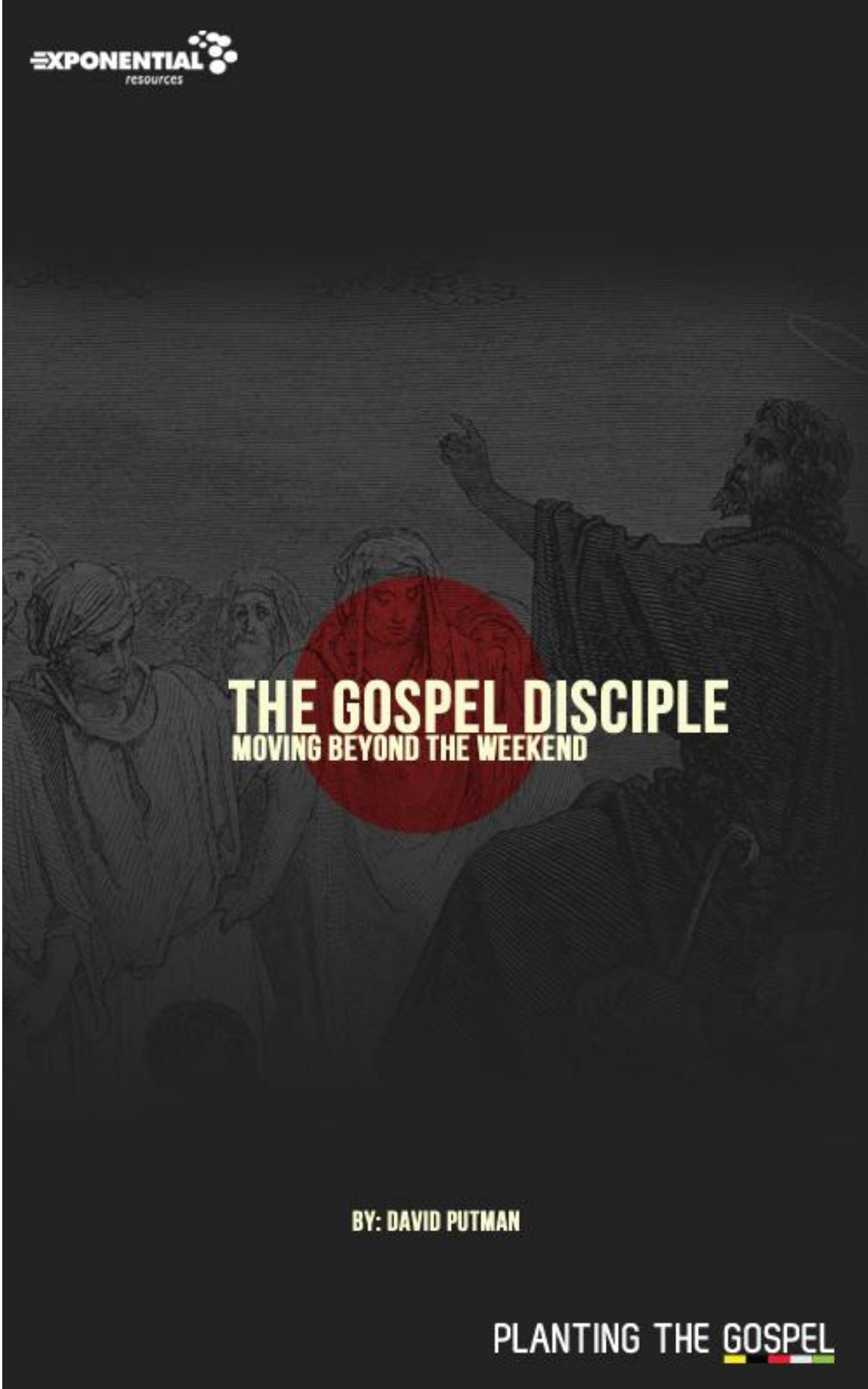




THE GOSPEL DISCIPLE

MOVING BEYOND THE WEEKEND

BY: DAVID PUTMAN

PLANTING THE GOSPEL

The Gospel Disciple:
Moving Beyond the Weekend

David Putman

The Gospel Disciple

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Other Books Published by David Putman

Breaking the Missional Code (Nashville, B&H Publisher, 2006) with Ed Stetzer

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The Gospel Disciple

Introduction

Not long ago I received an email from the leader of a Church in Haiti. It went like this, *“Since the earthquake, many churches are growing but many of our pastors are undisciplined. We are in great need. Will you come help us? Will you come teach us the Jesus way?”* It sounded like something right out of the books of Acts. *Therefore, we immediately perceived that the Lord wanted us to go to Haiti to encourage the churches. We traveled from Atlanta to Haiti, first stopping in Fort Lauderdale where we tarried for one day before continuing on our journey* (see what I mean?).

Over the past few decades, we have experienced a rapid movement of evangelization throughout the southern hemispheres of our globe. While the task remains unfinished, the gospel has been proclaimed and embraced throughout much of the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Africa. As the gospel spreads south there is an increasing cry for discipleship.

When we launched *Planting the Gospel* we envisioned a mostly western church planting movement for our new organization. More and more we are hearing the church cry for help in these areas around the world. We believe in the next few decades the mission of disciple making will be the issue for the church in both the South and West.

Today we are compelled by a new vision to take the whole gospel to the whole world. We are convinced that the great need of the church is the rediscovery of our disciple-making mission.

We Believe, But Are We Willing To Follow?

This need is not isolated to the southern hemisphere. It's also the great need of the church in the West. At least I have found this to be true in my own life. A couple years ago as I stood preaching to our young, growing congregation, I asked the question, “We believe, but are we willing to follow?” Immediately I sensed the Lord saying to me, “What about you?” At that very moment I knew God was calling me to something new. After a very long week I concluded I was to resign my dream job as one of the pastor's of

a fast growing church plant and rediscover what it means to follow him. That's exactly what I did.

