we can make a difference in our cities and communities. People will rally behind the cause when we effectively communicate the need and the opportunity to get involved. Community ministry shows people how the church is essential to the community. People from other churches and in your community may want the opportunity to get involved. You will see that there are many who are looking for an opportunity to get involved in a worthwhile project that will help others in the community.

Once you begin to communicate the needs in your community then you must select an appropriate course of action. Do not just start a ministry for the sake of starting one, but also select a plan of action that fits the needs of your community. For instance, if you live in an affluent town then starting a food pantry might not be the best option. Food will end up drying on your shelves. Perhaps you live in a city with a large Hispanic population you can start an English study program to help them learn the English language. The key is to see the need and then meet it.



# 4

## Community

### Building Biblical Community

*Does it matter how many people are coming through the front door if the back door is wide open? We've often become so focused on reaching people that we've forgotten the importance of keeping people.*

*-Larry Osborne*

The third element of the organic discipleship process is to develop pathways for people to build authentic Christ centered community. Discipleship must take place within the context of the Christian community. Disciples are made in community not isolation. Perhaps the reason why many churches struggle with making disciples is that they do not know how to live in community. The church must rediscover the power of biblical community if we are going to make disciples for Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

God made us to live in community with others. Martin Luther said, "God has created man for fellowship, and not for solitariness."<sup>34</sup> Fellowship is an intimate union in which Christians share and is not just a friendship, but also the deep bond that only Christians can know as the family of God. At the heart of the Greek word for fellowship is the idea of participation together.<sup>35</sup> No single word in the

English language captures the beautiful meaning of this word. This chapter will explore various ways for your church to develop an intentional and natural process for connecting people to gospel-centered community.

## **Baptism: Beginning the Journey**

Baptism is the initiation into the Christian community and the first steps into the life of discipleship. The Great Commission says that we are to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). A new believer should be baptized because Jesus did it and taught it (Matthew 3:13-17). Baptism is a public display and confession of faith for everyone who has accepted the free gift of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Acts 2:38, 39).

A person should be baptized upon their personal decision to become a Christ-follower. Likewise, a person must be accountable and mature enough to understand the basics of the gospel before being baptized. The literal meaning of baptism as described in the New Testament that indicates total immersion. Therefore, the biblical mode of baptism should be total immersion for believers who profess faith in Christ. Baptism is an amazing way for new Christians to feel accepted and loved by the Christian community.

Baptism can be an important celebratory event in a believer’s life that connects them to the church family. Christians both old and new join together to celebrate the public declaration of faith of new believers. We make it a special celebration event at our church. Several times a year, we gather at the beach to perform ocean baptisms. After a new believer is baptized we offer them an olive wood

cross to commemorate their experience and entry into the community of faith.

## **Connection Ministries**

Jesus taught an important analogy for discipleship in John 15:4-5, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” You have to abide in Christ if you are going to grow as a disciple. The key to this passage is that believers have to remain connected to the Vine to bear fruit. Our role as church leaders is to help facilitate connectivity and make sure that it happens.

For many churches, the back door is as big as their front door. This means that they lose as many people as they gain. Over a long period, a church will slowly die if they cannot close the back door and connect new people. Therefore, we need to close the back door of our churches by being intentional about connecting people to Christ and the church. The main way that we connect people is through having an intentional connection process built into our church that helps people stick. In order to do this our discipleship process should be clear and understandable so even a non-believer or new Christian can understand it.

Helping people connect in your local church is an important part of discipleship. You cannot be a disciple of Christ and not a connected member of His body. Being intentional about connecting new believers to the church is a stewardship issue. The Bible tells us that we should, “Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds” (Proverbs 27:23). Likewise, Paul tells us to “Pay

careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). If we are not connecting people to Christ in a meaningful way, we fail to fulfill the Great Commission.

An important part of the discipleship journey is to connect new believers to the church through connection ministries. Connection is not separate from discipleship; rather it is the entry point to the discipleship journey. The goal of connection ministries is to help new people take the next step in their walk with the Lord and to help them grow as disciples of Christ. Connection helps people take next steps in their faith. Some people may need to commit their life to Christ; others may need to be baptized, others may need to join a small group, while others may simply need to become members of the church.

