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Evangelism, Discipleship, and Church Planting

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Introduction

This writing mainly focuses on church planting, but it covers more than just that. It explains how to share the Gospel (evangelism) and how to guide new believers to grow in their faith (discipleship). Besides these, the text also talks about other important topics related to missions.

This writing talks about different ways to start churches, evangelize, and teach disciples. I've added many methods because I want readers to have options. This way, they can pick the best method that works for them, no matter where they are in the world. Many leaders have said that having knowledge helps us plan better. Like the famous saying goes, "Knowledge is power."

I believe that if we don't know our choices, we can't make the best plans. For example, my son in law just told me, “Most people don’t know that there are at least eight forms of evangelism.” If we don't know our options, how can we decide the best way to evangelize? With this book, I hope to give readers a good starting point to learn more about church planting, evangelism, and disciple making. Some might already know a lot about these topics, and that's okay. But remember, this book doesn't have everything. There's so much more out there to learn.

Lastly, in the spirit of transparency, I used an online tool called ChatGPT to help gather information for this writing.

Behind the Pages: The Author's Credentials

Educational Qualifications:

1. Doctorate from Westminster Theological Seminary
2. Master's degree in Cross-Cultural Communications from Fuller School of World Missions
3. Bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies from Vanguard University

Professional Experience & Accomplishments:

Church Planting:

- Planted and pastored a church in the United States
- Planted and pastored 3 churches in the Philippines
- Trained and equipped pastors in Mozambique to plant churches and grow in Christ
- Accumulated 14 years of pastoral experience, specifically in the United States, where I also initiated a church establishment

Evangelism:

- Engaged personally in eight distinct evangelistic approaches, amassing a comprehensive understanding of each

Church Planting Movements:

- Actively participated in two significant church planting movements, with a continued involvement in Mozambique

Public Speaking & Leadership Training:

- Served as a guest lecturer at various training institutions
- Conducted seminars tailored for aspiring church leaders
- Facilitated pastors' retreats, offering guidance and mentorship

"If we fail to plan, we plan to fail" (Benjamin Franklin)

A good friend once said to me, "Give 15 minutes a day to any topic, and in a year, you'll be an expert." I knew I couldn't become a

neurosurgeon or a nuclear physicist that way, but the message was clear: When serving the Lord, it's vital to be informed and grow in understanding. Before diving into any ministry, we should study it. Learn from others and seek advice. In all we do for God, let's aim for the best, not just the bare minimum.

Proverbs 15:22 tells us, “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”

I've worked in many church roles in different countries and met a lot of Christian leaders. From these meetings, I've seen that many church groups don't know what others are doing in the same region or in the same type of ministry. I think if every missionary would spend just 15 minutes a day for a year, learning more about their field of ministry, we'd see some great changes. Sharing what we know and learning from others can help all of us do better.

This writing is primarily about evangelism, church planting, and discipleship making, but let me give you an example as if you were a missionary who wanted to fight human trafficking. Here are my three suggestions:

1. Read whatever books you can find on the subject. I typed in, “What are the best Christian books written on how to fight human trafficking for missionaries?” and got seven book recommendations from chat.openai.com. [1] That took about 30 seconds. Of course, I would need to do further research before reading these books, but it is an easy way to start.

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[1] Terrify No More: Young Girls Held Captive and the Daring Undercover Operation to Win Their Freedom" by Gary A. Haugen and Gregg Hunter
Good News About Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World by Gary A. Haugen
The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence by Gary A. Haugen and Victor Boutros - Though broader than just human trafficking, this book explores the systemic issues of violence (including trafficking) that perpetuate poverty and provides insights relevant for missionaries.
God in a Brothel: An Undercover Journey into Sex Trafficking and Rescue by Daniel Walker
Hands That Heal: International Curriculum to Train Caregivers of Trafficking Survivors by Beth Grant and David A. C. Grant
Boundless: One Woman’s Heroic Fight Against Human Trafficking by R. Klug
Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development by Bryant Myers - Though not exclusively about human trafficking, this book from a seasoned Christian relief worker provides principles for transformational development, which can be applied to anti-trafficking efforts, especially in preventive measures.

2. Find out what other highly-regarded organizations are doing. Go and visit them. Learn what has helped make them effective and what obstacles to avoid. It took me another 30 seconds to ask, “What are the ten best mission groups that are fighting human trafficking overseas?” to chat.openai.com. You can see the results in the footnote.[2]

3. When gathering important information and looking at what works best, brainstorm together with your team. Let everyone share their ideas. If all team members spend time learning about human trafficking and support the plan, you'll all share a clear goal. This shared goal will help the team work better together to reach it.

This writing isn't about how to stop human trafficking. I've added these steps and this information to remind everyone that as missionaries, we need to be well-prepared. From what I've seen, many missionaries don't spend enough time learning. If missionaries are giving their whole lives to this work, shouldn't they spend at least 15 minutes a day to really understand it better? This can help them do their job more effectively. Isn’t that what all of us want?

[2] 1. International Justice Mission (IJM) - One of the most well-known Christian organizations focused on ending violence and injustice, including human trafficking, across several countries.
2. A21 - Founded by Christine Caine, A21 operates in over a dozen countries, working to fight against human trafficking through awareness, intervention, and aftercare.
3. Exodus Cry - This organization is committed to abolishing sex trafficking and breaking the cycle of commercial sexual exploitation while assisting and empowering its victims.
4. Polaris - While not explicitly faith-based, Polaris is one of the leading organizations in the fight against human trafficking and operates the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline.
5. Operation Underground Railroad (OUR) - A relatively new organization that gained attention for its operations to rescue victims of trafficking, especially children.
6. Not For Sale - Works to end exploitation and forced labor, providing support, intervention, and recovery programs for trafficking victims.
7. Destiny Rescue - A Christian-based organization dedicated to rescuing children from trafficking and sexual exploitation, offering them protection, healing, and restoration.
8. Shared Hope International - Founded by former Congresswoman Linda Smith, Shared Hope International aims to prevent trafficking and restore and bring justice to women and children who've been victimized.
9. Agape International Missions (AIM) - Focused primarily in Cambodia, AIM fights the ground war on sex trafficking through its holistic strategy involving prevention, rescue, restoration, and reintegration.
10. Love146 - An international human rights organization working to end child trafficking and exploitation with survivor care and prevention education.

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." These words capture the very essence of why planning, coupled with collective insights, paves the way to what the Bible calls, “success.” The words in this verse stress the necessity of acquiring guidance, evaluating different perspectives, and charting out a well-thought-out roadmap.

Make Your Own Plan

When church planting, make your own distinct plan. It is important to spend time and think through your strategy carefully. Don't just copy what others are doing. Even if you like a plan that already exists, make sure it fits your own situation before using it. Take time to look at how different churches have done things successfully all over the world. Learn from them, but then work with your team to come up with your own plan. This way, it'll really feel like it belongs to you and your team, and you'll believe in it more. Remember, everyone who creates a strategy has their own interpretation of certain Bible passages, defining terms like discipleship, evangelism, and church in their unique ways.

Always ensure that your approach is rooted deeply in your understanding of God's Word. Take the Discovery Bible Study movement as an illustration. David Watson, one of its primary advocates, promotes the idea that those who aren't believers can lead a study. He makes it clear by saying, “Let the lost facilitate the Discovery Bible Study. But remember, I didn't say, ‘teach.’” Watson's point is that it's God's Word itself that instructs, not the person leading the discussion. Some might be taken aback by this and reject the whole method, while others see the value in simply gathering non-Christians to engage with and reflect on the Scriptures. So, rather than dismissing an entire strategy because you disagree with certain aspects, tailor it to align with your beliefs and convictions. Mold the plan to resonate with your understanding and values.

There is no one size fits all methodology to reach the world. No one has found the one answer that is going to fulfill the great commission. But there are principles that can serve as the foundation of our work. We should learn from these principles. As we research various approaches to church planting, discipleship making, and evangelism, we will find the right approach that best fits our goals and beliefs.

Abundant and Intentional Prayer

Across the globe, a spiritual revival is unfolding. The Lord is actively at work, touching hearts in regions once considered resistant to the Gospel. Thousands are embracing the transformative love and grace of Jesus Christ. While this is primarily a sovereign act of God, many Christians overlook a fundamental spiritual principle: God desires to partner with us in His mission. In His profound wisdom, God chooses to collaborate with His children to bring His purpose to fruition on earth. One of the primary avenues of this partnership is prayer. As such, prayer must be the cornerstone of any effort in church planting, discipleship, or evangelism. While human strategies play their part, it's unmistakably God's power that brings about any miraculous transformation.
All strategy planning needs abundant prayer that is without ceasing and intentional. Here are some crucial aspects of church planting that require deep and intentional prayer:

1. Discerning where to serve
2. Preparing to enter a new region
3. Understand and then pray against the spiritual strongholds that might hinder the people
4. Guiding every planning phase
5. Setting strategies in motion
6. Selecting the right individuals for the mission
7. Blessing and commissioning these individuals through prayer and the laying on of hands

8. Seeking a local ally to bridge cultural gaps—a "man or woman of peace"
9. When reevaluating our approaches and strategies
10. Upholding both the seekers and those who commit their lives to Christ in prayer

The church in China: A Strategy that Multiplied on Its Own

Obtaining precise numbers on the size of the underground church in China is challenging, due to the clandestine nature of these congregations and potential discrepancies in reporting. However, many scholars, religious organizations, and journalists have provided estimates.

Fenggang Yang, a sociologist from Purdue University who has been studying religion in China for decades, predicted in 2011: "By my calculations China is destined to become the largest Christian country in the world very soon." He estimated that by 2030, China's Christian population "will reach 247 million", surpassing Mexico, Brazil, and the United States will have the largest Christian congregation globally.

The Council on Foreign Relations mentioned in a 2015 reports, "The number of Chinese Protestants has grown by an average of 10 percent annually since 1980."

Brent Fulton, as cited in a BBC report from 2011, mentioned: "Each year millions more believers are added, but this mostly happens in the unofficial churches, whether Protestant 'house churches' or the so-called 'underground' Catholic churches."

While specific numbers are hard to provide, what is clear is that all estimates show that the church in China is growing at a phenomenal rate.

The persecution and suppression of religion during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution inadvertently catalyzed its growth. As religious institutions were suppressed, believers went underground, and their faith became more resilient and decentralized. Christians formed underground house churches, which made them harder to monitor and suppress. It also made religious practice more personal and community-oriented, fostering strong bonds between believers. House churches provided not only spiritual support but material or emotional support as well.

The Chinese church successfully trained and raised up indigenous leaders who understood the local culture, challenges, and strategies needed to expand the church within the country's specific context. During the Cultural Revolution, most of the professional leaders of the church were arrested. Lay leaders, especially women, became the new house church leaders and teachers. Ordinary folks facilitated the gatherings.

Paradoxically, attempts to suppress Christianity have sometimes led to increased interest and growth. When believers face persecution, their commitment often deepens, and their stories inspire others.

There are numerous testimonies about miraculous healings, signs, and wonders that have helped the church grow. Some Chinese converts report having visions and dreams of Jesus, or Christian symbols, even before being exposed to the Christian message. There have been several Christian literature pieces and documentaries that highlight miraculous stories from China. For instance, *The Heavenly Man* is a book about the life of Brother Yun, a notable Chinese Christian leader, which includes several accounts of miraculous events. Similarly, the documentary, "The Cross: Jesus in China," offers accounts of signs and wonders that have reportedly accompanied the spread of Christianity in the nation.

