



Multiplying
DISCIPLES

*What Movements Can Teach
Us About Discipleship*

Winfield Bevins

Foreword by Bobby Harrington

“In *Multiplying Disciples*, Winfield Bevins masterfully explores a number of historical discipling movements. Bringing much insightful and practical reflection, this book will stir and challenge you to want to be part of a similar movement today.”

-Matthew Porter, Vicar of The Belfrey in York, England, and author
of *A-Z of Discipleship*.

“The 21st Century demands a new and revitalized apostolic movement of disciple making leaders like never before in the history of the Church. This book will become a blueprint to accomplish a such monumental task for those seeking to establish the kingdom of God.”

-Rev Dr. Iosmar Alvarez, Senior Pastor of Fuente de Avivamiento and
Founder of Disciple 21 Network

“Winfield Bevins is on the forefront of this contemporary movement. Bevins is a practitioner, not an armchair theologian. He does not claim to have all of the answers, but he has been around long enough to know most of the questions. We all can learn something from this man, and it is a pleasure to commend his teaching to you.”

-Dr. Robert Coleman

“To say that the task of making disciples that make disciples is an important feature of a missional movement is an understatement—it is absolutely critical. Fail here and we will fail everywhere. Winfield has gifted us with a book that not only reminds us of the importance of discipleship, but one that gives us some seriously useful tools in helping us become a disciple-making movement. We are grateful.”

-Alan Hirsch, award winning writer on missional leadership,
spirituality, and organization. Founder of the Movement Leaders
Collective, Forge Mission Training Network, and 100 Movements.



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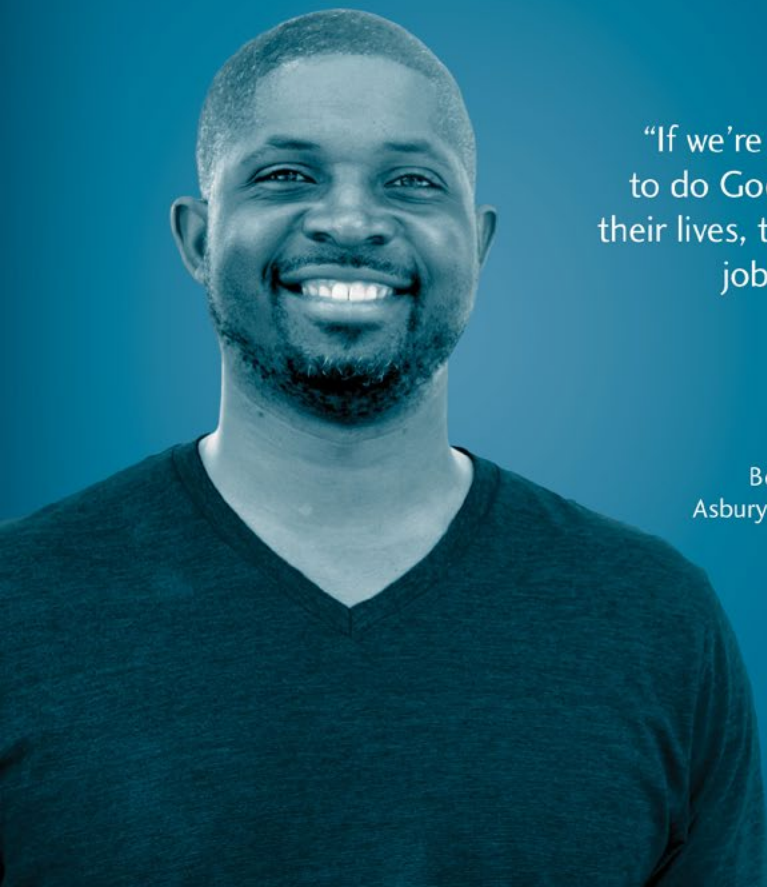
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Foreword

At Discipleship.org, our team has been working with national and international leaders on the key elements of disciple-making movements and disciple-making cultures. Even though there are over 330 million people in the United States, we have not been able to identify clear disciple-making movements *in our country at this time*. Yet, missionary experts and organizations like missionfrontiers.org point to almost 1,000 active disciple-making movements in other parts of the world.

As my friend Winfield Bevins points out—in the past, right here in America, there were significant movements like those mentioned in this book. He gives us hope that God will lead us to see them again in the future. In fact, *Multiplying Disciples* encourages us to look back for tools for the future. This book is also helpful in the quest to better understand disciple-making *cultures at an individual church level*. We believe that we will not see truly revolutionary disciple-making movements within churches in North America again until we create disciple-making cultures. Here are some of the character traits of disciple-making movements.

1. Disciple making is motivated by a loving, deep concern for people lost without salvation in Jesus.
2. Disciple making is the core mission and foundation of the church and everything the church does.
3. Every decision made and every dollar spent passes through the filter: How does this help us to make disciples?
4. Praying and fasting are significantly entrenched—it happens *a couple of times a week and it is intensified in special seasons*—asking for God to empower the mission of reaching as many as possible.

Multiplying Disciples

5. *Almost everyone* has been mobilized to the mission of making disciples.
6. Church leaders are focused on continual coaching and sustaining the disciple-making groups, classes, and bands.
7. There is joyful expectation that *everyone* a) obeys all of Jesus' commands and b) joins the mission.
8. *Everyone* understands the mission and method to be used.
9. A disciple-making movement regularly results in new church plants.

I am grateful to Winfield Bevins for his good work on this book. It is the kind of work that gives us hope grounded in the ministry of those who have gone before us in the past for making and multiplying disciples for future generations to come.

-Bobby Harrington, D.Min.

Founder and lead servant at discipleship.org and renew.org

Introduction

Facing the Music

The church has tried to get world evangelization without disciple making.

—Bill Hull

In Matthew 28, our Savior tells us to make disciples. The two words Jesus spoke to His disciples carried huge weight. The disciples understood that “make disciples” meant more than simply convincing someone to believe in Jesus. These men who had walked with and listened to Jesus for the last three years of their lives interpreted their leader’s command to mean that they should make out of others what Jesus made out of them.¹

Discipleship veteran Robert Coleman explains, “The Great Commission is not merely to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15), nor to baptize a lot of converts into the name of the triune God, nor to teach them the precepts of Christ, but to ‘make disciples’—to build people like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ that they not only follow, but also led others to follow his way.”²

1. Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003. 58.

2. Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1972. 101.

The Great Commission is rooted in the concept of the *missio Dei*—a Latin theological term that simply means the “mission of God.”³ *Missio Dei* recognizes that there is one mission: God’s mission.⁴ The *missio Dei* term reveals that God is a missionary God. The very being of God is the basis for the missionary enterprise. God is a sending God, with a desire to see humankind and creation reconciled, redeemed and healed.⁵ Throughout Scripture and history, God’s mission can be seen. Consider the well-known John 3:16: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” The church is not an end in itself; the church points beyond itself to fulfill the mission of God by making disciples.

Jesus gave the church one commission; and we are doing very badly at it. By its very nature, Christianity is a disciple-making multiplication movement. However, for much of the West this has not been the case. The time has come for us to face the music: the church is in decline in large part because we have forgotten the call to make disciples. Timothy C. Tennent, president of Asbury Theological Seminary, recently welcomed incoming seminary students by saying, “Welcome to life on the fastest-growing mission field in the world: North America.”⁶ Churches in North America and Europe are not witnessing a growing number of people who are radically unchurched or, as Professor Alvin Reid notes, “those who have no clear personal understanding of the message of the gospel, and who have had little or no contact with a Bible-teaching, Christ-honoring church.”⁷ In the United States alone, there are around

3. Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985. 194.

4. See Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2006.

5. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*. 2003. 18.

6. Timothy C. Tennent, “Homiletical Theology”, Opening Convocation Address, Asbury Theological Seminary, September 2016, <http://timothytennent.com/2016/09/13/my-2016-opening-convocation-address-homiletical-theology/>.

7. Alvin L. Reid, *Radically Unchurched: Who They Are & How to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 21.

180 million who have no connection to a local church, making it one of the fastest-growing mission fields in the Western Hemisphere.⁸ It is estimated that 670,000 to 700,000 people leave the traditional church every year.⁹

Backing up this trend, the Pew Research Center has noted that nearly one third of young adults now say they have no religious affiliation. This young-adult group is often called “nones” because they are disavowing association with any organized form of religion, which makes them North America’s second-largest religious group.¹⁰ We can see the impact of these trends in the decline of Christianity in Europe. In England, church membership has declined from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 million in 2010; from about thirty percent to slightly more than just eleven percent. If current trends continue in England, church membership is forecast to decline to 2.53 million (4.3 percent of the population) by 2025. The avowedly non-religious now make up 48.6 percent of the British population.¹¹ These are sobering statistics, indicating that massive cultural shifts are on the horizon for today’s church in the United States.

8. George G. Hunter III, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 28.

9. Phil Zuckerman, *Living the Secular Life: New Answers to Old Questions* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015) 60.

10. For an in-depth study on the spirituality of youth and young adults, see Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious Lives and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Their findings showed that the majority of youth adhere to a vague understanding of religion, which the authors call “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” (or “MTD”). For statistics on the overall state of youth involvement in religion among North Americans, the Pew Research Center has observed that about one third of older Millennials—adults currently in their late 20s or early 30s—now say that they have no religion, which is up 9 percent among this age range from 2007. Nearly one quarter of Generation X now say that they have no particular religion, or they describe themselves as “atheists” or “agnostics”. See <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

11. UK Census report on the state of religion in Great Britain. <https://faithsurvey.co.uk/uk-christianity.html>.

Obviously, cultural influences, such as technology, television and media, have had a significant effect on families. However, we can't blame it all on the culture. Christians are responsible for much of the problem as well.

One of the primary reasons is that we have taken an individualistic approach to faith, which has not emphasized the corporate nature of Christianity. The result is that we have produced a generation of consumeristic, and not radically committed, disciples of Jesus Christ.

Consumer Christianity sees the church as a place that's all about me, my wants and needs, and a place of goods and services; instead of being a place where we are challenged to grow, serve, give and go back into the world in mission. The result of embracing individualism and cultural consumerism has negatively affected contemporary Christianity. The truth is the church in much of the Western world is experiencing a discipleship crisis; and we are seeing the fallout from this deficiency. At the First International Consultation on Discipleship, John Stott called attention to the "strange and disturbing paradox" of the contemporary Christian situation. He warned, "We have experienced enormous statistical growth without corresponding growth in discipleship. God is not pleased with superficial discipleship."¹² Sadly, some churches focus on evangelism at the expense of discipleship by seeking to win converts instead of making disciples—despite the fact that the goal of evangelism is disciple making.