I realized that over time I had gently nudged Jesus out of my life. I was in many ways at the peak of success. I was helping lead a fast growing church plant. I was writing books. I co-founded a great church planting organization. I was doing all the right things. However, Revelations 3:20 described my life, *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."* Here is a picture of Jesus on the outside of the church of Laodicea. That's exactly where I found him in my life.

I share this story because I think this is our default mode. Over time it is so easy to drift and lose our way. As the church we have this wonderful savior who has given us the incredible mission to "go make disciples". It is so easy to get caught up in the many organizational things we have to do. It's easy to cater to the needs of religious consumers. If we aren't careful we become defined by what happens on the weekend. If we are completely honest there are times we lose our way when it comes to mission and we are in need to rediscover it.

What We Believe Determines How We Follow

Where do we begin? I'm glad you asked. I was once challenged during a presentation when a gentleman jumped up shouting, "Tell me, just what is the gospel?" I gave it my best shot. On returning home, I made a commitment to become a student of the gospel. What I discovered in the process was what we believe determines how we follow. This is especially true when it comes to what we believe about the gospel, disciples and church.

This leads us to one final observation. The order in which we rediscover the gospel, disciples, and church is crucial to our journey to becoming gospel disciples, in that what we believe about the gospel determines the kind of disciples we become. And what kind of disciples we become determines our understanding of church. In other words, we plant the gospel, make disciples and form the church around those disciples, in that order.

Chapter 1: *Rediscovering the Gospel?*

God in Christ has redeemed us, is renewing us and ultimately will restore all things!

Rediscovering the gospel is essential to our journey. Why? Because what we believe about the gospel will determine how we follow Jesus. This is where our journey toward becoming a gospel disciple must begin. This journey began for me when I was challenged to answer the question, “What is the gospel?”

The Gospel is an Announcement

The gospel is an announcement of good news that Jesus has redeemed us, is renewing us and ultimately will restore all things. The gospel is different than religion in that religion is our attempt to earn God’s favor by living up to a certain moral standard or cultural expectation. In essence, we earn our way to salvation through our own moralistic behavior. It’s our attempt to save ourselves from the wrath of God. It’s an exhausting way of living our life that always leads to death.

If religion is our attempt to earn or gain God’s approval, the gospel is radically different in that it is an announcement of the good news of what God has already done to save us. When Jesus cried out on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), all the demands brought about by sin for total reconciliation of all creation was finished. Jesus came to announce that everything was about to change.

A question worth pondering is, do we really understand the gospel? I don’t think so, or at least I’m discovering that the gospel is so much more than I understood or imagined it to be. As a good evangelical I understood that I was saved by grace. As Paul put it, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). I never questioned salvation by faith alone; however, I did struggle with how we grew as Christians. I thought once I was saved by faith I had to work really hard to grow. The gospel informs us that we are saved by grace but we also grow by grace. It’s not gospel plus works; it’s gospel and gospel alone. Half gospel and half religion is a perversion of God’s intent.

It doesn't end here. The gospel doesn't only address how we are saved and grow, but it also addresses how we live moment by moment on mission with Christ. Paul understood this when he wrote, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

The gospel is an announcement of good news that Jesus has redeemed us, is renewing us and is ultimately restoring all things. It's absolutely essential that we understand the whole gospel because this good news has huge implications to what it means to be a gospel disciple.

He Has Redeemed Us

For most of us evangelical types this is the part of the gospel we understand best. The gospel is an announcement of good news that in Christ we have been redeemed. Paul understood this when he wrote, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ... For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering"* (Romans 1:1 & 3, NIV). The announcement is that God sent Jesus, in his perfection, to take the wrath of our sin and punishment upon himself. The time had come that in one moment in history Jesus took all of our past, present and future sins upon Himself, absorbing their wrath and setting us free from their consequences. These sins are never to be held over our heads again. This is indeed good news!

The good news is that, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it"* (Matthew 13:45-46). In this parable, grace cuts both ways. Grace is God's abundant love given to us freely without price or cost. We don't deserve it. We can't earn it. It is beyond our reach. The only possible way to receive it is to have it gifted to us by someone beyond our reach. In this parable, God is the Great Merchant looking for something of great value. When he finds it, he sells all that he has to purchase it. He redeems the pearl by selling all. He holds nothing back. In Christ, God holds nothing back. He purchases us with his very blood and life. He redeems us. We are the pearl of great value. God is a great God who graciously loves his people.

This becomes our motivation for our devotion or worship of God. I no longer have to prove anything. I no longer have to gain man's approval. I no longer have to live up to any particular standard. More importantly, I no longer have to earn or gain God's approval. I have been redeemed for all of eternity, regardless of my past, present or future behavior.

You might think, doesn't this lead to carelessness or license to sin? Not at all! God in Christ has redeemed me, resulting in a new motivation for life which is his great love. I am now fully approved, accepted and complete—resulting in a life of humble gratitude and devotion. When I realize the nature of this good news, I find myself selling all to follow Him. As Tim Keller suggests, “The gospel is, therefore, radically different from religion. Religion operates on the principle: ‘I obey, therefore I am accepted’. The gospel operates on the principle: ‘I am accepted through Christ, therefore I obey.’”^a This is the great reversal we need.

He Is Renewing Us

We are saved by grace, but His grace doesn't end there. For most of my Christian life, I've understood this aspect of good news. However, what I didn't realize is that not only are we saved by grace, we grow by grace. While I understood that salvation was an incredible free gift from God, I lived as if Christian growth was my responsibility. It was gospel plus religion or grace plus works—not gospel and gospel alone.

If I completed five uninterrupted quiet times in a row, I felt good about myself. If I controlled my temper, abstained from alcohol or avoided getting angry with people who indulged a bit, I was a good Christian. On the other hand, when I missed the mark, I lived under self-condemnation.

While I depended on the gospel to save me, I depended on my ability to live up to certain standards and expectations to grow me. I found myself running faster and faster in religious circles in need of rest. My life simply didn't line up with the teachings of Jesus, who invites us into His rest, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light*” (Matthew 11:28-30). Once again, coming to understand that the gospel doesn't

only redeem us but also renews us was really good news breaking into my tired soul.

