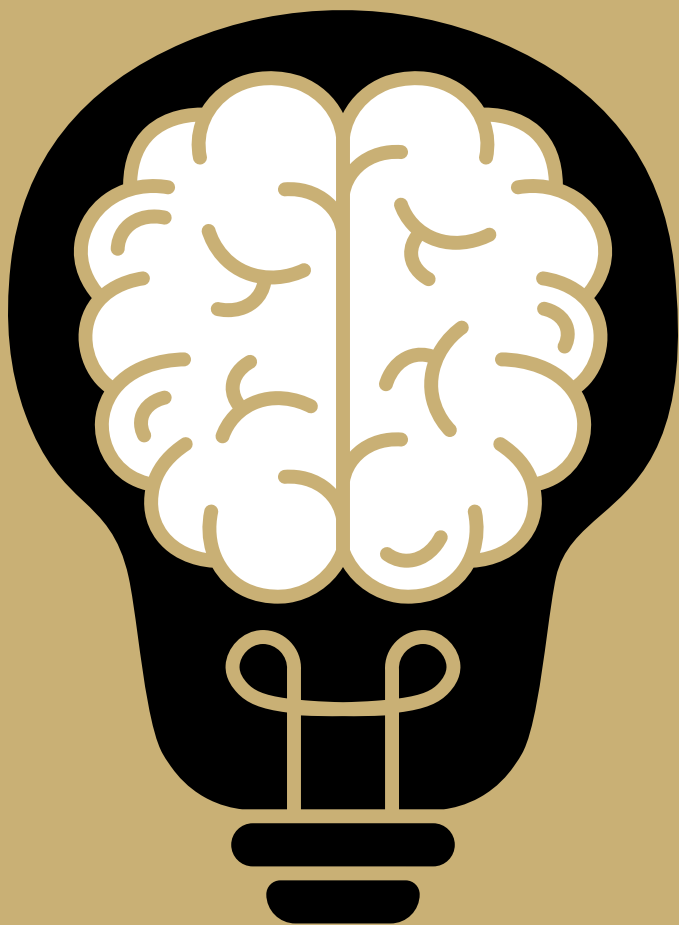


BRAD BRISCO



RETHINK

12 Missiological Principles
for Church Multiplication

Revised and Expanded



Rethink: 12 Missiological Principles for Church Multiplication

Copyright © 2023 Brad Brisco

Published by New Churches powered by Send Network

All rights reserved.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from THE MESSAGE, copyright ©1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress, represented by Tyndale House Publishers. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

05	Introduction
08	Principle 1: Rethink the Missionary Nature of God
12	Principle 2: Rethink the Missionary Nature of the Church
17	Principle 3: Rethink Incarnational Mission
25	Principle 4: Rethink Missio Dei
31	Principle 5: Rethink Post-Christendom
36	Principle 6: Rethink Place
39	Principle 7: Rethink Vocation
44	Principle 8: Rethink Multiplication
48	Principle 9: Rethink Teams
59	Principle 10: Rethink Strategies and Models
68	Principle 11: Rethink Flow
74	Principle 12: Rethink Scorecards
82	Conclusion: Think Long Haul, Not Quick Fix

Starting a church? *We'll help.*

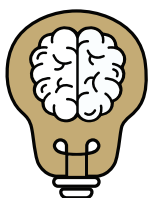
Reliable, **free** resources, featuring world-class teachers

START HERE



NewChurches.com

 **@NewChurches**



INTRODUCTION

“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.” —Alvin Toffler

When bringing about change in the way people behave, we often need to start with questions of “why” before considering the practical issues of “how.” In the book *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Simon Sinek contends that there are two primary ways to influence human behavior: you can either manipulate it or inspire it. While manipulation is not always negative, for example when a retailer drops the price of a product to motivate a purchase, it often involves the use of fear or peer pressure to influence behavior. Additionally, change that is manipulated is usually short-lived.

Inspiring change, on the other hand, involves the consideration of deeper issues. We need to ask underlying questions of “why.” Why do we perceive things in a particular way? Why do we behave in a certain manner? What are the motivations or inherent factors that undergird our behaviors?

Ronald Heifetz deals with similar issues of change in *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, making a distinction between organizational

change and cultural change. He argues that organizational change typically involves restructuring, along with the use of new programs, processes, and techniques. Cultural change, however, looks at how to create a new culture or environment, which will require a new set of skills and capacities. By connecting the themes of these two books, we can say that cultural change is about starting with the “why,” while organizational change is more about the practical issues of “how.”

This topic of change is important in church multiplication because responses to the crises of the church in North America will not be organizational changes. We can’t settle with minor adjustments in our ecclesiology, how we *do* church. The problem is deeply rooted. We must *rethink* to make cultural changes and ask the “why” questions. The underlying issues are primarily spiritual, theological, and missiological. If we want to plant disciple-making, missional churches that have a mindset of multiplication, it will take deep cultural change in the way we think about God’s mission and the nature of the church, as well as how the church lives out that mission in local contexts. We must change our attitude from “we have never done it that way before” to “whatever it takes.”

Another way to frame the rethinking discussion is by using the language of paradigm. The word *paradigm* commonly refers to a perception, assumption, or frame of reference. In a general sense, it’s how we see the world in terms of perception, understanding, and interpreting.

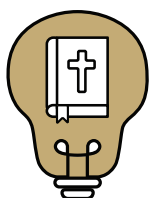
Every organization, including the church, is built upon underlying paradigms or assumptions. This is not the same thing as the church’s beliefs or theological systems. Rather, the paradigm determines how an organization thinks and acts. Paradigms explain behavior then guide behavior. If we try to restructure an organization but leave the

original paradigms in place, then little will change. For real change to take place, we need a paradigm shift or, in most cases, multiple paradigm shifts.

A paradigm shift occurs when there is a fundamental change in an underlying assumption. It's a change from one way of thinking to another, a rethinking. There is a transformation, a sort of metamorphosis that takes place. For the church to move from a mindset of addition (simply planting growing churches) to one of multiplication (planting reproducing churches), the church must rethink several key shifts in the way we think and the way we behave. While it isn't complicated, it is certainly multifaceted.

When I first wrote *Rethink*, I shared 9 paradigm shifts to activate the church. Since that time and based on the feedback I have received from church leaders, that initial list has grown. In this revised and expanded version, I now unpack 12 missiological principles we must rethink to activate the people of God to engage in His redemptive mission. Separately, none of these principles are a cure-all for what ails the church in North America. However, as we begin to think and act differently, I believe there is a synergistic effect within these missionary arenas that will lead to multiplication of disciples and churches.

The strategies and models that fit earlier eras of church history are simply no longer effective. What we need now is a new set of tools. We need a fresh perspective—a new paradigm—and must rethink church multiplication, especially as it relates to our understanding of the church, mission, and church planting.



PRINCIPLE 1: RETHINK THE MISSIONARY NATURE OF GOD

“Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God.” —David Bosch

The most foundational missiological shift that must take place for many Christians relates to their understanding of the missionary nature of God and the church. Let’s first consider the missionary nature of God then discuss implications on the way we understand the church.

When we think about the attributes of God, we most often think of characteristics such as holiness, sovereignty, wisdom, justice, love, and so forth. Rarely do we think of God’s missionary nature. But Scripture teaches that God is a missionary God, a sending God.

The missionary nature of God can be framed in two primary ways. The first involves the grand narrative of Scripture. When we consider the grand story or metanarrative of Scripture, we discover it is about God's redemptive purposes. All Scripture and doctrines of biblical faith connect around God's grand plan and purpose for creation. Mission is the central theme describing God's activity throughout history to restore creation. The mission of God unifies the Bible from creation to new creation.¹

A second way to recognize God's missionary nature is to examine the "sending language" throughout the Bible. From God sending Abram in Genesis 12 to the sending of His angel in Revelation 22, hundreds of sending examples portray God as a missionary-sending God. The Hebrew verb *shelach*, meaning "to send," is found nearly 800 times in the Old Testament. While it is often used in a variety of non-theological sayings and phrases, it is employed more than 200 times with God as the subject of the verb. In other words, God commissions and sends.

Exodus 3:10-15 contains a fascinating dialogue surrounding God's prompting of Moses to confront Pharaoh. God is sending Moses to convince the king of Egypt to release the Israelites from bondage. In the six verses, there are five references to sending.

"So now go, I am *sending* you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have *sent* you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has *sent* me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to

the Israelites: 'I AM has *sent* me to you.' " God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has *sent* me to you' " (emphasis added).

The prominence of sending language is not only seen in Genesis and Exodus but throughout the historical, poetic, and prophetic books of the Old Testament. God is a sending God. Especially when you consider the prophets, it is easy to see that they were sent by God to participate in His redemptive purposes. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of sending in the Old Testament is found in Isaiah 6. In this passage, we catch a glimpse of God's sending nature in its trinitarian fullness. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I *send*? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. *Send* me!'" (Isaiah 6:8, emphasis added).

Later in Isaiah 61:1-3, it is interesting to note that there are no fewer than seven acts of redemption that proceed from or depend on the Hebrew verb "sent." To emphasize how central the sending theme is, the passage could be rendered this way:

He has *sent* me to bind up the brokenhearted,
He has *sent* me to proclaim freedom for the captives,
He has *sent* me to release from darkness for the prisoners,
He has *sent* me to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and
the day of vengeance of our God,
He has *sent* me to comfort all who mourn,
He has *sent* me to provide for those who grieve in Zion,
He has *sent* me to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead
of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of
praise instead of a spirit of despair.

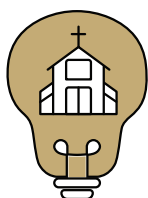
Jesus applies this passage to His own ministry in Luke 4:18-19 as He claims to be the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-3. These verses become, in a sense, the personal mission statement for Jesus.

The Old Testament ends with God promising to send a special messenger as the forerunner of the Messiah: “I will *send* my messenger” (Malachi 3:1, emphasis added). The New Testament begins with the arrival of that messenger in the person of John the Baptist, described in the Gospels as “a man sent from God” (John 1:6).

In the New Testament, sending language is found not only in the Gospels but throughout Acts and the Epistles. The most comprehensive collection of sending language, however, is found in the Gospel of John, where the word *send* or *sent* is used nearly 60 times. Most uses refer to God as the “one who sends” and Jesus as the “one who is sent.”

We see God the Father sending the Son, God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, and God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit sending the church. In the final sending passage in John, Jesus makes clear that He is not only sent by the Father but now He is the sender, as He sends the disciples: “As the Father has *sent* me, I am *sending* you” (John 20:21, emphasis added).

With this sentence, Jesus draws more than a vague parallel between His mission and ours. Deliberately and precisely, He makes His mission the model for ours. Our understanding of the church’s mission must flow from our understanding of Jesus’ mission as revealed in the Gospels.



PRINCIPLE 2: RETHINK THE MISSIONARY NATURE OF THE CHURCH

“Following Jesus into the mission field is either impossible or extremely difficult for the vast majority of congregations in the Western world because of one thing: They have a systems story that will not allow them to take the first step out of the institution into the mission field, even though the mission field is just outside the door of the congregation.” —Bill Easum

Now that we have discussed the missionary nature of God, why is it important for us to recapture God’s missionary nature in the grand narrative of Scripture? Why should we consider God as a missionary God by examining sending language in the Bible? If God is a missionary God (and He is!), then we as His people are missionary people. The nature and essence of the church is rooted in the missionary nature

of God. Another way to articulate this truth is to say that the church doesn't just *send* missionaries; the church is the missionary.