It is important to differentiate between being a person who's a Christian in name only and a disciple of Jesus Christ. Missiologist and author Alan Hirsch writes, "We can't make disciples based on a consumerist approach to the faith. We plainly cannot consume our way into discipleship Consumption is detrimental to discipleship."¹³

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

13. Alan Hirsch, *Forgotten Pathways Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006., 45.

The result of consumerism on Christianity is what martyred evangelist Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace” in his most famous work, *The Cost of Discipleship*, a rigorous exposition and interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, and Matthew 9:35-10:42. Bonhoeffer famously contrasted cheap grace:

“Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. *‘All for sin could not atone.’* Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world’s standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, and grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”¹⁴

According to the New Testament definition, many professing Christians in North America are not disciples. One survey concludes that only 25 percent of evangelicals meet the biblical standard for a disciple.¹⁵ Researcher George Barna also weighs in. In his book, *Growing True Disciples*, he reported that the church in America is comprised of “many converts, but shockingly few disciples.”¹⁶ And in a similar way, Dallas Willard illustrated the lack of discipleship in United States, saying that we “need to clear our heads about what discipleship is”:

“The leading assumption in the American church is that you can be a Christian but not a disciple. That has placed a tremendous burden on a

14. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. trans. R.H. Fuller, rev. ed. New York: Macmillan, 1960, 47.

15. Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell), 55.

16. This conclusion is based upon two years of research Barna conducted regarding the current state of discipleship, and how churches might enhance the effectiveness of their discipleship ministries. See George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001).

mass of Christians who are not disciples. We tell them to come to church, participate in our programs, and give money. But we see a church that knows nothing of commitment. We have settled for the marginal, and so we carry this awful burden of trying to motivate people to do what they don't want to do. We can't think about church the way we have been. We need to clear our heads about what discipleship is. My definition: A disciple is a person who has decided that the most important thing in their life is to learn how to do what Jesus said to do."¹⁷

Becoming a Disciple-Making Multiplication Movement

The answer is we need to get back to the original disciple-making mandate of Jesus Christ. At its core, Christianity is more than an institution; it is a disciple-making multiplication movement that Jesus Christ started. With little money and no modern technology or mass marketing strategy, Christianity grew to become one of the world's major religions. The best estimates suggest over two billion followers of Christ worldwide today. And it all started when an obscure Jewish teacher named Jesus invited a few ordinary people to follow Him as disciples.

Being a Christian is ultimately a revolutionary call to return to a serious and intentional disciple-making movement! Making and multiplying disciples is the call of every Christian and ultimately the call of every new church. The word disciple comes from the Greek word *mathetes* meaning an "apprentice, learner, or a pupil."¹⁸ It's found 269 times in the New Testament. In ancient times, a disciple was a person who left everything that they had to follow the teachings of a master. The word "disciple" implies much more than a learner or a pupil; it is someone

17. Dallas Willard, "Rethinking Evangelism." *Cutting Edge Magazine*, Winter 2001, Vol. 5, Number 1.

18. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, compiled by Walter Bauer, trans. and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed. rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, s.v. "*mathetes*," 486-87.; Gerhard Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4 Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. 1967, 441.

who has totally committed their life to the training and teaching of a master or a school of thought.¹⁹ According to the New Testament, a disciple is a radical follower of Jesus Christ who is obedient, bears fruit, glorifies God, has joy, loves others, denies themselves, and is committed to fulfilling the Great Commission to go and make disciples of others (see John 3:3–8; 15:7–17; Luke 9:23–25; and Matthew 28:19).

In short, disciples reproduce. Nature can teach us many things about the way the kingdom of God operates, and one of those lessons is that all healthy, living things will naturally reproduce and multiply. Multiplication is the goal of every living thing, and we see this truth confirmed throughout the pages of the Bible. God created every living thing—humankind, animals and plants—to reproduce. He told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). Reproduction is inherent in much of the agricultural language Jesus uses when He teaches and preaches. He used metaphors from nature and farming to teach His disciples lessons about the kingdom of God, and expected His disciples to reproduce what He had impressed upon them in the lives of others. Jesus imparted His message and His mission to His disciples so they would reproduce themselves, essentially, and make disciples of all nations. This reproductive DNA is one reason the early Christian community of several hundred people turned into a worldwide movement. Starting with twelve disciples, Christianity now claims over 2.1 billion members.

Being a genuine follower of Jesus Christ is all about making and multiplying disciples. This is the result of selecting, training, and empowering leaders who will, in turn, reproduce themselves in others. This begins locally with the church and then can take place on a larger scale through the reproduction of church plants regionally and internationally. Just think, through a faithful commitment to investing in others, you can be a part of a twenty-first-century, disciple-making movement that can change our postmodern world for Christ!

19. See Walter Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker. 1988. 629.

About This Book

I'm confident that we will not find the answers to the current disciple-making crisis in the church by simply trying to come up with new innovative ideas; nor will we find them by only looking to the past. Rather, the answers we need will be found on the road where the past and the present meet. Leonard Sweet reminds us, "Postmodern pilgrims must strive to keep the past and the present in perpetual conversation so every generation will find a fresh expression of the gospel that is anchored solidly to the faith that was once delivered."²⁰

You may be wondering, "What can Christian history teach us today?" The answer is a lot. There have been over two thousand years of church history and disciple-making multiplication. Are we so arrogant to think that we are smarter than those who have gone before us? The pages of church history are full of amazing stories about great men and women of faith who changed the course of history by working together for the sake of the world. They are the great heroes of the Christian faith. who have left a distinct mark on the church and the world forever. Their life, ministry and contributions cannot and must not be forgotten. Their stories should also inspire use to work together and attempt to do great things for God. Their stories show and remind us how the Lord can do extraordinary things through ordinary people working together.

In this book, I'm seeking to draw wisdom from the well of church history by looking at several important disciple-making multiplication movements: The Celtic Movement, The Moravian Movement, the Methodist Movement, and finally, insights from global discipleship movements. Each one of these movements offers vital contributions to the church and when discovered, they can help us rediscover the power of working together for the Great Commission to make and multiply disciples of Jesus Christ for the 21st century.

At the end of each chapter, I've included reflection questions to help guide you to think through these ideas and implement them in your

20. Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims*, Nashville, TN: B&H. 2000.

Introduction

own context. You can use this book as an individual discussion guide, for teams, or as a small group resource.

I invite you to turn the page and begin a journey to rediscover the lost art of disciple making. My prayer is that this book will challenge and encourage you to rethink the way you do discipleship. Disciple making is not a program or curriculum, but the personal calling of every Christian. Let's begin the journey!

Chapter 1

Be Thou My Vision: St. Patrick and the Celtic Way of Making Disciples

“In becoming an Irishman, Patrick wedded his world to theirs, his faith to their life.”

—Thomas Cahill

Chapter 1 Summary of Big Ideas

- Doing Ministry as a Team
- Holistic Faith
- Biblical Hospitality
- Evangelism in Community

When most of us think of Ireland, we think about green rolling hills and country sides covered in grass. What is not as widely known is that over one thousand years ago on this little island, was the birth of one of the most influential movements in the history of the Christian church. In fact, some scholars argue that the Celtic Christians contributed to preservation of western civilization. Celtic Christianity stands out as one of most vibrant and colorful Christian traditions that the world has ever known. In this chapter we will see that the Great Commission is not a solo operation, but a collaborative adventure of faith. As we shall see, Celtic Christianity was a model that brought together

evangelism and discipleship in community. In the next few pages we will learn lessons from the Celtic Missionary movement.

The Life of Saint Patrick

Before you can fully understand Celtic Christianity, it is important to look at the life and ministry of Saint Patrick. His life is surrounded by mystery, superstition, and myth. We have all heard of him, but few of us know very much about him. There is a holiday that bears his name and he is known as the man who drove the snakes out of Ireland and used the shamrock to explain the Trinity. So, who was Saint Patrick? Patrick was the founding leader of the Celtic Christian church and was personally responsible for baptizing over 100,000 people, ordaining hundreds of priests, planting hundreds of churches and monasteries, driving paganism from the shores of Ireland, and starting a movement in Ireland that helped preserve Christianity during the Middle Ages.²¹ As we shall see, the life and ministry of Saint Patrick reveal the great influence that he made upon Christianity and the world.

Patricius, better known as Patrick, is believed to be born in AD 389 in a Christian home in Britain during a time when England was undefended by the Roman Empire. Irish raiders captured people in Britain and brought them back to Ireland as slaves. At the age of sixteen, Irish barbarians demolished Patrick's village and captured him. They brought him to the east coast of Ireland and sold him into slavery. During this time, Patrick would spend many hours in prayer talking with God.

Six years later, he received a message from the Lord saying, "Soon you will return to your homeland . . . Come, and see your ship is waiting for you."²² He escaped from his master, fled 200 miles, and boarded a ship of traders who set sail for France and eventually made his way back into

21. Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. New York: Doubleday Press, 1995. See introduction.

22. Liam de Paor, *Saint Patrick's World: The Christian Culture of Ireland's Apostolic Age*, Dublin: Four Courts. 1993. 99-100.

Britain. It was at this time that he received his call to evangelize Ireland. He explained his call in the following way:

“I had a vision in my dreams of a man who seemed to come from Ireland. His name was Victoricius, and he carried countless letters, one of which he handed over to me. I read aloud where it began: ‘The voice of the Irish . . . We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come home and walk among us.’ I was deeply moved in heart and I could read no further, so I awoke.”²³

This vision had a profound effect on Patrick and he immediately made plans to return to Ireland, the land of his previous captivity.

Tradition has it that Patrick was appointed bishop and apostle to the Irish in 432. Patrick traveled the Irish country preaching the gospel. Paganism was the dominant religion when Patrick arrived. He faced most of his opposition from the druids who were highly educated and also practiced magic. They constantly tried to kill Patrick. He writes, “Daily I expect murder, fraud, or captivity, but I fear none of these things because of the promise of heaven.”²⁴

Patrick’s own writings tell a great deal about the man, his ministry, and his love for Ireland.²⁵ He mentions several times that his education was disrupted when he was taken captive at the age of sixteen. His writings tell us that he was very self-conscious about his lack of education. Although he did not receive the same education as other bishops, he did receive his call directly from the Lord. Perhaps it was his lack of education that made him so successful in pagan Ireland. His great success demonstrates that he was able to relate to common people in a real and relative way. He had a great love for people and the Lord, which was manifested in every area of his life and ministry.

Part of Patrick’s ministry strategy was focused on Ireland’s tribal kings. Patrick knew that if a king converted, his people would follow. When kings converted, they would often give their sons to Patrick to

23. *Ibid*, 100.

24. *Ibid*, 97.

25. See *Confessions of St. Patrick*.

educate and train in the ways of the Lord. Thus, he persuaded many of them to enter into the ministry.