People can stick at our church numerous ways. Our church developed a connection process that helps newcomers connect to the church body. First, we have a hospitality area on Sunday mornings with coffee from one of the local coffee shops and other goodies for people to eat. This helps people let down their guard and mingle before and after service. I have made many connections with people over a cup of coffee on Sunday morning who eventually became a member of our church.

We also host a monthly Next Step Dinner for people who are interested in getting involved in our church. At the Next Step Dinner, church leaders share the church’s vision, values, and beliefs as well as our discipleship process. This process emerged from the church’s vision to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century followers of Jesus Christ who connect with God, connect with others, and live on mission.

The church's interactive website is also an important part of the church's ability to help people connect. People can listen to the sermons, watch videos, interact on the blog, and connect on the online member's directory. The internet is an untapped discipleship resource for the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The key of the connection process is helping people take the next step in their journey of faith. We should think outside of the box at how we can connect people. There may be hundreds of ways that new believers can connect to Christ and your church.

## **Community Groups that Connect**

Community groups are an important way to help people build authentic gospel-centered community. Organic discipleship seeks to connect and grow disciples with the gospel through community groups that involve Bible studies, pathways to serve, and teach spiritual disciplines. The church community is the organic context in which disciples grow. We should desire to help people grow in a community of believers who love God and care for one another through real relationships by meeting regularly in fellowship groups and weekly small groups.

Disciples are made through biblical Christ centered community. When reading the book of Acts, we can see that the life of the early church revolved around community. Acts 2:42 says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Fellowship is an intimate union in which Christians can share. This is not just friendship, but also the deep bond that only Christians can know as the family of God. The Christian life is living together in community with one another and Christ. The spiritual discipline of fellowship is very important in living the Christian life.

## **What Are Community Groups?**

Community groups are typically a home fellowship made up of 10-15 people who meet every week for six to eight weeks to share, study, and support one another. A leader usually leads each group. An average meeting lasts for an hour and a half, followed by light refreshments. There are all kinds of groups because there are all kinds of people. There can be small groups for married couples, single adults, blended groups, men's groups, women's groups; just to name a few. There can be groups designed for new Christians and groups for people who want to really dig deeper into a book of the Bible. There can be a small group for just about everyone and everything. They are the place where the real ministry of the church should take place as we study God's Word, while supporting and sharing our lives with one another.

The Christian life finds its fulfillment when we share it together with one another and Christ. Small groups are one of the primary ways of experiencing fellowship. Community groups provide a place for spiritual growth, intimacy, accountability, and protection. The church is not a building but the family of God and the Body of Christ. The people that we connect with in community groups become our spiritual family that support and encourage us. Through true fellowship in community groups, we experience and share the love of God with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In community groups, we also become a part of the spiritual formation of others through the blessing of fellowship.

## **Why be a part of a Community Group?**

There are several specific benefits for being a part of a community group. First, community groups are a place for believers to live together in community. The Christian faith

is a social religion not a solitary one. Secondly, they are a place for believers to pray for one another. Prayer is one of God's greatest gifts that He has given the church. Thirdly, small groups are a place to hear and learn from the Word of God. Community groups are a place where we can find, grow, and use our gifts and talents for Him. Lastly, you will be under spiritual protection of godly leaders who will help you grow (Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28-29). There are many more reasons why you and I need to be a part of community group. Do not rob yourself of the great blessing of being a part of the family of God by joining a community group.

### **What Community Groups Are Not**

If you are like me, you have probably had a bad community group experience at least once in your life. You know the kind, where some weirdo takes over the discussion, or where the leader allows too much time of awkward silence. There is nothing worse than a bad small group experience. In fact, this is the reason why so many people are reluctant to be a part of a small group. As group leaders, our job is to protect our small groups and make them a safe place where people can share, grow, and learn together. We train our community group leaders to watch out for the following five landmines, which can destroy a good small group.

#### **They become a gossip group.**

Community groups are not a place to talk about others; rather they should be a safe place that is free from gossip and condemnation. People who attend a community group should feel free to come as they are and share openly and honestly. If we are not careful community groups can degenerate into a gossip group that will tear down instead of build up.