Individually and collectively as the body of Christ, we are a sent, missionary church. We should be sending people in the church out among people of the world rather than attempting to attract people of the world in among people of the church. The reason we start with this crucial distinction is because most people in the church today do not think of their congregation in a sending, missionary manner.

REFORMATION HERITAGE VIEW

People today understand the church in two prominent ways. The first view is what some call the “Reformation heritage” perspective.² The main idea behind this understanding of the church is that Protestants have inherited a particular view of church from the Reformers, which emphasizes the right preaching of the Word, the right administration of the ordinances, and the proper exercise of church discipline.

Historically these have been referred to as the “marks” of the church. While each of the three marks are important aspects of church life, this view has left us with an understanding of the church as a place where certain things happen. In other words, a person goes to church to hear the Bible taught, to participate in the Lord's Supper and baptism, and, in some cases, to experience church discipline. Once again, all very good things, but is that the way we want to define the church? Do these marks speak to the real essence and nature of the church?

CONTEMPORARY VARIATION VIEW

The second view is a slight variation on the Reformation heritage definition. The contemporary variation view is perhaps the most prevalent way people in North America understand the church today, as a vendor of religious goods and services. From this perspective, members are

viewed more as customers for whom religious goods and services are produced. Churchgoers expect the church to provide a wide range of religious services, such as great worship music, preaching, children's programs, small groups, parenting seminars, and so forth.

One of the key issues with both views of defining the church is that the church is seen as an institution that exists for the benefit of its members.

The church should not be viewed as a place where certain marks must occur or as a consumer interaction that provides services. The nature of the church—rooted in the very nature of God—is missionary. The church is a people *called and sent* by God to participate in His redemptive mission in the world. Rather than seeing ourselves primarily as a *sending body*, we must see ourselves as a *body that is sent*.

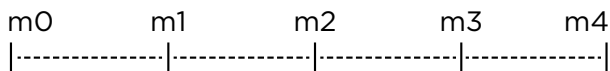
Of course, the church still gathers, but the difference is that we don't simply gather for our own sake, but for the sake of others, or better yet, for the sake of God's mission. We come together as a collective body to be equipped through prayer, worship, and study to then be sent out into the world. The church is meant to be a gathered and scattered people.

Missionary Lesslie Newbigin stated it this way, "The church is not meant to call men and women out of the world into a safe religious enclave but to call them out in order to send them back as agents of God's kingship."

WHY THIS MATTERS

To grasp the importance of understanding the church as missionary, consider the idea of cultural distance. This is a simple missionary tool to help discern just how far a person or a people group is from a

meaningful engagement with the gospel. This image provides a visual.



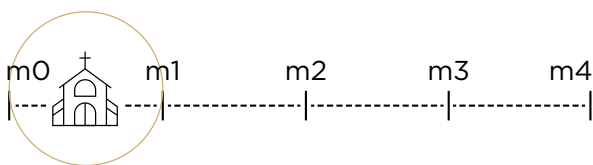
Notice the number scale. Each numeral with the prefix *m* indicates a significant cultural barrier to the meaningful communication of the gospel. Barriers include such things as language, race, history, worldview, traditions, beliefs, political affiliation, and so forth. The greater the number of cultural barriers, the increased complexity there will be in communicating with another person.

In *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, Alan Hirsch offers a description of how the scale might look in a local context.

- ***m0–m1***: People in this group have some concept of Christianity. They would speak the same language, have similar interests, are probably the same nationality, and are from a similar class grouping. Most of your friends would probably fit into this group.
- ***m1–m2***: This group includes the average non-Christian, someone who has little awareness of or interest in Christianity and is somewhat suspicious of the church. This category might also include those previously offended by a bad experience of church or Christians.
- ***m2–m3***: People in this group have no idea about Christianity or might be part of an ethnic group with different religious impulses or a fringe subculture. This group will include people antagonistic toward Christianity as they understand or have experienced it.

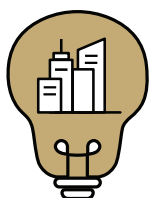
- **m3–m4:** This group might be inhabited by ethnic and religious groupings such as Muslims or Jews. The fact that they are in the West might ameliorate some of the distance, but just about everything else gets in the way of a meaningful dialogue. They are resistant to the gospel.³

This discussion is important because churches in North America often operate almost exclusively in the sphere of m0–m1, as illustrated in this image.



Many churches in North America function in a sort of Christian bubble where there are little or no cultural barriers. This problem is significant because, as we have stated previously, it is we who are the called, sent, missionary people of God, which will sometimes mean we must go to where people are. If we fail to go to the people, the only way they will encounter the gospel meaningfully is by coming to us. This is the built-in assumption of the attractional church, and it requires the nonbeliever do the cross-cultural work to find Jesus, and not us! And make no mistake, for many people, coming to a church service involves serious cross-cultural work. When we ask them to come to us, we are in essence asking *them* to be the missionaries.

Instead, we must see that we are missionary people, sent to participate with a missionary God, who desires to reconcile all of creation to Himself for His glory. We, the church, are called to bless and reach the nations.



PRINCIPLE 3: RETHINK INCARNATIONAL MISSION

“In the incarnation of Jesus, God revealed himself as the One who is with and for his creation. Now, as the Risen Lord sends his Spirit to empower the church, we are called to become God’s people present in the world, with and for the world.” —Darrell Guder

The last two missiological principles we examined illuminated the missionary nature of God and the “sentness” of the church. God is a missionary God who *sends* a missionary church. However, being sent is only part of the story. The language of “incarnational mission” represents the rooting of our lives and the gospel into the place we live. If the essence of missional living is sending, then the heart of incarnational mission is staying.

THE INCARNATION

The word *incarnation* comes from a Latin word that literally means “in the flesh.” It refers to the act whereby God took on human flesh and entered our world to bring about reconciliation between Himself and humanity. The incarnation is God’s ultimate missional participation in creation (John 3:16-17). When God entered our world in and through the person of Jesus, He came to live among us. He *eskénosen*—literally, “set up a tent.” In simpler terms, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood” (John 1:14, MSG).

INCARNATIONAL MISSION

If God’s central way of reaching His world was to incarnate Himself in Jesus, then our way of reaching the world should likewise be incarnational. It is important to acknowledge that the incarnation of Jesus was a special, unrepeatable event. Though we will never be able to embody God the way Jesus does, we ought to be able to make a distinction between *the* Incarnation with a capital “I” and incarnational ministry.

Obviously, there is nothing wrong with inviting believers to model their lives after the life of Jesus. The apostles encouraged Christians to imitate Christ as a way of identifying with Him. Both Peter and Paul insisted that Jesus is the model for Christian living. “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Peter makes clear that Jesus’ life is to be our example. “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). And Paul states that we can follow his way of life because he is so closely following the way of Jesus.

Missiologist Michael Frost elaborates on the theme of following Christ’s example from the book of Philippians:

Paul makes this point even more strongly in Philippians, in which he tells us that our “attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). We often assume that this passage then commends to us Jesus’ humility, which is clearly present in the text. But Jesus’ humility is commended to us insofar as it is expressed in his commitments to identification and relinquishment. First, to follow Jesus’ example means that we should share his profoundly humble identification with sinful humankind (Philippians 2:7b-8a). Second, those of us who wish to emulate Jesus should be aware of his equally humble willingness to empty himself and make himself nothing for the sake of God’s redemptive purposes (Philippians 2:6-7a). ... To embrace an incarnational ministry, then, involves a willingness to relinquish our own desires and interests in the service of others.⁴

This examination of the Philippians speaks to two very important ideas related to incarnational mission—the concepts of *proximity* and *presence*.

Incarnational mission involves living in close proximity with others. We cannot love and serve those God has sent us to from a distance. Jesus took on flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood, so we must do the same. This may require moving geographically to be closer to those to whom God has sent us. At the very least, it will demand creating time and space to be directly and actively involved in the lives of people we are seeking to reach.

The concept of *presence* moves beyond mere proximity to identification and surrender. Jesus identified *with* and advocated *for* those who He was called to serve. As the Philippians passage makes clear, He humbled Himself. He literally *emptied Himself* for the sake of others. This realization reveals an incarnational approach that calls us to

relational identification with our neighbors, leading us to tangible acts of love and sacrifice.

Jesus' words from John 20:21 are most often used to emphasize the sending of the disciples and subsequently the church, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." But we must not neglect the first half of the passage. Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me ..." (emphasis added). The word "as" (or in some translations "just as") translates to "like" or "in a similar manner." In other words, we need to be sent *like* Jesus was sent. To whom and in what manner was Jesus sent? He was sent to the down and outers of society. He was *with* and *for* tax collectors, the oppressed, the poor, and the diseased. If Jesus is our example, we are called to do likewise.

In *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness*, Darrell Guder provides an insightful summary on the incarnation of Jesus and what it means to be a Christian.

We arrive at the concept of incarnational witness as one way of expounding on the character of our missionary vocation. In the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God revealed himself as the One who is with and for his creation. Now, as the Risen Lord sends his Spirit to empower the church, we are called to become God's people present in the world, with and for the world, like St. John pointing always to Christ. The most incarnational dimension of our witness is defined by the cross itself, as we experience with Jesus that bearing his cross transforms our suffering into witness.

Incarnational witness is, therefore, a way of describing Christian vocation in terms of Jesus Christ as the messenger, the message, and the model for all who follow after him. To speak of the incarnation missionally is to link who Jesus was, what

Jesus did, and how he did it, in one great event that defines all that it means to be Christian.⁵

NUTS AND BOLTS

What does all this talk of identification, proximity, and presence have to do with daily living? It may sound cliché, but it really is all about relationships. It's all about getting close enough to people to listen, understand their hopes and dreams, and coming to love them the way Jesus does.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus is a friend of sinners. Hear that—a friend. What constitutes a friend? When another person invites you to meet their friends, you are in. The Bible is full of stories of people inviting Jesus to meet and spend time with their friends. People were drawn to the mysterious love and holiness of Jesus. Someone once said that people who were not like Jesus liked Jesus. As followers of Jesus, shouldn't that also be true of us? That doesn't happen without living with and among people. What will it take for you to incarnate the life of Jesus? What will it take for you to really move into your neighborhood, perhaps for the very first time?

SEEKING THE WELFARE OF YOUR CITY

A fascinating passage in the Old Testament provides a picture of what it looks like to live out incarnational mission. It gives practical instructions for digging into the places where we live. This is especially helpful when Christians sense they are living in a world that is hostile toward their beliefs or living in a place that doesn't really feel like home.

In Jeremiah, we read how the nation of Israel had forsaken God's law and found themselves taken into captivity, exiled far from their

Jerusalem homeland. God sent the Babylonian empire to discipline His people. As they were relocated to a foreign, idolatrous land, they heard whispers that their time in the hostile country would be short. False prophets began telling the nation of Israel that God would soon deliver them and settling into this new, strange land was foolish.

God's word through the prophet Jeremiah was quite the opposite.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (Jeremiah 29:4-7, ESV).

The words of Jeremiah were shocking. The premise of his message was that the exiles would be in Babylon for several generations and that the Israelites would simply need to come to terms with this fact. God was telling them to settle down and get used to being in this hostile, ungodly place.

Jeremiah counseled his community not to be nostalgic for the past, for the past could not be recovered. He did not advise them to plan for insurrection, for there was no promise of their restoration in Jerusalem, at least not any time soon. Nor was the community's survival tied to the remnant that remained in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 24:5-10). For Jeremiah, exile did not mean that God had abandoned Israel. Rather, exile was the place where God was at work. God's purposes for Israel were served by the Babylonian invasion.