Even amidst the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, stories emerged of Christians providing aid and support to their neighbors, whether it was sharing scarce food resources during times of famine or providing emotional support during the widespread societal upheaval. Rather than invite people to church, which would be quite dangerous, people helped and prayed for those in need in their community.

Lessons We Learn from the Underground Church in China

A. Rapid growth is possible when church is held in homes rather than expensive buildings.
B. Everyday believers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can serve as effective leaders, and play a pivotal role in the rapid expansion of church.
C. The church and its leaders come from their local areas (indigenous).
D. Praying for the sick and expecting God to do the miraculous can aid in the expansion of the church.
E. Persecution can strengthen the church.
F. Home churches became a place of emotional, spiritual, and physical support.

Let's look more closely at these six lessons we learn from the Church in China.

Why are home churches effective?

A. Rapid growth is possible when church is held in homes rather than expensive buildings.

1. Flexibility: Unlike traditional church structures, church can be held anywhere. A group can gather in living rooms, backyards, under trees, or in someone's business. This flexibility allows for

spontaneous formation and multiplication without waiting for dedicated buildings.

2. Low Cost: These types of churches require little to no financial investment. This allows resources to be used for other purposes, such as outreach, training, or community support.

3. Rapid Multiplication: Because these churches are simple and require very little money they can multiply quickly. When a group grows too large for a home setting, it can easily split and form additional house churches.

4. Intimate Setting: The smaller, intimate nature of home churches fosters deeper relationships and accountability among members. This environment can be more conducive to discipleship, as individuals can share, ask questions, and learn in a close-knit setting.

5. Accessibility: House churches or churches under a tree are approachable and often less intimidating for newcomers, especially for those who might feel overwhelmed or out of place in larger, more formal settings. While doing church planting in the Philippines, no one would come into the house we rented. Yet they felt comfortable meeting as a large group in the courtyard in front the house.

6. Cultural Relevance: In many cultures, faith and community life revolve around the household or outdoor meeting place. As such, these types of churches can be culturally relevant and easily integrated into daily life. For Example, in many African cultures, the "boma" is a communal space where people gather around a fire. Originally designed to protect livestock, it became a hub for sharing stories and traditions. For Christian missionaries, using the boma as a gathering spot for worship makes Christianity feel more woven into local customs, feeling less like an outside practice and more like a natural part of the community.

7. Persecuted Regions: In areas where Christianity might be suppressed or persecuted, house churches provide a discreet way for believers to gather, worship, and study without drawing unnecessary attention.

8. Leadership Development: As churches spread out and grow rapidly, new leaders are needed. This can be both good and tricky. It's good because it provides chances for people to step up and lead. It is also a fantastic place for leadership training and spiritual growth. On the job training is usually more effective than hypothetical ministry. But it's also challenging because there's a need for a clear plan on how to teach and guide all these new leaders. This is often the area of greatest need, as churches multiply rapidly. I talked to a missionary from the South African Assemblies of God who said they had to stop their church planting efforts. Churches were being added so quickly that they could not keep up with discipleship. They felt that their leaders and church members had not made a break from the spiritism of their traditional African religion.

Ordinary People Leading the Church

B. Everyday believers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can serve as effective leaders, and play a pivotal role in the rapid expansion of Church.

The role of everyday believers cannot be understated. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, every believer in the church is encouraged to minister and play an active role right from the start. They're not mere spectators, but active participants in God's work. The teachings and methods used are often simple, allowing even new believers to easily share their faith and start new groups.

Why are Indigenous churches and leaders more effective?

C. The church and its leaders come from their local areas (indigenous).

Indigenous churches are more effective for several reasons:

1. Cultural Relevance: Indigenous churches understand the nuances, traditions, and intricacies of their own culture. Their methods of worship, teaching, and outreach can be tailored to resonate deeply within their specific cultural context.

2. Community Trust: Leaders and members of indigenous churches often have longstanding relationships and shared histories with their communities. This trust can pave the way for more open and effective communication of the Gospel.

3. Sustainability: Since indigenous churches rely on local resources and leadership, they are often more sustainable in the long run. They aren't as dependent on external funding or leadership.

4. Authentic Representation: Indigenous churches can avoid the perception of being a foreign religion, which can sometimes be a barrier to acceptance.

5. Language and Communication: Indigenous church leaders and members speak the heart language of their community and understand the culture.

6. Local Solutions to Local Challenges: Indigenous churches have a deeper understanding of local issues and challenges and can address them in ways that are relevant and effective.

7. Rapid Multiplication: An indigenous approach often leads to the rapid multiplication of churches, as new believers are quickly trained and released to evangelize and disciple in their own communities.

8. Deep Commitment: Since the church is a natural outgrowth of the local community, there's often a deep sense of ownership and commitment among its members.

9. Flexibility: Indigenous churches can be more agile and adaptable in their strategies and methods, as they're not bound by external mandates or structures.

10. Holistic Ministry: With a keen understanding of local needs, indigenous churches can engage in holistic ministries that address both spiritual and practical needs of their communities.

In summary, indigenous churches are effective because they're deeply rooted in their communities, understand local challenges and opportunities, and can engage in authentic, culturally relevant ministry.

Signs and Wonders

D. Praying for the sick and expecting God to do the miraculous can aid in the expansion of the church.

Why and how does this work?

1. Tangible Demonstrations of God's Power: When prayers result in healings, it serves as a visible and undeniable manifestation of God's power. Such miraculous events can significantly enhance the credibility of the Gospel message, making it more compelling for those who witness or hear about them.

2. Building Faith: Witnessing healings can bolster the faith of existing believers. It reminds them of God's active presence and encourages them to trust Him more.

3. Evangelistic Opportunities: Stories of miraculous healings can quickly spread in communities, drawing curiosity and interest. These

stories create natural openings for sharing the Gospel with those who might not have been interested otherwise.

4. Addresses Real Needs: In many areas in China there is limited access to medical care. Praying for the sick addresses an immediate, tangible need, showing that the Church is concerned about both their spiritual and physical well-being.

5. Encourages Total Dependence on God: Praying for the sick underscores the Church's dependence on God's power rather than on human effort or wisdom.

6. Acts as a Catalyst for Further Planting: As people experience or witness healings, they may be inspired to share their stories with others in different regions or communities, creating opportunities for further church planting.

8. Deepens Discipleship: The act of praying and witnessing God's intervention can lead believers to delve deeper into their faith, seeking a more profound understanding of God and His ways. This depth of discipleship is crucial for the maturity and sustainability of the new churches.

9. Counteracts Opposing Spiritual Forces: In many cultures, illness is often seen through a spiritual lens, and praying for healing can be a direct counter to local spiritual beliefs or practices that might be opposed to the Christian message. Throughout the world people go to the local shaman (witchdoctors). Until Jesus' power is clearly recognized as stronger, many new believers will continue to go to these “healers”.

10. Affirms Scriptural Promises: Healing aligns with numerous promises and examples found in the Bible. When believers pray for the sick and witness healings, it confirms the authenticity and power of the Scriptures.

In essence, praying for the sick has provided the church in China with a means to tangibly demonstrate God's love and power, leading to increased faith, unity, and evangelistic opportunities.

Growth During Times of Persecution

E. Persecution can strengthen the church.

Persecution, while inherently distressing and painful, has historically played a complex role in shaping and often strengthening the Christian church. Here are some ways in which persecution can lead to the fortification and growth of the church:

1. Refinement of Believers: Persecution tests the genuineness of believers' faith, helping to distinguish between true followers and those with a superficial faith.

2. Dependence on God: Persecution reminds believers of their dependence on God rather than human institutions or leaders. This dependence often leads to a deepened prayer life and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

3. Rapid Spread of the Gospel: Historically, attempts to suppress Christianity often result in its spread. The early Christian church, for example, spread throughout the Roman Empire partly because of persecution. As believers fled persecution, they carried the Gospel with them, leading to the establishment of new churches. "But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:3-4 NIV).

4. Martyrdom as a Witness: The testimony of those willing to die for their faith serves as a powerful witness to both believers and non-believers. The term "martyr" originates from the Greek word for "witness."

5. Deepened Spiritual Commitment: Persecution forces believers to count the cost of following Christ, often leading to a more profound, intentional commitment to their faith.

7. Greater Distinction from the World: Persecution can serve to distinguish the church from the surrounding culture, preventing it from becoming too entangled or aligned with worldly values.

8. Encouragement of Lay Leadership: In China, traditional church leadership structures were targeted. This led to the rise of lay leadership, decentralizing the church, and often resulting in a more resilient, organic church structure.

More Than Just a Place to Hear a Sermon

F. Home churches became a place of emotional, spiritual, and physical support.

In response to persecution, the Church in China developed the following various strategies to meet the emotional and physical needs of its members.

1. A Haven: Members could worship, share burdens, and support each other emotionally and spiritually.

2. Secret Prayer Meetings: These sessions provided a space for believers to find emotional solace and strength.

3. Sharing Resources: Given the economic challenges faced during certain periods of persecution, church members often pooled resources, ensuring that the basic needs of all members were met. Their efforts went beyond the walls of the church and reached out to those in need in the community.

4. Supporting the Persecuted: Families of imprisoned believers were often supported by the broader church community, ensuring they had the necessary provisions and emotional support.

Why the emphasis on the church in China? The spread of Christianity in China in the last few decades is truly amazing. Many people consider it one of the biggest growth stories in the history of the church. It gives us real-life examples that support many of the ideas that people talk about in modern church missions. By looking at China's story, we can learn lessons and see what works when trying to grow the Church in other parts of the world.

Many ways of starting and growing churches, like the Church Planting Movement, Training for Trainers, and the Four Fields approach, take lessons from real-world examples. The growth of Christianity in China is a big example of this. By looking at how the church grew in China, we can see how these methods work out in perhaps the biggest growth story in all human history. The story of the church in China helps us understand the best parts of these methods and ways they can be improved.

What is a Discipleship Making Movement?

A discipleship movement is a phenomenon within Christianity where individuals or small groups intentionally focus on making new disciples of Jesus Christ. Here's a summary of key points related to a discipleship movement:

1. Purpose: The primary purpose of a discipleship movement is to fulfill the Great Commission given by Jesus in the Bible (Matthew 28:18-20), which is to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them all that Jesus commanded them.

2. Discipleship: If it is done correctly, it places a strong emphasis on the process of discipleship, which involves nurturing and mentoring

new believers to become more like Jesus in their beliefs, character, and actions.

3. Multiplication: Discipleship movements often prioritize the multiplication of disciples rather than just addition. The goal is for each disciple to make more disciples, creating a self-sustaining movement. Every new disciple is taught to be a disciple maker.

4. Teaching and Training: Discipleship movements provide teaching and training in foundational Christian principles, such as Bible study, prayer, evangelism, and living out Christian values.

5. Evangelism: A discipleship movement often involves active evangelism efforts, where disciples are encouraged to share their faith with others and invite them to become followers of Jesus. A prominent part of a discipleship movement is the use of Discovery Bible Studies.