## **They become a one-man show.**

The leader should not do all the talking. Encourage others to participate and share in the group discussions. In the past, I have been to some community groups where only one person does all the talking. When this happens no one wants to share much less attend. An effective community group leader encourages everyone to participate in the times of discussion.

## **They become a place to complain about the church.**

Community groups can become a sounding board for disgruntled people to complain about the church. This is not a place to complain and slander the church. If people have a problem with the church, they need to share it with the church's leadership, which is biblical. Train your leaders to protect the unity of the church by not allowing upset people to use the community group as a place to complain about their problems.

## **They become a place for crazy people to take over.**

Community groups can attract crazy people who will hijack the group if you let them. Do not allow people to get off the subject by chasing rabbit trails. Whenever people start getting off track in the discussions, bring them back quickly. This requires a lot of discernment and grace. A good leader can keep people on track and the discussion moving.

## **They become an end in themselves.**

Sometimes community groups become a social club. They should not become an end in themselves. Instead, community groups should reach out to new people in the community where we live. Community groups should seek

to serve and bless the community around us. Encourage the people in your community group to reach out to others. Begin thinking of creative ways that you can serve together as a community group and be a blessing to the community where you live.

## **Connect Through Serving and Spiritual Gifts**

A final way to help people connect with Christ centered community is by empowering people with the gospel to serve God and others. Serving is one of the greatest things that Christians can do as disciples. We should be committed to helping people grow as disciples by using their gifts and talents for God in a way that will bless others and make the community a better place. The Bible tells us that God gave each of us the ability to do certain things well (Romans 12:6-8). The Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers to be used for the building up of the body of Christ. As a church, we need to help people find and use these gifts for God. Serving is a powerful connection point that many churches ignore or simply overlook.

Serving others is certainly not encouraged in our individualistic society. To be a servant means that we must look after the interest of others. It means selflessness as opposed to selfishness. A servant asks, "What can I do for others" instead of "what can they do for me?" Jesus set the example of being a servant by saying, "For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Christians must strive to be like Jesus, our perfect example. Jesus said, "the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This scripture beautifully embodies the task of Christian ministry. Disciples are to serve and give their lives for others. Serving is the example that Jesus gave and his followers should

follow it. Jesus met both the physical and spiritual needs of the people He ministered to in the gospels. As the Body of Christ, we become His representatives to a lost world.

A servant revolution in our churches will reach our community and show the love of Christ. Each week and month, our church provides dozens of many different opportunities for people to make a difference through service projects that touch peoples' lives in the community. These pathways of service help people connect to their God given to serve. Serving is one of the major connection points in our church. The church should be an army of servants who are making a positive difference in their families, their community, and the world. Help find creative pathways for people to connect to your church through serving.

# 5

## **Reproductive**

### A Few Good Men

*What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses  
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*

*-Apostle Paul*

Reproduction ensures that a movement will live past its founding stages. Many Christians and churches will never reproduce themselves. The result is that they take their faith and legacy with them to the grave. Nearly four thousand churches close every year in North America, and nearly 80 percent of all evangelical churches in the US have either stopped growing or are in decline!<sup>36</sup> What does this mean? Simple: the church in North America is not reproducing. We need to become a reproducing disciple making movement once again.

There is no happier time than when a family is getting ready to have a baby. Likewise, churches are full of excitement and energy whenever they are reproducing. The reason is that they are fulfilling their God-given purpose for existence. The church was never intended to be an end in itself; rather it is called to reproduce and fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples. Reproduction is the goal of

every living thing. We see this throughout the pages of the Bible. The Bible is full of reproductive language. God created humankind, animals, and plants to reproduce. Reproduction is also seen in the agricultural language that Jesus uses through the gospels.

As we will see in this chapter, reproducing disciples is the result of selecting, training, and empowering leaders who will in turn reproduce themselves in others. This begins locally with the church and then can take place on a larger scale through reproduction of church plants regionally and internationally. You can be a part of a 21<sup>st</sup> century disciple making movement that can change our postmodern world for Christ.

## **Reproducing Disciples: A Few Good Men**

The most powerful paradigms for reproducing disciples is the discipleship methodology of Jesus. In *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman tells us that Jesus' plan of reproducing disciples, "was not with programs to reach the multitudes but with men whom the multitudes would follow...Men were to be His method of winning the world to God. The initial objective of Jesus' plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to His life and carry on His work after He returned to the Father."<sup>37</sup> If we are to be like Jesus, we must invest our lives in faithful men who will reproduce themselves in others.