Because of his ministry, Christianity spread through Ireland and into other parts of the British Isles. Patrick's mission was responsible for planting hundreds of churches and monasteries throughout Ireland. The churches and monasteries he established became some of the most influential missionary centers in all of Europe. Missionaries went out from Ireland to spread the gospel throughout the world. It was the Irish monasteries that helped preserve the Christian faith during the dark ages.

The missionary legacy of Saint Patrick continued long after his death through the Celtic Christian monastic movement. In the sixth and seventh centuries, Celtic Christianity spread throughout the British Isles like wild fire under the gifted leadership of men such as Columba who established monastic communities in Iona and Aidan in Lindsfarne. These monasteries were not places for monastic recluses; rather they became spiritual centers and discipleship training hubs that sent out missionaries throughout Western Europe.²⁶

What made the Celtic way of discipleship especially successful was their commitment to making disciples, not just converts, by infusing evangelism and discipleship. This is an important lesson. Many churches today focus on evangelism at the expense of discipleship by seeking to win converts instead of making disciples. The goal of evangelism is disciple making. The Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28 is to make disciples who will follow Christ rather than simply win converts. When Jesus said, "make disciples," the disciples understood it to mean more than simply getting someone to believe in Jesus and they interpreted it to mean that they should make out of others what Jesus made out of them. There are several lessons that we can learn from the Celtic way of

26. Neil, *History of Missions*, 49.

answering the Great Commission, which we will look at in the following pages.²⁷

Doing Ministry as a Team

The Celtic Christians did evangelism and discipleship as a team instead of individually. This means they didn't go out and try to win the world by themselves; rather they went out as a team because they understood the power of numbers. Each member of the Celtic missionary team played an important role in the whole of reaching the community. Author John Finney observes that the Celts believed in "the importance of the team."

"A group of people can pray and think together," he wrote. "They inspire and encourage each other. The single entrepreneur is too easily prey to self-doubt and loss of vision."²⁸

The Celtic team approach to ministry and discipleship is an important alternative to the modern "lone ranger" mentality approach that is typical in so many Western churches and desperately needs to be recovered. Asbury Professor Emeritus George Hunter writes:

"In contrast to contemporary Christianity's well-known evangelism approaches of "Lone Ranger," one-to-one evangelism, or confrontational evangelism, or the public preaching crusade, (and in stark contrast to contemporary Christianity's more dominant approach of not reaching out at all!), Celtic Christians usually evangelized as a team by relating to the people of a settlement; identifying with the people; engaging in friendship, conversation, ministry and witness with the goal of raising up a church in measurable time."²⁹

The Celtic Christians understood that mission takes place within the context of the Christian community. They entered into the community

27. In this section, I have drawn from George Hunter's *Celtic Way of Evangelism*, which as we shall see was a model that brought together evangelism and discipleship in community.

28. *Ibid.*, 53.

29. George Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 47. This section draws heavily from Hunter's classic work.

that they were trying to reach with the gospel—living, working, and eating among the people they were trying to reach. I think you'll agree with me that typically, this is contrary to the way most modern Christians try to reach people. They went to where the people were; we usually expect people to come to us. They knew that God created man to live in community with others. In the context of Christian community, spiritual seekers were able to explore the faith in real-life settings. They were able to see the gospel message lived out before them. In this sense, Christian community is a living sacrament that demonstrates the eternal truths of the Word of God.

A Holistic Faith

The Celtic Christians developed a holistic approach to discipleship that prepared people to live out their faith through a sense of depth, compassion, and power in mission. They were immersed in a holistic spirituality that had depth and meaning and enabled them to withstand difficult and hardship in their everyday lives. In other words, their faith wasn't just theoretical, but practical and relevant to everyday life. Celtic Christians were not just hanging out in classrooms but living their faith in real world.

A major problem with much of North American discipleship is that it is one-dimensional. Many Christians see themselves as either evangelical, sacramental, charismatic, etc. However, like a diamond, the Christian faith has multiple dimensions. The Celtic Christians understood the complex nature of the faith and sought to bring together a faith encounter that encouraged spiritual growth on many levels. George Hunter says that they had a four-fold structure of experiences that deepened their faith.

1. You experienced voluntary periods of solitary isolation in a remote natural setting, i.e. a grove of trees near a stream where you can be alone with God.
2. You spent time with your "soul friend," a peer with whom you were vulnerable and accountable; to whom you made confession; from

whom you received absolution and penance; who both supported and challenged you.

3. You spent time with a small group.
4. You participated in the common life, meals, work, learning, biblical recitation, prayers and worship of the whole Christian community.³⁰

Through having a small group, community life, and soul friend, believers observed and gained experience in ministry and witness to pre-Christian people. Through this fivefold structure, the community's purposes for individuals were to root their consciousness in the gospel and the Scriptures; to help them experience the presence of the Triune God and an empowered life; and to give them experience in ministry with other seekers.

Biblical Hospitality

The Celtic Christians understood and practiced biblical hospitality. The role of hospitality was central in their ministry to seekers, visitors, refugees, and other guests who came into their sphere of influence. Hospitality was an important part of the monastic community life and ministry. They would invite seekers, pilgrims, refugees and others to be guests of the monastic community. They followed the Benedictine Rule that said, "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for He Himself will say: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'"

Upon arrival, a guest would be given a soul friend, a small group, and a place for solitude. A guest would also learn some Scripture and worship with the community. One or more members of the community would share the ministry of conversation and pray with and for the guest daily. After some days, weeks or months, the guest would find themselves believing what the Christians in the community believe. They would then invite the seeker to commit their life to Christ and His will for their life, leading the new disciple in continued outreach ministry to other seekers.

30. Hunter, 48.

Many contemporary Christians and churches have lost touch with biblical hospitality. It is imperative that we relearn the gift of hospitality, especially in light of its important place in the Scriptures. The word “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers” and is found several times in the New Testament (Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:9). We are all called to offer the love of Christ to our guests and welcome them in such a way that they would be transformed from strangers into friends.

Evangelism in Community

The final tenet in Celtic Christianity involves the seeker’s experience of the Christian community in the process of conversion. To understand their unique approach to evangelism, it’s important to contrast the Roman way of doing mission and evangelism and the Celtic way. The Roman model for reaching people says: 1) present the Christian message; 2) invite them to decide to believe in Christ and become Christians; and 3) if they decide positively, welcome them into the church and its fellowship. The Roman model seems very logical to us because most American evangelicals are scripted by it. George Hunter writes, “We explain the gospel, they accept Christ, we welcome them into the church! Presentation, decision, assimilation. What could be more logical than that?”³¹

In contrast, the Celtic model for reaching people says: 1) you first establish community with people, or bring them into the fellowship of your community of faith; 2) within fellowship, you engage in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship; and 3) in time, as they discover that they now believe, you invite them to baptism and discipleship.

31. Ibid, 53.

Compare and contrast Roman vs. Celtic evangelism:

| | |
|---|--|
| Roman Model (American Evangelical model) | Celtic Model (Cell community model) |
| Presentation | Fellowship |
| Decision | Ministry and conversation |
| Fellowship | Belief; invitation to discipleship and baptism |

The Celtic model reflects the adage that, for most people: “Christianity is more caught than taught!”³² Hunter notes that many new believers report that the experience of the fellowship enabled them to believe and to commit their lives to Christ and His church. For many people, the faith is three-fourths caught and one-fourth taught. In his book, *Finding Faith Today: How Does It Happen?*, John Finney reports that most people experience faith through relationships that they encounter the Gospel through a community of faith. Becoming a Christian, he says, involves a process that takes time. We can summarize this by saying that for most people “belonging comes before believing.”³³ Finney contends that the Celtic way is more effective with postmodern Western populations than the American evangelical Roman model. His data shows that more people come to faith gradually (the Celtic cell community way) rather than suddenly (the American evangelical Roman way). The ongoing common life of the congregation helps people discover faith for themselves, connected to others, at their own pace. It appears to be much more influential than special event-preaching evangelism.³⁴

Finney outlines the typical journey of faith that most people will experience today: A person is introduced to the faith community through

32. Ibid, 54.

33. Ibid, 54.

34. Ibid, 55.

a member of their family, through friendship with a Christian, or through marketplace contact with a minister;

1. They begin to ask questions;
2. They are invited to explore further and come to a knowledge and practice of the faith through a small community group;
3. They discover over time that they have come to embrace the faith through these relationships, and come to Christ through baptism;

Following the Celtic model, they continue to grow in discipleship, in turn bringing others into fellowship where the cycle of new growth continues. Hunter predicts that the church will observe a continual widespread shift away from the Roman (American evangelical) way of evangelism to a more community-centered Celtic cell model.

Lessons for Today

There is a lot that we can learn from the Celtic Christian movements. First, we can learn a lot from the man, Saint Patrick. He is an example of how an individual can overcome tremendous obstacles with the Lord's help. Patrick went back to the very land where he had been a slave to evangelize. It is like the story of Joseph who ended up saving his brothers who had sold him into slavery. What a powerful example of how God can use our past to minister to others. Many times, the Lord will give you a burden to help bring salvation and healing to people from your past.

Even though Patrick didn't have a good education, he didn't let that stop him from letting God use him. He was able to do great things for God despite his lack of worldly education. His calling came from God, and that's all that really mattered. When the Lord is in your life, He will make a way for you. God mightily used Patrick to deliver the people of Ireland from paganism, slavery and sin. He helped bring revival to a nation and to a continent. He stands as one of the great men of the Christian faith.

The Celtic Christian movement offers several extraordinary insights into collaborative multiplication for the 21st century church. First,

and perhaps most importantly, these insights remind us of the power of missional community. Disciples are made in Christian community on mission not in isolation. Perhaps the reason why many churches struggle with making disciples is that they do not know how to live in community. The church of the future must rediscover the power of biblical community if we are going to make disciples for Christ in the 21st century. We should seek to develop pathways for people to build authentic Christ-centered community in our churches because discipleship takes place within the context of the Christian community that is living together on mission.

The Celtic Christians also teach us that we should develop a discipleship process that is unique to our own church setting, city and community. The God we worship doesn't make robots; he's not a cookie-cutter God. Remember, you need to find out what works in your own culture and context. This can happen in a thousand different ways. Depending on your setting, you can develop your own strategies for different ages within your church context or small groups. You can find fresh and innovative ways to live as a missionary in your community or neighborhood.

Chapter 1 Questions

1. What was the one thing that stuck out most to you from the Celtic way of disciple making?
2. In what ways is discipleship a holistic faith?
3. How did the church in the West forget about hospitality? Why is it so essential to recover biblical hospitality?
4. How did the Celtic saints evangelize in community and why does it matter for the church of the 21st Century? What would it look like for you to embrace a community approach to evangelism and discipleship in your context?

Chapter 2

Into All the World: Count Zinzendorf and Missional Discipleship

“I have but one passion—it is He, it is He alone.”