The gospel as an announcement of good news that we are redeemed is just the beginning. This same gospel is renewing us. Jesus uses an amazing parable to describe this that blows my mind. It's the parable of the growing seed: *"This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come"* (Mark 4:26-29). The seed in this parable is the gospel and soil is the good soil or the repentant and humble heart. The key to spiritual growth is the gospel being planted in good soil. The soil is good when our hearts are open and receptive to the truths of the gospel. Jesus says, *"Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how."* This is an amazing truth that changes everything...gospel in-gospel out. In this parable Jesus describes the full maturation process, *"first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head."* The gospel is all we need to come to complete maturity.

Paul understood this and gives us insight into how the gospel grows within us when he said, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will"* (Romans 12:1-2). In this text Paul reminds us that we are transformed by the renewing of our mind. Our minds are renewed through the gospel (in view of God's mercy). This is why we need to preach the gospel to ourselves. We don't present our bodies to get mercy. Instead, we present our bodies because of God's mercy. The order has been reversed. I no longer do to earn God's favor; I do because I have God's favor. He goes on and addresses the idea of transformation. We are transformed by the renewal of our minds in the wonderful reality of the gospel. Once again we see gospel in-gospel out.

Gospel growth occurs when His truth transforms me. When I come to understand that I am fully loved, then and only then can I offer love. When I come to understand

God's forgiveness of me, I become more forgiving and understanding of others. As I come to understand God's provision, only then can I truly become more generous. As I come to apprehend the gospel, there is a reformatting and aligning of my values that takes place. I am transformed. It is an inside-out job. This is why we must not only preach the gospel to lost people, but we must preach the gospel to ourselves. We need to be reminded of His mercies to be transformed.

This understanding of the renewing aspect of the gospel has the potential to change everything. As a preacher, I once thought I had something to say. I thought it was my job to give people good tips on how to live the good life. Much of my preaching and teaching was about me or about them. As a result, we saw many people come and many people go; however, we saw very little spiritual transformation. We preached a kind of moralistic therapeutic deism. We referred to Scripture. We even taught passages of Scripture, but we had very little gospel in what we preached and taught, often seeing the scriptures simply as a guidebook for what to do and what not to do to experience the good life.

When you understand gospel in-gospel out, it changes everything. This understanding produces the urgency toward proclaiming a healthy gospel-centered hermeneutic. Our goal in teaching and preaching isn't to be cool, clever or even relevant.

The gospel is not simply a tag we put at the end of a good blog post or sermon, but rather God's story of redemption, renewal and ultimate restoration. It is the entire story. It is the truth that makes its way throughout every book in the Bible. Together, they tell the story of creation, rebellion, rescue, redemption, renewal and restoration. It is the announcement that everything has changed, and so can we.

He Is Restoring All Things

Ultimately, the gospel restores all things. This is a profound foundational truth. What God begins, God concludes. He makes all things new! In Genesis we see God's creative purpose in full bloom. There is relational harmony among all creation and we are at rest. Sin disrupts and destroys. Relational brokenness enters the world. God's creation loses its way. We are lost.

In Christ we are redeemed, we are being renewed, and ultimately all things are

restored. Once again, Jesus uses the power of a simple parable to convey this pregnant truth: *“He told them another parable: ‘the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches’”* (Matthew 13:31-32). In this parable we see the impact of the gospel to restore all things. A mustard seed grows. It becomes the largest of garden plants. It becomes a tree where the birds of creation come and find rest. What God began in one garden, He completes in another. What God began with one Adam, he completes with the second Adam. Here, Jesus wittedly points back to the opening chapters of Genesis, revealing God’s ultimate intent.

If you read the last chapters of Revelation you will see this being played out. John says, *“I saw a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God”* (Revelations 21:2). In this picture we aren’t going up; heaven is coming down, keeping with Jesus’ message of the kingdom of heaven being “here” or “at hand.” God is doing a new work in this world recreating it. He isn’t finished; he is restoring all things. What he began in one garden, he concludes in another garden. This time He is employing His church to be His restorative agent. What He began in Christ, He concludes through His people.

Understanding the whole gospel reveals that we are on mission with God, restoring all things. That’s right; God is working through His church to restore all things. As Paul declares, *“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His very appeal through us”* (I Corinthians 5: 20, NIV). Jesus tells us that we are the *“salt of the earth and light of the world”* (Matthew 5:13 &14). Salt and light have their greatest impact from within. As restorers we enter into God’s redemptive, renewing and restorative work. As restorers we enter into the lives of those who are in the most need of redemption, renewal and restoration. We become God’s ambassadors. The gospel restores us that we might be restorers.

God is writing His gospel in the hearts of men and women. As restorers we get to help rewrite people’s stories. All you have to do to participate is to enter into the story of others with the gospel. This can be as simple as asking someone, “What’s your story?” As they begin to share, it is your invitation to enter in with the good news of the gospel. We get to inform their lives with the good news of redemption, renewal and restoration.

It's an amazing thing to be a gospel disciple and to be part of planting the gospel in their life.

This only scratches the surface when it comes to understanding the gospel, but serves as a beginning point for grasping what it means to not simply be a disciple of the church, but to be a gospel disciple. Being a gospel disciple is a journey we will now explore.

Chapter 2: Rediscovering Our Disciple-Making Mission

Live like Jesus, love like Jesus and leave what Jesus left behind!

The gospel defines our mission in that the very essence of the gospel teaches us that God is actively restoring all things. What he began, he will bring to completion and he chooses to use his body to accomplish his mission. We see that the very nature of this mission is a disciple-making mission in what we've come to know as the Great Commission, "*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*" (Matthew 28:19-20).

As gospel disciples we have one and only one mission—to make disciples. This immediately raises the question, "What about the many other needs in our world? Isn't our task bigger than simply making disciples?" This is the beauty of Jesus' disciple-making mission. As disciples we live and love like Him. Therefore, if someone is hungry, we provide food. If someone is sick, we provide healing and comfort. If some injustice exists in this world, we seek justice. Therefore, as the church we have one and only one mission- that is to make disciples that live and love like him.