Robert Coleman's *Master Plan of Evangelism* offers the following eightfold way Jesus trained the twelve disciples; selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision, and reproduction. In this section, I will summarize Coleman's analysis of Jesus training of the twelve disciples in this section and apply it to reproducing disciples.

## **Selection**

It all started when Jesus called a few men to follow him. Jesus did not choose everyone he met to be his disciples. He took very seriously the selection of men he trained. Rather than focusing on the multitude, he only chose twelve. The reason for his selectivity was intentional. He chose twelve men to instruct, train, and who would in time reproduce themselves in others. A few good men were Jesus' master plan of reproducing disciples.

In a similar way, we so must be selective in the people with whom we choose to disciple. We should look for people who are faithful, willing, and able to reproduce themselves in others. Discipleship does not require a degree or bible college education; rather we should seek to find men and women who have a passion and a hunger to for Christ. Willingness to answer the call to follow Jesus is the only requirement to be a disciple of Jesus.

## **Association**

Jesus was intimately involved in the lives of his disciples as they followed Him. His training method was spending time with His disciples. Coleman points out that Jesus had no formal training or education; He was his own school and curriculum. This is a radical concept for those of us who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whenever we find someone, who seems called into ministry we send them off to let someone else train them. The New Testament model of discipleship was homegrown, natural, and organic. Discipleship happens as men and women spend time with their spiritual mentor.

In a similar way, we should be in the lives of the people we are seeking to develop. We should schedule time with people who we want to disciple outside of normal

church functions. We should schedule times to play, pray, and share a meal together with the people we are discipling. This means that discipleship will require something of us. Discipleship cost us something even for those of us who are called to disciple others. We must sacrifice our time, energy, and emotion in others if we are to fulfill the discipleship task of making disciples. I believe this is one of the number one reasons that churches don't disciple anymore because it takes time.

## **Consecration**

Jesus expected His followers to obey Him. He sought to create in His disciples a lifestyle of consecrated obedience. Discipleship is about a total consecration to the Lord. As disciples, we need to submit and obey God's word and plan for our lives. However, many of us have trouble submitting. We live in an individualistic culture where people do not want anyone else telling us what to do. That is why submission and obedience to God is so hard as well as important. When we become obedient to God in every area of our lives, we will experience victorious Christian living. God can only use men and women who are willing to obey Him.

## **Impartation**

Jesus gave himself away to His disciples by imparting to them everything that the Father had given to Him. He gave Himself freely. He imparted not only Himself, but also spiritual truth about life and ministry. He taught them about the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus imparted Himself to his disciples, we must seek to give ourselves to the men and women that we are called to serve. There is a transfer of godly wisdom and character when true discipleship takes place. As leaders, it is important for us to

grasp that we have a spiritual responsibility to impart ourselves in others if we are going to make disciples.

## **Demonstration**

One reason Jesus had such a lasting impact on His disciples is that He lived the message before them daily. He was the message and the method. By walking with Jesus, they saw how He lived His faith in the real world. He prayed before them. He fed the poor. He had compassion on the multitude. He healed the sick. In other words, He lived the life that He wanted to reproduce in His disciples. After Jesus death and resurrection, He expected His disciples to say and do what He said and did.

It is important that we practice what we preach, because the people we are training will follow our life and example. It is not enough to preach the gospel, we have to practice it daily. Our personal walk with God is one of the most important factors in developing godly leaders. We will reproduce what we are. The most powerful message is a life lived for God. Make sure that the life you live is worthy for others to follow.

## **Delegation**

Jesus assigned His disciples work. He developed His disciples by delegating ministry responsibilities to them. He sent His disciples out and gave them real ministry. Hands on experience was a vital part of Jesus discipleship curriculum. It is funny that churches make people do things that even Jesus did not do. Some churches make people go through a yearlong process before they can even serve in any capacity in the church. Likewise, some people spend years in college and seminary with little if any real ministry involvement. Churches need to rethink delegating spiritual responsibility to people, especially new believers. Is it any wonder our

discipleship is often anemic? Sadly, most people think the pastor is supposed to do everything in the church. We must not forget the power of involving people in ministry.