—Count Ludwig Von Zinzendorf

Chapter 2 Summary of Big Ideas

- Practicing Reconciliation
- Eating Together
- Prayer Watch
- Missional Discipleship

One of the greatest disciple-making movements of all time began with the rich young ruler who said “yes.” In this chapter, the Moravian Christian movement can teach us that the Great Commission flows from the Great Commandment to love one another.

Count Ludwig Von Zinzendorf was born into a wealthy, noble family and belonged to one of the most ancient of noble families in Austria. Six weeks after young Ludwig’s birth, his father died of tuberculosis and his mother married again when he was four years old. At this time, he was sent to live with his pietistic Lutheran grandmother who did much to shape his character and faith.

He fell in love with Jesus at the age of six and continued to mature in Christ throughout his school years. He grew up with regular times

of prayer, Bible reading and hymn singing. His dearest treasure next to the Bible was Luther's Smaller Catechism. Zinzendorf was a star student and by the age of 15 he could read the classics and the New Testament in Greek, and was fluent in Latin and French.

Zinzendorf eventually pursued his university studies at Wittenberg, which was a strong hold of Lutheran theology. Once he finished his studies at Wittenberg, he embarked on a grand tour of various centers of learning throughout Europe. Then in 1720 he went to Paris where he stayed for six months. He toured Versailles, and even formed a friendship with Roman Catholic Cardinal Noailles Roman.

Despite all the beauty of Europe, nothing could compare to an encounter that Zinzendorf had in the art museum at Dusseldorf where he encountered the Christ in an amazing way—while viewing Domenico Feti's painting, *Ecce Homo*. It is a portrait of the suffering thorn-crowned Jesus). He was reading the inscription below it, "I have done this for you; what have you done for me?" when Zinzendorf said to himself, I have loved Him for a long time, but I have never actually done anything for Him. From now on, I will do whatever He leads me to do.³⁵

In May 1721, Zinzendorf purchased his grandmother's estate at Berthelsdorf. On September 7, 1722, he married Countess Erdmuth Dorothea von Reuss, the sister of his friend, Henry. She was a strong believer, devoted to Pietism. For a time, Zinzendorf devoted himself to government matters in Dresden. But everything would change for him one eventful day when a Moravian refuge ended up at his door. The man's name was Christian David. He had heard that Zinzendorf would open his home to oppressed Moravian refuges. Zinzendorf agreed to the request and a group of ten Moravians arrived in December 1722. His manor became known as "Herrnhut," meaning "the Lord's watch" or "on the watch for the Lord." This was only the beginning. By May 1725, ninety Moravians had settled at Herrnhut. By late 1726, the population had swelled to 300.

35. Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, 141.

Practicing Reconciliation

As is often the case, with growth came division. Trouble eventually began to enter the group over differences in liturgy, economic pressures, language difficulties and other issues. Zinzendorf knew that God had called them to be a community of reconciliation, forgiveness and love. The Bible reminds us that grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation are at the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 18:15, Jesus says: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”

Zinzendorf began meeting with different families for prayer and counsel and helped regain a spirit of unity and love. He drew up a covenant calling upon them “to seek out and emphasize the points in which they agreed,” rather than focusing on their differences. This started a process of deep reconciliation among members of the community. On May 12, 1727, they all signed an agreement to dedicate their lives to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. At this time, small groups were organized to provide the people with a special spiritual affinity to one another. From that time forward, the Moravian movement was built on doing mission from a heart of having love for one another.

Jesus calls us to love one another. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The phrase “one another” comes from the Greek word *allelon* which means, “one another, each other; mutually, reciprocally.” It occurs one hundred times in the New Testament in ninety-four verses. About one-third of the “one another” commands are about Christian unity; and about one-third of these are instructing Christians to love one another. What is the point? We are called to love one another. Here is a list of the “one another verses.”

“One Another” Verses³⁶

- Strengthen one another: *Romans 14:19*
- Help one another: *Hebrews 3:13; 10:24*
- Encourage one another: *Romans 14:19; 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25*
- Care for one another: *Galatians 6:2*
- Forgive one another: *Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13*
- Submit to one another: *Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5*
- Commit to one another: *1 John 3:16*
- Build trust with one another: *1 John 1:7*
- Be devoted to one another: *Romans 12:10*
- Be patient with one another: *Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13*
- Be interested in one another: *Philippians 2:4*
- Be accountable to one another: *Ephesians 5:21*
- Confess to one another: *James 5:16*
- Live in harmony with one another: *Romans 12:16*
- Do not be conceited toward one another: *Romans 13:8*
- Do not pass judgment on one another: *Romans 14:13; 15:7*
- Do not slander one another: *James 4:11*
- Instruct one another: *Romans 16:16*
- Greet one another: *Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:12*
- Admonish one another: *Romans 5:14; Colossians 3:16*
- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds: *Hebrews 10:24*
- Meet with one another: *Hebrews 10:25*
- Agree with one another: *1 Corinthians 16:20*
- Be concerned for one another: *Hebrews 10:24*
- Be humble toward one another in love: *Ephesians 4:2*
- Be compassionate toward one another: *Ephesians 4:32*
- Do not be consumed by one another: *Galatians 5:14-15*
- Do not anger one another: *Galatians 5:26*

36. List from <https://www.mcleanbible.org/sites/default/files/Multiply-Resources/Chap5/OneAnotherPassagesinScripture.pdf>.

- Do not lie to one another: *Colossians 3:9*
- Do not grumble toward one another: *James 5:9*
- Give preference to one another: *Romans 12:10*
- Be at peace with one another: *Romans 12:18*
- Sing to one another: *Ephesians 5:19*
- Be of the same mind to one another: *Romans 12:16; 15:5*
- Comfort one another: *1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11*
- Be kind to one another: *Ephesians 4:32*
- Live in peace with one another: *1 Thessalonians 5:13*
- Carry one another's burdens: *Galatians 6:2*

Eating Together

A hallmark of the Moravian movement is the “lovefeast,” inspired by the first gathering of Christians after the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:42, we read, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” The early believers met and broke bread together, thereby signifying their union and love for one another. These meals were associated with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper and the lovefeast was a time of fellowship that followed it. They were called agape, from the Greek word for love. The Eucharist and the lovefeast were eventually broken up between the latter part of the first century AD and 250 AD.

The importance of the Lord’s Table can be traced back to its vital role in the early life of the church. The early church celebrated communion every time they came together to worship and, in some cases, they practiced it daily.³⁷ In the Book of Acts, we can see that the life of the early church revolved around fellowship. At the heart of the Greek word for fellowship (*koinonia*) is the idea of participation. *Koinonia* is used to describe both the fellowship and actual participation in the Lord’s

37. Many of the early church fathers spoke about the regularity of the Eucharist in the church’s life and worship, including Cyprian, Ambrose, Basil, and Chrysostom, who wrote about the Eucharist as a daily practice in the life of the church.

Supper.³⁸ No single word in the English language fully captures the meaning of this Greek word. It's more than just a shared experience and nice conversation with other people. It is, at the deepest level, a spiritual connection in Christ, a supernatural bond provided by God's grace. The Christian life is rooted in living together in community, sharing life with one another and with Christ. The early Christians viewed the communion meals of *koinonia* as absolutely vital to their life as a church.

If you think about it, so much of life happens when sharing a common meal around our dinner tables. Most of us eat three meals a day. That's about 1,095 meals for each person over the span of a year. Wow, that's a lot of meals! Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised to find that the Bible places a table at the center of the spiritual lives of God's people. In the Old Testament, we see the table of Passover and in the New Testament we find the table of Communion. Jesus Christ often used the context of sharing a meal to minister to people and to teach others important lessons about the Kingdom of God. The Gospels show us that Jesus loved meals. In the book of Luke alone, there are ten stories of Jesus dining with various people. Each Gospel ends with Jesus breaking bread and sharing the last supper with His disciples (Matt. 26:17–30, Mark 14:12–26, Luke 22:7–39, and John 13:1–17:26). Luke even records Jesus making a meal for his disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:42–43). Then, we find in the Book of Acts that sharing meals in homes was a central place of evangelism, worship and church planting.

The Moravian Church recovered the ancient practice of the lovefeast in 1727. After a memorable celebration of the holy communion on August 13, participants were deeply and spiritually moved. They were reluctant to separate from one another and return to their own homes for their meal out of a deeply profound sense of community. Count Zinzendorf sent them food and the group continued in prayer, conversation, and singing. This incident reminded Zinzendorf of the

38. Compare Acts 2:42–46 with Paul's use of the word *koinonia* in 1 Corinthians 11:20–34.

agape feast of the early church. The idea of regularly practicing lovefeasts became a custom in Moravian life.

The lovefeasts were introduced wherever new settlements were founded and so came to America. Wherever its fullest liturgical development exists, the lovefeast is a service of solemn dignity, in which the finest Moravian Church hymns and stately music may be heard, but without any surrender of its central idea. Traditionally, lovefeasts consisted of a sweetened bun and coffee served to the congregation in the pews. Today, the food and drink used by congregations may vary. A Moravian congregation may hold a lovefeast on any special occasion, such as the date their church was founded, but there are certain established dates that lovefeasts are regularly observed. Some notable dates include Watch Night, Good Friday and Christmas Eve. Each member of the congregation receives a lighted candle at the end of the service, in addition to the bun and coffee. Regardless of the menu or time it's offered, the love feast is a beautiful reminder of the unity among believers.

The Power of Prayer

1727 was an important year. It marked a spiritual turning point in the Moravians community when a spirit of prayer began to spread among them. They covenanted together to meet often to pour out their hearts in prayer and hymns. On August 5 of that milestone year, the Count spent the whole night in prayer with about twelve or fourteen others, following a large meeting for prayer at midnight. Then a few days later on Wednesday, August 13, 1727, the Holy Spirit was poured out on them all. The Moravians experienced a powerful "Pentecost" during a communion service where the Spirit came upon Zinzendorf and the community. This experience radically changed the community and sparked a flame of prayer and missions that would burn for decades to come. Looking back

on that day, Zinzendorf later recalled: “The whole place represented truly a visible habitation of God among men.”³⁹

This marked the beginning of the Moravians’ commitment to a round-the-clock “prayer watch” that continued non-stop for over a hundred years. On August 26, twenty-four men and twenty-four women covenanted together to continue praying in intervals of one hour each, day and night; each hour allocated by lots to different people. Others joined the intercessors, and the number increased to seventy-seven. They all carefully observed the hour that had been designated to them and they had a weekly meeting where they received prayer needs.

The spirit of prayer was not just for the adults of the community, but even spread to the children as well. The children were also touched by God and began to pray a similar plan among themselves. The children’s prayers and supplications had a powerful effect on the whole community. Parents and others members of the community were deeply moved by the children’s prayers for revival and missions. From that time onward, the Moravians prayed continuously for revival and the missionary expansion of the gospel. As members of the Moravian church continued non-stop in this “Hourly Intercession,” they became known as “God’s Happy People.” Their prayers became the catalyst for one of the world’s greatest missionary movements.