Become the Disciple You Want Others to Become

Disciple making isn't an add-on or a program in our church. It's our very mission. It's who we are as the church. At the end of the day our effectiveness can only be determined by the quality of disciples we make. Disciple making must permeate every fiber of our church culture if we are to be faithful to our mission. In fact, disciple making must become the very culture of the church. Jesus modeled this in his own life. His approach to making disciples was life-on-life, in the context of authentic community.

Recently, I was challenged to help a group of pastors from the Northeast develop a discipleship strategy. I spent weeks developing a workshop that would walk them step-by-step through a process that would allow them to create the contextual disciple-making strategy they had requested. Finally, the day came for me to present my systematic approach to developing a discipleship strategy. That's when it hit me. The key to

making disciples isn't a strategy; it's a way of life. As I stood before them I gave them the following bottom line: *Become the disciple you want others to become*. I spent the next eight hours teaching them what it means to be a disciple. Going back to the very basics is key to making gospel disciples.

Rediscovering our disciple-making mission involves defining what it means to be a disciple. While there may be many different and helpful definitions, here is the one I developed some years back that has given others and myself handlebars for understanding a disciple. A disciple is a follower of Jesus that lives like Jesus, loves like Jesus and leaves what Jesus left behind (which is followers who live and love like Jesus). Let's go a little deeper.

Living Like Jesus

We discovered earlier that the gospel isn't about living up to some moralistic standard. If that's not the case then what does it mean to live like Jesus? Paul teaches us that living like Jesus begins with an attitude that leads to a very specific way of living. Once again we see that being a gospel disciples is life lived from the inside-out. *"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8)!"*

Notice what is happening here. Jesus came to show us a whole new way of living. In this passage Jesus didn't see equality with God as something to hang on to (attitude). Instead, he became a man, took on the form of a servant and died—even by way of a cross (action). Here we see a kind of upside down living that so characterized Jesus' way of living. John grasped this same way of living when he said, *"He must increase, and I must decrease"* (John 3:30, ESV).

Living like Jesus, in the context of the gospel of grace, means a little less of me and a little more of Jesus each day. When I talk about grace, I am speaking of the work of the gospel in my life, which is simply the fact that I have been redeemed, I'm being renewed and ultimately Jesus is restoring all things. There's nothing I can do to add to

the completed work of Christ in me. As a disciple I am a student, an apprentice and a learner. Each day I'm discovering more of Him through the gospel, which means I need less of me. In the context of his great grace, I am constantly decreasing as he increases.

Following involves living in the context of this grace. Because I have been redeemed, I recognized that this kind of living is a journey. I often compare it to the stock market. There are many peaks and valleys but overall there is an upward trajectory. This is what Paul meant when he said we are being conformed to the image of his dear son. Over time the gospel is imprinting our lives from the inside-out.

The key to living like Jesus is seeing, hearing and understanding. The gospel unlocks the teachings of Jesus. When the disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables, he responded this way: *"You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge"* (Matthew 13:11-12, NLT). He goes on to add, *"This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand'"* (Matthew 13:13).

A while back I experienced an eye injury that required surgery. The surgery resulted in blindness, with a gradual recovery over time. My injured eye never recovered to 20/20 vision. However, after months of recovery I was fitted for glasses and for the first time in many months I could see. The gospel is the lens that opens our minds to all the teachings of Christ, but it doesn't end there. The gospel opens up all of scripture. Take the gospel out and you will always end up with religion. Pull one verse out without the gospel and you end up with another law. According to Jesus, the gospel permits us to understand the "secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven". This is key to following Jesus. Much of our planting philosophy is wrapped up in this truth.

I can follow Jesus as a gospel disciple when I see him at work, when I hear his voice and when I understand his ways. God is actively revealing himself to us through his Spirit. The only thing left is for us to obey. I obey based on the gospel. I'm redeemed, I'm being renewed and I'm on mission with God restoring all things. His great love compels me to respond in obedience. By obeying I am now following.

Finally, as a follower I live in the context of His kingdom. His kingdom is coming. In other words, he is restoring all things. His Kingdom is being established.

It's established wherever his will is done on earth as it is in heaven. As gospel disciples we are citizens of his Kingdom. Our citizenship defines our very mission.

Loving Like Jesus Loves

A disciple not only lives like Jesus; they love like Jesus as well. Jesus' ultimate expression of love is seen in how he laid down his life for us. *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). The gospel addresses this love in that Jesus has redeemed us and now nothing can separate us from the love of God (see Romans 8:39). We are secured for eternity, regardless. We received what we didn't deserve or earn.

To live like Jesus is one thing, but to love like Jesus is another. Paul understood that this kind of love couldn't be imitated over time with practice. He knew that something had to happen deep within us if we are to love like Jesus. *"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God"* (Ephesians 3:17-19).

It's one thing to be loved (redeemed), to understand this love (renewal), but it is another thing to give this kind of love (restoration). Jesus laid out what it might look like to give this kind of love in his famous *Sermon on the Mount*. *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you* (Matthew 5:38-42).

It's one thing to love those who love you. It's another thing to love those who hate you, despise you, use you or are indifferent to you. Recently I was holding my young grandson (he was eighteen months old at the time) in my arms when he laid his cheek against mine and let out a long wooing sigh, expressing his unconditional love for me. I was caught up in the moment and for the first time I grasped what it

meant to love someone with your whole heart. I held him tight in my arms, feeling the warmth and softness of that little cheek and told him, “I love you with all my heart”. We had a special bonding moment.

How do we love those who don’t love us? Or, how do we love our enemies? There is no wiggle room in the gospel for getting out of this one. Jesus had this to say, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matthew 5:42-48).