Jeremiah's instructions were more counterintuitive than they might at first seem. He tells the Jews to "seek the welfare" of their captors and pray for the very people who destroyed their homeland, because the welfare of the exiles and the captors were bound together. If God's purposes for Israel were being fulfilled through their captivity, then as the exiles pursued the shalom of Babylon, God would provide shalom for those in exile.⁶

It seemed reasonable for the Jews to be hostile to their captors. It also would have been natural for them to withdraw from the world around them. By the same token, it would have been easy for them to simply assimilate into the Babylonian culture. Any of these options would have made sense in human terms. But God called the Israelites to something radically different, not to be defensive against, isolated from, or absorbed into the dominant culture but instead to be incarnated within it.⁷ He was calling them to dig into the place He had sent them, to stay where they would be doing life for a long time.

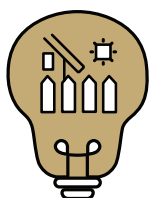
What God instructed the exiles to do is rather ordinary. Consider the list from Jeremiah 29:

- Build houses and live in them.
- Plant gardens and eat their produce.
- Have children.
- Marry off your children so they have children.
- Seek the welfare of the city.
- Pray for the welfare of the city.

Nothing from this list is dramatic or miraculous. These are normal, everyday activities. It could represent any person, regardless of income, social status, education, vocation, or geographical location.

The way the kingdom of God takes root in the lives of people and ultimately changes a city is by exiles living normal, everyday lives as citizens of the King in every neighborhood and city. We build houses. We plant gardens. We have children. We seek the welfare of our city. Often, the ways of Jesus are indeed local and ordinary.

Are you willing to commit to the welfare of your city? Will you allow your imagination to see a movement that begins with the local and ordinary but over time becomes global and extraordinary? If your answer is yes, then together let's seek the welfare of our neighborhoods and let us strive for it to spill over into every nook and cranny of our city.



PRINCIPLE 4: RETHINK MISSIO DEI

“The main business of many mission committees is to determine how to spend the mission budget rather than view the entire congregational budget as an exercise in mission.” —Darrell Guder

The fourth missiological principle is the concept of *missio Dei*. An English rendering of this Latin phrase speaks to the “mission of God.” It is God who has a mission to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem and restore it to what He has always intended.

Mission is not the invention, responsibility, or program of the church. Instead, mission flows directly from the character and purposes of a missionary God. In the words of David Bosch, “It is not the church which ‘undertakes’ mission; it is the *missio Dei* which constitutes the church.”⁸

It is not only crucial to understand that God has a mission but equally important to understand that His mission is larger than the church. We in the church often wrongly assume that the primary activity of God is in the church, rather than recognizing that God’s *primary*

activity is in the world and that the church is God's instrument sent into the world to participate in His redemptive mission.

Before discussing how to live out a *missio Dei* theology in a practical manner, let's consider how the first four missiological principles cohere together. Remember, the first two principles reminded us that we are a sent missionary people. The third principle instructs that we are to incarnate or embed our lives and the gospel into the local context we have been sent. *Missio Dei*, then, simply states that God is already at work in the lives around us and our job is to figure out what God is doing and how He wants us to participate.

GOD'S MISSION AS THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE

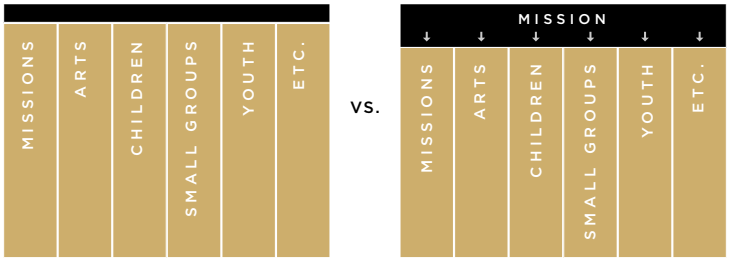
A *missio Dei* perspective will shape our thinking in the manner we understand the form and function of the church. Typically, congregations view "missions" as simply one program or activity among many other equally important functions of the church. Therefore, the missions program is seen alongside that of worship, small groups, men's and women's ministries, youth and children's ministries, and so forth. When missions is viewed in this way, the business of many mission committees "is to determine how to spend the mission budget rather than view the entire congregational budget as an exercise in mission."⁹ However, when the church begins to define itself as an agent of God's mission, it will begin to organize every activity of the church around the *missio Dei*.

Mission as the organizing principle means that mission goes way beyond being some sort of optional activity or program for our churches. It actually is the organizing axis of the church. The life of the church revolves around it. This is not to say that we don't do corporate worship, develop community, and

make disciples, but that these are catalyzed by and organized around the mission function. Only in this way can we be truly missional. Merely adding serving events or special outreach days to our church schedules will not develop missional people nor make a missional church.¹⁰

To ensure clarity on this issue of God’s mission as the organizing principle for all activities of the church, let me state again that this does not minimize the need for and importance of the other functions of the church. It is simply stating that no other function of the church can rightly be the organizing principle or the reason we come together in the first place. Worship should not be the organizing principle. Community should not be the organizing principle. Even evangelism should not be the organizing principle.

Instead, worship, community, discipleship, evangelism, and every other important activity of the church are properly understood and initiated only when viewed through the lens of mission. Pause for a moment and examine the image below.



The first image represents some activities of a local church. Most churches have ministries for arts or worship, children, small groups, youth, and so forth. However, one of the problems with a list like this, is that “missions” becomes just one activity of the church, alongside several other equally important aspects. These images illustrate the

move from “missions” as one among many functions of the church to “mission” being *the* organizing principle for all other activities or ministries of the church.¹¹

If we believe the church is really all about God’s mission, then God’s mission should inform everything else we do as a church. As the second image shows, we should remove the “s” of *missions* and put *mission* at the top to illustrate that the *missio Dei* should shape, or at least influence, every other program and activity of the church.

GOD’S MISSION AS THE STARTING POINT

Determining *where* and *how* we engage in God’s mission is the second way a *missio Dei* theology influences our activity. If the mission is God’s, and it is, then how do we step into it? How do we truly participate in what God is doing? Geoffrey Harris provides these helpful words:

The average church member may be reassured to know that mission is instigated by the simple act of praying, and of listening to God, and following God’s guidance. In such fundamental activities all Christians can participate. In addition, it is reassuring to know that God’s Spirit is at work in the world prior to our engagement in any relationship or any work of mission. The presence of God in the world means that anyone embarking upon God’s mission already has an ally and accomplice in the work. It becomes “mission alongside” rather than mission alone.¹²

FOUR STEPS TOWARD MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Practically speaking, what does it look like to do mission alongside what God is already doing? If it is God's mission and not ours, how do we know where, when, and how to participate? The answer, at least in part, is that we must look for God's activity in a local setting as the place to begin our missional engagement. Let me introduce one way to determine what God's local mission is and how a church body can begin to participate in it.

1. DISCOVER

If it is truly God's mission and not ours, then we must first discover how God is at work. The first step in discovering what God is doing is through listening. Individually and collectively, we must cultivate our ability to listen well on three fronts: to the Spirit, to the local community, and to each other. It is impossible to ascertain the movement of God without carving out significant time to listen to His voice through prayer and Scripture, as well as the voices of those we desire to serve. If the first step is about discovering, then the first question must be, "What is God doing in this place?"

Mission cannot be decided beforehand. It must be decided in relation to God's activity in a local context. Instead of front-loading mission strategies with what we *think* a community needs, we begin by listening and learning what God is already doing. Only after discovering what God is doing in a particular setting do we then ask how He wants us to participate.

2. DISCERN

In addition to listening, participating in God's mission will involve discernment. Not only will we need to discover what God is already

doing, but we will need to ask the follow-up question, “In light of our gifts and resources, how does God want us to participate in what He is doing?” The fact is that we can’t do it all, which is true for both individual followers of Jesus as well as local congregations. But it is also true that God has gifted us all to do something! The point of discernment is to determine where and how to participate in God’s mission.

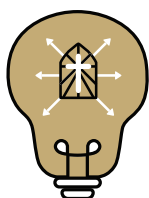
3. DO

This may seem obvious, but the processes of discovery and discernment are useless if we do not obey what God is calling us to do. We must acknowledge that following Jesus will often be costly. Therefore, we need to ask, “Will we be obedient to costly discernment?” Or will we put conditions on our obedience? Someone once said that you shouldn’t ask God to guide your steps if you are not willing to move your feet.

4. DEBRIEF

Throughout the process of engaging God’s mission, we must create opportunities to reflect on our missional involvement. Sometimes this may simply mean we need individual “down time” to reflect upon our activities. We may need to ask God to affirm our involvement or to ask for clarity. But it will also mean carving out time to reflect with others among our faith community. We need to hear what others are seeing and sensing concerning God’s activities and to hear the stories of how others are engaging God’s mission. It is important for us to offer feedback on what we are sensing.

These four steps toward missional engagement help to put emphasis on the context God has sent us to and on how God has already been working in that place long before we ever arrived.



PRINCIPLE 5: RETHINK POST-CHRISTENDOM

“In Christendom the emphasis was on maintaining a supposedly Christian status quo, but in post-Christendom it is on mission within a contested environment.”

—Stuart Murray

Remember the famous line from *The Wizard of Oz*, when Dorothy first arrives in Oz and realizes she is now in a world that is strangely different? “Toto,” she says to her little dog, “I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” Dorothy’s surroundings were suddenly unfamiliar. The people and places she was used to seeing no longer existed. She had no idea where she was, but one thing was certain—everything around her had drastically changed.¹³

A place that is strangely different describes the world around the church today. Culture has seemingly changed so quickly and radically that many churches feel like exiles in a foreign land. Like Dorothy,

many churches no longer recognize their surroundings. They don't completely understand the changes that have taken place. They only know that things are not like they used to be.

CHRISTENDOM TO POST-CHRISTENDOM

Numerous factors have influenced the change we see in Western culture. Issues such as globalization, urbanization, post-modernism, and the rise of the information age have significantly influenced the church. However, nothing has shaken the foundations of the church over the centuries as much as the rise and fall of Christendom.

In 313 A.D., the Roman Emperor Constantine adopted the Christian faith as his own and decided to replace paganism with Christianity as the official imperial religion. He brought the church in from the margins of society, where it had been operating for the previous three centuries and united it with the empire. By giving great resources and favors to the church, Constantine set in motion a process that would eventually bring all of Europe into a church-state relationship known as Christendom. It is difficult to overstate the impact Constantine's decision had on the Christian faith. A few of the changes that took place included:

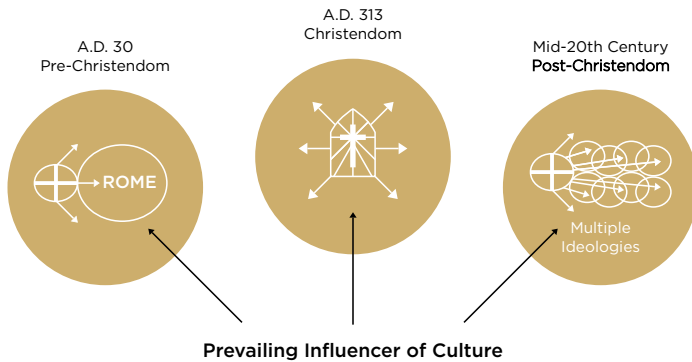
- The assumption that all citizens were Christian by birth
- Infant baptism as the symbol of necessary incorporation into the Christian society
- Sunday as the required day of church attendance, with penalties for noncompliance
- The definition of "orthodoxy" as the common belief shared by all, determined by powerful church leaders supported by the state

- The construction of massive and ornate church buildings
- A strong distinction between clergy and laity and the relegation of the laity to a largely passive role
- The increased wealth of the church and the obligation of required tithes to fund the system
- The division of the globe into either “Christendom” or “heathendom” and the waging of war in the name of Christ and the church
- The use of political and military force to impose the Christian faith¹⁴

The net effect of Christendom was that Christianity moved from being a dynamic, revolutionary, social, and spiritual movement to being a static religious institution with corresponding structures, priesthood, and rituals. The Christian faith moved from an integrated way of life that was lived out seven days a week to an obligation that was fulfilled by attending a service at a set time.