6. Holistic Transformation: It seeks to bring about holistic transformation in the lives of individuals and communities, addressing not only spiritual needs but also social, emotional, and physical needs.

7. Leadership Development: A strong discipleship movement prioritizes the development of leaders within the movement to ensure its sustainability and growth.

8. Flexibility: A strong discipleship movement can take various forms and adapt to different cultural contexts, making them adaptable to different settings and regions.

A discipleship movement is where individuals or groups intentionally prioritize making new disciples of Jesus Christ. David Garrison, author of Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World, writes, "Church Planting Movements are acts of God, but it's amazing

how often they develop where fervent prayer, faithful evangelism, and fastidious application of God's Word are already occurring."[3]

Approaches to Discipleship

The Lesson Approach to Discipleship

The "lesson approach" to making disciples refers to a structured, curriculum-based method of disciple-making, where specific lessons, principles, or doctrines are taught in a sequence to help believers grow in their faith and understanding of Christian life. While various churches and ministries may have different specifics for this method, here are the general characteristics of the lesson approach:

1. Structured Curriculum: There's a pre-defined set of lessons or topics that are considered essential for spiritual growth. These might include foundational teachings about faith, salvation, the nature of God, the Holy Spirit, prayer, worship, etc.

2. Progressive Learning: Lessons typically progress from basic teachings to deeper theological and practical topics, ensuring that foundational concepts are grasped before moving on to more advanced subjects.

3. Homework & Application: Apart from teaching, participants might be given homework or assignments that require them to apply what they've learned, read certain scripture passages, or perform certain spiritual exercises.

4. Evaluation & Feedback: Teachers or mentors will often evaluate the understanding and application of the lessons by the disciples. This can be through discussions, quizzes, or just personal interactions.

[3] Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World

5. Mentorship: Alongside the lesson-based instruction, one-on-one mentorship or small group interactions play an important role. These settings allow for personalized guidance and addressing specific questions or doubts.

6. Real-Life Application: While the lessons provide theological and spiritual knowledge, an emphasis is always placed on how to live out these teachings in daily life. This might include discussions on topics like personal ethics, community service, evangelism, etc.

7. Reproduction: The end goal is often not just individual spiritual growth but also preparing the disciple to disciple others. Hence, lessons might include teachings on leadership, evangelism techniques, and strategies for starting new disciple groups.

It's worth noting that while the lesson approach offers a systematic way to understand and grow in faith, disciple-making is also about relationship-building, personal transformation, and being led by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the lesson approach is often combined with other relational and Spirit-led methods to provide a comprehensive disciple-making experience.

Possible Criticisms of the Lesson Approach

Here are some criticisms often associated with the lesson approach that can help you to make a more powerful plan:

1. Lack of Personal Engagement: Some argue that structured lessons can be impersonal, not catering to individual needs or addressing personal questions and struggles.

2. Overemphasis on Knowledge: There's a risk of focusing too much on head knowledge at the expense of heart transformation. Knowledge without application can lead to a form of godliness without its power.

3. Rigidity: A set curriculum might not be flexible enough to address timely issues or the specific needs of a particular group.

4. Potential for Legalism: Highly structured lessons can sometimes lead to a checklist mentality where discipleship is seen as completing a series of classes or tasks.

5. Cultural Insensitivity: Lessons created in one cultural context might not always translate well to another, leading to misunderstandings or even the propagation of foreign cultural norms rather than biblical ones.

6. Neglect of Relational Aspects: While lessons can convey information, they might not always foster deep relationships, which are crucial for discipleship.

7. Over-reliance on Human Teachers: Focusing on a lesson approach can sometimes place undue emphasis on human teachers rather than encouraging personal study and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

8. Potential for Misunderstanding: Without adequate discussion or interaction, some participants might misunderstand the material but not have an opportunity to seek clarification.

9. Accessibility Issues: Not everyone learns best in a traditional lesson format. People with different learning styles or educational backgrounds might feel left out or struggle to engage.

10. Loss of Narrative Emphasis: Focusing on specific doctrines or teachings might sometimes neglect the broader narrative of Scripture, making it harder for people to see the big picture of God's redemptive plan.

11. Potential for Intellectual Pride: There's a risk that acquiring knowledge without humility can lead to pride, where individuals feel superior because of their biblical or doctrinal knowledge.

Despite these criticisms, many believe that when used wisely and in conjunction with other methods, the lesson approach can be a powerful tool for deepening understanding and fostering growth in discipleship. It provides a structured way to ensure foundational truths are taught and understood.

The Story Approach to Discipleship

The "lesson approach" to making disciples refers to a structured, curriculum-based method of disciple-making, where specific lessons are taught in a sequence to help believers grow. Here are the general characteristics of the lesson approach:

1. Structured Curriculum: There's a pre-defined set of lessons or topics that are considered essential for spiritual growth.

2. Progressive Learning: Lessons typically progress from basic teachings to deeper theological and practical topics.

3. Homework & Application: Apart from teaching, participants might be given homework or assignments that require them to apply what they've learned.

4. Evaluation & Feedback: Teachers will often evaluate the understanding and application of the lessons by the disciples.

5. Mentorship: Alongside the lesson-based instruction, one-on-one mentorship, or small group interactions play an important role.

6. Real-Life Application: While the lessons provide theological and spiritual knowledge, an emphasis is always placed on how to live out these teachings in daily life.

7. Reproduction: The end goal is often not just individual spiritual growth but also preparing the disciple to disciple others. Hence, lessons might include teachings on leadership, evangelism techniques, and strategies for starting new disciple groups.

The story approach, often called "storytelling" or "oral discipleship," is a method of evangelism and discipleship that prioritizes the use of stories—typically from the Bible—to communicate truths about God and the Gospel. This method recognizes that many cultures are orally focused and stories can be powerful tools for conveying truth.

Possible Criticisms of the Story Approach

Like any method, the story approach has its critics. Here are some criticisms often levied against it:

1. Lack of Theological Depth: Critics argue that relying solely or primarily on stories can sometimes neglect deep theological truths that might be better communicated through teaching or exposition.

2. Potential for Misinterpretation: Stories, without proper contextualization or explanation, can be misunderstood. There's a risk that listeners might miss the main point or interpret the story in a way that was not intended.

3. Incomplete Picture: Relying solely on selected stories might provide an incomplete view of the broader narrative of the Bible or might neglect important doctrinal truths not covered in those specific stories.

4. Cultural Misunderstandings: While stories can be powerful cross-culturally, there's also a risk that certain cultural contexts might interpret stories differently than intended, leading to confusion or doctrinal error.

5. Overemphasis on Orality: Some argue that by focusing on an oral approach, there might be a neglect of encouraging literacy or deeper personal study of the Scriptures.

6. Memory Limitations: Relying on oral transmission can lead to alterations in the story over time, especially if it isn't rooted in a written text.

7. Limitations in Addressing Modern Issues: Biblical stories are set in ancient contexts, and while their truths are timeless, the storytelling approach might face challenges when addressing modern-day issues or questions that aren't directly dealt with in the stories themselves.

8. Potential to Overlook Direct Commandments: While stories illustrate principles, they might not always convey direct commandments or instructions as clearly as didactic teaching would.

9. Risk of Entertainment Mentality: If not done thoughtfully, there's a risk that listeners might engage with the stories primarily as entertainment rather than as transformative truths.

10. Lack of Systematic Theology: The storytelling approach might not lend itself easily to a systematic study of theology, potentially leading to gaps in understanding.

Despite these criticisms, many proponents of the story approach argue that, when used judiciously and in conjunction with other methods, storytelling can be a powerful and effective tool for making disciples, especially in oral cultures or among people groups with limited access to written Scriptures.

The Discovery Bible Study Approach

Discovery Bible Study (DBS) is an approach to studying the Bible that emphasizes individual discovery and obedience to God's Word. DBS is often used in discipleship, evangelism, and church planting efforts,

particularly in contexts where traditional church models may not be as effective or possible. Here's a breakdown of the Discovery Bible Study approach:

1. Scripture-Centered: At its core, DBS is about reading and reflecting on Scripture. A specific passage or set of verses is chosen for each study session.

2. Simple Format: DBS usually follows a consistent, straightforward set of questions. This simplicity allows participants to easily facilitate a group after they've been involved in one.

3. Reproducible Method: One of the hallmarks of DBS is its reproducibility. Participants are encouraged not just to attend, but to lead their own studies, multiplying the impact.

4. Questions: A typical DBS will involve questions such as:
    - What does this passage say about God?
    - What does it say about people?
    - How can we obey or apply what we've learned?
    - Who can we share this story with?

5. Obedience-Based: DBS emphasizes not just knowledge, but obedience. Participants are encouraged to apply what they've learned and to share their insights with others.

6. Participatory: Instead of a lecture or sermon format, everyone in the group is encouraged to participate, share insights, and discuss the Scripture passage.

7. Discovery: Instead of being told what the Bible says, participants in a DBS are encouraged to discover the truths of Scripture for themselves. This personal discovery can lead to deeper understanding and conviction.

8. Multiplication: The end goal of DBS isn't just personal growth but also multiplication. Participants are encouraged to start their own DBS groups, leading to organic growth and the spread of the gospel.

Discovery Bible Study has proven to be an effective tool, especially in cross-cultural contexts and places where traditional forms of church might not be feasible. The method leverages the power of God's Word, personal discovery, and communal reflection to transform lives and communities.

Possible Criticisms of a Discovery Bible Study Approach

The Discovery Bible Study (DBS) approach, while celebrated by many for its simplicity and reproducibility, is not without criticisms. Here are some of the common concerns and criticisms raised by various individuals or groups:

1. Lack of Depth: Some critics argue that the DBS approach, with its reliance on simple questions, can sometimes lack theological depth. They worry that it may not sufficiently address complex doctrinal issues or offer deep enough biblical teaching.

2. Potential for Misinterpretation: Without trained leaders or facilitators, there's a possibility that participants could misinterpret or misunderstand certain passages of Scripture, potentially leading to doctrinal error.

3. Overemphasis on Reproducibility: The focus on easily replicable methods might lead to an oversimplification of Scripture or an overemphasis on rapid multiplication at the expense of depth and growth.

4. Potential for Isolation: If not connected to a larger body or church community, small DBS groups might become isolated, potentially missing out on the broader support, accountability, and resources of a larger community.

5. Absence of Trained Leadership: Traditional church structures often involve trained and educated leaders. In the DBS model, leadership is more organic, leading some to worry about the potential lack of theological training or oversight.

6. Cultural Sensitivity: While DBS is lauded for its adaptability across cultures, critics might point out that certain cultural contexts could lead to readings of Scripture that are influenced more by local customs than by the text itself.

7. Reliance on the Holy Spirit: Some critics feel that DBS might overemphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding interpretation, potentially leading to subjective or varied interpretations of Scripture without checks and balances.

8. Format Limitations: The structure of DBS might not appeal to everyone, especially those who prefer more traditional or liturgical forms of study and worship.

While these criticisms exist, it's important to note that many practitioners and advocates of DBS are aware of these potential pitfalls and work actively to address them. They would argue that when done correctly, DBS can be a powerful tool for discipleship and evangelism, especially in contexts where traditional models of church and Bible study might not be as effective. As with any method, the efficacy and appropriateness of DBS will depend on its implementation and the context in which it's used.