It’s obvious that we must love others, even our enemies, but how? We give them our cheek, our shirt, go the extra mile and we pray for them? Where does it end? Jesus sums it up toward the end of his sermon when he says, *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”* (Matthew 7:12). Wow! This blows my mind. This is so profound, yet so simple. Treat people like you want to be treated. Treat even your enemies like you want to be treated. Yet Jesus doesn’t tell us to treat people the way we want to be treated because it’s some kind of moral law we must live up to, but because God has done something so great in our lives, we see something good in them. We love them because the gospel makes us love them. This leads us to two questions: Isn’t this impractical and how do we come to love like this?

Impractical Nature of Love

In our western world, everything has to add up. And eye-for-an-eye makes good practical sense. In reality the gospel doesn’t add up. There is nothing practical about Jesus dying on the cross for all the sins of all humanity in one single moment. There is nothing practical about the idea that I have been redeemed and no sin past, present or future will ever be held to my account. There is nothing practical in the idea that my sins never existed.

If we are religious, it makes sense to treat those who are like you with respect to get their respect. If you are religious, it makes sense to repay those who bring harm to you with fair and equal justice. However, Jesus came teaching us a whole new way. It is the way of love and in impractical terms it means laying down your life for others.

In John 4, Mary anoints Jesus with some very expensive perfume, illustrating what I'm talking about. *"Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected, Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages"* (John 4:1-5).

Look at Jesus' response: *"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me"* (John 4:7-8). Do you see the impractical nature of love? More importantly, do you see the extravagance of His love?

The reality is that Christianity doesn't add up. One plus one doesn't equal two when it comes to the gospel. I'm learning that I'm way too practical when it comes to my expression of love. Following a horrible accident where my wife nearly lost her life and spent months recovering from her injury, our twenty-fifth anniversary approached. I wanted to, like never before, express my love for her by giving her the diamond I couldn't afford when we got married. There was only one problem - I still couldn't afford it. When I finally found that special diamond I weighed the options, thinking about how impractical it was. What about the starving children in Africa? Reading the previous passage it hit me, Jesus' love isn't practical - it's extravagant.

Since I didn't have all the funds I needed for the purchase I put the ring on lay away. I had nearly a year before our 25th anniversary, which gave me some time to earn extra cash speaking, writing and consulting to pay off the balance. It was an act of love and pure joy. The day came when I had given all to redeem my lay away. I was able to place this ring on my bride of twenty-five years' finger. It was a celebration of

extravagance in which only she and I participated. Is this not what Jesus did for us? He gave all his love holding nothing back. His love is impractical. An understanding of that love, through experience, makes us extravagant in our expression of love.

How Do We Come To Love Like This?

I've often heard people say, "Hurting people hurt other people." We live in a hurting world. People lives are broken all around us. This is the world in which we live and are called to the ministry of restoration. God is restoring all things. God is restoring the hearts of hurting and broken people.

In order to love like Jesus we must experience His love. His love is more caught than taught. This is why making disciples that live and love like Jesus isn't a program or a curriculum, but a way of life. When we are loved well, we love others well. When I come to experience His love, it changes my life and in return I am able to love others well. This is transformation from the inside-out.

A gospel disciple loves like Jesus. The reason we love like Jesus is because He first loved us. The more we grasp the gospel, the more loving we become. This is part of the renewing process of the gospel. When we do real life in the context of the gospel we are renewed as we experience God's love unconditionally through His family. It is a beautiful thing.

There are so many people who have never experienced this kind of love. There are those who have grown up in brokenness. There are so many who have been used and abused by ungodly parents, relatives and so-called friends. They are wounded and hurt. They have a very difficult time imagining any self worth or love. There's only one-way to disciple them into Jesus' impractical love, and that is by loving them in the context of community. Jesus came not simply to die but to show us how to live life. He taught us above all else to love one another. He even declared that all men would know that we are His disciples by the way we love one another (see John 13:35).

Leaving What Jesus Left Behind

This leads us to ask the question, "What did Jesus leave behind?" It's simple: others who lived like Jesus and loved like Jesus. How did He go about leaving people

who lived and loved like Him? Look at what he did in Mark 3: 13-15: “*Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those he wanted, and they came to Him. He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons*” (NIV). Jesus chose those He wanted to do life with to be his disciples.

Jesus’ way of making disciples wasn’t a curriculum or a 26-week Bible study course. Jesus did life with His followers and His life was His curriculum. The reality is that we are already making disciples. The question becomes, “What kind of disciples are we making?” I remember when my daughter started driving. She would yell and scream at careless and rude drivers. It was awful. Where did she get that? She got it from her father. I did the same thing. You see, the fruit doesn’t fall far from the tree. We reproduce who we are, not who want others to become.

When we live and love like Jesus, we are going to make disciples out of those closest to us. If you get the gospel, they will get the gospel. If you are giving, they will become giving. After years of neglecting my health I spent the last year getting in the best shape of my life. What I’ve noticed is that it has an affect on those around me. Many of them are following my lead and getting healthier too. This was my story. I got on the health bandwagon because of a close friend of mine. The same is true spiritually. As I become more like Jesus, those around me become more like Jesus. My life is my authority.

Tami and I recently became empty nesters, freeing up some space for guests. We are discovering the beauty of hospitality as an expression of discipleship by inviting people into our home to do life on life. We believe this is where gospel disciples are made. It’s here, in the context of a safe place, that they can come to experience the love of God first hand through our lives and the lives of our family and friends. The gospel disciple’s home is an expression of church.

When you live like Jesus and love like Jesus, it brings life to everything around you. Our tendency is to make this way too complicated. We need to rediscover the simplicity of Jesus and His ways. As we go, let’s make disciples who live like Jesus, love like Jesus and leave what Jesus left behind.

Chapter 3: *Rediscovering What It Means to Be the Church?*

Plant the gospel, make disciples, form the church around those disciples!

What we believe about the gospel radically shapes our understanding of our disciple-making mission; however, it doesn't end there. Our disciple-making mission shapes our understanding of church. As Alan Hirsch and a host of missional thinkers suggests, "Our church doesn't have a mission; our mission has a church." . Jesus addressed this two centuries ago when he said, *"Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved"* (Matthew 9:16-17). The gospel shapes our disciple-making mission and our church. When the gospel is properly grasped and we become gospel disciples, we can never be satisfied simply doing church. We must be the church.