By the middle of the 20th century, however, it was becoming clear in Europe that Christendom was in serious decline. People began to use the term “post-Christendom” to describe the church’s loss of social privilege. Others used it to refer to Western civilizations that no longer considered themselves to be Christian.

In the era of post-Christendom, the church returned to the margins of society, losing prominence and control. While once the majority, the church became the minority. The shift from once being on the margins of society, elevated to a place of control, then back again to the margins is illustrated in this image.¹⁵



Before Constantine, the dominant influence in society was the Roman Empire and the church was a marginalized sect, located on the outskirts. However, while the church operated on the margins, we know from Paul's Epistles and early church history that the church was making serious inroads into the Roman Empire. The second circle represents Christendom when the church became the dominant seat of culture, albeit corrupted with political and military power. Today, the picture is of a church that has been relegated back to the margins.

However, it is important to note that while those outside the church understood that Christendom was fading, many inside the church struggled to realize the church was losing its footing. Consequently, the church was at a loss as to how to reach into the changing pluralistic, postmodern culture that had little interest in it.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

The difficulty the church is experiencing today in trying to relate to culture is in large part due to our Christendom heritage. Many in the church still believe that Christianity is in a place of influence and significance and operate under the false assumption that Christendom is alive and well. While there may be *some* parts of the country that still cling to Christian values, most of the population is rapidly moving

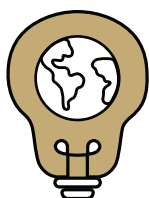
away from the things associated with the church. In the eyes of many outside the church, the church has become completely irrelevant.

The decline of Christian influence in North America can be seen in multiple ways. The most prominent is the continual drop in church attendance. But it doesn't end there. In fact, every indicator that can be used to measure church health is headed in the wrong direction. Conversions. Baptisms. Membership. Retention. Participation. Giving. Religious literacy. Effects on the culture. Look at it from any direction. Everything is in decline.¹⁶

This is an enormous problem. While the church is less effective at reaching a changing world, many in the church continue to believe that it maintains a central role in culture. Instead of leaning toward the missionary vision of the church, we default to church as a place where certain things happen and wrongly assume that those outside the church will be interested in what we do. But every statistic proves that simply isn't the case.

Like Dorothy arriving in Oz, we must not forget that the religious landscape around us has drastically changed. We are in a new land. At times we may feel like exiles. But unlike many exiles, let us not yearn for what once was. Instead, let us seek to bring life and vitality to the land where God has placed us. Let us pray and toil for God's kingdom to come to the cities and neighborhoods in which we live.

This may be a hard pill to swallow, but the reality is that North America is *not a* Christian place. Like Dorothy, we're not in Kansas anymore! The sooner we can come to grips with that reality, the sooner we can return to the revolutionary, missional movement exemplified for us in the early church.



PRINCIPLE 6: RETHINK PLACE

“To be a stranger in a strange land, to be lost ... is perhaps the condition most typical of contemporary life.”

—Iain Chambers

The film *Avalon* is a story of an extended family who arrives in America in the early 1900s. Avalon is the name of the neighborhood where the family members settled. The first half of the film highlights the integration of the extended family. Life in Avalon is lived *with* others and rooted not only in relationships but also in *place*.

However, halfway through the film, three themes fragment the family: suburbs, automobiles, and televisions. The rise of suburbs creates physical distance between extended family members. The affordability of automobiles enables the families to live in the suburbs, but the fathers then spend less time at home as they commute to their jobs. And the popularity of television leads to dinners in front of a screen instead of conversations around a table. The film ends with the resulting alienation and isolation of the extended family.¹⁷

The Great Good Place by Ray Oldenburg highlights similarities I noticed in *Avalon*. Oldenburg contends that most communities in the United States are void of relational vitality, primarily because of the loss of what he calls informal public places. He understands the absence of informal public life as the result of suburban sprawl and the rise of the automobile culture, both of which foster geographical and relational separation between home and workplace. The problem is magnified by home entertainment that often inhibits face-to-face communication. Today, this issue has moved far beyond the introduction of television as portrayed in *Avalon*. Smartphones, computers, tablets, gaming devices, and streaming services provide limitless viewing options.

The warning that Oldenburg sounded over 30 years ago remains relevant today:

The problem of place in America manifests itself in a sorely deficient informal public life. The structure of shared experience beyond that offered by family, job, and passive consumerism is small and dwindling. The essential group experience is being replaced by the exaggerated self-consciousness of individuals. American life-styles, for all the material acquisition and the seeking after comforts and pleasures, are plagued by boredom, loneliness, alienation, and a high price tag. America can point to many areas where she has made progress, but in the area of informal public life she has lost ground and continues to lose it.¹⁸

LOOK AT ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE

The way of life in developed countries is greatly reducing the quantity and quality of our relationships. Most people no longer live in extended families or even near each other. When you add the high

degree of mobility, a strong sense of individualism, and decreased opportunities for informal public life, isolation and loneliness become increasingly common.

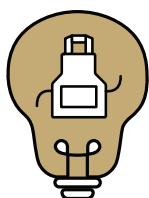
While studies show that we are now actually “connected” to a larger and more diverse circle of people, nearly a quarter of Americans say they have nobody to talk to. In 1985, that figure was 8 percent.¹⁹ And this is not simply a picture of solitary retirees. Middle-aged people are the loneliest group in the United States. According to one study, 40 percent of adults ages 45–49 said they were lonely, up from 20 percent in the 1980s.²⁰

The issue of isolation is compounded by a sense of detachment from place. In a highly mobile society, people rarely feel rooted geographically. We live as nomads, both figuratively and literally. But God created us as social, relational beings. We are created to be in a relationship with the Creator but also to be in relationships with other people. We have been formed with an innate need to know and be known.

WORD BECAME FLESH AND BLOOD

What then is the appropriate response to a culture of increasing displacement? Can something turn the tide of isolation? What practical actions can be taken to mend the broken pieces? To restore people *and* places to flourish?

The solution is no doubt multifaceted. It will involve a variety of tactics: engaging with our neighbors, restoring genuine community, sharing meals with others, welcoming strangers, and opening our lives to those who are disconnected. But in all of the practical actions, the *how* must be rooted in the *why* of incarnational presence. The journey of restoring the relational fabric of our communities must begin with our tangible presence in the place where God has called us.



PRINCIPLE 7: RETHINK VOCATION

“Believers participate in Christ’s priesthood not within the walls of the Church but in the daily business of the world.”

—Lesslie Newbigin

Consider for a moment what you did yesterday. How much of your day was spiritual and how much was secular?

Does selling insurance, running a coffee shop, driving for Uber, teaching at a public school, or waiting tables at the local restaurant matter to God? Most people would probably answer, “No, not much.” Yet, Christians may spend more than half of their lives in work-related activities.

Rethinking vocation must start with a consideration of the sacred and secular divide. Greco-Roman thought was that the world is divided into two competing domains: the sacred or spiritual and the secular or material. Such a worldview tends to assume that the spiritual is the higher realm and that the material world lacks deep meaning. This approach leads to multiple divisions in thinking, including dividing the clergy (spiritual) and the laity (secular), the church (spiritual) and the

world (secular), and between so-called spiritual practices (Bible study, prayer, worship) and so-called secular practices (work, art, eating).

This approach happens often in our understanding of vocation. The word *vocation* comes from the Latin *vocatio*, meaning a call or summons. It is normally used to refer to a calling or occupation that a person is drawn to or is particularly suited for. In the 4th Century, Augustine compartmentalized the way people lived. He divided life into the contemplative life and the active life. The contemplative life was given to sacred things and was seen as a higher calling, while the active life was given to secular things and regarded as a lower calling. This kind of thinking created a distorted view of work that continues today.

For example, the language of “full-time Christian work” or “full-time ministry” is commonly used to describe those whose vocational calling is to be a pastor, missionary, or parachurch worker. However, a proper and biblical understanding is that all Christians are called to full-time ministry, doing good work for the glory of God regardless of their vocation. If God reigns over all things, then all things are sacred. Too often, people leave their homes on Monday morning and somehow think they leave God behind. Instead, the church needs to help people recognize that regardless of what God has called them to do, they are contributing to and participating in God’s redemptive mission.

This missiological principle is twofold. First, we need to understand the harm that this view of vocation has on our understanding of calling in general but also on our calling to both be in the marketplace and to be a faith community.

Second, we need to recognize how rethinking vocation can open other missiological opportunities for church multiplication with those who are already in the marketplace. Then, we will begin to see the benefits of bivocational and covocational ministry.

BIVOCATIONAL AND COVOCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Often the language of bivocational invokes the thought of two distinct vocations. To help us reconnect the two, we might use the language of “covocation.” The prefix “co” is the reduced form of the Latin *com* which means “together” or “in common.” English words like *cofounder*, *copilot*, or *companion* are examples of words that denote partnership and equality.

Covocation embodies the reality that if a person is called to be a dentist, teacher, web-designer, or plumber and also called to start a church, the different callings are not isolated from one another. Instead, they are interlinked and equal. The language of covocation pushes against the temptation to compartmentalize different aspects of our lives. When we begin to understand that each of our callings are legitimate and necessary aspects of God’s mission, they can be leveraged together for His purposes.

Perhaps the most significant benefit of being bivocational or covocational is that it provides the planter greater opportunities to connect relationally with people in the community. Some people have referred to this as “marketplace mission” because relationships develop as a result of the planter’s vocational connections. Their marketplace job is not a hindrance to what God is doing but an advantage to engaging God’s mission.

Being bivocational or covocational gives planters access to a mission field that is not readily available to a pastor who is employed full-time by a local church. Many of these pastors find themselves working inside a church bubble, spending most of their time talking with church people about church things. Even when a pastor makes the effort to engage people in their community, they often find it

challenging to fully relate. It is not until a person incarnates into the local context that they begin to understand the values and interests of the people in their community.

Bivocational or covocational ministry also helps to diminish the sacred and secular divide with respect to vocation. The congregation can see the planter model the truth that all vocations are sacred. Whatever work God has called a person to do, it is a sacred calling. As a result, the benefits of being in the marketplace are multiplied exponentially as every member recognizes how their vocation fits into God's mission.

Another missional benefit is that working in an occupation in the community builds credibility with those outside the church. In a post-Christian context, where people are skeptical of the church, it is important for non-Christians to see that church planters have jobs like everyone else. In a time when Christianity doesn't have the best reputation, it can provide significant "street-cred" with those outside the church.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Another major benefit of bivocational or covocational ministry relates to the financial stability it provides in at least three different areas.