The Alpha Course approach to Evangelism

The Alpha Course started at London's Holy Trinity Brompton in 1977. Nicky Gumbel took it over in 1990, reshaping it for outsiders. Its growing popularity at Holy Trinity caught other churches' eyes, seeking a potent evangelism tool. It was launched globally in 1993, over 28 million people have attended the course worldwide. The

course is now in over 110 languages. Alpha is an effective strategy to share Gospel.
We have many friends who have used the course. Our friends in Ukraine have seen exceptional results using the course. They share what a powerful tool it is to get out into the community with the word of God.

The Alpha Course is an 11-week program designed to foster open dialogue about life, faith, and one's relationship with God. Set in diverse settings, from homes to coffee shops, each Alpha session is strategically structured to enhance connection and reflection. The course starts with a meal, promoting fellowship and unity among participants. Following the meal, attendees are presented with a thought-provoking talk addressing pivotal aspects of life and faith. The session culminates in small group discussions, emphasizing inclusive dialogue where every individual's perspective is acknowledged and appreciated. Rooted in fostering genuine conversations and deepening understanding, the Alpha Course serves as a bridge between questioning and faith, creating a safe space for exploration and discovery.

The Alpha Course covers a range of topics that explore the basics of the Christian faith. While the exact topics might have slight variations depending on the version or adaptation of the course, the core subjects typically include:

1. Is There More to Life Than This?
2. Who is Jesus?
3. Why Did Jesus Die?
4. How Can We Have Faith?
5. Why and How Do I Pray?
6. Why and How Should I Read the Bible?
7. How Does God Guide Us?
8. How Can I Resist Evil?
9. Why and How Should I Tell Others?
10. Does God Heal Today?

11. What About the Church?

Additionally, there's usually a Holy Spirit day or weekend halfway through the course. This segment delves deeper into topics like:

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What does the Holy Spirit do?
- How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Another similar course is “Christianity Explored”. This is an alternative to the Alpha Course for those who prefer a less charismatic view of Christianity.

The Alpha Course approach is characterized by the following key elements:

1. Welcoming Environment: Alpha is designed to be non-threatening and accessible, particularly for people who might not otherwise attend a church or have any religious affiliation. Often, sessions start with a meal, fostering a relaxed, communal atmosphere.

2. Talks on Christian Basics: Each session includes a talk (or video presentation in some versions) that covers fundamental aspects of the Christian faith. Topics range from "Who is Jesus?" to "How can I resist evil?" These talks are designed to be engaging, straightforward, and non-confrontational.

3. Discussion Groups: After each talk, participants break into small groups to discuss what they've heard. This is a space for open dialogue where participants can ask questions, express doubts, or share their thoughts without any judgment.

4. Non-Pressured Approach: One of the hallmarks of the Alpha Course is its non-coercive approach. Participants are not pressured into making a commitment or holding a particular set of beliefs. Instead, the course encourages exploration and personal discovery.

5. Weekend/Day Away: Most Alpha Courses include a day or weekend away, usually focused on the Holy Spirit. This time allows for deeper exploration of topics and often provides opportunities for participants to experience Christian worship and prayer in a more intensive setting.

6. Universality: The Alpha Course has been adapted for various contexts and age groups, including youth, prisons, and different cultural settings. Its foundational principles are consistent, but the content can be tailored to best fit the audience.

7. Relational: The emphasis throughout Alpha is on building relationships—both between participants and leaders and among participants themselves. This fosters a sense of community and mutual discovery.

8. Comprehensive: While the primary focus is on evangelism and introducing people to Christianity, the course also touches on other aspects of Christian life, helping attendees understand what life might look like as a follower of Jesus.

The Alpha Course's approach to evangelism is invitational and relational, making it particularly effective in contexts where people may have little to no background in Christianity or might have misconceptions or negative experiences with the church. The environment it creates allows for open dialogue and genuine exploration of the Christian faith.

Possible Criticisms of the Alpha Course Approach to Evangelism

While the Alpha Course has been widely used and appreciated by many, it has also faced various criticisms from different quarters. Here are some possible criticisms of the Alpha Course method of evangelism:

1. Theological Concerns: Some critics, particularly from more conservative Christian circles, have expressed concerns about the theology presented in Alpha. They believe that certain fundamental doctrines might be underemphasized, misrepresented, or even omitted.

2. Over-Simplification: Some argue that the Alpha Course can be too simplistic in its presentation of complex theological topics, which may not provide participants with a sufficiently deep understanding of Christian beliefs.

3. One-Size-Fits-All: While Alpha is adaptable, some critics argue that it can still come across as a one-size-fits-all solution. They believe that evangelism should be more tailored to individual needs and contexts.

4. Cultural Limitations: Even though the course has been adapted for various cultures, some believe that its origins in Western Christianity might limit its effectiveness in other cultural contexts.

5. Lack of Discipleship Focus: Some critics believe that while Alpha is good for introducing people to Christianity, it doesn't offer enough in terms of discipleship and guiding new believers in their walk with Christ beyond the course.

6. Ecumenical Approach: Alpha's broad appeal to various Christian denominations has led to concerns among some groups about ecumenism. They worry that key denominational beliefs might be watered down to accommodate a wider audience.

It's important to note that while these criticisms exist, many people and churches have found the Alpha Course to be a valuable tool in outreach and evangelism. The effectiveness and appropriateness of the course might vary based on context, leadership, and audience.

Approaches to Church Planting

A Church Planting Movement

A Church Planting Movement (CPM) is a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment. The concept is rooted in the idea of not just planting individual churches but catalyzing movements where new churches continually plant other new churches, which in turn plant even more churches, leading to exponential growth.

Key features of a Church Planting Movement include:

1. Rapid Multiplication: Churches are not just added; they multiply rapidly across generations (i.e., churches planting churches that plant more churches).

2. Indigenous Leadership: Local or native believers, rather than foreign missionaries, primarily drive the movement. This ensures cultural relevance and often leads to better sustainability.

3. Simple Church Structures: Often, the churches in a CPM are simple and can meet anywhere, from homes to workplaces. This simplicity allows for rapid multiplication and adaptability.

Note: Instead of focusing solely on home churches, as many do, our perspective should shift towards churches that can rapidly multiply without external aid. Drawing from our experience with numerous churches across Mozambique, traditional house churches in the remote 'bush, bush' regions are not effective. Yet, the abundant availability of free or highly affordable building materials and land is a boon. I've witnessed local believers construct a church building within a weekend, using grass for roofing and harnessing indigenous

materials from the surrounding area for the walls. At other times, a group of shade trees make a good meeting point.

4. Biblical Authority: The Bible serves as the primary guide for faith and practice. This often includes obedience-based discipleship, where believers are encouraged to act on what they learn from Scriptures.

5. Lay Leadership: Ordinary believers, not just professionally trained pastors, take on leadership roles and actively evangelize, disciple others, and start new churches.

6. Intentional Reproduction: From the onset, believers and churches are taught and expected to reproduce—meaning believers are to evangelize and disciple others, and churches are to plant other churches.

7.Discovery Bible Study (DBS): Church Planting Movements commonly utilize the DBS approach as a central component of their strategy.

The goal of a CPM is to evangelize an entire people group or population segment quickly and effectively by tapping into existing social networks and using indigenous resources and strategies. This method is seen by many as a return to the New Testament model of church growth and multiplication.

A church planning movement usually consists of 100 or more churches that were planted faster than most people thought possible. These churches grew not by adding one church after another but by multiplying.

The people leading this movement are the locals themselves, homegrown leaders who know their communities inside out. We call them indigenous leaders, and they're the heart and soul of these movements.

It is a movement that expands out to four generations or more. Here's how it works: Bill visits Pastor Fred's church and gets inspired. After soaking up the goodness at Pastor Fred's place, Bill decides to start his own church. Now, Mark comes along and joins the church where Bill is the leader. After getting discipled and inspired from Bill's church, Mark gets that spark and starts his own church too. And the cycle continues as Ted, with a passion ignited by Bill's church, follows suit. So, in a nutshell, Fred passes the baton to Bill and others, Bill to Mark, Mark to Ted and Ted to a possible fifth generation. You get the idea.

Now, when we talk about a movement, whether it's about growing disciples or planting churches, we're talking about—exponential growth. Exponential growth is rapid, consistent multiplication over time.

Depending upon how you strictly you define a church planting movement, I've been profoundly blessed to be a part of two.

First, there's an incredible story going on in Mozambique, where my wife and I remain deeply involved.

And before that, I had the privilege of being part of an extraordinary church planting movement right in the United States. In Southern California, I planted a third-generation church, and two of our remarkable members, driven by the same passion, ventured out and started fourth-generation churches! We didn't officially label them as third or fourth generation churches. I'm using these terms to make sense within my description of a church planting movement.

These two movements distinctly deviate from the conventional concept of church growth because they unfolded without any formal training. No one participated in seminars about Church Planting Movements or Discipleship Making Movements, and there were no T4T or Four Soils workshops in sight. Instead, they experienced

remarkable, organic, and exponential growth without a prearranged plan.

Possible Criticisms of the Church Planting Movement

The Church Planting Movement (CPM) approach, while celebrated by many for its effectiveness in rapidly planting and multiplying churches, has also faced various criticisms. Here are some of the primary concerns raised by critics:

1. Shallow Theology: Due to the rapid multiplication of churches, some critics worry that there might not be enough depth in biblical teaching. The rapid pace might lead to an over-simplification of complex theological concepts.

2. Leadership Concerns: Rapid multiplication can sometimes result in immature leaders who might not be fully prepared for the challenges of pastoral care or might misuse their authority. Leaders raise up without formal training opens up the potential for doctrinal errors.

3. Sustainability: While rapid growth is impressive, there are concerns about the long-term sustainability of churches that are planted so quickly. Without deep roots and strong leadership, some churches might fade away as quickly as they appeared.

4. Cultural Sensitivity: While CPMs emphasize indigenous leadership and cultural relevance, the methodologies, often developed in one context, might not always transfer effectively to another cultural context.

5. Discovery Bible Study Concerns: Some critics argue that the Discovery Bible Study method, often used in CPMs, can be too open-ended, allowing participants to come to incorrect conclusions about Scripture without proper guidance.

6. Quality vs. Quantity: The rapid growth prioritized in CPMs can sometimes lead to a focus on quantity (number of churches or believers) rather than quality (depth of faith, understanding, and discipleship).

It's important to note that while these criticisms exist, most all practitioners of the CPM approach are deeply aware of these potential pitfalls and work actively to address them. Advocates would argue that, when done correctly, CPMs can result in deeply committed disciples and resilient, multiplying churches.

Training for Trainers (T4T) Approach to Church Planting

Developed by Ying Kai and Steve Smith in East Asia, T4T is a church planting movement method that has seen significant success, especially in parts of Asia. The core components include:

Intentional Evangelism: Participants are trained to share their testimonies and the gospel story with non-believers, aiming to win them to Christ.

Immediate Training: New believers are immediately trained to witness to others, leading to rapid multiplication.

Bible Study and Formation: Groups of believers meet for Bible study, prayer, and mutual encouragement, often forming the nucleus of new churches.

Reproduction: From the outset, the goal is not just making disciples but training disciples to make disciples, leading to exponential growth.

Leadership Development: As new groups form, leaders are identified and trained, ensuring that the movement can continue to grow without outside intervention.