While reading through the Gospels over the course of a year my understanding of church was greatly impacted. At the end of that year I felt compelled by to go back and re-read the Gospels one more time, this time paying close attention to what Jesus said about the church. I was shocked to discover that He referenced the church only twice (see Matthew 16 and 18). I'm not sure what I expected to find. What I did come to understand was that my own cultural biases had greatly flawed my understanding of church and I was in need of rediscovering what it means to be the church.

This rocked my world. If I'm completely honest, I spent most of my time, effort and resources on the weekend. I knew how to do church, but Jesus seemed to put all of his energy on being the church. As I began to search the scripture more intently for an understanding of the church, my world was rocked because I kept stumbling on one of Paul's favorite metaphors for church: "body of Christ" (Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 3:6 and 5:23, Colossians 1:18 and 1:24). That's right! We are the "body of Christ." The church at her best is a living organism representing the very essence of Jesus, His life and mission right now, right here through his people. While the weekend can be and often is an important part of our total church experience, it's only a small part of what it means to be a gospel disciple.

I was recently reminded how misguided my understanding of church can be in a

discussion with a leader of a church in the Middle East. I was discussing an upcoming trip when I made the naïve mistake of asking the leader for the name of the churches we would be working with. Pausing, she replied, “Our churches don’t have names. “They are the followers of Jesus gathered together in that particular city.” I was a little embarrassed. Once again, I was reminded that the church is a movement, not a meeting. It’s an organism, not an organization.

Obviously there are many ways to describe or define the church. I’m trying to apply the K.I.S.S. (keep it simple silly) to my own tendency toward complexity and control. One reason this is so important is the simpler a system, the easier it is to reproduce. A simple church system must begin with a simple definition of church. Here’s a definition I have put together as I’m rediscovering what it means to be the church. “Church is the body of Christ, called out of this world, forming a new community, on mission together.” One much simpler definition is, “followers living sent together.” Each of us would benefit from thinking through our own definition of what it means to be the church, as part of our rediscovering process.

Part of rediscovering what it means to be the church is reshaping our understanding of church planting. We are convinced that Jesus didn’t call us to plant churches. Nowhere in Scripture will you find a place where Jesus says to go plant His church. However, He does tell us to “go make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), and He tells us He will build His church (see Matthew 16:18). Our approach to church planting is: 1) pray for laborers; 2) go where the soil is prepared; 3) plant the gospel; 4) make disciples; and 5) form the church around those disciples. This comes right out of the teachings of Jesus and was modeled by Paul and the early church as they moved out beyond Jerusalem.

Pray for Laborers

When Jesus saw crowds of people He was greatly moved with compassion. He described these crowds as “sheep with no shepherd”, and instructed His disciples by telling them, “*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send laborers into the harvest field*” (Matthew 9:35-38). The need for the church is everywhere. According to this passage, a limiting factor is the lack of

laborers for the harvest field. He also tells us our beginning point for a gospel movement (rapid reproduction of churches) is prayer. As we see the great harvest and the needs of those who are harassed and helpless, we are to be moved to pray for laborers. There's work to do in the harvest field. The role of the gospel disciple begins with prayer.

Imagine for a moment what can happen in our churches if we see the potential for movement in the lives of everyone who make up the church. When we stand and preach, what do we see? Our tendency can be to over professionalize ministry to the point of disqualifying the very people in which Jesus puts His hope. When Jesus sees the least, the lost and the lonely, He sees people beaming with potential.

I recently did a study of some of the church planting networks in North America. This led to our vision of a global movement for 10,000 gospel-centered church plants. As I shared this vision with one of my pastor friends he asked a key question, "Do we even know 10,000 church planters?" I replied by telling him that I didn't even know one. We both laughed, knowing exactly what I meant. It's hard to find the right church planter when you are looking for one. I went on to tell him that we are asking the wrong question. What we need to ask is, "How do we *raise up* 10,000 church planters?" Jesus' answer is to start praying.

I recently met with a Missions Pastor of a large mega church. He's working on a strategy for engaging lay people on mission among the unengaged and disenfranchised of his city. I challenged him to mobilize 100 lay people for planting the gospel where they live, work and play. Together, we are exploring how we can plant 100 churches that will follow our disciple-making model. The first step is praying to the Lord of the harvest to raise-up the 100 ordinary people that we can call out, disciple and coach through an intentional gospel planting process. This begins with what we see when we encounter the crowds and how we respond. Start by praying for laborers.

Another pastor sent me an email wanting to know if we could plant 100 churches in Cuba over the next ten years. I'm convinced we can, but we must rediscover what it means to be the church. Our vision is to assist 100 leaders in planting 100 churches each. This begins with praying for laborers.

Go Where the Soil is Prepared

In Matthew 13: 3-8 Jesus taught a parable. *“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”* In this parable, we discover that all soil isn’t equal. We are to plant the gospel where the soil is good. This is an important principle to gospel movements. As a ministry we frame it this way, “we are committed to taking the whole gospel to the whole world”. By this we mean we are to go anywhere in the world where the soil is good. We can’t go everywhere, but we can go anywhere.

As gospel planters we must become aware of what good soil looks like. Good soil is always broken and fertile. In Jesus’ ministry, he had a clear theme for going to the “least of these.” This is a pattern we’ve seen in the church throughout its history. There are many broken and fertile people in the United States and throughout the world. Movements often happen amidst the darkest places on the earth. Jesus rightfully describes this in the Sermon on the Mount when He says, *“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).* We are to plant our lives and let the gospel light shine wherever we find darkness.

I think this is the very imagery Jesus employs in Matthew 16:17 when he says, *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”* The rock he stood on was located outside of Caesarea Philippi and was known as the very gate of hell. It was a place of pagan worship. There were many heinous acts of worship to false gods offered from that rock. I’m convinced that Jesus is telling us to take the gospel to the very gates of hell and plant it. This is where you are going to find fertile soil.