1. THE PLANTER

When the primary financial support comes from a marketplace source rather than the church, there is usually less financial strain on a family. This is especially true when the planter is employed full-time in a vocation that provides benefits like insurance, vacation, and retirement.

2. THE CHURCH

A church led by bivocational or covocational planters usually finds its financial base is much stronger. Without the need to provide full-time salaries and benefits, the church can put more of its financial resources into ministry.

3. THE CHURCH PLANTING ENTITY

Many denominations plan to plant hundreds, if not thousands, of churches over the next several years. Bivocational and covocational ministry provides the opportunity for funding entities to embrace more sustainable church multiplication practices. This is especially necessary for planters who are engaging in socioeconomically diverse contexts.

Many traditional church plants start with a large annual budget supported by multiple funding streams, including partnering churches and denominational entities. Because most funding models are structured over 3–5 years, it puts pressure on the planter to grow the church quickly so it can become self-sustaining before funding runs out. The unfortunate reality is that a planter is often forced to attract financial givers rather than engaging in the brokenness in their community. Bivocational or covocational ministry provides a more viable financial model that allows the planter to focus primarily on mission.

This move towards planting more churches with bivocational or covocational planters must start by rethinking vocation. We need to help people see that regardless of what God has called them to do in the marketplace, their work matters and can align with God's redemptive purposes.



PRINCIPLE 8: RETHINK MULTIPLICATION

“Movement occurs when the making of mission-shaped disciples—who live in the world for the sake of the world, in the way of Christ—goes viral.”

—J.R. Woodward and Dan White, Jr.

In *1,000 Churches* by Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, they discuss rapid reproduction of churches and compare the gestation periods of elephants and rabbits. Elephants carry one calf for a gestation period of nearly two years then nurse it for three years after birth before reproducing again. On the other hand, rabbits carry a litter of typically 14 babies for just one month. Then, in a matter of minutes after giving birth, that rabbit can become pregnant again, repeating the cycle. There may be a time and a place when an elephant-type approach is appropriate in the church. But if our goal is rapid church multiplication, then we must strive toward a movement that, as the saying goes, “breeds like rabbits.”²¹

MULTIPLICATION IS A MINDSET

Perhaps the first thing that should be said regarding church planting and movements is that it has to be a mindset. We must have a “rabbit”

kind of mentality that will not only change the way we think about church, mission, and multiplication, but it will begin to shape the very way we function as the church.

Albert Einstein's famous quote rings true here, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." If we apply that to the church, then, "We cannot solve the problems of the church by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created those problems in the first place." We can't keep thinking and doing what we have already done and expect different results. We must rethink how we understand and live out the life of the church if we wish to see a multiplication movement.

Make it a discipline to think *movement*, not institution. If you identify yourself as a movement, then you will eventually start acting like one.

THE MAKEUP OF A MULTIPLICATION MOVEMENT

What are the tangible characteristics of multiplying churches? Here are four aspects that contribute to a movement culture.

1. GOD'S MISSION IS CENTRAL.

A church that is focused on real movement has a strong emphasis on the *missio Dei*. It is God who has a mission to set things right in a broken world, to redeem and restore it to what He always intended. A movement church understands that mission is not the invention, responsibility, or program of the church. Instead, they see that mission flows directly from the character and purposes of a missionary God.

A multiplying church not only understands that the mission is God's but also recognizes that His mission is larger than their individual church. They live out the reality that God's primary activity is in the

world and that their responsibility is to be *sent* into the world to participate in what He is already doing. As a result, the church does not simply *send* missionaries. They view their church *as* the missionary.

2. ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE ACTIVATED.

Multiplication movements only succeed when they equip *all* of God's people. Every believer has potential to change the world. This transformation occurs more often through the ordinary than the extraordinary. Our job as church leaders is to bring it out. As Tim Keller describes this movement, "In every seed is the potential for a tree, and in every tree the potential for a forest, but all of this is contained in the initial seed."²² In a movement church, everyone gets to play. No one sits on the bench.

3. ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ADAPTIVE STRUCTURES

A movement church has leadership that knows how to move a church and keep it moving. This type of leadership highlights apostolic and prophetic roles. The apostolic person leads with a positive vision of what can be, while the prophetic tends to call the status quo into question.

Multiplication needs adaptive leadership, people who can help the church transition to a different, nimbler version of itself. Such leaders don't necessarily have to be highly creative innovators, but they must be people who can move the church into adaptive modes capable of tackling adaptive challenges. These people create the conditions for change and innovation.

In movement-focused churches, the effectiveness of the leaders is not measured by what they accomplish but by how the people of God are equipped, organized, and inspired to participate in God's

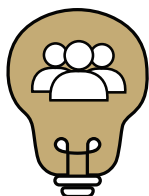
mission in the world. This leadership and structure is geared toward disciple-making. In the makeup of a movement, discipleship is the engine for everything. Without it, the church will drift away from its core calling.

As J.R. Woodward and Dan White write:

Movement occurs when the making of mission-shaped disciples—who live in the world for the sake of the world, in the way of Christ—goes viral. Movement is about developing structures and systems that catapult people into mission, where reproducing discipleship groups, missional communities, churches and networks of churches is a natural part of its DNA. It's the ripple effect: throwing a rock into a pond creates one ripple and then another and another, till ripples cover the whole pond.²³

4. APEST, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE A

We will examine APEST in principle 9, but for a quick summary, it denotes the roles of apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher in Ephesians 4. Keller notes that all APEST ministries are vital, but the apostolic role leads to movement. As Keller writes, “This is not an emphasis of importance or priority; it is one of purpose and design.”²⁴ Apostolic people push against current boundaries and propel Christianity into new areas. If you remove apostolic leaders, you won't see multiplication movement.



PRINCIPLE 9: RETHINK TEAMS

“In the New Testament there are functional distinctions between various kinds of ministries but no hierarchical division between clergy and laity.” —Howard Snyder

There is an adage that speaks to the importance of change in an organization. The saying goes, “We are perfectly designed to achieve what we are currently achieving.” If we apply this statement to the church, a question we might ask is: are we satisfied with what we are currently achieving? In other words, are we totally content with the impact the church is having? If we are totally honest, the answer would likely be a resounding *no*.

If we are perfectly designed to achieve what the church is currently achieving, then shouldn't we ask if there is an issue in the way we are designed? Or at least question if there is an issue in the way we understand the nature of the church and its place in God's mission? Are there “design” factors that we need to rethink to achieve the outcomes we desire?

Part of the solution is found in rethinking the nature of the church, mission, culture, multiplication, and vocation. However, I believe there is also an organizational issue to be addressed. The church must activate every member of the body.

CLERGY-LAITY DIVIDE

Before we address how to look at the gifting and functions of the body of Christ, let's consider a general view of leadership that has kept the church from fully realizing its calling. I am referring to what is considered the clergy-laity divide.

The word *laity* comes from a Greek word *laos*, meaning “people of God.” Today we often use the related term “layperson” to distinguish from “professional.” A layperson is someone in a particular discipline who is seen as an “amateur” who dabbles in an area but doesn't operate with a high level of skill or expertise. The professional, on the other hand, is the expert. While there may be a place for this division in the business world and sports, there is no biblical basis for such a distinction in the church.

As Eugene Peterson writes

Within the Christian community there are few words that are more disabling than “layperson” and “laity.” The words convey the impression—an impression that quickly solidifies into a lie—that there is a two-level hierarchy among the men and women who follow Jesus. There are those who are trained, sometimes referred to as “the called,” the professionals who are paid to preach, teach, and provide guidance in the Christian way, occupying the upper level. The lower level is made up of everyone else, those whom God assigned jobs as storekeepers, lawyers, journalists, parents, and computer programmers.²⁵

Ministry is not set aside for some professional class within the church. All the people of God are called and commissioned. In *The Community of the King*, Howard Snyder speaks to this issue:

The New Testament doctrine of ministry rests not on the clergy-laity distinction but on the twin and complementary pillars of the priesthood of all believers and the gifts of the Spirit. Today, four centuries after the Reformation, the full implications of this Protestant affirmation have yet to be worked out. The clergy-laity dichotomy is a direct carry-over from pre-Reformation Roman Catholicism and a throwback to the Old Testament priesthood. It is one of the principal obstacles to the church effectively being God's agent of the Kingdom today because it creates a false idea that only "holy men," namely, ordained ministers, are really qualified and responsible for leadership and significant ministry. In the New Testament there are functional distinctions between various kinds of ministries but no hierarchical division between clergy and laity.²⁶

We must "de-professionalize" ministry and give it back to the people of God. However, this does not mean we don't have leaders. Any significant multiplication movement that makes an impact has definitive leadership, but we cannot confuse leadership with a call to participate in Jesus' redemptive mission.

When we look at the early church, we see that everyone is regarded as a significant agent of the King and has a place in the unfolding of the movement. In other words, in the church that Jesus built, everyone gets to play. In fact, everyone *must* play!

THE IMPORTANCE OF APEST

So if we are to activate all of God's people for mission, how do we accomplish this task? Part of the solution to diminishing the clergy-laity

divide and helping the *laos* engage in mission and ministry involves broadening our concept of ministry. We need to move beyond ministry being framed simply by the traditional pastor-teacher model of the church to a fivefold understanding of ministry giftings as described in Ephesians 4:1-16.

This fivefold framework is often referred to as APEST: apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher. Most of the time, Ephesians 4 is viewed as a leadership text. In other words, we understand the gifts mentioned as leaders given to the church for the purpose of equipping the people of God. However, Ephesians 4 is about the ministry of the church. It is a body of Christ text. Paul is stating that the gifts given to the church are given to the *laos*—the whole people of God.

At the heart of this letter is Paul's understanding and description of the essential ministry of the church. Consider it this way:

- In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul calls us to realize our fundamental unity in the one God.
- In Ephesians 4:7-11, he says that APEST has been given to the church by Christ.
- In Ephesians 4:12-16, he says why APEST is given to build up, reach unity, and become mature.

Paul outlines in simple terms the core ministries that make up the body of Christ. He clearly states that Christ has given certain gifts to each one and distributed them throughout the body as He sees fit. The ministry of the church is unmistakably stated as being at least fivefold in form through expression in the giftings of apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher. And it is through the diversity of APEST that the church can operate in the fullness of Christ.

The word *equip* in verse 12 is an interesting word choice. It was often used to describe the setting of a broken bone or alignment. Paul is saying that each of the ministries within APEST add to the ability of the entire body to function properly. Our ability to grow, mature, and become the church that Jesus intended is directly linked to the ministries within APEST.

Sadly, most churches operate with only two out of the five: shepherding and teaching. In most cases, the ministries of the apostle, prophet, and evangelist have been minimized, if not completely relegated to the margins. When we do this, we essentially cut off three-fifths of our capacity to grow and mature as the body of Christ. This has damaged the church's ability to be the fullness of Jesus in the world.

APEST SUMMARY

Here are summaries of each APEST ministry.

APOSTLE: SENT AND EXTENDS

The word *apostle* literally means “sent one.” The Latin form is *missio*, which is where we get the English word *mission*. The apostle is most responsible to activate, develop, and protect the missionary sentness of the church. This sent quality gives the apostle's life a catalytic influence, often playing the role of an entrepreneur at the forefront of new ventures. They are the cultural architects who are concerned with the overall extension of Christianity throughout society. Because of this, they are often drawn to issues related to design, systems, and overarching organizational structures. They have a missional focus to their ministry.