Possible Criticisms of Training for Trainers approach

Things to be aware of that could help you make a more powerful strategy .

Training for Trainers (T4T) has been applauded for its effective approach in facilitating rapid church multiplication, especially in hard-to-reach areas. However, as with most methodologies, there are criticisms and concerns expressed by some practitioners and observers. Here are a few of the criticisms:

1. Overemphasis on Rapid Multiplication: Critics argue that the strong focus on rapid multiplication can sometimes prioritize quantity over quality, leading to shallow discipleship and groups that are not deeply rooted in their faith.

2. Potential for Theological Shallowness: Due to the rapid replication model, there's a concern that there might not be enough depth in theological training, which could lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of Scripture.

3. Dependence on Human Effort: Some critics feel that T4T can, at times, lean too heavily on human strategies and techniques, potentially overshadowing the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of discipleship and church planting.

4. Risk of Syncretism: In contexts where new believers come from other religious backgrounds, the rapid multiplication without deep theological grounding might lead to syncretism, where elements of the previous religious beliefs get mixed with Christian doctrine.

5. Over-Structured Approach: Some argue that the T4T model can be too formulaic, which might not allow for the flexibility needed in diverse cultural or community contexts.

6. Potential Burnout: The T4T model places a strong emphasis on continual evangelism and training, which can lead to burnout among practitioners if not balanced with periods of rest, reflection, and spiritual nourishment.

7. Lack of Emphasis on Worship and Communion: Some critics feel that the structure of T4T doesn't place enough emphasis on the importance of worship, communion, and other vital elements of Christian community life.

It's important to note that any methodology, including T4T, will have strengths and weaknesses. While criticisms exist, many practitioners have found T4T to be an effective tool in certain contexts, especially where traditional methods have not seen success. As with all strategies, contextualization, ongoing evaluation, and a reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit are crucial.

The Four Fields Approach

The "Four Fields" (4F) approach to church planting is a strategy rooted in a biblical framework and has been widely adopted by many mission organizations and church planters. It's a comprehensive model that covers the entire process of church planting, from entry to the establishment of a multiplying church. The name "Four Fields" is metaphorical, representing the process of sowing, growing, and harvesting a crop. This method takes inspiration from Mark 4:26-29, where Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God as a man scattering seed on the ground.

Here's a breakdown of the Four Fields:

1. Entry (Empty Field): This represents the beginning of the work, where the church planter enters a new area or community. The focus is on building relationships, understanding the culture, and

prayerfully seeking persons of peace (those who are receptive and can open doors into the community).

2. Gospel Sharing (Seeded Field): After establishing relationships, the next step is to share the gospel. The emphasis is on evangelistic efforts, ranging from personal conversations to larger community outreaches.

3. Discipleship (Growing Crops): Those who respond to the gospel are then discipled. This involves teaching new believers to obey Jesus' commands and equipping them to share their faith. This stage emphasizes both individual growth and the beginning of community formation.

4. Church Formation (Harvested Field): As disciples grow, they gather into new churches. This isn't just about starting a Sunday service; it's about forming a community of believers who support one another, worship together, and commit to the mission.

5. Leadership Development (Multiplying the Process): To ensure sustainability and multiplication, leaders are identified, trained, and empowered to repeat the process in new fields. This leadership development is crucial for the churches to grow, mature, and multiply.

The beauty of the Four Fields strategy is its adaptability. It can be contextualized for various cultural settings, and its principles can be applied in urban and rural areas, in different socio-economic contexts, and among different people groups.

The goal of the Four Fields approach to church planting is always the multiplication of disciples and churches.

Possible Criticisms of the Four Fields Approach to Church Planting

While the Four Fields method of church planting has been influential and successful in many contexts, it, like all methodologies, has faced criticisms and challenges. Here are some of the criticisms or concerns that have been raised:

1. Over-Simplification: Some critics argue that the Four Fields method oversimplifies the church planting process. While the method intends to provide a clear and reproducible strategy, detractors feel it might not take into account the nuances and complexities of various cultural and socio-economic contexts.

2. Rapid Multiplication Concerns: The emphasis on rapid multiplication can sometimes lead to the establishment of churches that lack depth in discipleship, theological understanding, and maturity.

3. Lack of Emphasis on Deep Theology: While the method focuses on making disciples and teaching them to obey Jesus' commands, there can be concerns about whether it provides a comprehensive theological foundation for new believers.

4. Cultural Contextualization: While the Four Fields is designed to be adaptable, there can be challenges in adequately contextualizing the method for different cultures. If not done carefully, it can lead to a form of church that feels foreign or irrelevant to a particular community.

5. Leadership Development: The method emphasizes the rapid identification and training of leaders. Some critics argue that this might result in underprepared leaders, leading to potential theological errors or other issues in the young churches.

6. Dependency Issues: There's a potential risk of creating dependency on external resources or missionaries, especially if the foundational stages of the method are heavily driven by outsiders rather than emerging local leaders.

7. Potential for Burnout: The emphasis on rapid growth and multiplication can put a lot of pressure on church planters and leaders, leading to potential burnout.

8. Quality vs. Quantity: There's a tension between the desire for rapid multiplication (quantity of churches and disciples) and the depth of discipleship and maturity (quality). Critics might argue that the method, if not implemented carefully, might prioritize the former over the latter.

It's worth noting that many practitioners of the Four Fields method are aware of these challenges and criticisms and work diligently to address them. Additionally, the effectiveness and challenges of the method can vary based on how it's implemented and the specific context in which it's used.

George Patterson and the Seven Commands to teach every new disciple.

I first heard of George Patterson and his work in Honduras when I attend Fuller School of World Missions forty years ago. He took seriously Jesus' command to "Teach them to obey all I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). He believed that there were seven specific commands that summarized Jesus basic instructions to his disciples. George Patterson was a pioneer in the multiplication of churches.

He believed that we should teach every disciple of Jesus seven specific commands.
1. Repent & Follow Jesus

2. Be Baptized
3. Pray
4. Make Disciples
5. Love
6. Lord’s Supper
7. Give

George Patterson's church planting efforts in Honduras offer a compelling model for missions and evangelism. He's especially known for pioneering the principles that later formed the foundation for many church planting movements (CPMs) around the world.

Much of Patterson's approach is evident in today's Church Planting Movement. What distinguishes his method is the incorporation of Bible stories, making the Gospel both accessible and unforgettable, particularly in cultures that value oral traditions. Additionally, he championed a comprehensive ministry, addressing both physical and spiritual needs.

Here's what we can learn from George Patterson's method:

1. Obedience-Based Discipleship: Instead of mere knowledge-based discipleship, Patterson emphasized obedience to Christ's commands. New believers were trained to immediately obey and implement what they learned from the Bible, ensuring active faith.

2. Reproducibility: Patterson prioritized simple methods and teachings that could be easily replicated by new believers without the need for external resources or formal theological education.

3. Rapid Multiplication: He encouraged new believers to evangelize and start new churches quickly rather than waiting for external leadership. This led to a rapid multiplication of churches.

4. Use of Bible Stories: Recognizing that not everyone could read or had access to Bibles, Patterson made use of storytelling. This made

the Gospel message more accessible and memorable, especially in oral cultures.

5. Indigenous Leadership: Instead of relying heavily on foreign missionaries, Patterson's method focused on training local believers to become leaders in their communities. This approach made the church more adaptable and relevant to the local culture.

6. Spontaneous Expansion: By equipping local believers to evangelize and plant churches, Patterson's method allowed for spontaneous and organic growth of the church without excessive external control or intervention.

7. T4T (Training for Trainers): While Patterson himself didn't coin this term, his methods greatly influenced the development of the T4T strategy, which emphasizes training believers to train others in evangelism and discipleship, leading to rapid multiplication.

8. Addressing Physical and Spiritual Needs: Patterson believed in holistic ministry that addressed both the physical and spiritual needs of the people.

9. Avoiding Dependency: Patterson was cautious about creating dependency on foreign resources or leadership. He encouraged self-sufficiency among the local churches to ensure their long-term sustainability.

10. Flexibility: Rather than imposing a rigid structure, Patterson's method was adaptable. This flexibility allowed churches to thrive in various cultural, economic, and political contexts.

George Patterson's work in Honduras and his broader influence on church planting movements underscore the importance of local leadership, rapid multiplication, and obedience-based discipleship. His methods have been transformative in missions strategy, and they continue to inspire church planters worldwide.

Eight Evangelism Approaches

Intellectual Approach to Evangelism

The intellectual approach to evangelism emphasizes the use of reason, evidence, and logical argumentation to present the message of the Christian faith. This method caters to individuals who value critical thinking, have questions about the faith, or need rational answers to their doubts. Here are some key characteristics and components of the intellectual approach:

1. Apologetics: This is the systematic defense of a belief or doctrine. Christian apologetics seeks to provide logical and evidence-based arguments in support of the faith. Famous apologists like C.S. Lewis, Ravi Zacharias, and William Lane Craig have used this method to address doubts and objections to Christianity.

2. Evidence-Based Discussions: This approach often involves presenting historical, philosophical, and scientific evidence to support the claims of Christianity, such as the historicity of Jesus, the reliability of the Bible, and arguments for the existence of God.

3. Engaging Doubts and Objections: Instead of shying away from hard questions, the intellectual approach actively engages them, providing thoughtful and well-researched answers.

4. Dialogues and Debates: Public or private dialogues and debates with skeptics, atheists, or adherents of other belief systems are a hallmark of this approach. The goal is often to present the Christian worldview as coherent, reasonable, and superior to alternative worldviews.

5. Understanding Worldviews: Evangelists using this approach often invest time understanding various worldviews, both religious and secular, to engage effectively with a diverse range of people.

6. Use of Literature: Books, articles, and academic papers are frequently used in this method, both as sources of information and as tools for evangelism.

7. Training and Equipping: Those who use the intellectual approach often emphasize the importance of Christians being well-equipped to defend their faith. This might involve seminars, courses, and study materials that delve deep into theology, philosophy, and other relevant disciplines.

While the intellectual approach can be powerful, especially in academic or skeptical settings, it's essential to use it in conjunction with other methods and to always prioritize the love and compassion of Christ. Knowledge and reason are important, but they should be paired with genuine care and concern for the individual, ensuring that the evangelistic effort doesn't become merely a cerebral exercise.

Possible criticisms of the Intellectual Approach to Evangelism

The intellectual approach to evangelism, while effective for certain audiences, has been subjected to various criticisms. Here are some possible criticisms of this approach:

1. Too Cerebral: Critics argue that this approach can become overly intellectual, focusing too much on arguments and debates and not enough on the personal, transformative relationship with Jesus. It might appeal to the mind but not always to the heart.

2. Risks Arrogance: The intellectual method can, at times, come across as arrogant or condescending, especially if the evangelist appears to be more interested in winning an argument than genuinely understanding the other person's perspective.

3. Doesn’t Address Emotional or Experiential Components: Many people's beliefs are rooted in personal experiences or emotions. An overly intellectual approach might neglect these aspects, focusing solely on logical reasoning.

4. Not Always Culturally Relevant: In cultures where storytelling, testimonies, or personal experiences are more valued than logical arguments, this approach might be less effective.