## **Supervision**

Supervision is important. Jesus supervised His disciples. Whenever they returned from a ministry trip, they would report in with Him. This allowed a time for the disciples to reflect, review, and to receive instruction from Jesus. Supervision is an important part of leadership development, especially when dealing with new believers. We want to delegate and empower people to act, but we also need to help supervise them to make sure they stay on track. Many times people will get into trouble without proper supervision. Supervision is an art. On the one hand, if we are not careful, we can micro manage people. On the other hand, we can be so loose that we don't supervise people at all.

## **Reproduction**

Jesus expected His disciples to reproduce His likeness in others. He imparted His message and mission to His disciples so that they would reproduce themselves in others and make disciples of all nations. The Great Commission implies that the followers of Jesus will reproduce themselves and "Make disciples."

Reproduction is how the Christian movement was born. Today, what has become a 2.1 billion-member movement started with only twelve disciples. I want to return to the analogy of the Vine in John 15:1-17. The purpose of the Vine (Jesus) and the branches (us) is to bear fruit. Christians are to work for and expect a harvest (Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2). Let us commit our lives and

our churches to reproducing ourselves in others in order to make disciples of our communities and our world.

## **Reproduction through Church Planting**

Experts say that church planting is the number one way to reach unchurched people and make new disciples for Jesus Christ. C. Peter Wagner says, “Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.” Likewise, statistics show that it is much harder for traditional churches to reach the unchurched. Therefore, there is an even greater need to plant churches that reach the unchurched in our nation. Church planters are modern day missionaries to North America.

There is a church planting movement happening right now in the United States and around the world. It is causing a rapid multiplication of new disciples of Christ across denominational lines and cultural divides. The Acts 29 Church Planting Network is one of the leaders of this movement. Acts 29 is a trans-denominational peer based network of missional church planting churches that has a high view of scripture on the one hand and a commitment to engage contemporary culture with the gospel. In just a few years, they have planted nearly 300 churches in the United States and have bold plans to plant over 1,000 new churches in the next 20 years.

## **One Size Doesn't Fit All**

There are many different types of church plants: Missional, multisite, house church, theatre church, and purpose-driven to name a few. Planting culturally relevant churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is one of the best ways to reproduce disciples through rapid multiplication. It takes different kinds of churches to reach different communities

and cities for Christ. We need churches that will reach urban, suburban, and rural communities.

One size does not fit all and one church cannot win all. It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. The key is that the church needs to be gospel centered but culturally relevant to whatever community or culture that they are called to serve through planting. It is important to take into consideration the culture, race, and ethnicity of the culture in which you plan to plant a church.

There are many ways to plant a church and no one way is the only way. In fact, there are numerous ways that people can and do plant churches. For instance, some people choose to plant as a team, while others may choose to plant as a solo church planter. Different ecclesiastical models abound including churches that are led by church boards, deacons, pastor, congregational, and elder led. When we are talking about church structure, we should be primarily concerned with what the bible says on the matter.

## **Getting Involved**

Existing churches can and should reproduce themselves by planting new churches. You may be asking yourself, “How can I help plant a church? I have enough to worry about with the church I am already a part of.” There are many ways that you can become involved in church planting.

## **Encourage Planters**

First, you can encourage church planters in your area. Planting a church can be a lonely business. Nearly 80 percent of church plants fail within their first year. One of the primary reasons for failure is not a lack of finances but a lack of support. Church planters often experience culture

shock and spiritual fatigue. It is hard for a church planter and his family to adjust to new culture.

When planting a church, there is also a lack of fellowship and accountability. You can build relationships with church planters and encourage them to fight the good fight of faith. These men have sacrificed everything to plant a new church. These guys need all the encouragement they can get. Meet with a church planter, pray with him, and take him to lunch or coffee.

### **Support A New Church**

Secondly, you can help financially support a church plant. One of the greatest needs for church planting is finances. An existing church can collaborate with a new church plant by becoming a mother church that sends out a church planting team with funds. You can help pay a church planters salary for a year. Churches in a region or community can partner together to plant new churches in their area. You can also join or support a new churches in a church planting network like Acts 29.