Plant the Gospel

When we find good soil, we are to plant the gospel. Jesus plants the gospel in the good soil of our lives and in return we plant the gospel in new soil, by planting our lives and proclaiming His word (gospel). It requires both. We plant the gospel by “loving our neighbor as we love ourselves.” The advice I give church planters, when it comes to planting the gospel, is simply to move into your neighborhood and become a good neighbor and pastor your neighbors. After all, they are like sheep with no shepherd. We all can do this, and we can plant the gospel anywhere and everywhere.

Years ago as a new follower of Jesus, I worked for a phone utility company where the soil was good. Many of the men I worked with heard and received the gospel. Unknowingly, we planted a church right there. We prayed together, we worshipped together, we met each other’s needs and we were on mission together. God gave us favor with all the people. The gospel even transformed our company. What we didn’t realize was that we were the church and we were birthing a gospel movement where we lived, worked and played. Specifically, in this case, a gospel movement was started right where we worked. We lacked vision and understanding. We needed help re-envisioning and re-discovering the church. However, in spite of our ignorance, God built His church and even sent out others on gospel missions.

Make Disciples

As we go plant the gospel, we are to make disciples. God grows it, like the farmer in Mark 4:27-29. *“He also said, ‘This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, where he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain- first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.’”*

As the sent people of God, we go plant the gospel where we live, work and play. God gives the increase. Paul understood this when he said, *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow (I Corinthians 3:6).* It’s not our responsibility to grow the church. Our responsibility is to plant the gospel and make disciples. We begin by being the disciple we want others to become. Disciples are made as we live like Jesus, love like Jesus and leave what He left behind, which are those who

live and love like Him. As we plant our lives in the good soil the gospel begins to grow. It spreads from one relationship to another, forming a whole new kind of community or redeeming an existing community.

Form the Church Around those Disciples

Once disciples are made the church is formed around those disciples, creating a new gospel community or transforming an existing one. New communities are formed as the gospel spreads from relationship to relationship. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, he told them to look for a “Person of Peace”(see Luke 10:5-7). This person is a person of receptivity, reputation and referral who represents good soil. Once the gospel is planted in this person, the gospel begins to make its way through his/her relational network. Jesus describes it this way: *“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough”* (Matthew 13:33). The New Testament pattern often observed in the gospel is planted among a “Person of Peace” and spreads throughout their entire family or relational network forming a new community.

We see this played out in Paul’s gospel planting approach with Lydia. *“From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us”* (Acts 16:11-14).

I once had the opportunity to plant the gospel in the life of an African Chief. This chief was the “Person of Peace.” Once he became a follower of Jesus, the gospel was able to spread throughout the entire village, forming an alternative way or new community. Prior to this, I preached the gospel to the entire village with no effect.

Once the gospel is planted and new communities begin to form around new disciples, they do kingdom life together by loving their neighbors and loving the nations. These gospel communities then express the generous life of Jesus by meeting one another's needs and responding to the needs of their neighbors.

In the context of community, disciples are formed as they do life together living like Jesus, loving like Jesus and leaving what Jesus left behind (those who live and love like Jesus). Like African Chief Waya, they understand that it takes a whole village to make a disciple. We see this same type of community forming in Acts 2:42-47: *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

Paul understood that gospel communities require a variety of gifts and leaders to shepherd a new or existing community. For this reason he tells us that God gives us apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors for the equipping of God's people (see Ephesians 4:11-13). In my gospel community, I am an apostle in that I'm constantly moving outside of my existing communities to establish new gospel movements. My wife, Tami, is a pastor. Not in the traditional sense, but she loves, cares for and nurtures the needs of the community. It's her gifting. Others in our community serve as prophets, evangelists and teachers.

Gospel communities often gather with other gospel communities. This is an important expression of the Church, capital "C." I often say that no pastor, planter, church or church plant should ever be alone. I believe this is a strategy of the enemy to separate and isolate us. Jesus prayed that we might be united so that the world might be reached: *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me"* (John 17:20-21). Our mission requires our coming together where we envision the church

on mission; we preach the gospel to one another; we relate in community as a kingdom of priest and kings called out of the world to serve, joined together in one disciple-making mission.

Finally, gospel communities grow by reproducing new communities. This is the natural way for growth to occur as God gives the increase. New “Persons of Peace” are reached and new *families and/or networks* are penetrated, forming new communities.

Re-Discovering Church

Where do we begin? How do we move beyond the weekend? Do we scrap our existing churches as a misguided project? No! I believe we are sitting on a goldmine, but we need to mine it. Let me make some simple suggestions for how we might move forward.

Re-discovering church is less about gathering and more about scattering. The turning point of the church is found in Acts 8. The Church of Jerusalem enjoyed incredible growth in the city. Following the stoning of Stephen she experienced a great scattering. *“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:1-4).* As a result the gospel was planted, new disciples made and new churches were formed around those disciples.

As pastors of existing churches we are poised for a similar gospel movement. Chances are the people who make up your church are embedded throughout your community in places where the gospel is most needed. We have School Teachers that spend much of their life in public schools throughout your city. We have business owners who are responsible for a handful of employees to large work forces. We have families that dot the landscape of the various subdivisions and apartment complexes of your region. The people that we shepherd live, work and play in restaurants, bars, hospitals, factories, schools and businesses, penetrating every sector of our culture.

What do we see in them? What does Jesus see in them? He sees people beaming with gospel movement potential! I recently challenged a pastor of a young church that reaches about 400 people in weekend attendance to see the people he leads differently. On a given Sunday he stood and challenged the least, the lost and lonely to recognize that God was up to something big involving them. That weekend more than 60 people vowed to follow Christ with a new commitment. They agreed to accept God's mission for their life no matter where it took them. He implemented what he calls a leadership greenhouse where he intentionally discipled them to be missionaries where they live, work and play. As a result, the gospel is being scattered and planted all over the place. What he might have considered a great risk has done nothing but produce gospel growth. As they continue to scatter, by starting new churches and new ministries where they live, work and play, their church has more than doubled in the past year. God is faithful in producing a 30, 60, 100-fold increase.