5. Can Be Intimidating: For those not accustomed to academic or intellectual discussions, this method can be off-putting or intimidating, making some feel inadequate or ill-prepared to engage.

6. Risk of Over-complicating Simple Truths: While deep theological discussions can be enriching, there's a risk of making the gospel seem more complicated than it needs to be for a general audience.

7. Limited Audience Appeal: This approach might resonate well with skeptics, academics, or those with specific questions about the faith but may not appeal to everyone. Some people are more influenced by personal testimonies, acts of kindness, or other forms of evangelism.

8. Potential to Neglect Spiritual Elements: Over-reliance on human reasoning can sometimes neglect the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of conversion and conviction.

9. Overemphasis on Apologetics: While defending the faith is essential, some critics argue that the intellectual approach might prioritize apologetics over sharing the core message of the gospel.

10. Can Create a Barrier: If not done with humility and love, intellectual discussions can sometimes create a barrier between the evangelist and the individual, making it harder for them to see the love of Christ.

It's worth noting that every evangelistic method has its strengths and weaknesses. The key is to use the right approach for the right context and to always prioritize love, understanding, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Testimonial Approach to Evangelism?

The Testimonial Approach to Evangelism centers on personal stories and experiences to communicate the transformative power of the Gospel. Here's a breakdown of this approach:

1. Personal Testimony: At the heart of this approach is a believer's personal testimony. This is the story of how they came to faith in Jesus Christ. It often includes details about their life before coming to faith, the circumstances that led them to Christ, and the changes they've experienced since becoming a Christian.

2. Relatability: Personal testimonies are powerful because they are relatable. When people hear about real-life experiences and changes, they can often see similarities in their own lives or the lives of those they know.

3. Authenticity: Personal stories come across as genuine and heartfelt. They are not rehearsed arguments or theological explanations, but raw accounts of personal experiences.

4. Emotional Connection: Testimonies often evoke emotional responses. They can inspire hope, empathy, and even conviction as listeners relate to the storyteller's experiences.

5. Demonstration of God's Power: Through personal testimonies, listeners can see tangible evidence of how God works in individual lives, bringing about change and transformation.

6. Variety of Experiences: Every believer has a unique story. This variety ensures that there's likely a testimony that can resonate with just about anyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

7. Simple and Direct: The testimonial approach doesn't require deep theological training or expertise in apologetics. Anyone who has experienced God's grace can share their story.

8. Everyone is Able: Unlike the intellectual approach to evangelism, every individual can compellingly speak of how God touched their life.

In evangelism, personal testimonies serve as a bridge. They can open conversations about deeper theological truths and the broader message of the Gospel. However, like any method, the testimonial approach is most effective when used with genuine love, humility, and sensitivity to the listener's perspective.

The Relational Approach to Evangelism

The Relational Approach to Evangelism focuses on building genuine relationships and connections with people as a primary method for sharing the Gospel. Instead of leading with doctrinal discussions or theological debates, this approach prioritizes cultivating trust, showing genuine care, and understanding a person's life situation and feelings. Here's a breakdown:

1. Personal Connection: The foundation of relational evangelism is getting to know someone on a personal level. This could be a friend, coworker, neighbor, or even a stranger with whom you've built rapport over time.

2. Authenticity: Instead of approaching someone with an "agenda" to convert them, the relational approach values genuine interest in the other person's well-being and life.

3. Trust Building: By investing time and showing consistent love and care, trust is established. People are more open to discussing deeper topics, like faith and spirituality, when they trust the individual they're talking to.

4. Sharing Through Life Events: Instead of structured presentations or scripts, the Gospel is often shared through life experiences, personal testimonies, or mutual events that naturally lead to spiritual conversations.

5. Long-Term Commitment: Relational evangelism isn't about quick conversions. It's about long-term relationships that might eventually lead to someone's decision to follow Christ, recognizing that the timeline is different for everyone.

6. Holistic Care: It's not just about sharing the Gospel verbally, but also demonstrating the love of Christ in tangible ways – helping in times of need, offering support during challenges, celebrating joys, etc.

The idea behind relational evangelism is that as people experience the love, consistency, and genuine concern of a believer over time, they'll be more receptive to hearing about the source of that love, which is Jesus Christ.

Possible Criticisms of the Relational Approach to Evangelism

While the Relational Approach to Evangelism has been lauded for its genuine and compassionate nature, there are various criticisms that have been leveled against it. Some of the potential criticisms include:

1. Takes Too Long: Some argue that relational evangelism can be a slow process, potentially taking years to eventually discuss faith matters. There's a concern about missed opportunities or waiting too long to share the Gospel.

2. Lack of Urgency: Critics might say that this method lacks the urgency conveyed in scriptures regarding the importance of spreading the Gospel message promptly.

3. Potential for Compromise: Being deeply embedded in relationships can sometimes lead individuals to compromise their beliefs or values to maintain the relationship, especially if controversial topics arise.

4. Ambiguity: There's a possibility that the evangelist may never get to the point of sharing the Gospel clearly, relying too much on the relationship and not enough on the message itself.

5. Risk of Misunderstanding: The person being evangelized might feel betrayed or used if they perceive the relationship was built solely for evangelistic purposes. Authenticity is crucial, but misunderstandings can still occur.

6. Overemphasis on Relationships: Some critics argue that while relationships are essential, the primary focus should always be on Christ and His message. They worry that relational evangelism might place too much emphasis on human connections rather than divine truth.

7. Potential for Discouragement: If someone invests heavily in a relationship hoping to guide someone to Christ and it doesn't happen, it can lead to significant discouragement and feelings of failure.

It's essential to recognize that no single method of evangelism will be without its critiques. The Relational Approach, like all methods, requires discernment, wisdom, and guidance from the Holy Spirit to be effectively and genuinely implemented.

The Direct Approach to Evangelism

The Direct Approach to evangelism is a method where the gospel message is presented directly and straightforwardly to an individual or group, without any preliminary activities, relationship building, or pre-evangelistic events. It's a clear, concise proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, often emphasizing humanity's separation from God due to sin and the solution found in Christ's death and resurrection.

Here are some key characteristics of the Direct Approach:

1. Immediate Presentation: This approach doesn't wait for a "right moment" but believes that any moment is the right one to share the gospel.

2. Clarity: The emphasis is on presenting the core message of the gospel in a clear and straightforward manner, explaining essential concepts like sin, redemption, and salvation.

3. Urgency: There's often an emphasis on the urgency of making a decision for Christ, given the eternal implications.

4. Tools: Tracts, evangelistic booklets, or other written materials might be used to aid in the presentation of the gospel.

5. Settings: This approach can be used in various settings – street evangelism, door-to-door witnessing, evangelistic events and more. It can also involve large crusades, however this is covered under a different section entitled, “Large Scale Evangelism: Example Daniel Kolenda of Christ For All Nations (CFAN)”.

6. Response: Often, after sharing the message, the evangelist will invite the listener to make a decision, pray a prayer of commitment, or take some other step of faith.

The Direct Approach is rooted in the belief that the power of the gospel message itself, when presented clearly, has the inherent power to transform lives.

The Invitational Approach to Evangelism

Note: I differentiate this approach from the Discovery Bible Study Method, even though both employ an invitational style.

The Invitational Approach to Evangelism is a method wherein believers invite others to church or a religious event in hopes that the experience will lead them towards a relationship with God or a deeper understanding of faith. It operates under the premise that the church or event environment will present the Gospel message in a way that resonates with the invitee. Key components and characteristics of this approach include:

1. Simplicity: The primary responsibility of the believer is to extend an invitation. The actual sharing and explaining of the Gospel is often undertaken by the church, event, or program to which the person is invited.

2. Leveraging Church Programs: Special events, services, or outreach programs can be particularly effective venues for this approach. Examples might include holiday services, revival meetings, or special guest speakers.

3. Low Pressure: This approach can feel less confrontational or direct than other evangelism methods. The inviter isn't necessarily required to explain or defend faith concepts on the spot.

4. Personal Testimony: Often, the inviter shares personal experiences about the benefits and positive changes brought about by attending such events or being part of the church community.

5. Community-Focused: The invitational approach emphasizes the importance of the church community and integrates newcomers into a supportive and welcoming environment.

While it can be a very effective way to introduce people to the Christian faith, the Invitational Approach is just one of many evangelism methods. As with all approaches, its effectiveness depends largely on the context, the individuals involved, and the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit.

Possible criticisms of the Invitational approach to evangelism.

The Invitational approach to evangelism, where individuals invite others to church events or activities as a primary means of outreach, can be an effective way for people to hear the gospel message in a comfortable setting. However, like all methods, it has its criticisms. Some potential criticisms include:

1. Superficial Commitment: By relying on organized events or services, there's a risk that attendees might connect more with the event itself (like the music, atmosphere, or social aspects) rather than developing a deep personal relationship with Jesus.

2. Dependence on Church Programs: It might cultivate an over-reliance on church-organized events and programs as the primary means for evangelism. This could potentially stunt the development of organic, personal outreach by individual believers.

3. Neglect of Personal Testimony: This approach might inadvertently de-emphasize the power and importance of personal testimonies and one-on-one evangelism, which can be deeply transformative.

4. Potential for Disappointment: If the event doesn't meet the expectations of the invitee, it could lead to a missed opportunity or even negative perceptions about the church or Christianity as a whole.

5. Limitation on Scope: Not everyone is receptive to an invitation to a church event, especially in a post-Christian culture or among those with past negative experiences related to church. This approach might miss opportunities to reach those individuals in other ways.

6. Avoidance of Tough Topics: Church events, in their effort to be welcoming, might avoid deeper or more controversial theological topics, which could leave newcomers with a somewhat shallow understanding of the faith.

Remember, no evangelism method is without its challenges or criticisms. The key is to be adaptable, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and being led by the Holy Spirit in each evangelistic encounter.

The Service Approach to Evangelism

The Service Approach to evangelism is grounded in the idea of serving others as a tangible expression of God's love and as a means to share the gospel. This method often revolves around meeting physical, emotional, or social needs as an avenue to also address spiritual needs. It is based on Jesus' own example, as He often met people's immediate needs (healing, feeding, etc.) before or while teaching them spiritual truths.

Key Characteristics of The Service Approach:

1. Actions Speak Louder: Demonstrating God's love in tangible ways, often even before verbalizing the message of the gospel.

2. Meeting Real Needs: Whether it's providing food, medical care, emotional support, or other forms of assistance, the Service Approach addresses immediate and palpable needs in a community.

3. Building Trust: By serving others without immediate expectation of something in return, trust is built, which can pave the way for more open conversations about faith.

4. Community Involvement: Often, this approach involves active participation in the community, understanding its specific needs, and working to address them in meaningful ways.

5. Holistic Care: Recognizing that individuals have both physical and spiritual needs and that addressing one can open doors to addressing the other.

Jesus epitomized this approach in many of His interactions, such as when He washed the feet of His disciples or when He fed the multitudes.

Physical Needs Meet by Jesus

Jesus performed numerous miracles during His time on earth, addressing various physical needs. Here are some of the key physical needs that Jesus met:

1. Hunger: Jesus fed the 5,000 men (plus women and children) with five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21). He also fed the 4,000 with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish (Matthew 15:32-39).
2. Illness and Disease
3. Physical Disabilities
4. Blindness

5. Deafness and Muteness
6. Death

These miracles not only met immediate physical needs but also showcased the authority and divinity of Jesus. They served as signs pointing to His identity as the Messiah and the coming of God's Kingdom.