PROPHET: QUESTIONS AND REFORMS

Prophets are sensitive to God and what is important to Him. They often sense what truth needs to be emphasized for their time and

place. Prophets are guardians of the covenant relationship. Whether it is in the church, society, or an organizational setting, prophets are quick to recognize the gap between “what is” and “what should be.” The weight of this tension leads prophets to question the status quo as well as initiate efforts for reform. Ultimately, they are not satisfied until they see a “closing of the gap” between God’s demands and our covenantal faithfulness. This desire to see the truth of God’s reality fleshed out in concrete and tangible ways gives an incarnational quality to their ministry.

EVANGELIST: RECRUITS AND GATHERS

Evangelists communicate the message of the gospel in joyous, infectious ways. They enjoy meeting new people and wooing them into a friendship. They are avid communicators of ideas and often share their thoughts and feelings in convincing ways. They are recruiters to the cause and find fulfillment in helping people get caught up into the driving narrative of the church—the gospel of the kingdom. As bearers of good news, they have an attractational quality to their ministry.

SHEPHERD: PROTECTS AND PROVIDES

Shepherds protect the community from danger and provide for its needs on both an individual and communal level. They notice when people are alone or hurting and feel drawn to nurture the spiritual and communal health of the church. They are loyal to the organization and the people within it. They ensure the community is experienced as a safe and loving environment, giving their ministry a distinctly communal focus.

TEACHER: UNDERSTANDS AND EXPLAINS

Teachers find great satisfaction in helping people learn truth and wisdom. They grasp complex, systemic truths then help people understand them. They often formulate curriculum and pathways

of learning. They ensure the truths of Scripture are passed from generation to generation. Their ministry could be summarized as instructional in nature.²⁷

APEST AND MULTIPLYING CHURCHES

When considering the importance of developing a team, it is essential to note that there isn't a single solution for every context. However, developing a multiplying church that is effectively engaging its context will no doubt involve team dynamics that are informed by the fivefold typology of Ephesians 4.

Practically speaking, how do you incorporate APEST into the development of a team?

1. Understand your gifts considering APEST because it will influence where you focus your ministry. Example: A teacher will focus on a Sunday gathering to teach.
2. Understand the makeup of your team and recognize what gifts may be missing. If you are a gifted shepherd, you need someone apostolic or you will never start something new. But likewise, if you are apostolic, you must have a shepherd or you will likely push people too hard and run the risk of burnout.
3. Determine how each gift will have equal input into the mission and ministry of the church. Remember that a key aspect of Ephesians 4 is that the church will not reach maturity unless all five gifts are activated and exercised.
4. Determine how to ensure the equipping of the saints. How will you encourage and empower those with the gift of teaching to equip other teachers? How will those who have an apostolic calling fan the flame of other sent ones? How will the evangelist equip others who have an evangelistic calling?

5. Measure success. How will you measure success from an APEST perspective? How can APEST become a mark of the church?

If these are functions of the community, here is one way to frame measuring language to determine how the church is doing in each area:

- A: missional impact
- P: covenant faithfulness
- E: gospel proclamation
- S: reconciled community
- T: deep wisdom

Remember, a church that can bring together, encourage, and capture the gifting of a *fully functioning team* will succeed in whatever it is seeking to achieve. APEST adds a necessary ingredient to the overall missional fitness and maturity of the church but must be informed and shaped by the others to anchor the church in the fullness of Christ's nature and mission.

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

Amid conversations surrounding APEST, there are occasionally questions regarding the significance of Ephesians 4. Some will ask, "Are we putting too much emphasis on APEST, especially when it seems to be based on one passage of Scripture?" A second question often includes the other gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians and Romans 12. People ask why the gifts in Ephesians 4 are given prominence over gifts mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.

The following responses should help address concerns you may have when considering APEST.

1. Biblical commentators have long-held Ephesians as a constitutional document of the church. Like all constitutions, it is meant to guide subsequent thinking and action in the organization. The book represents the best way to think about the church—at least how Paul understood it.
2. Ephesians 4:1-16 presents a promise that no other passage of Scripture claims: maturity and fullness of Christ (vv. 11-16). If we desire unity (vv. 1-6) and strive for maturity (vv. 11-16), then it is difficult to discount the connection point between unity and maturity with the diversity of gifts given by Christ in verses 7-11.
3. Ephesians 4 is *not* the only passage in which APEST is mentioned.
 - Apostle is used over 80 times in the New Testament.
 - Prophet is used nearly 800 times in Scripture, over 150 times in the New Testament.
 - Evangelist is used in Acts and 2 Timothy.
 - Shepherd is used 23 times in the New Testament.
 - Teacher is used 129 times in the New Testament.
 - The word *pastor*, which we have no problem using as the catch-all for leadership, is used *once*, and it is in Ephesians 4.
4. If you struggle to think about these gifts as personal callings or vocations (they are certainly *not* roles or offices), then at least consider them as communal *functions* of the church.

Should the church be apostolic? Prophetic? Evangelistic? Is the church to be a shepherding and teaching community? The answer to each of these questions is a resounding yes! These five functions should define what the church does.

5. The key word in 1 Corinthians is “manifestations” or gifts of the Spirit. The gifts are tools given to execute the calling. The key word in Romans 12 is “praxis,” which is skill-based, while Ephesians 4 are callings given to the body by Jesus. The callings in Ephesians 4 are the people. Think of them as how we are wired instead of spiritual gifts given to a person. Compare the distinction between the passages to being a carpenter. If my calling is to be a carpenter, I am wired and gifted at carpentry work. However, as a carpenter I have several tools that I will use including a level, saw, hammer, and router.

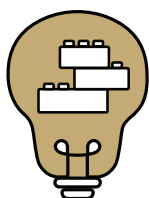
Or consider the spiritual gift of hospitality. Someone wired as a shepherd may provide hospitality as they desire to welcome people into their home. But someone wired apostolically may be hospitable because they want to start something new and welcome others into that new adventure. The gift is the same, but the motivation is different.

6. Recognize the gifts are given to the church at Jesus’ ascension. Why, in His ascension, does Jesus bestow the fivefold approach on the church?
 - We become equipped, perfected, or completed (Ephesians 4:12).
 - We can live out the unity described in Ephesians 4:1-6 (Ephesians 4:13).
 - We grow into maturity, so we attain the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

- We are not given to theological fads or deception and will stand firm (Ephesians 4:14).
- We grow up into Christ, our head (Ephesians 4:15).
- We will be rightly ordered in our relationship to our head and to each other as His body (Ephesians 4:15-16).

7. Consider APEST to be broader than Ephesians 4. Some would argue that we can actually see APEST in the created order, not just the church. In other words, APEST is laced by God throughout His creation. Are there teachers in society? Shepherds? Evangelists?

Further, and this is incredibly significant, APEST is incorporated fully into the life of Jesus. He is the perfect archetype of each gift. He is the ultimate Apostle, the perfect Prophet, the good news Evangelist, the Good Shepherd, and the great Teacher.



PRINCIPLE 10: RETHINK STRATEGIES AND MODELS

**“No strategy will reach every kind of person except
a strategy that mobilizes every kind of person.”**

—Brian Sanders

Church multiplication and church planting take many different forms; therefore, defining the models is a difficult task. However, as we discuss how to rethink church multiplication, here are four approaches in the church planting landscape.

- Contemporary attractional or launch
- Missional communities or microchurches
- Campus or multisite
- Replant

CONTEMPORARY ATTRACTIONAL OR LAUNCH

In a contemporary attractional or launch model, a church planter begins with a launch team. In some cases, the church plant may even begin with a small staff. This model seeks to build a core group, usually 30–50 people, which will become their launch team. Often there is a “sending church” that is large enough to send the people that make up the initial team.

Once a launch team is formed, the church will conduct a series of preview services to give the target community a picture of what the church will be like before it goes public. In some cases, a church plant may refer to this as a “soft launch,” where the core group holds corporate gatherings that are less publicized to increase the size of the launch team and build momentum. At the time of the “hard” launch, the church will send out a mass-mailer or other marketing to invite the community to attend the new church.

Because much of church planting over the past four decades has been focused in suburban areas populated by middle to upper class families, the launch model has been effective. However, it has lost some of its effectiveness in areas saturated by other contemporary churches. And as North America is increasingly becoming a missionary context, the percentage of people open to this kind of church plant is declining.

ADVANTAGES

Launching large breaks growth barriers. Begin small, and chances are the church will remain small. But start large, and the church will break growth barriers quicker. One effective way to shatter growth barriers is with momentum created by launching large. Momentum is one of a planter’s best tools for growth. Launching large can produce tremendous momentum.

Launching large provides credibility. When a first-time guest walks into a new church and sees a large crowd, they immediately sense that something good is happening, and the credibility of the church increases.

Launching large facilitates financial sustainability. By launching with a large group, the church may be able to quickly become financially sustainable. Learning to effectively raise funds and creating a well planned budget for a new church are foundational for launching large and becoming self-sustaining within a couple of years.

POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES

Launching large has a higher cost. On the flip side of becoming financially sustainable faster, it costs more to launch a large church. Further, many expenses will be up front, including rent for a meeting space, sound system and video equipment, computers, musical instruments, and supplies for children's ministry. Marketing for the launch is another significant financial commitment.

Launching large can be stressful. Beginning with a church of 100 or more people will create challenges with assimilation, programming, and development. Because of the potential to start with a large group, the planting team will need systems in place prior to the first public service. Rather than simply going through a worship service, plans will have to be made for children, parking, group space, and so forth before the church opens its doors. This can be stressful and time-consuming.

MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES OR MICROCHURCHES

Proponents of a missional community or microchurch model propose that when starting a new church, you should begin with missionary activity and not with the corporate gathering. Church planting over

the past several decades has really focused on a church service. When the emphasis is on the large gathering, we can lose focus on what God is doing in the surrounding context. Further, because many people today are less interested in the programs and activities of the church, starting a church by attempting to attract people to attend a corporate gathering may prove to be difficult.

WHAT IS A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY?

Missional communities are not smaller church services, Bible studies, small groups, or other programs of the church. Instead, missional communities *are* the church. Those who follow this model will gather their missional communities into a corporate setting once there are three or more communities. They may meet once a month then choose to gather on a weekly basis.

Many have been so conditioned by what they have experienced through typical church activities that they naturally seek to make missional communities fit what they have known before. Other programs and activities of the church are great for the purposes they serve, but they do not generally deliver on the purposes of missional communities.

A missional community is a committed group of Jesus followers, the size of an extended family (12–25 people), and empowered by the Spirit to participate in God’s mission of redemption in a particular neighborhood and/or network. Hopefully, this definition offers a framework to differentiate a missional community from a traditional small group. It is important as you define what a missional community looks like in your context that you are not too prescriptive. In other words, allow each missional community to be unique to their context and mission. All missional communities will not, and should not, look alike.

MICROCHURCHES

While microchurches share several characteristics with missional communities, there are a couple differences. Like missional communities, microchurches see mission as the organizing principle of their existence. However, microchurches not only focus on specific neighborhoods and networks of relationships but engage in specific problems. These areas of missional engagement could include poverty issues, human trafficking, education, crime, homelessness, mental health, and other areas of brokenness where gospel restoration is needed.

The language of *microchurch* provides a broader umbrella to encompass a variety of church expressions. *How* and *where* microchurches gather and engage their missional contexts will be different. Some will meet in their homes, as that approach often makes sense for reaching a neighborhood or a social network. Others will meet in coffee shops, cafés, community centers, apartment complexes, and the like.