Early in my church planting efforts I often saw church through the lens of the weekend. In doing so, I attempted to improve each and every weekend experience. Throughout the year, I was forced to live from one big event to the other. Every few weeks, I made announcements of big news to be followed by bigger news and finally the biggest news ever. Re-discovering church has allowed me to see a new way forward. While the weekend can be important for many of us in the west, I am discovering that God wants to start gospel movements in the people who attend our churches. If your church is like the average church in America, running less than 100 in weekend attendance, you have incredible potential to dot the landscape of your community with 100 points of light. If your church has 300 people, you have 300 points of light in your community. We are poised for a gospel movement

Re-discovering church involves shifting power from the center to the edges. Let's be honest, many people who attend our churches see the building and the weekend services we offer as the church. This is the old world in which most of us grew up. The good news is that this is changing. Most of our churches are no longer simply defined by our Sunday meetings. More and more we are seeing healthy, robust, small group ministries emerge.

This can be good news or bad news. If our small groups are simply about gathering existing Christians into homes, it may be bad news. It may actually further isolate and insulate us from a gospel movement. On the other hand, if our small groups are about penetrating previously disenfranchised and unengaged people of our city, this is good news.

In a conversation with author/missiologist Reggie McNeal, while discussing why the movement of church wasn't increasing, I declared (in my naivety) that it was because we were out of resources. I thought if we had more money, we could grow our churches larger and plant more churches. I'll never forget his response. He said, "We've reached everyone like us, or who want to be like us." I think Reggie is onto something. The way we move beyond where we are is by shifting our power to the edges. The power of the church is the person already embedded in our culture. We can empower them. We can do this by casting a new vision of the church. What if we began to preach and model that our small groups are the church, not our weekend gatherings. We can do this focusing on being the church opposed to doing church. We can do this by fulfilling our mission of making gospel disciples.

One day I was praying with my wife when it hit me. I was frustrated with my weekend experience of church. I had recently resigned as a pastor on the staff of a large church. I felt like a captain without a ship. As I prayed that morning, I heard God say, "Pastor the church I am planting around you." Immediately I told Tami what I had heard. She challenged me by asking me what that looked like. I spent the next few minutes re-envisioning the church. I saw the church differently. For one, it was no longer mine to plant; it was His (God's). He was already at work in my community. Quickly, I was able to identify five to six "People of Peace" who were unaware they were forming churches around them. I immediately started a discipleship group to intentionally disciple these people, to help them re-envision the church and to specifically see that God was using them to plant his church.

A simple way for existing churches to re-envision the church is to re-envision their small group as the church and their small group leaders as their pastors. This is what I mean by shifting power to the edges. This will more often than not require some rethinking and retooling of our group ministry. At the same time, don't underestimate the

power of this shift in thinking and strategy. This will also have profound implications for our weekend services. Our weekend services will be where we gather to worship and celebrate the many mighty things God is doing in His scattered church.

This kind of change must begin with the leader. This is not simply a tweaking of our strategy. It involves a rediscovering of our understanding of church and how we approach church. At the most basic level it may look similar, but it isn't. This shift represents an internal transformation of our DNA and often our motivation.

The beauty of it is that you can make this kind of transition over time. We don't have to ditch our churches as a misguided project. We can start with ourselves and then began to disciple our leaders to a new way forward. Over time, we can see a radical transformation of our churches and our communities.

Re-discovering church involves hitting the reset button. We live in an information age. On any given day, I live my life attached to at least three different computers: my iPhone, iPad and Mac. It's not unusual for one of them to start doing some funky stuff. I've discovered the key to keeping them running smoothly....hit the reset button! What if we hit the reset button with the way we do church? What if God gave us a do-over? That's what happened in China. Prior to the Cultural Revolution, there was an estimated 20,000 Christians in China. The reset button was hit with many pastors being imprisoned, forcing the church underground and becoming a lay movement. "According to a survey done by China Partner and East China Normal University in Shanghai, there are now 39 to 41 million Protestant Christians in China."^b In the land of the free, we don't have to wait on a cultural revolution to hit the reset button. We can hit the reset button by re-envisioning church.

I once heard author Len Sweet say the movement of God is like a tornado vs. a hurricane. A hurricane forms in the oceans and hits land sweeping across it, impacting everything in its path. A tornado, as he described it, is more random, hitting here and there, impacting the landscape in unpredictable patterns. He went on to say that we would see incredible impact if we learned how to connect the dots. This describes the church in our Western world today. The future is already happening. Churches all across the landscape are springing up with a renewed vision of the church as a movement of ordinary people planting the gospel among the disenfranchised and unengaged people.

Like no other time, new and existing churches are connecting the dots and forming and transforming gospel communities. New networks are forming and the body is working together everywhere to plant the gospel. This is good news for the church.

^a http://extendingthekingdom.org/?page_id=17

^b http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_China

THE GOSPEL DISCIPLE

MOVING BEYOND THE WEEKEND

THE GOSPEL DISCIPLE SEEKS TO ANSWER THREE CRITICAL QUESTIONS WE MUST ALL ANSWER IF WE ARE TO BE GOSPEL DISCIPLES. THEY ARE: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL, WHAT IS A DISCIPLE, AND WHAT IS THE CHURCH. ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS ALLOWS US TO BUILD A GOSPEL-CENTERED FOUNDATION FOR MOVING CHURCH BEYOND THE WEEKEND.



DAVID PUTMAN IS FOUNDER OF PLANTING THE GOSPEL A NETWORK OF GOSPEL-CENTERED CHURCHES COMMITTED TO MAKING GOSPEL DISCIPLES AND TAKING THE WHOLE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD. HE IS ALSO AUTHOR OF BREAKING THE MISSIONAL CODE (WITH ED STETZER), BREAKING THE DISCIPLESHIP CODE, AND DETOX FOR THE OVERLY RELIGIOUS.

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