Richard J. Foster reminds us, “If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to prayer: Intercession is a way of loving others.”⁴⁰ What is intercessory prayer? According to Webster, “intercede” means simply, “to go or pass between; to act between parties with a view to reconcile those who differ or contend; to interpose; to mediate or make intercession; mediation.” Intercession basically means to stand between two extremes. It means to earnestly plead with a person on behalf of another. Intercessory prayer happens when we stand in the gap between God and

39. J. E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church*. (Fetter Lane, London: Moravian Publication Office, 1909). p. 207.

40. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 35.

others. We live in a world that is full of spiritual warfare and God wants us to pray for the salvation and redemption of others. It is not His desire that any should perish but that all would receive eternal life (1 Tim. 2:4).

As Christians, we are called to pray not only for ourselves, but to pray for others—the church, the hurting, the sick, and the world in which we live. The call to pray for others flows from the command to love our neighbors. Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:36-40, NIV). We pray because we love, and we love because God first loved us. Love flows from Him to all His creation. John reminds us, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10, NIV). Love begins and ends with God, and flows from us to our neighbors through our prayers.

Missional Discipleship

Within a short time, Herrnhut became a missionary launching pad that would send out missionaries throughout the world, which made them the first great Protestant missionary movement. They gathered small groups of individuals who gathered for prayer and Bible study and travelled across Europe sharing the gospel with everyone they met, especially the outcast of society. Out of this grew a network of small groups that eventually became known as the “Diaspora.” Under Zinzendorf’s leadership, Moravian missionaries went out into all the world in an unprecedented way that had never been seen before! On Sunday, December 13, 1732, after almost ten weeks at sea, the ship sailed into the harbor of St. Thomas to reach slaves for Christ. This was a difficult time where many of the missionaries died. Twenty-two of the first twenty-nine died, forcing them to retreat from St. Croix for a time. Despite trials and difficulties, missionaries continued to go out from Herrnhut into all the world.

By the time Zinzendorf died in 1760, after twenty-eight years of cross-cultural mission, the Moravians had sent out 226 missionaries and entered ten different countries. Mission stations had been established

in Danish St. Thomas, in the West Indies (1732); Greenland (1733); Georgia, North America (1734); Lapland (1735); Surinam, or Dutch Guiana, on the north coast of South America (1735); Cape Town, South Africa (1737); Elmina, Dutch headquarters in the Gold Coast (1737); Demarara, now known as Guyana, South America (1738); and to the British colonial island of Jamaica (1754), and Antigua (1756). In 1760 there were forty-nine men and seventeen women serving in thirteen stations around the world ministering to over 6,000 people.

Moravian passion for mission was grounded in one thing, and one thing alone. Zinzendorf said, “I have but one passion—it is He, it is He alone. The world is the field, and the field is the world; and henceforth that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ.”⁴¹ Over the years, his passion for Jesus grew, as did his passion for the lost. He was determined to evangelize the world through raising up and sending out Moravian missionaries who were equipped only with a simple love for Jesus and the spirit of prayer.

A seal was designed to express their newfound missionary zeal. The seal was composed of a lamb with the cross of resurrection and a banner of triumph with the motto: “Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow Him.” The Moravians were missionaries of the gospel. They followed the call of the Lamb to go preach the gospel to all nations. In 1791, the Moravians beautifully explained their motivation for missions: “The simple motive of the brethren for sending missionaries to distant nations was and is an ardent desire to promote the salvation of their fellow men, by making known to them the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ.”

Missionary success came with a price to Zinzendorf and his followers. His opponents sought to undermine him and his ministry. As a result, in 1736 he was banished from Saxony. He took the family with him west to Wetteravia, near Frankfurt, and found residence in an old castle, called the Ronneburg. Here a new settlement, Herrnhag, would thrive nearby, surpassing Herrnhut in size. Over the following years, the missionary’s

41. John Greenfield, *When the Spirit Came: The Story of the Moravian Revival of 1727*. (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1967), p. 20.

endeavors continued to spread throughout the world. In 1747 alone, 200 missionaries went out to posts of duty as missionaries to the New World among the Diaspora. Zinzendorf spent the remainder of his days leading the growing Moravian movement, traveling, teaching and encouraging others to follow Christ. He lived out his last days at Herrnhut. The year 1760 marked twenty-eight years in Moravian missions. In the final days of his life, he became weak and feeble. By the time of his death, Zinzendorf had helped found one the world's greatest missionary movements.

Lessons for Today

There is a lot we can learn about discipleship from the Moravian prayer movement and its lasting influence upon the world. They set up a watch of continuous prayer that ran twenty-four hours a day for one hundred years. They established more than thirty missionary settlements internationally on the Herrnhut model, which emphasized prayer, worship and missional living. These communities provided a place for Christian training and support for the Moravian Mission work throughout the world. The Moravians became the first Protestant church body to begin missionary work. They formed many hundreds of small renewal groups, which we would call missional communities known as “diaspora societies.” These groups encouraged their members to practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, Bible study, confession of sins and mutual accountability. Today the modern Unitas Fratrum (or Moravian Church), with about 825,000 members worldwide, influenced other movements such as the Wesleyan revival. We’ll explore that in the next chapter.

Finally, the Moravians can remind us that mission is the duty of every Christian believer; young and old. We are all called to be missional Christians who share the good news of Jesus’ love and forgiveness with the world. So what does it mean to be missional? Author and researcher Ed Stetzer explains that being missional means actually “doing mission right where you are.”

“Missional means adopting the posture of a missionary,” Stetzer writes, “learning and adapting to the culture around you while remaining biblically sound.”⁴² Not only are we called to be missional as individuals, but also as disciples together. God never intended for us to do mission alone. We are called to be missional together. But being missional doesn’t begin with us; it begins with Jesus Christ. Jesus was the first and greatest missionary. The Bible tells us that He came from heaven to earth to die for a lost and dying world. As the Father sent Jesus, He also sends us into our time and culture. We have been chosen by God to live in this time and place to fulfill the mission of God.

Being missional is God’s way of showing the love of His Son Jesus through the lives of His followers. Being missional is striving to live like Jesus, our perfect example. Jesus said, “the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This scripture beautifully embodies what it means to be missional. To be missional is to serve and give our lives for others. The Moravians remind us that we can share our faith together. After all, Jesus sent his disciples out two-by-two. There are no lone rangers in the kingdom of God. Being missional doesn’t mean we have to go overseas; it starts in our own backyard. Find the needs of your community and begin to fill them by being a missionary to your city and community. We will never know what the needs of our community are until we begin to get outside the four walls of our church and answer the call to “go and make disciples.”

Chapter 2 Questions

1. What was the greatest lesson you learned about disciple making multiplication from the Moravian movement?

42. Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church that’s Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), 19.

Chapter 2

2. Why is reconciliation so critical to the work of disciple making? What is one example of when you practiced reconciliation in your life and a relationship was restored?
3. The Moravian Movement was birthed out of a prayer revival. How strong is your prayer life and what ways might the Lord be calling you deeper in prayer?
4. For the Moravians, disciple making happened on the road and in the mission field. What are some ways they might inspire us to think and be missionaries to our communities?

Chapter 3

Banding Together: The Discipleship Methods of John Wesley

“Once upon a time, in John Wesley’s lifetime and for another century or more, Methodism in Great Britain and in North America was a contagious Christian movement.”

—George Hunter III

Chapter 3 Summary of Big Ideas

- Empowering Others
- Disciple Making Systems
- Education and Training
- Holistic Mission

The Methodist movement of the early 18th century was the greatest multiplication movement ever recorded in the United States.⁴³ We can trace its roots back to its founder, John Wesley. If anything could be said about John Wesley, it would be that he was a collaborative leader who empowered others to become heroes in God’s unfolding story. He was what Exponential calls a “hero maker.” With skill and discipline, Wesley quickly became one of the most influential leaders of

43. For a fuller account of the Wesleyan revival as a modern movement, see my book *Marks of a Movement: What the Church Today Can Learn from the Wesleyan Revival*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Books, 2019).

the evangelical awakening of the 18th century by leading a movement that reached thousands of people in his lifetime. He was committed to seeing lives truly transformed, and during his life, he traveled more than 250,000 miles and preached over 40,560 sermons. The Wesleyan revival, which started with only a handful of people in the 1700s, grew into a resurgence that established hundreds of societies in England and in the United States. By John Wesley's death in 1791, Methodism had become a global church movement with more than 70,000 members in England and more than 40,000 in the new United States, and with even more among other mission stations around the world.

One of the greatest beauties of Wesley's influence is that the growth of Methodism continued well beyond his own life. Only a few years after his death, Methodism in North America grew from 1,200 to 200,000 strong with more than 4,000 preachers. By 1830, official membership reached almost half a million people, and attendees numbered 6 million.⁴⁴ Then, from 1850 to 1905, American Methodism planted more than 700 churches per year on average.⁴⁵ In our present day and age, if we are going to reach the world with the gospel of Christ, we could use a movement of the same proportions and such astounding success. To this end, I believe that the wisdom of the Wesleyan revival offers vital and timeless lessons for disciple-making multiplication in the 21st century.

Wesley's formal education began in 1714 when he was sent to Charterhouse, a school that prepared him to enter Oxford University. He enrolled in Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1720. By the time of his graduation in 1724, he had become versed in theology, science, history and classical literature. While at Oxford, John had only a seminal interest in religious matters and held no interest in inward religion. In 1725, however, his thoughts about the nature of religion began to change. Many scholars believe that 1725 marked the beginning of Wesley's

44. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*

45. George G. Hunter III, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011) p. 5.

religious awakening and the first of three phases in his theological development. He began thinking seriously about entering the church, and his parents enthusiastically encouraged him.

During this time, several major occurrences helped to shape Wesley's religious thought life. He came into contact with three writings that made a profound impact upon his spirituality: Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*, Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, and William Law's *Christian Perfection and a Serious Call*. These books brought him down the path of holiness. Along with these selected readings, he took communion every week, attended prayers, avoided outward sins, and sought to live a holy life before God. Then, on September 25, 1725, he was ordained as a deacon at Christ Church Cathedral by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford.

On March 17, 1726, Wesley was elected as a Fellow at Lincoln College. Around the same time, his younger brother, Charles Wesley, had entered Christ Church College as a student. Charles joined the small group of Oxford students, where his brother John was already involved. The group met regularly for the purpose of spiritual formation. Soon after Charles joined this group, John became the unofficial leader of the group.