Like missional communities, microchurches will not, and should not, look alike. Perhaps the greatest distinction between a missional community and a microchurch is that microchurches are seen as the church in its smallest, most nimble, and potent expression. Most missional communities are closely “tethered” to the larger church. Missional communities are seen by many as an outreach expression of the church.

Microchurches, on the other hand, give special emphasis to empowering people to use their gifts and resources to engage in God’s redemptive mission. They provide an opportunity for localized leaders to create and contextualize expressions of the church. They give both the license to lead and creative control. This does not negate the benefits of networking microchurches together for the sake of training,

coaching, accountability, and movement. However, those resources exist to support the microchurches, not for the microchurches to support the network.

ADVANTAGES

- *They are highly relational.* Both missional communities and microchurches network and build bridges throughout the community, including neighborhoods, businesses, schools, non-profits, local government, and so forth.
- *They disciple their way into church planting.* By loving and serving people through a growing network of relationships, a missional community or microchurch will create space for people to belong before they believe. In this space discipleship happens, which in turn leads to the multiplication of churches, not the other way around.
- *They are a better fit for certain contexts.* A missional community or microchurch approach is more conducive in urban contexts, along with places where meeting space is limited or expensive. The relational aspect is also more fruitful in post-Christian environments.

POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES

- *Slower growth.* The nature of a relational, disciple-making approach inherently leads to slower growth. A church planter that employs this model needs to have a long “runway” perspective.
- *Financial stability.* Because of the grassroots nature of this approach, the church plant may not experience financial sustainability for several years. However, because bivocational or covocational leadership best fits this model, the church plant may be in a position to focus on steady, long-term growth.

CAMPUS OR MULTISITE

Many churches find the campus or multisite model, compared to building larger facilities, more fiscally wise and sustainable.

ADVANTAGES

- *They are well resourced.* Multisite churches are usually well resourced—fiscally, organizationally, structurally, and professionally—because they are connected to a main campus. This connection strengthens the foundation of the new campus. Multisite and satellite campuses can also be a great incubator for developing emerging leaders.
- *They are an effective way for an existing church to extend their reach.* Churches who implement a multisite model can extend their mission and vision to a different geographical area. In many cases, the campus is an area that already has people who attend the main campus. The church can start with a built-in launch team that understands the church's vision, mission, and strategy. Many multisite churches embrace the motto, "One church in multiple locations."

POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES

- *They can be personality driven.* One drawback is that multisite campuses can be built around a single personality, especially if the lead teaching pastor is the same for all campuses. When the church is built upon one personality, the church can suffer when that person is no longer there.
- *They can lack contextualization.* Another drawback is that this model can create "cookie cutter" churches that are not properly contextualized. When an existing church's vision and mission is "imported" in a different geographical context,

it may not be a good fit for that location. Just because a church model and strategy are successful in one setting doesn't guarantee it will be effective in another.

REPLANT

The replant process involves the decision to close an existing church and relaunch as a new church, with new leadership, a new name, new governance, and a new ministry approach. In this model, a dying church avoids permanent death by recognizing it will no longer flourish unless conditions drastically change to facilitate growth.

ADVANTAGES

- *Builds on the history or legacy of the previous church.* This may help those who would prefer the status quo and recognizes the church's past impact in the community.
- *A new identity creates momentum.* Establishing a new identity in the community can create momentum, enthusiasm, and interest in the replant.
- *Offers a break with the past and a fresh start for the future.* Setting an end date and a launch date avoids permanent death of the church.

POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES

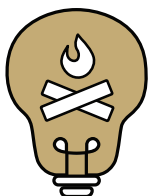
- *Requires a new leader and a decision-making structure.* To replant, a new leader and new structure and approach for making decisions must be in place.
- *Those in power may reject the new leadership structure.* A new leadership structure is sometimes rejected by those in power.
- *Patience is essential.* The average turnaround time for a replant is 5–7 years, so patience is key.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Learn and implement the strengths of different models. There are strengths and challenges of every model. While you may operate from one model, it is helpful to incorporate the strengths from other models. Perhaps in your context you should consider a hybrid that takes the best of multiple models and implements them to suit your needs for multiplication.

Pick a model that fits who you are and where you are. Do not import a model from another leader or context. When considering church multiplication, leaders are often guilty of attending a conference or visiting another church and concluding that they want to plant the church they have seen or heard about in their context. But resist the temptation to import a model from outside your context. Pick a model that fits your giftedness and your context.

Remember the model is just a tool, not the target. We live in a highly pragmatic culture and want to know what works. We want to utilize the products or approaches that produce the best results. But the models are simply tools. Don't put your faith in them to produce results only God can produce. Instead, focus your faith on the calling that God has put on your life for a particular place and people group.



PRINCIPLE 11: RETHINK FLOW

“If we fail at engaging well and living as Christ would live among our neighbors and friends, we fail as missionaries and the culture doesn’t see the visible beauty of the sent church.” —Hugh Halter

Traditionally, we start with church then disciple people and send them on mission if we want to see multiplication. But, in a post-Christian context, we must start with discipleship and mission then work toward church. The most effective approach to multiplication is to begin with missionary activity.

This is what is meant by the phrase missionary flow. It’s a simple way to rethink the flow or direction of starting a new church. We need a new framework, a new way to think about planting that doesn’t begin with Sunday.²⁸

Let's consider each circle individually.

Missionary Flow



ENGAGING CONTEXT

Too often church multiplication starts with Christians from another church or they gather disconnected believers from around a city. This is well-intentioned and might be better than nothing at all, but in most cases, this is simply starting a church with a church. This is not what we are talking about with missionary flow. Missionary flow means starting from scratch.

The first phase of any mission must involve contextualization, understanding the local setting so you can best engage people relationally. Along with understanding the context, we need to remember that we are a sent, missionary people. In other words, we have already been sent into our neighborhoods. We have already been sent to our workplaces. We have already been sent to the social spaces we inhabit each day. We don't have to wait, wondering where God might send us. Instead, we already live, work, and play in these places for the purpose of God's mission.

This is where our church multiplication efforts need to start. We must identify the places and people to whom God has sent us. Incarnate into those places. Pray and listen for what God is doing. Discern how

He wants us to participate as we begin to understand, relate to, and connect with people. Start with discipleship and mission and work toward church.

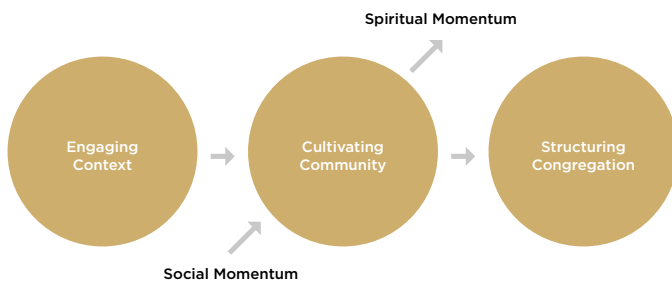
CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

The word *cultivating* speaks to the idea of nurturing. When we cultivate soil, we prepare it for planting. We have no power to make crops grow, but we can nurture conditions that will increase the likelihood for growth. Cultivating community is similar. We can't make community happen, but we can create opportunities and environments in which community can flourish.

We use the word *community* to make a distinction from the more customary word *church*. Cultivating community involves creating time and space for people to connect relationally with you but also with each other. The key is that this space is not seen as a church but instead as a place where relationships are developed. When relationships begin to develop, you are building “social momentum.”

Examine the updated missionary flow and notice two additional phrases and arrows.

Missionary Flow



SOCIAL MOMENTUM

Social momentum creates spaces for Christians and non-Christians to connect, do life together, and build relational equity before they consider attending a church. Unless we create a consistent, gathering environment—between engaging context and structuring congregation—that people can be invited to and be part of, we will never experience social momentum in our missionary engagement.

Here is another way to think about it. Most church planters are good at engaging context. They work at getting to know their neighbors. They are intentional about making connections in coffee shops or at the gym. They pay careful attention at their workplaces for opportunities to make friends with coworkers. However, if there isn't an ongoing, somewhat informal "get-together" for the planter to invite people to, they will simply have lots of surface connections that never move beyond being acquaintances. After making connections with new people, many church planters don't have a clear vision of what to do next relationally. Too often, the step taken is to start a Sunday morning worship service so there is a church activity to which new people can be invited.

Now, there is certainly nothing wrong with inviting people to church, but in a missionary context, we need to consider an intermediate or in-between relational step. There must be regular, relational spaces to which we can easily and naturally invite people. Without a consistent space to welcome the people we have met while engaging in our context, we will never develop social momentum. Instead, we will simply have relational connections that never move beyond knowing each other by name.

So, what do those relational spaces look like? We need to find something we are already doing, or at least like to do, and develop a

consistent rhythm where we can easily invite someone to join. For example, maybe you have a fire pit in your backyard that you light every Saturday night. Maybe it is a game night once a week or once a month in your home. Schedule a neighborhood potluck once a month. Sharing meals is always a great idea.

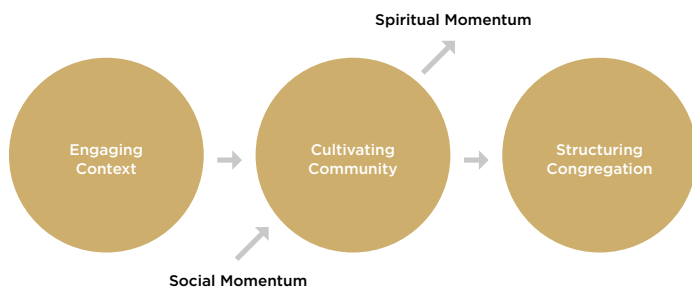
The point is that when you have an ongoing relational event, it is natural to invite those you are trying to connect with. You could say to a coworker or neighbor, “Hey, on the first Saturday night of every month, we have a group of friends over to roast hot dogs and make s’mores around the fire pit. You are always welcome to join us.”

Creating time and space to develop social momentum will provide a necessary opportunity for Christians and non-Christians to begin the process of cultivating community within a neighborhood or network.

SPIRITUAL MOMENTUM

Now, back to missionary flow.

Missionary Flow



The new arrow coming out of cultivating community is spiritual momentum. Much like developing social momentum, we need to think about creating time and space but, in this case, to provide opportunities for people to grow spiritually.

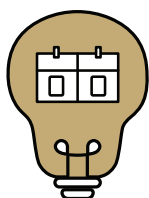
It may be as simple as gathering to pray for one another, read through the Gospels, or discuss what Scripture says regarding current events. If we are truly doing life with unbelievers and developing social momentum, then there will be those who desire deeper, more meaningful conversations. It should be natural and easy to say to someone that you have a group of friends that meet once a week to pray for each other and talk about spiritual things.

If we are starting with and connecting exclusively with non-Christians, the group that provides spiritual momentum may be something brand new. In other words, it may be formed directly out of the time and space created to develop social momentum. However, if we have a group of Christians who are a part of a church planting team, this spiritual momentum group may be a missional community to which we invite that person.

STRUCTURING CONGREGATION

The final circle is structuring congregation. There will come a time to form or structure a congregation. There will be many issues to consider, such as governance, meeting rhythms, administration, budgets, staffing, and so forth.

Don't forget that we are talking about the importance of thinking like a missionary. Church multiplication is the outworking of mission and community. Structuring a congregation is the outworking of engaging context and cultivating community. Church multiplication is the point where mission and community intersect. At the heart of God's plan to bless the nations are the people of God. The church is formed by mission and is formed for mission.