### **Replanting**

A final way for churches to get involved with church planting is through replanting or church revitalization. Replanting happens when a church that is in decline or dying decides to face the music and dare to start over again for the sake of advancing the gospel. This will require churches to be willing to create a new identity, empower new leaders, and reach new people for Jesus. It will probably mean that a church sell their building and put that money back into church planting. The reality is that very few churches have the honesty and humility to admit that its over and even less

have the courage to do what it takes to replant. Pray and ask God if He may be leading you and your church to replant.

Church planting is one of the greatest ways to make disciples. We should all share in the responsibility of impacting our nation for Christ through planting new churches that are gospel centered and culturally relevant. If we really want to get serious about making disciples for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we will get involved in church planting.

# Conclusion

## Putting It All Together

Synergy is the interaction of two or more forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual parts. In other words, the whole is greater than the *sum* of the individual parts. In the same way, organic discipleship reminds us that we need to bring together the essential elements of the Christian faith to make disciples.

This study has demonstrated the need for a recovery of an organic discipleship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that brings four essential elements together, which is Gospel centered, missional, connective, and reproductive. Each one is the individual parts that make up the whole of the discipleship process. They must come together in synergy for the greater good of the whole, which is fulfilling the Great Commission to make disciples.

We looked at the Organic Discipleship Model that brings together four essential foundations of discipleship. The Gospel is the seed and foundation of the entire discipleship process from beginning to end. Without the gospel, discipleship will become works based and will eventually dry up and die. Each stage of our discipleship process should also be gospel-centered. Charles Spurgeon encourages us to be saturated with the Gospel. We need to have the Gospel at the heart of all of our activities and endeavors.

Mission is the outreach impulse of making disciples. It is the force that compels us to go out and make disciples through word and deed. Without it, discipleship would be inward focused. There are groups who focus merely on inward spiritual disciplines without ever taking seriously the call to make disciples. Missional ministry moves us beyond ourselves to share the gospel with our friends, family, and neighbors.

Connectivity is the inward movement of discipleship whereby we seek to connect and grow new believers to Christ and His church. Many churches never implement this important part of discipleship. They think if we can just get people saved, they will stick. Many churches simply lack an intentional structure or dynamic to help people connect. The result is the backdoor of their church is often bigger than the front door. Are we really making disciples if we lose more people than we gain? The church in North America desperately needs to rethink how they are trying to make disciples.

Lastly, reproduction is the ultimate goal of discipleship. We need to rediscover the reproductive nature of the church. We are called to select, train, and send missional disciples of Christ out in the world who will be able repeat the process of discipleship. What we need in our day is an organic disciple making movement that will train and send men and women to be reproducing disciples of Christ.

The four points of organic discipleship are not a program or a curriculum; rather they are four essential movements that you can adapt and apply to your local church context and setting to rapidly make disciples in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Regardless of your culture or context these four foundations will help you begin to make missional disciples of Christ who are committed to changing their

world by reproducing themselves in others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



# Appendix 1

## Discipleship Begins in the Home

*A house is actually a school and a church and the head of the household is a pastor in his house.*

*–Martin Luther*

It would be wrong for me to write a book on discipleship and not address the importance of Discipleship in the home. Family and children are a gift from God. I am the husband of an amazing godly wife Kay and the father of two incredible little girls Elizabeth and Anna Belle. I am also the pastor of a church with many young families who have small children. Many of these young families are new to the faith and have come from broken homes with parents who have had a divorce. My wife and I both have come from homes where our parents had divorced. I see the importance of integrating faith in the home every day. Statistics for divorce is rising at an alarming rate. More than ever, it is time for us to step back and rethink the importance and value of the home.

What good is it if you make disciples of your neighbors and co-workers yet neglect to disciple your own family? This is what Paul meant when he said, “If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Timothy 3:5). This

Scripture is not just for pastor, but is also applicable for all Christian parents. The reality is we are not doing a good job at discipleship in the home. Statistics show that between 70 and 88 percent of Christian teens will leave the church by their second year in college.