Along with their academic pursuits, these devoted students engaged in prayer, Bible study, fasting, communion, and social work, which included prison visitation and caring for the sick. These practices earned them the nickname "Methodists," and that name would become the title of the Wesleyan movement. Around this time, the Wesley brothers and George Whitfield, who would later become a leader in the evangelical revival, formed an important alliance. Whitfield was a fellow student and member of the "Holy Club" (another name for the gathering of Oxford Methodist students). Wesley was impressed with Whitfield's wit and piety, and soon, the two became close friends. These various influences mark Wesley's time at Oxford as an important season of religious development. A combination of selected readings, academic training, and certain influential persons all laid the foundation for the Wesleyan

movement that would sweep the country and travel across the Atlantic during the next eighty years.

Trials in Georgia

In 1735, only eight weeks after their father's death, John and Charles Wesley set sail for Savannah, Georgia. They had been commissioned there as missionaries by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the missionary wing of the Church of England. After a two-month trip by sea, the Wesleys landed in America on February 6, 1736. While John's primary intention for traveling to America was to minister to Native Americans, he found himself serving as parish minister to the colonists in Savannah. Meanwhile, Charles became the personal secretary to governor James Oglethorpe. Oglethorpe had been a friend of Samuel Wesley and was anxious to have Samuel's two sons help in Georgia.

The mission in Savannah lasted less than two years for John and Charles. Their ambitions for coming to America were never fully realized, but the mission proved revolutionary in John's life. It was through this endeavor that Wesley became acquainted with a group called the "Moravians" (sound familiar?) on his way to Georgia, during his stay, and on his return to England. Don't you love how God connects the dots? As we read in the last chapter, the Moravians were German pietists who were associated with teachings of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf. They taught a simple faith and assurance of salvation through the inner witness of the Spirit in a way that John had never witnessed. He was impressed with their confidence, piety, and assurance of faith. They were instrumental in leading him to search for an inward Christianity of the heart.

When he returned to England, Wesley spent several months in spiritual distress and deep introspection. He was challenged by the Moravians' example of a simple faith in Christ. After their return, John and Charles met another Moravian by the name of Peter Böhler in England. He further convinced John that conversion happens in an instant and that real Christians have assurance of their salvation from

the witness of the Holy Spirit. Böhler testified to this experience and brought to Wesley several other witnesses who also testified to the same experience of instantaneous faith. As Böhler shared about the mercies of God, Wesley wept and determined that he would seek full assurance of salvation.

On May 24, 1738, while attending a prayer meeting at Aldersgate Street in London, John Wesley had a personal encounter with Christ that forever changed his life. He writes:

In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.⁴⁶

This experience has been called Wesley's "evangelical conversion." (His brother Charles also had an experience like this only three days before.) Aldersgate proved to be yet another revolutionary milestone in John's religious life and changed the course of his ministry.

The power of his conversion experience served as the catalyst that helped to ignite the fires of the Great Awakening. This genuine experience of faith in Christ moved him with compassion to do all he could to share his experience with others. It was Wesley who said the now-famous quote: "I look upon all the world as my parish." He was not exaggerating, because wherever he went, he preached that everyone could have a relationship with Jesus Christ. This belief was against the grain for the nominal Christians of Wesley's day. He was accused of excessive "enthusiasm" because he believed and taught that a person could have a real, life-changing encounter with the Lord.

The beauty of Wesley's emphasis on a real encounter with Christ was how he integrated this belief into the framework of his emphasis on

46. Thomas Jackson, *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1979) 1:103.

holiness. At this point in his life, he had seen the importance of both intense accountability that strove for holiness (“The Holy Club”) and also the importance of having assurance of salvation that is found only through the power of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis of grace for inward transformation and recognition of the need for vital relationships in community for growth would prove to be integral for the birth of the Methodist movement—and its growth.

Empower Lay Leaders

As Methodism grew, Wesley saw the need to appoint lay preachers to assist him in preaching the gospel to the masses. This was a bold decision on his part, because it meant breaking from the traditional view that only ordained clergy could preach the gospel and do ministry. Part of Wesley’s genius was in his ability to select, train and gather lay leaders around him. These leaders became extensions of his ministry. The rapid and miraculous growth of Methodism would not have been possible without the endeavors and self-sacrifice of those early Methodist lay leaders. John Wesley famously said in a letter, “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth.”⁴⁷ This truth of the 1700s Wesleyan revival remains true today in the 21st century: We need both ordained and lay people to plant new churches.

Wesley was no lone ranger and his Methodist Movement was not a one-person operation, but a collaborative movement that over time empowered hundreds of thousands of people to do ministry. In order to replicate his model, Wesley identified, trained and appointed lay leaders to oversee these societies of believers. He carefully hand-picked lay leaders according to their gifts. They were men and women of piety and experience. As he empowered lay leaders, the societies began to multiply and grew rapidly throughout England. Everywhere they went, societies

47. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1777>.

kept and nurtured new converts, and the number of Methodists grew at an amazing rate. They started from literally a handful of people and grew into the thousands. Today, as a result of Wesley's message of discipleship, Methodism's spiritual descendants are in every part of the world. Yet even with all his effective preaching, George Whitfield's name is hardly known. Instead, most people remember the name and legacy of Wesley because he recognized an invaluable and timeless truth that fostered a true and lasting movement: We cannot overestimate the importance of discipleship and fellowship in the life of Christians in every age.

John Wesley had a bias to say "yes" by empowering others to work together for the sake of multiplication. As Methodism grew, Wesley identified the need to appoint lay preachers to assist him in preaching the gospel to the masses. This was a bold decision on Wesley's part because it meant breaking from the traditional view that only the ordained clergy could preach the gospel. As the movement expanded, the number of Methodist lay preachers continued to grow, too. As a result, there was an increasing need to organize them in a way that fostered deep collaboration.

In 1744, Wesley began to meet with his preachers annually. They would discuss Methodist doctrine and discipline and appoint preachers to specific locations for the coming year. This was the origin of the "Methodist Conference" as we know it today. By this, we see that lay preachers played an important role in the development of Methodism. The Conference gave them a voice and strengthened their support of Wesley's leadership; it also united them and gave them a sense of ownership for their ministry. Although only a few attended the first Conference, hundreds of lay preachers were attending by the time of Wesley's death.

The most important leaders that Wesley helped raise up were an army of on-fire women and men. The role of lay leaders in the life and mission of a new church cannot be overstated. Wesley embraced this understanding in a time when the church relied almost solely on clergy.

Regardless of the context, there is nothing more powerful than ordinary men and women who do the work of ministry in a new church.

The lay leaders of early Methodism gave their whole life for the cause of Christ and to the spread of Methodism. Many of them put their life in harm's way to assure that Methodism would continue to grow. They had grit and determination, which has scarcely been seen since the persecution of the early church. It can be said that Methodism was born with a great price—the lives of great men and women, among whom were prominent women of piety who served as leaders of class meetings, visited the sick, and preached the gospel. Together these men and women helped Methodism become one of the fastest-growing movements the world has ever known.

Disciple-Making Systems

The Wesleyan revival has made many contributions to the church as a whole. Wesley's society structure, for example, can be found in many of our contemporary denominations. A part of his genius was to put new converts into these societies to receive care, accountability, and fellowship. Examples of this influence can be seen in cell groups, ministry and accountability groups, as well as in group structures of other discipleship movements. Another contribution of the Wesleyan movement is a reminder that the Great Commission involves both evangelism and discipleship. While Whitfield focused on evangelism, Wesley saw that evangelism and discipleship are two sides of the same coin; they cannot be separated. Evangelism is the beginning of the journey, and discipleship is the process of spiritual growth. The church today needs to rediscover the integrative process that focuses on serious disciple making, not just leading people to make a decision. The Great Commission compels Christians to focus on making disciples through discipleship as much as they focus on reaching people through evangelism. If we want to see a multiplication movement, it will begin with a renewed focus on discipleship!

Discipleship for every believer was absolutely essential for John Wesley. (He would have problems with our modern, individualistic approaches to Christianity.) Wesley warns that “preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer.”⁴⁸ This was one of the major differences between the ministries of Wesley and Whitfield. At the close of his life, Whitfield lamented that he had not cared enough about discipleship. He looked up to Wesley for how he had prioritized discipleship. Wesley knew that preaching was not enough to keep people in the faith. He wrote, “I determined, by the grace of God, not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow.”⁴⁹ He followed the “blow” of salvation by putting people into groups to make sure they continued to grow in Christ.

In his best-selling business book, *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell notes the significance of the Methodist movement. He highlights Wesley’s organizational genius and emphasis on community:

“He wasn’t one person with ties to many other people. He was one person with ties to many groups, which is a small but critical distinction. Wesley realized that if you wanted to bring about a fundamental change in peoples’ belief and behavior, a change would persist and serve as an example to others, you needed to create a community around them, where those new beliefs could be practiced and expressed and nurtured.”⁵⁰

In terms of Christian movements, the genius of Wesley was that he realized the importance of creating disciple-making systems. He organized people into three interlocking discipleship groups: societies, class meetings, and bands. Societies were larger gatherings of fifty to seventy people that provided worship and teaching (much like a new church). It was the smaller, more intentional class meetings, however, where deep discipleship happened. Class meetings were about twelve

48. *Works*, 3:144.

49. *Works*, 1:416.

50. Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point. How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2000) 173.

people, and bands were five people. D. Michael Henderson says, “It could be said metaphorically that the society aimed for the head, the class meeting for the hands, and the band for the heart.”⁵¹

Wesley would take new converts and place them into class meetings, which were much like small groups; they were designed to meet spiritual needs. These class meetings met weekly for prayer, instruction, and mutual fellowship. Each group had a designated male or female leader. The leaders served their group with a kind of pastoral oversight. Wesley himself described these societies in the following way:

“Such a society is no other than a company of [people] having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”⁵²

Part of Wesley’s training included admonishing leaders to do the following things: first, do no harm and avoid evil; do good of every possible sort; and attend upon all the ordinances of God, including prayer, the sacraments, searching the scriptures, and fasting.

Christians who were even more spiritually mature became members of a band. The bands had fewer members and more rigorous requirements than societies. They were divided by gender and marital status, designed to provide a forum where each member of the group could confess their sins, encourage others and pray for one another. The rules of the band were as follows:

The design of our meeting is to obey that command of God, “Confess your faults to one another, and to pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (James 5:16). To this end, we intend:

1. To meet once a week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.

51. D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley’s Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1997) 112.

52. Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 178.