The early church also demonstrated this by caring for the poor, widows, and orphans. Today, many mission organizations and local churches use the Service Approach as part of their outreach strategy, recognizing the powerful impact of serving "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40).

Possible Criticisms of the Service Approach to Evangelism

While the Service Approach to evangelism has been effective for many and has biblical precedent, there are still criticisms and concerns associated with it. Some of these include:

1. Misunderstood Motives: Some may perceive the acts of service as having ulterior motives, suspecting that the service is just a bait-and-switch tactic to proselytize.

2. Overemphasis on Works: There's a risk of placing too much emphasis on works at the expense of clear gospel proclamation. People might think that doing good works is the primary message of Christianity, rather than understanding the grace of salvation through faith in Christ.

3. Creating Dependency: If not carefully managed, continuous service can lead to dependency, where individuals or communities become reliant on the help provided instead of becoming self-sufficient or addressing root issues.

4. Potential for Neglecting Spiritual Needs: In focusing on tangible, immediate needs, there might be occasions where the spiritual needs of an individual are overlooked or deemed secondary.

5. Burnout: Those serving can easily become overwhelmed or burned out if they are constantly giving without taking time for their own spiritual nourishment or rest.

6. Cultural Insensitivity: If those serving are from a different cultural background, there's a risk of misunderstanding or misinterpreting the needs and values of the community they are trying to serve.

7. Short-term Impact: While service projects can have immediate benefits, critics might argue that some of these initiatives lack a long-term strategy for sustained impact.

8. Potential for Pride: There's a risk of developing a "savior complex," where those providing the service might see themselves as superior or more enlightened than those they serve.

While these criticisms exist, many proponents of the Service Approach to evangelism argue that when done with genuine love, cultural sensitivity, and a clear gospel message, it can be an incredibly effective means of sharing the love of Christ. It's important for individuals and organizations using this method to be aware of these criticisms and actively work to address and mitigate potential issues.

Large Scale Evangelism: Example Daniel Kolenda of Christ For All Nations (CFAN)

Daniel Kolenda is a Christian evangelist and the successor to Reinhard Bonnke at Christ For All Nations (CFAN), an international evangelistic ministry. The ministry is primarily known for its large-

scale crusades in Africa and other parts of the world. While it's challenging to pinpoint a singular "method" of evangelism attributed to Daniel Kolenda, several characteristics mark the approach of CFAN and, by extension, Kolenda's evangelistic style:

1. Mass Crusades: Much like his predecessor Reinhard Bonnke, Kolenda often preaches at massive open-air crusades. These events gather thousands, sometimes even hundreds of thousands, of attendees.

2. Simple Gospel Message: Kolenda often emphasizes a clear and straightforward presentation of the Gospel. His messages typically revolve around the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the need for personal salvation.

3. Miracles and Healings: In line with Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions, Kolenda believes in the present-day workings of miracles. Many of the CFAN crusades include testimonies of healings, deliverance and other miracles which are believed to confirm the preached Word.

4. Follow-Up and Discipleship: Recognizing the importance of ongoing discipleship after the crusades, CFAN always collaborates with local churches to ensure new believers are connected to a community where they can grow in their faith.

5. Evangelism Training: Apart from the crusades, Kolenda is involved in training others in evangelism, emphasizing not just the act of preaching but living a life that draws people to Jesus.

6. Media Outreach: Recognizing the importance of modern communication tools, Kolenda and CFAN utilize TV broadcasts, online platforms, and printed materials to reach a wider audience and reinforce their evangelistic message.

7. Prayer Movements: Kolenda emphasizes the importance of prayer in evangelistic efforts and often mobilizes prayer movements in conjunction with evangelistic outreaches.

Notable evangelists who have effectively used the Direct Approach include Billy Graham, George Whitefield, and D.L. Moody, among others.

It's essential to recognize that while methods and strategies can be useful, Kolenda, Graham, Whitefield, and Moody, would surely emphasize the need for the power of the Holy Spirit in all their evangelistic effort.

Possible criticisms of Daniel Kolenda's Evangelism Method

While Daniel Kolenda's evangelistic efforts through Christ For All Nations (CFAN) have witnessed significant success and have had a substantial impact, they are not immune to criticisms. Some criticisms of the evangelism methods used by Kolenda and similar evangelists include:

1. Mass Crusades: Some critics argue that mass crusades, while drawing large crowds, may not lead to genuine long-term conversions. They believe that it's easier for attendees to make a momentary decision without fully understanding or committing to the faith.

2. Follow-Up Concerns: While CFAN does work with local churches for follow-up, critics often point to the logistical challenges of adequately discipling the sheer number of new believers from large crusades.

3. Financial Aspects: Large-scale evangelistic efforts, like those of CFAN, require significant funding. This sometimes leads to criticisms

about financial transparency, the usage of funds, or the necessity of such large budgets for evangelism.

4. Cultural Sensitivity: There are concerns about whether large-scale evangelistic efforts by Western ministries in countries with different cultural contexts can sometimes inadvertently overlook or misunderstand local customs, traditions, or social issues.

5. Overemphasis on Numbers: Critics might argue that emphasizing the number of attendees or conversions can overshadow the deeper, transformative work of discipleship.

It's essential to approach these criticisms with a balanced view, recognizing that many people have had genuinely life-changing experiences through such evangelistic efforts. While no method is perfect, the intention of reaching people with the Gospel message remains at the heart of Daniel Kolenda's ministry and similar evangelistic endeavors.

Power Evangelism

Power evangelism is a form of evangelism that emphasizes the role of supernatural experiences as a means to aid in the sharing of the Christian message. The term was popularized by John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Movement, in the 1980s. It's essentially a way of evangelizing that combines the proclamation of the Gospel with the demonstration of the Gospel through signs, wonders, miracles, and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Here are some characteristics and key points of power evangelism:

1. Signs and Wonders: Power evangelism often includes miracles, healings, prophetic insights, and other gifts of the Holy Spirit as seen in the New Testament, especially in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles.

2. Personal Experience: This form of evangelism heavily emphasizes personal encounters with God. Those witnessing or experiencing a miracle are then more open to the message of the Gospel.

3. Kingdom of God: The emphasis is on the present reality of the Kingdom of God. Power evangelism seeks to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is at hand, just as Jesus proclaimed.

4. Holistic Approach: Power evangelism sees the combination of word (proclamation) and deed (demonstration) as a full representation of the Gospel.

5. Spontaneity: Power evangelism can happen anywhere, not just in church settings. Believers are encouraged to pray for the sick or share prophetic words as they go about their daily lives.

6. Controversy: Power evangelism has been a subject of controversy within the broader Christian community. Some embrace it wholeheartedly, seeing it as a return to the practices of the early church, while others are more skeptical, cautioning about potential excesses and the possibility of fake miracles.

In essence, power evangelism is about merging the proclamation of the Gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit, affirming that God is active and can intervene supernaturally in people's lives today just as He did during the times of Jesus and the apostles.

Spiritual Mapping

Spiritual mapping is a controversial strategy used within certain mission groups. Its proponents believe that by identifying and studying spiritual strongholds in a particular geographic area or culture, believers can more effectively pray against or confront these negative spiritual forces, paving the way for evangelism and church

planting. It's a part of what some call "strategic-level spiritual warfare."

Here's a breakdown of the spiritual mapping concept:

1. Identification of Spiritual Strongholds: The basic idea is that certain demonic spirits or principalities exert control or influence over specific areas, peoples, or cultural issues. Spiritual mappers seek to identify these entities and their strongholds.

2. Research and Analysis: Spiritual mappers might gather data on historical events, cultural practices, or belief systems in a particular region. They believe that past events or cultural patterns can give rise to spiritual strongholds.

3. Informed Prayer: Armed with their findings, intercessors pray more specifically against identified spiritual obstacles. This can involve repenting for historical sins or asking God to break alleged generational curses.

4. On-Site Prayer: Some believers involved in this movement will physically go to locations identified as spiritually significant (like ancestral worship sites) to pray against perceived dark forces there.

5. Evangelism and Church Planting: With the perceived spiritual barriers addressed, evangelists and church planters then move in to share the gospel, believing that people will be more receptive.

Proponents claim to have seen positive results and believe that the practice enables more effective ministry by addressing deep-rooted spiritual issues.

Possible Criticisms of Spiritual Mapping

Spiritual mapping, as a part of the larger strategic-level spiritual warfare movement, has drawn various criticisms from theologians, missiologists, and other Christian leaders. Here are some of the primary criticisms:

1. Lack of Biblical Basis: One of the primary criticisms is that the methodology and principles of spiritual mapping are not clearly outlined or emphasized in the Bible. Critics argue that while the Bible acknowledges the existence of spiritual warfare, the specific strategies endorsed by spiritual mapping aren't biblically supported.

2. Oversimplification: There's a concern that spiritual mapping can oversimplify complex cultural, social, and spiritual issues. By attributing societal problems primarily to demonic activity, it might overlook other significant factors.

3. Cultural Insensitivity: The process of identifying non-Christian spiritual practices as demonic can be seen as dismissive or disrespectful of indigenous cultures. This runs the risk of creating barriers rather than fostering understanding and dialogue.

4. Dualistic Worldview: Spiritual mapping can promote a hyper-spiritualized worldview where every challenge or problem is attributed to a specific demonic entity or stronghold. Such a perspective might detract from other essential aspects of the Christian message and mission.

5. Potential for Fear: Focusing on identifying and battling specific demonic forces might inadvertently promote a culture of fear, rather than one of faith and trust in God's sovereignty.

6. Misallocation of Resources: Some argue that the time, energy, and resources devoted to spiritual mapping could be better spent on other mission activities, such as direct evangelism, discipleship, or social justice initiatives.

7. Efficacy Questions: There's debate over the actual effectiveness of spiritual mapping in advancing the Gospel. Some argue that there's no tangible evidence that the method leads to more conversions or stronger Christian communities.

8. Theological Concerns: Some theologians worry about potential imbalances, where the focus on battling the devil might overshadow the centrality of Christ and the gospel.

It's essential to note that while many critics raise these concerns, proponents of spiritual mapping believe they've seen positive results and defend the practice as a valuable tool in mission work. The debate around spiritual mapping reflects broader discussions about the best methodologies and practices in Christian missions and evangelism.

We All Believe in Discipleship, but What is Discipleship?

Matthew 28:18-20 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jesus’ model of discipleship went beyond mere intellectual understanding.

When we delve into the biblical concept of discipleship, it becomes evident that it closely mirrors modern-day mentoring programs or apprenticeships. The first twelve disciples of Jesus did not merely benefit from spoken teachings. Instead, they were immersed in a holistic learning environment where Jesus served as both their

teacher and their model. This form of discipleship was experiential and hands-on.

Much like an apprentice learning a trade, they were taught not just the theory, but also the practical application of Jesus' teachings. They observed His interactions, His reactions, and His decisions daily. They witnessed firsthand His compassion, His boldness, His dedication to prayer, and His unwavering commitment to God's will. Over time, these practices were not just things they learned; they became intrinsic parts of their own lives and characters. This model of discipleship was transformative, focusing on shaping not just the mind but also the heart and actions.