PRINCIPLE 12: RETHINK SCORECARDS

What if our church saw as its goal the Kingdom of God instead of the number of bodies it gathered and organized into straight rows? —Jeff Christopherson

In the 1950s, a 33-year-old left-handed pitcher made major league baseball history. Harvey Haddix struck out 27 consecutive batters. After nine innings, the scoreboard read all zeroes. No runs, no hits, no errors, no walks.

But Harvey's teammates forgot something amid their excitement over his historic performance. The scoreboard had another zero. The game was not over. It was tied. Harvey would go on to pitch another amazing three innings, 12 full innings of perfect pitching.

So, why have so few people heard of Harvey Haddix and arguably the greatest game ever pitched? Because he lost the game. Harvey's team failed to score, and the Braves ultimately reached the plate in the thirteenth inning because of an error.²⁹

What does this 1950s baseball game have to do with the church in North America? I would argue that it is entirely possible for church leaders to have impressive statistics regarding filled seats and still lose the game because they have little to no effect in their community. It's possible to grow a "great" church but fail to make disciples. It doesn't have to be this way. Church leaders must stop being enamored with just one side of the scoreboard.

THE THREE COMMON METRICS

When it comes to "keeping score," churches in North America typically focus on three metrics: buildings, budgets, and butts. While there is nothing inherently wrong with counting these things, we do need to ask if keeping score of how big our buildings are, how much money people give, and how many people show up is the best indicator of how a church is doing. Do these metrics really measure how incarnationally the body of Christ is living?

The fact is that these three metrics give us no real sense of the influence a church has on its community. Do the number of people who attend a Sunday morning gathering give you any indication of the impact the church is having on individual neighborhoods or the city? The answer is a resounding *no*! There is no correlation between the number of people who show up for an event and the difference those people are making where they live. The same is true with how much money people give to the church and how large a church's buildings are. The reason we "count" those three things is because they are easy to count. But we must rethink to not count what is easy but measure what is important.

COUNTING AND MEASURING

While we often use the language of "counting" and "measuring" interchangeably, there is a difference between the two. We must make

the distinction because the church has largely been in the counting business, which has negatively influenced the way we think about the nature of the church and limited our multiplication and impact in the world. We need to move to measuring more and counting less.

Counting gives attention to numbers. The question is “How many?” It is quantitative. Conversations about “How many?” are frequently conversations about resources but can also be about activities. Conversations about resources, in a time of limited resources, become conversations about sufficiency, “Do we have enough?” or, “How can we get more?” Examples could include finances or people. We ask questions like, “Do we have enough money for that mission?” or “Do we have enough volunteers for that ministry?” A quantitative question about activities might be, “How many Bible studies took place this week?”

Measuring gives attention to change. When measuring, the question is “How far?” It is qualitative. Conversations about “How far?” frequently involve change that can be measured over a particular time, as in, “How far have we come over the past year?” “Has the quality of something changed over time? Has something gotten better, or worse, since the last time we measured?”

There is a need for both counting and measuring. In all complex organizations, multiple tools are needed. However, like all tools, the right tool must be chosen for the job at hand. So, what should we count and what should we measure?

I hesitate to be too prescriptive because contexts are different. But let me suggest some possibilities that will hopefully crack open your imagination for metrics that fit your community. Think of these as conversation starters for the scorecard your church should be tracking.

COUNTING

One of the things we should count are missionary behaviors. For example:

- How many neighbors have I gotten to know by name in the past month?
- How many coworkers have I gotten to know on a deeper level?
- How many people have I had in my home this past month?
- How many meals have I shared with people outside my church family this week?
- How many times this week have I intentionally been a blessing to someone?

What other missionary behaviors can you track that would help you see if your church was living with gospel intentionality?

In *Missional Renaissance*, Reggie McNeal suggests developing new scorecards around six resources of the church: prayer, people, time, finances, facilities, and technology. Here are a few ideas from each category to rethink outside the walls of the church.³⁰

Prayer

- Number of people being prayed for both inside and outside the church
- Number of people prayed with during the week by church members
- Number of prayer meetings conducted off church property
- Number of prayer answers reported back to the church
- Number of community leaders adopted and prayed for each week

- Number of prayer walks taken in the community or neighborhoods
- Number of prayer cards received from community prayer boxes
- Time spent in prayer in staff meetings for community needs
- Number of times each week school teachers are prayed for/over

People

- Number of people engaged in financial planning
- Number of people growing in financial giving to kingdom causes
- Number of people engaged in daily spiritual formation
- Number of people pursuing an intentional learning agenda
- Number of people reporting increased friendships over time
- Number of people sent into trailer parks, apartments, retirement centers
- Number of community ministries adopted by church groups or classes
- Number of people serving other people in some venue
- Number of people serving as mentors
- Number of people practicing an intentional blessing strategy

Time and Calendar

- Amount of time spent debriefing people engaged in community service
- Time spent in mentoring people in the community beyond the church

- Number of hours people spent in direct ministry to community needs
- Amount of time spent in gatherings celebrating stories of community involvement
- Number of hours each week members opened their homes to others
- Hours each week spent supporting or ministering to single parents
- Amount of time staff spent developing relationships with community leaders

Finances

- Number of people reporting personal debt retirement
- Number of people increasing their generosity through charitable giving
- Number of people who have developed a personal budget
- Percent of church budget moving toward externally focused ministry
- Percent of church debt reduced to free up dollars for people investment
- Amount of money invested in microeconomic development

Facilities

- Number of schools using church facilities for activities
- Number of community organizations using the church facilities
- Space devoted to conversation-friendly areas

- Use of church land for soccer or baseball fields, basketball court, or skateboard park
- Number of hours the facilities are used during the week by people for personal growth such as exercise classes, tutoring, and life skill seminars

Technology

- Number of podcast interviews with community leaders
- Space on church website dedicated to community events and engagement
- Number of webinars to educate people about missional opportunities
- Number of graphics or videos telling the stories of missional engagement by members

Not only does counting the right things give us a better indication of a church's engagement in the community, and ultimately its impact, but it also illustrates to the congregation what is important. When we count the things suggested, people know what is valued and know the target for which they need to be aiming.

MEASURING

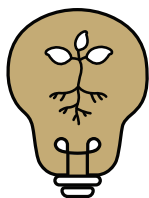
While all the suggestions can certainly help a church begin to move in the right direction, these questions are still *activities*. They are more about “inputs” rather than “outcomes.” Unfortunately, most often in the church world, we stop with inputs.

We must focus on measurables that are outcome-based. Outcome-based measurables are primarily focused on change. If we can describe the change we desire to see or make, we can also have conversations about whether we are moving toward that change

over time. Measuring relates not so much to what *is* but what *could be*. It is more about possibilities. The best questions associated with measuring ask both about change and about time. For example, we might ask, “How have the test scores changed over the past six months in the elementary school where the church provides tutors?”

In the context of the church, measuring is about determining transformational change in both people and in the neighborhoods where we live. Ask, “What changes would you like to see in the lives of the people but also in the life of your community?” That is an outcome. But then ask the follow-up question, “What will it take to get to that place?” Then begin to ask measurement questions toward that change. “How will we know if we are making progress in the right direction?” “What will we measure to determine transformational change?”

Measuring is *definitely* more difficult than counting, but it is essential if we are serious about making a difference. When something is measured and shows transformational change, it will be repeated and create a ripple effect. Rethinking scorecards will not only help create a more missional culture but people will also have a better idea of what is valued.



CONCLUSION: THINK LONG HAUL, NOT QUICK FIX

As I noted in the introduction, the answer to the crises of the church in North America will not be found by making minor adjustments. Simply doing more of the same will not get us where we need to be in church multiplication. Instead, we must be willing to rethink deeply held assumptions about the nature of the church, mission, discipleship, and leadership. Without these needed paradigm shifts in the way we think, we will not be capable of making the necessary changes to activate all the people of God and engage His mission more fully.

The late Austrian philosopher, Ivan Illich, was once asked about the most revolutionary way to change society. He answered the question this way:

Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society, rather you must tell a new powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes

the preferred story, one so inclusive that it gathers all the bits of our past and our present into a coherent whole, one that even shines some light into our future so that we can take the next step. ... If you want to change a society, then you have to tell an alternative story.³¹

The church needs to tell an alternative story. Yet, it will be one that will often run contrary to the story many evangelicals have been told. It is a story of being sent rather than being served. It is a story of incarnating into local contexts. It is a story of activating all the people of God, not just a few. It is a story of embracing the posture of a servant, rather than being in a place of power and privilege. I would argue that at least in part, the story is tied up in the realization and application of the principles laid out in this book.

However, for many these shifts will not come easy. Be patient. Remember the deeply held assumptions we have discussed throughout this book are indeed deeply held. Seventeen hundred years of Christendom will not be extracted from your church quickly. Rethinking rarely happens overnight. Most people will need to visit and revisit these ideas. They will need to process with other people over time. In other words, a pastor can't preach a 4-week sermon series and somehow think everyone in the congregation is going to magically "get it."

Instead teach and talk about each of these principles, not just from the pulpit, but one-on-one and in small group settings. Perhaps walk through this book with a group of early adopters who intuitively know there must be an alternative story. A story where God is calling the body of Christ to join Him in the restoration of all things.

ENDNOTES

1. Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).
2. George Hunsberger, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 337.
3. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016).
4. Michael Frost, *Exiles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 54.
5. Darrell Guder, *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 9.
6. Brad Brisco and Lance Ford, *Next Door as It Is in Heaven* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016).
7. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York: Oxford Press, 2010), 277.
8. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 539.
9. Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 6.
10. Alan Hirsch and Lance Ford, *Right Here, Right Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 67.
11. Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, *On the Verge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).
12. R. Geoffrey Harris, *Mission in the Gospels* (London: Epworth, 2004), 227.
13. *The Wizard of Oz*, (1939, MGM).

14. Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2004), 76.
15. Adapted from Alan Roxburgh, *Crossing the Bridge* (Percept Group, 2000), 25.
16. Christine Wicker, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), ix and David Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).
17. *Avalon*, Directed by Barry Levinson, (1990, TriStar Pictures).
18. Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 13.
19. Susan Pinker, *The Village Effect* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2014), 212.
20. “Loneliness among Older Adults: A National Survey of Adults 45+,” AARP, September 2010, http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/general/loneliness_2010.pdf
21. Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *1,000 Churches* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2017), 20.
22. Tim Keller, *Serving a Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 261.
23. J.R. Woodward and Dan White Jr., *The Church as Movement* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 23.
24. Keller, *Serving a Movement*, 263.
25. Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 32.
26. Howard Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 94–95.
27. Adapted from Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012) and Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution Playbook* (Missio Publishing, 2014).

28. Adapted from Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *AND* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 54.
29. Adapted from Brad Brisco and Lance Ford, *The Missional Quest* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 189–190.
30. Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009).
31. Ivan Illich, “Storytelling or Myth-Making? Frank Viola and Ivan Illich,” Proclamation, Invitation, & Warning, July 2007, <https://procinwarn.com/storytelling-myth-frank-viola-ivan-illich/>

SENDING CHURCH **MASTERCLASS**

**THERE ARE
275 MILLION LOST PEOPLE
IN NORTH AMERICA.**

Reach these communities today.

START NOW





4200 North Point Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176

A Southern Baptist Convention entity supported by the Cooperative Program
and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®

For general information, call 1 800 634-2462 or visit NewChurches.com

For more information, call Customer Service Center, 1 866 407-NAMB (6262)