3. To begin (those who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting.
5. To end every meeting with prayer suited to the state of each person present.
6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.⁵³

The account above gives us a little glimpse into what it was like to participate in one of these group meetings. These groups were for the committed, although Wesley made the general requirement for admission that people “desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.” Wesley wanted the members to show constant progress in their walk with the Lord, and through the grace of God, these groups provided structure and relationships that fostered this progress. Wesley exhorted them to:

Never omit meeting your Class or Band; never absent yourself from any public meeting. These are the very sinews of our Society; and whatever weakens or tends to weaken our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strikes at the very root of our community. As one saith, “That part of our economy, the private weekly meetings for prayer, examination, and particular exhortation, has been the greatest means of deepening and confirming every blessing that was received by the word preached, and of diffusing it to others, who could not attend the public ministry; whereas, without this religious connection and intercourse, the most ardent attempts, by mere preaching, have proved of no lasting uses.”⁵⁴

53. Outler, *John Wesley*, 181.

54. *Works*, 11:433.

Christians need discipleship that involves the whole body of Christ. There are no lone rangers in the kingdom of God. Wesley recognized the importance of meeting together with other Christians to share experiences, hold one another accountable, and pray for one another. The goal was that Christians grow in the faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they knew that such growth didn't happen in isolation. We must constantly be growing in our relationship with the Lord, which involves interdependence with fellow believers. Forming people into these groups was a successful part of John Wesley's ministry.

Education and Training

Another unique contribution of John Wesley's discipleship was creating innovative forms of education and learning. Personal piety was not enough; he was committed to the process of life-long learning. Wesley promoted education to make his followers more knowledgeable and his preachers more effective in their ministry. There are several ways in which he promoted the education of the people called "Methodists."

Wesley wanted to make Christian literature available to every Methodist. He did this by publishing hundreds of books, pamphlets and other publications, which included a wide range of topics. The various subjects included poetry, history, grammar, dictionaries and doctrine. He published his sermons, letters, journals and his Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament. He also edited a 50-volume Christian Library, which included many Christian classics. The printing press was a means of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the British Isles, and Wesley used the press to defend the doctrines of Methodism, provide guidance for his followers, and address the various needs of the movement.

Wesley founded several schools in places with a strong Methodist presence. He wanted to make education available to everyone, and he was particularly interested in the education of children. One of the most prominent schools he founded was Kingswood School in Bristol, which opened in 1748. School administrators required students to maintain

a rigorous schedule of study, which included philosophy, reading, writing, mathematics, science, music and theology. In addition, they were expected to learn Latin, Greek, Hebrew and French. Wesley also supported the use of Sunday schools among Methodism. He empowered a woman named Hannah Ball to organize the first Methodist Sunday school in 1769. After Wesley's death, Methodists continued to build schools, universities and seminaries around the world, many of which remain in existence today.

Holistic Mission

The Wesleyan revival sought to transform all of society with holistic mission. While Wesley valued “inward religion,” he wasn't concerned simply with the soul of a person, but with the whole person and the whole gospel. He sought to meet the needs of the entire individual, not just aspects of an individual, as well as seeking to alleviate the evils of society. John and his brother, Charles, were moved by compassion for the poor, the lower classes, and the disenfranchised people of society. They were not afraid to associate themselves with others who stood for human rights causes, including fighting slavery, equal rights for women and children, and establishing better labor laws. John wrote a letter to abolitionist William Wilberforce, who fought against slavery in England, in which he said, “O, be not weary in well doing! Go on, in the name of the God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.”⁵⁵

Not only did John Wesley support different social causes, he was also actively involved with them. He used societies as a means of “doing good” to others. He urged his followers to actively participate in meeting the needs of those around them:

By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible, to all men: to their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by

55. Outler, *John Wesley*, 86.

giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison; to their souls by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all they that have intercourse with.⁵⁶

John Wesley was no hypocrite, because he practiced what he preached. He often made fourteen hundred pounds in a year from his book sales; he would, however, keep only thirty pounds for himself. He gave his money to the poor and other worthwhile causes. He said, “If I leave behind me ten pounds, you and all mankind bear witness against me that I lived and died a thief and a robber.”⁵⁷ His denial of self and property for the sake of the less fortunate is very much like the early church, but this type of practice is almost totally foreign in North America and Europe today.

Wesley felt that the church should care for all of society, especially those who could not take care of themselves, and he purported that believers have a social responsibility to the world: “‘Holy Solitaries’ is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than ‘holy adulterers.’ The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection.”⁵⁸ The church is to be the body of Christ for the sake of the world and to offer community for those within the world, especially for those who are less fortunate. This is a natural outworking of faith.

Lessons for Today

There is so much we can learn today from the methods of the Wesleyan revival and the ministry of John Wesley. His ministry contributions are timeless and can be applied to our present ministry situation—whether in

56. Ibid, 179.

57. Bready J. Wesley, *England: Before and After Wesley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.) 238.

58. John Wesley, *Poetical Works*, I: IX-XXII; cited in D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1997) 86.

a local church, university, or the mission field. His basic ministry strategy had to do with meeting the needs of the total person. Evangelism—or sharing the gospel—speaks to the human need of salvation from sin and death; it is a message of hope and healing. All who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ can experience genuine Christianity. This experience is open to all the people of the world regardless of their economic, racial, social or political background. John Wesley reminds us that discipleship begins and ends with Jesus Christ. Wesley’s own experience was the fuel that sparked the fire for his disciple-making revolution. Being a disciple means that we are called to simply live out the basics of the Christian faith—basics that are directly connected to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Regardless of the culture or time period, the church needs an authentic faith that comes from Christ alone.

Discipleship and the gathering together of believers can offer many spiritual blessings. Accountability, fellowship, encouragement and study are only a few. Social witness allows the Christian family to move beyond themselves and reach out to meet the needs of those in our societies that are hurting and in need. The church should draw from the witness of John Wesley and take up his missionary charge to meet the needs of the whole person in society.

One of the main things we can learn from this chapter is that movements happen through deep collaboration that empowers others to work together for the sake of the kingdom. Movements focus on identifying, training and empowering the next generation of leaders. Significant movements, such as the Wesleyan revival, are built on empowering non-ordained lay leadership to work together for a common mission and purpose.

Most people don’t realize that John Wesley did more for lay ministry than any other major Christian leader in history since the time of the reformation. Until the 1700s, lay people could not serve in any type of ministry with a leadership position in the church. They were excluded from teaching, visiting the sick, or holding a leadership role in the church. Clergy were the only ones who had the authority to teach or preach in the

church. As a result of Wesley's decision to begin using lay ministers in the Wesleyan revival, lay people today have an open door in most churches to share in ministry. In this regard, Wesley was a forerunner to the modern-day lay leader revolution in the church. Therefore, if we want to see a collaborative multiplication movement today, it must be built on a model that empowers and releases lay leadership for ministry and evangelism—like the Wesleyan revival was. The Great Collaboration happens when we work together to advance the kingdom of God in our day!

Chapter 3 Questions

1. How do small group settings help foster discipleship?
2. How do deep personal friendships also help foster discipleship?
3. Why is regularity and structure crucial for the growth of a movement?
4. What is the meaning and purpose of “holistic mission?” Why is a holistic approach vital for movements?
5. Does your church have a special focus on ministry to the poor? Explain.

Epilogue

Marks of a Disciple-Making Movement

“While we need the past, we must not let ourselves become imprisoned by it or allow it to become an idol.”

—Esther de Waal

As we come to the end of this journey, I hope you have gained some insight and wisdom from the movements and methods we’ve explored together. After being a pastor, teacher, church planter and disciple maker for over twenty years, I have sensed a growing need among Christians, both old and new, to rediscover the disciple-making wisdom of the past to live out our faith in the present and to help shape the future. There is an old saying, “You can’t know where you’re going until you know where you have been.” The past is like an anchor that keeps us grounded, rooted and centered. With our feet firmly rooted in the past, we can move forward with confidence into the future knowing that we have a firm foundation.

As much as we want to see a disciple-making multiplication movement today, most of us are unable to envision what that might look like. We are familiar with the status quo—the existing models of church largely focused on group gatherings for worship and teaching. To begin to clarify our vision, we can benefit from a closer look at church history and the global church.

In my book, *Marks of a Movement*, I have developed a list of the six essential marks of disciple-making movements.⁵⁹ There is no better example of a successful disciple-making multiplication movement in the West than the Methodist movement of the 18th and 19th centuries. I believe it serves as an indispensable paradigm for how we can multiply today's church.

These six marks provide a *genetic* structure—much like the DNA in a living organism—mutually working together to create the movement dynamics. As you read through them, think of them as an interconnected ecosystem rather than focusing on the individual parts. And I want to emphasize that this list is neither authoritative or comprehensive. Rather, it is designed to offer you a simple and accessible snapshot of the key elements of disciple-making movements. As you read them, consider how they might be applied today.

Changed Lives

Movements begin as people's lives are changed by a fresh encounter with the living God. Movements often begin with a catalytic leader like John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, or William Seymour whose lives has been touched by God. Sometimes the change is a conversion experience. At other times it is a personal renewal that results in a radical commitment to follow Christ. Movements are not primarily about numbers or slogans, but about changed lives that lead to broader cultural transformation. In renewal movements, there is usually a tipping point where the transformation occurring in the lives of individuals as they embrace a vision for renewal begins to spread like wildfire, leading to broader social and cultural change.

59. See Winfield Bevins, *Marks of a Movement. What the Church Can Learn from the Wesleyan Revival*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019).

Contagious Faith

Movements become contagious when ordinary people share their faith with others. One of the reasons a movement grows and spreads is because it has a simple, life-changing message that ordinary people can easily understand and share with others. Revival can spread as people rediscover the simplicity of the gospel or an essential aspect of the Christian faith that inspires and mobilizes them to action. A common feature of these revival movements is an invitation to commit or join a cause, often effective in helping recruit others to join the movement. In Christian movements, this growth typically results from a renewed passion to share the gospel with others, and this passion spreads from one person to another like a contagion.

The Holy Spirit

Movements emphasize the person and work of the Holy Spirit in peoples' lives. Fresh encounters with the Holy Spirit create a renewed sense of spiritual vitality among the followers of Christ, leading to personal and corporate renewal. More specifically, the reciprocity of the Word and the Spirit interacting together offers a potent mix that renews peoples' faith and compels them outward to engage the world in mission. The Word of God becomes the foundational authority and guide for life, while the Holy Spirit fills and empowers people to live holy lives and to share their faith with others.

Discipleship Systems

Movements develop systems for discipleship and spiritual growth. This frequently looks like some form of small group structure to facilitate ongoing spiritual growth and commitment. Preaching alone is not enough; people need ongoing support, community and structure to help them continue on the spiritual journey. A holistic ecosystem is needed to help people grow at every stage of their journey. This involved an interlocking discipleship group structure. Each of these structures gathered people into groups of different sizes focused on different aspects

of the discipleship process to help individuals grow in their faith. There were also spiritual practices that undergirded and reinforced the entire discipleship system.