## **Disciple Your Children**

The call to “make disciples” begin in our homes first. As parents, it is our spiritual responsibility to disciple and teach our faith to our children. The Bible tells parents to, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). As Christian parents, we should want to raise our children to grow up to love Jesus and know the Bible. It is important for children to begin learning about God and the Bible at home. Faith is not just something that we do once a week, but should be a part of our daily lives.

It is not the churches or schools responsibility to raise our kids. Too often, I think we think that church is more like a baby-sitting service to watch our kids for a few hours a week. While church is important, the Bible tells us that the home is primary place of learning the Bible and moral instruction. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we read:

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

You can and should teach your children basic Christian beliefs and to memorize Scripture. This can be both fun and

educational. You can use short scriptures to learn with your children. As you continue to learn the Scriptures, you can use longer passages such as the Ten Commandments and 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm for when you and your children feel ready to go deeper. You can also use a short Family Catechism with question and answers for you discuss that will help basic Christian doctrine with your children. Lastly, there are many family prayers and songs that can be used at various times of the day to help you disciple your family.

## Some Practical Ideas

Here are a few practical ideas that may help you disciple your children.

- Find a good children's bible, such as *My First Bible*, *The Adventure Bible for Young readers*, *ESV Children's Bible*.
- Have a daily time for family worship (morning, afternoon, evening)
- Remember to have fun with your children while learning the bible.
- Keep the time brief to hold the child's attention.
- Recite the verse several times a day in your child's presence so it becomes familiar to them.
- You can make flash cards with Scripture on one side and the book, chapter, and verse on the other.
- Put the verse to music or rhythm. Your child will enjoy singing and clapping their hands.
- Think of fun activities to make the verse fun and easy to remember. Be creative.
- Reward your child when he/she has accurately memorized a verse. Rewards could include small treats or prizes, a trip to the dollar store, or special time with mom or dad.
- Telling them you are proud of them and having them recite it to someone else like a grandparent or teacher.
- Pray with your children every day at meals and before they go to bed at night.

If we want a revolution of discipleship in our nation, it will have to begin in our homes. Discipleship begins in our marriages, by loving our spouses with the love of Christ. It happens by teaching, loving, and disciplining our children. When this happens it will spread through our neighborhoods and into the communities where we will. If every family in every church got serious about making disciples in the home, it would change our world.

The great puritan pastor Richard Baxter knew the importance of family ministry. He said, "We must have a special eye upon families, to see that they are well ordered, and the duties of each relation performed. The life of religion, and the welfare and glory of both the Church and the State, depend much on family government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we shall undo all....I beseech you, therefore, if you desire the reformation and welfare of your people, do all you can to promote family religion."<sup>38</sup> Let us not neglect our duty to disciple those who are within our very homes.

## **About the Author**

Winfield Bevins is lead pastor of Church of the Outer Banks, an Acts 29 church located on the coast of North Carolina. He has authored several publications and is currently finishing a doctorate at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. He is passionate about church planting and has been involved with training church planters from different denominations. He and his wife have two children and live in the Outer Banks.

To find out more about Winfield and his writing go to [www.churchobx.com](http://www.churchobx.com) and [www.winfieldbevins.com](http://www.winfieldbevins.com).

# Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Hirsch, *Forgotten Pathways Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazo Press, 2006., 181.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. Washington, D.C.: Nine Marks Ministries, 2005. 49.

<sup>4</sup> John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*. San Francisco: Harper, 1997. 301.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 102.

<sup>7</sup> Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 55.

<sup>8</sup> See George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*.

<sup>9</sup> Alvin Reid, *Radically Unchurched: Who They are & How to Reach Them*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002. 21.

<sup>10</sup> George Hunter, "The Rationale for a Culturally Relevant Worship Service," *Journal of the American Society of Church Growth, Worship and Growth*. 7 (1996): 131).

<sup>11</sup> Reid, *Radically Unchurched*. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1972. 101.

<sup>13</sup> John R.W. Stott, "Make Disciples, Not Just Converts: Evangelism without Discipleship Dispenses Cheap Grace." *Christianity Today*, October 25, 1999 Vol. 43, No. 12, Page 28.

<sup>14</sup> Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Thom Rainer, Class notes. Spring 2008, SEBTS DMIN 8802.

<sup>16</sup> See the National Council of Churches' *2008 Yearbook of American & Canadian*.

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