Apostolic Leadership

Movements have an apostolic impulse—drawn from the models and methods of the early church—that empowers and mobilizes all of God’s people for mission. Movements draw their inspiration from the faith and spirituality of the early church, especially the church of the first two centuries (the pre-Constantine era). Movements work to empower ordinary, non-ordained Christian men and women to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples in every nation.

Organic Multiplication

Movements have an outward missional focus that naturally leads to the multiplication of disciples and new communities of faith. Movements don’t become movements by naval gazing, but by looking outward, by inviting people in, and by growing and multiplying its mission and influence. There is a natural dynamism and excitement among the people that makes them contagious, helping the movement spread widely and organically from one person to another. We can describe the growth of movements as organic because it tends to happen naturally, rather than being forced by the leadership at the top level. Movements look outward and grow and multiply; as people’s lives are changed, they begin making disciples and then start new ministries and communities of faith to facilitate the ongoing growth of more individuals.

Conclusion

These six marks form the basis of what I believe a disciple-making multiplication movement would look like in our day. By looking to the past, we will better understand how God brought revival, first to an individual and a group of their close friends, then to the nation of

England, eventually forming a worldwide movement. But what about today?

A wonderful example of a disciple-making movement happening here in my own backyard is Fuente De Avivamiento (Spring of Revival), led by my friend Dr. Iosmar Alvarez in Lexington, Kentucky. Fuente De Avivamiento bears all the marks of a movement, and it all began when Iosmar had a **life-changing encounter** with the Lord. Iosmar was born and raised in Cuba and became a veterinarian. Yet all his worldly ambitions changed when he was gloriously saved during a Methodist crusade in Cuba. When Iosmar came to the United States, he sensed the Lord calling him to plant churches—not just one church, but a whole movement of new churches. Since planting Fuente in Lexington, that single church has become a **contagious movement** reaching hundreds of people in the Latino community. Every week new people come to faith in Christ, and the church is teeming with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Members of the church have a fervent spirituality that is **Spirit-filled** and marked by a hunger for the Word of God and prayer. They have developed an **organic discipleship ecosystem** that keeps their members connected and committed in active discipleship. They gather across the city once a week in nearly one hundred groups that meet in people's homes for worship, teaching and prayer ministry. Fuente's house churches function just like the class meetings of early Methodism, which met in people's homes throughout the week. They are committed to holistic mission by caring for people's felt needs.

Their growing movement has an apostolic DNA that is especially committed to **empowering non-ordained people** to do the work of the ministry. Their leaders are ordinary women and men who work ordinary jobs throughout the week but also serve as the pastors of their house churches. As they demonstrate faithfulness in their house churches, some eventually become leaders over ministries, and others are sent out to plant churches across the region. Finally, they are reproducing themselves through **organic multiplication**, planting several other churches across

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the Lexington area and helping launch a national network of churches being planted all across the country.

In closing, this book is not exhaustive, but a teaser to point you toward the need for rediscovering the lost art of disciple-making multiplication for the 21st century! If it happened then, it could happen now. Why not you? Why not now?

We have much to learn and a long way to go as we look to the future of Christianity. My humble prayer is that this book will be a call for the church to glean wisdom from the passionate faith and spirituality of previous generations of followers of Jesus so that we can offer a vibrant, healthy, life-giving faith for our generation and generations to come! I believe that the wisdom of the past can and will help us make the disciples of the future.

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Appendix

10 Affirmations of a Disciple-Making Movement

Discipleship.org is a collaborative community of men and women committed to the discipleship lifestyle—being disciples of Jesus and making disciples of Jesus.

1. **We believe the gospel and it is our message—this good news is focused on Jesus as our Messiah (King) and his death, burial and resurrection.** All who respond to salvation are freely saved and called to discipleship, no exceptions, no excuses (Mark 8:34–38; 1 Cor. 15:1–8). The gospel we preach and believe dictates the kind of disciples we are and the kind of disciples we make. If we attempt to make a Christlike disciple from a non-discipleship gospel, we will fail. A non-discipleship gospel is one that does not include discipleship as a natural part of the message and expectation.
2. **We are compelled to be and make disciples of Jesus.** We believe Jesus Christ is supreme and worthy of all devotion, worship and emulation; and that disciple making is a natural and necessary life response to Jesus. With laser focus, it was Jesus himself who made disciples who could make disciples . . . and Jesus commands us to do the same (Matt. 28:16–20; John 20:21). We prefer to use the expression “disciple making” over “discipleship” because the former is closer to the words of the Great Commission, and the latter is often mischaracterized (Matt. 28:18–20).
3. **We believe Jesus is the model (for life and ministry).** Jesus showed us how to live life and how to make disciples. We seek to emulate His

method and model. As the sinless second Adam, Jesus was man as God intended man to be. He then told us, “Do the works I have been doing” (John 14:12). John said those who “claim to live in him must live as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6). Paul understood this when he said, “Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1 NLT). Discipleship demands us to “follow” the resurrected Christ and “imitate” the priorities and patterns of the incarnate Christ. We like the expression “Jesus model and method of disciple making” as a summary of what we do.

4. **We believe love is the driving motive.** The Great Commandment precedes the Great Commission. Loving God and loving people are the passion behind the priority, the motive behind the mission, the heart behind the hands. Love is the signature card of true disciples. Disciple making cannot happen apart from loving and caring relationships—both tough and a tender love (1 Thessalonians 2). Larger ministries require more relational disciple makers to keep growing. Disciple making is relational and, as ministries grow, more relational disciples are needed. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).
5. **We believe verifiable fruit is the measure.** God’s agenda for each one of us is that we stay close to Him and bear “fruit,” “more fruit,” and then ultimately “much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:8). God transforms our hearts as we “remain in [Him]” and He leads us into lives of love (John 15:4, 17). Jesus modeled the focus of love as He came to seek, save, and disciple people (Luke 19:10; 6:40). Jesus masterfully showed how love produces disciples, reaching and developing His men and helping them grow from nonbelievers all the way to disciple makers reproducing disciple makers (Matt. 28:19–20). There is a natural process of moving people from those who do not know Jesus all the way to becoming mature disciple makers. Jesus showed the model to us. In short, we haven’t truly made mature disciples until they are

following Jesus' model of love and helping to make more disciples. This is fruitful multiplication.

6. **We believe Holy Spirit power is the means.** Disciples cannot be made through fleshly efforts. Jesus, in His humanity, fully acknowledged His dependence on the Spirit. Disciple making is not just a good strategy—it is a way of life, accomplished through the fruit of the Holy Spirit living through a person's yielded and holy life (2 Cor. 3:16–17). If Jesus fully depended on the Holy Spirit's power, how can we do any less? The Holy Spirit will lead us to be obedient people who live holy lives to God's glory.
7. **We believe the local church is the primary environment for disciple making.** The church is for discipleship, and disciples manifest the kingdom of God to the world (Col. 1:28–29). When the church reverses this process and primarily attempts to get the world to go to church instead of the church going to the world, you get chaos. Pastoral and ministerial work should be evaluated and rewarded based on how many disciple makers are produced and the kind of people a church sends into the world. Jesus was a man for others; the church, likewise, is for others. Any plan that does not create disciples who live for others is a failure.
8. **We believe that equipping leaders is the linchpin of the movement.** All Christians are called to be disciples who grow to help make disciples, using the unique gifts God has given each of us. Leaders are also called to grow a movement of disciple making. This is called the church (2 Tim. 2:2). How Jesus built a movement differs from how Jesus made a disciple. If we are going to create a disciple-making movement in North America, it is our conviction we must train leaders in how Jesus built a movement. This is harder and takes more time, but in the end, this will bear fruit that will remain. Practically, this means we must develop a team of disciple-making leaders (pastors), with various disciple-making best practices (church models), who can continue to fan the flame of disciple making.

9. **We believe definitions are vitally important. Our definitions are in agreement with the following and where possible, we will use these definitions.**
- a. **Discipleship** – is simply the state of being a disciple. This word (like the word evangelism) is not in the Bible. Unfortunately, in the North American church, discipleship is typically seen as an educational process designed to orient new believers to the biblical and everyday practices of our churches—and so we often prefer disciple making.
 - b. **Disciple** – someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus (Matt. 4:19).
 - c. **Disciple making** – is entering into relationships to intentionally help people follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus, and join the mission of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - d. **Disciple maker** – a disciple of Jesus who enters into relationships with people to intentionally help them follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus, and join the mission of Jesus.
 - e. **A Church** – a spiritual family growing in surrendered obedience to all the teachings of Jesus Christ who gather together regularly under biblically recognized leadership for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission (making disciples) with a Great Commandment heart (loving God, loving people).
 - f. **A Disciple-Making Culture** – the beliefs, habits and narrative of a church constantly repeated with congruence and intentionality that make it clear to almost everyone, all the time, including newcomers; disciple making is what everyone does in this church.
 - g. **A Disciple-Making Church (Level 5)** – a church where disciple making is the core DNA and culture of the church, where the average church member makes disciples to the fourth generation. This disciple-making activity is regularly produced in significant and diverse streams within the church that consistently multiply into new churches.

- h. **Disciple-Making Movement (DMM)** – a disciple-making movement exists when churches plant multiple churches (within a few short years) through gospel activity that has abundant fruit among the lost; and multiplies these disciples (people growing in obedience to all of Jesus’ commands), who in turn replicate themselves in others. Through this fruit, we can see at least four generations regularly produced in multiple streams of disciple- making activity that consistently multiply into churches.
10. **We believe Jesus and Scripture are the basis.** We believe the sixty-six books of the Bible are the authoritative, reliable and ultimate standard for disciple making and life (2 Tim. 3:16–4:2). The Bible was written by disciples, to disciples, and for disciples. We find healthy guidance for our movement in the Apostle’s and Nicene Creeds. Jesus is our focus, and He rightfully deserves our commitment and imitation as we seek the fullness of the kingdom He offers us, both in this life and the next.



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WINFIELD BEVINS is an author, artist, and speaker whose passion is to help others connect to the roots of the Christian faith for discipleship and mission. He is the Director of Church Planting at Asbury Theological Seminary. He frequently speaks at conferences on a variety of topics and is a regular adjunct professor at several seminaries. Having grown up in a free-church background, Winfield eventually found his spiritual home in the Anglican tradition, but freely draws wisdom from all church traditions.

Having authored several books, his writings explore the convergence of liturgy, prayer, and mission. His latest book, *Ever Ancient, Ever New*, with Zondervan examines young adults who have embraced Christian liturgy and how it has impacted their lives.

As an artist, Winfield is dedicated to connecting the church and the arts community. He is a visual artist who enjoys painting iconography, landscapes, and portraits. Over the past decade, he has helped start numerous arts initiatives, including a non-profit art gallery and studio and an arts program in North Carolina.

He and his wife Kay have three beautiful girls Elizabeth, Anna Belle, and Caroline and live in the Bluegrass state of Kentucky.