It's a profound reminder for us today. True discipleship goes beyond mere intellectual understanding. It's about internalizing and emulating the life of Jesus in our day-to-day existence, learning through both instruction and observation, and, ultimately, embodying His teachings in every facet of our lives."

We are Disciples of Jesus

While we have teachers and examples today, as Christians we are not their disciples. We are disciples of Jesus. When someone says, “I was discipled by Bob”, we understand that bob was involve in the process but the one we want to follow and imitate is Jesus.

Matthew 23: 8 “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah.

Within the pages of the Bible, discipleship is portrayed as a deep mentorship or apprenticeship directly under Jesus. The disciples weren't just passive listeners; they formed a deep and meaningful connection with Jesus, recognizing Him as their foremost Teacher

and Guide. In the grand scheme, no one can rival the role Jesus plays. The original twelve were explicitly advised not to be addressed as Rabbi, Teacher, or Father. In Matthew 23:8-10, I believe Jesus employs a form of emphasis to stress that no one can match His position as a Rabbi, teacher, or spiritual Father in our lives. This perspective is vital when considering our roles today. As highlighted in Matthew 28, our primary task is to lead others to become devout followers of Jesus, not to gather followers for ourselves or any other human leader. It isn't about rallying around a charismatic individual; it's about centering our lives on Jesus, ensuring He remains the focal point. This is the essence of authentic discipleship: guiding everyone's focus toward a deep relationship with Jesus, without any human distractions."

How do we define disciple?

There are many definitions regarding what constitutes a disciple.'

Here are some examples…

A disciple of Christ is one who (1) believes his doctrine, (2) rests on his sacrifice, (3) imbibes his spirit, and (4) imitates his example (Matthew 10:24 ; Luke 14:26 Luke 14:27 Luke 14:33 ; John 6:69).[4]

"Christian discipleship connotes a relationship with a master teacher, following them, and adhering to their way of life because their teaching shapes your own worldview".[5]

"A Christian disciple is a believer who follows Christ and then offers his own imitation of Christ as model for others to follow (1 Corinthians 11:1).[6]

[4] Easton's Bible Dictionary definition of disciple, https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/disciple/
[5] Grace Theological Seminary, "What is the True Meaning of Christian Discipleship?" https://seminary.grace.edu/what-is-the-true-meaning-of-christian-discipleship/
[6] Wikipedia definition of Disciple, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciple_(Christianity)

“A disciple of Jesus is someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus.”[7]

In my years as a missionary, I've encountered people who've reduced the meaning of 'disciple' to merely someone who follows Jesus’ teachings. Yes, obedience is vital, but walking with Jesus as His disciple encompasses so much more. Here is my description of a disciple: “*A disciple is someone who loves Jesus, anchors their life and faith in Jesus, cherishing every word and lesson He imparts. They long for His presence and seek to imitate Him in every action and decision*.”

Jesus isn’t a philosophy or a religion to be followed, do this, and don’t do that. Jesus is our God, our Friend, our Lord, our Savior, our Groom, our Father, our Beloved. Christianity is a relationship and not a religion.

Christianity, goes so far beyond laws, commands, and doctrines, often associated with other religions. Instead, it is a profound, living relationship that calls us to connect intimately with the Jesus. It's an invitation to know and be known by the Him, not just to adhere to a set of rules or practices.

Jesus emphasized the need for us to abide in Him. He focused his attention to the human heart. When He spoke, He didn’t offer complex rules and regulation to be obeyed; He offered Himself. He extended His hands in friendship, love, and sacrifice.

This relationship with Jesus is transformative. It is not about ticking boxes or performing rites to attain God’s favor. It's about heart-to-heart communion. It's about being grafted into the vine. Through this relationship, believers find genuine love, purpose, and a promise of eternal live and pleasures at His right hand forever more.

[7] “What is a Disciple? Three Key Characteristics” by Bobby Harrington discipleship.org

We never want to reduce Christianity to obedience. In essence, Christianity challenges that very thought. Instead of being a path defined by obedience, it presents a dynamic, living journey with God, where every moment is a step closer to Him. It's not about going through the motions; it's about genuine, transformative love—a love that alters hearts and changes lives. If we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15 ESV).

Jesus linked obedience to intimacy when He said,

> Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (John 15:4-8 NIV).

This obedience is not driven by fear of punishment or the desire for rewards, rather it comes from a place of gratitude, reverence, and intimate connection. When we commune with Jesus, when we engage in a deeply personal relationship with Him, our hearts are transformed. We are moved to follow His ways not out of obligation, but out of a passion that arises from knowing Him closely.

To know Him is to Love Him

I believe in obedience to Jesus, but it is an obedience based on a profound and heartfelt response to the love He has shown us. When we truly understand and experience the depth of Jesus's love — His sacrifices, His teachings, His unwavering commitment to humanity —

our desire to obey His teachings becomes a natural expression of our love in return.

Author Franics Chan wrote, “It's crazy, if you think about it. The God of the universe—the Creator of nitrogen and pine needles, galaxies and E-minor—loves us with a radical, unconditional, self-sacrificing love. And what is our typical response? We go to church, sing songs, and try not to cuss."[8]

I've come to see that to Jesus, our heart is of paramount importance. It's not just our actions, but our hearts that He deeply cares about. Jesus didn’t step foot on this earth merely because we stray occasionally into bad habits. No, He came with a greater mission. He saw our hearts, desperately wicked and in need of redemption, and He came to cleanse us and give us His righteousness.

The Bible is powerful!

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints, and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The scripture from Hebrews 4:12 beautifully encapsulates the power of the Word of God. Let's delve deeper into its profound significance:

1. Living and Active: The Word of God isn't merely text on a page or ancient stories passed down through generations. It's dynamic and transformative. It has the ability to speak to every individual, in every situation, in every era.

2. Sharper than any two-edged sword: Swords are designed to cut, to penetrate, and to divide. Similarly, the Word of God can penetrate our lives, cutting through our misconceptions, doubts, and facades.

[8] Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God

Its truth provides clarity in the midst of confusion and hope in despair.

3. Piercing to the division of soul and spirit: The Word transcends the physical realm, delving into the spiritual. It addresses not just our visible lives but also our innermost beings – our hopes, fears, dreams, and doubts. It brings alignment and harmony to our soul and spirit.

4. Of joints and of marrow: Like how marrow is deeply embedded within bones, the Word reaches the very core of our existence. It's not just about addressing surface-level problems but rooting out deeply ingrained patterns, beliefs, and behaviors.

5. Discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart: The Word of God has a remarkable ability to illuminate our hidden motives and intentions. It acts as a mirror, reflecting our true selves, revealing areas we might be unknowingly clinging to sin or unbelief.

In essence, the Word of God is not just a book—it is God breathed. It's a compass for the lost, a comfort for the grieving, wisdom for the seeker, and strength for the weak. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Key Point

Let me underscore a pivotal belief that drives today's discipleship and church planting strategies: the transformative power of God's Word. It's not simply a book; it's powerful and God breathed. By reading it, reflecting upon its wisdom, and engaging in meaningful discussions about its teachings, people can be saved and discipled.

I'm convinced that the transformative force behind approaches like Discover Bible Studies lies in the power of the Word of God. When

you get God's word out into a community and encourage reflection on its relevance and application to life, you will see its transformative impact.

The Word and the Spirit

The role of the Holy Spirit in helping individuals understand the Bible is interpreted in various ways. Here's an overview:

1. Traditional Christian Belief: Many Christians hold that the Holy Spirit can and does work in the lives of non-Christians in various ways, including helping them understand the truths of the Bible. This perspective argues that the Holy Spirit can convict non-Christians of their need for salvation, guiding them to an understanding of Scripture that leads to faith in Christ.

2. Illumination: The doctrine of "illumination" suggests that while anyone can read and understand the basic narratives and moral teachings of the Bible, a deeper spiritual understanding—especially concerning the nature of God, the work of Christ, and the application of Scripture to one's own life—requires the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Thus, while a non-Christian can understand the Bible at a basic level, the Holy Spirit further illuminates the Scripture for believers.

3. Common Grace: The concept of "common grace" refers to the grace of God that is common to all humankind. It is "common" because its benefits are experienced by the whole human race. Through common grace, non-Christians can perceive beauty, have a moral compass, and even understand spiritual truths to some degree. In this view, the Holy Spirit can enable non-Christians to grasp certain truths of the Bible even if they don't have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

4. Evangelism and Missions: In practical terms, many missionaries and evangelists believe that the Holy Spirit prepares the hearts of non-Christians to receive the Gospel.

5. Differing Views: Some Christian traditions might emphasize the total depravity of humans, suggesting that without the Holy Spirit, individuals can't truly understand or seek God on their own. Others might emphasize human free will and suggest that individuals can seek and understand God, with the Holy Spirit then working to deepen that understanding.

”But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13).

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

“As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him” (1 John 2:27).

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day” (John 6:44).

“A sinner can no more repent and believe without the Holy Spirit's aid than he can create a world” (Charles Spurgeon).

The Bible and the Holy Spirit work together in a special way. Think of them as a supernaturally powerful team. Together, they have the power to help people see and understand things about God, even if they didn't believe in Him before.

God is the one who starts the process. He reaches out to people first, even before they start looking for Him. When someone decides to follow God, the Bible and the Holy Spirit help guide them on their journey.

Even if there's no one around to teach them, new believers can still learn about God and grow. The Bible gives them the information, and the Holy Spirit helps them understand and apply it to their lives.

“The indwelling Spirit shall teach him what is of God and what is not. This is why sometimes we can conjure up no logical reason for opposing a certain teaching, yet in the very depth of our being arises a resistance” (Watchman Nee).

Together they can…

1. Help us know God

2. Lead us into intimacy with God

3. Help us fall more in love with Jesus

Knowing God, intimacy with God, and falling in love with Jesus are powerful things and all can be had as the Holy Spirit guides anyone who studies His Word.

Many of the approaches in this writing like Discovery Bible Study, focus on helping everyone establish a personal relationship with God through the Bible. It encourages individuals, no matter where they stand spiritually, to connect with Jesus in their own special way. Instead of feeling pressured to give the "right" answer, it's all about having authentic and meaningful experiences with God through the Scriptures.

In this way new believers understand that they can read the Bible, understand it, grow, and become more like Jesus. From the start

new disciples can understand the transformative power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

Every Christian can preach, teach, and share the Word of God

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

This verse asserts that the Word of God possesses a dynamic and living quality, setting it apart from all other books.

The analogy of the double-edged sword is not merely poetic; it signifies the Word's unique ability to discern and penetrate with precision. The verse elaborates on this by stating that it can divide "soul and spirit" and even discern between "joints and marrow." This imagery conveys that the Word's influence reaches the deepest recesses of human existence, separating the immaterial aspects of our being and exposing the innermost thoughts and attitudes of the heart.[9]

To plant churches that grow and spread, we need to embrace two important truths. First, every person who believes can experience deep change through God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. And second, each one of us has the ability to pass on what we've learned to those around us.

In the Scriptures, we certainly witness a unique calling on those chosen to preach and teach God's Word. But, just as importantly, we see that each and every one of us has the potential to be filled with

[9] Hebrews 4:12 underscores the transformative and discerning power of the Word of God. This verse serves as a cornerstone in understanding the Bible's profound impact on the lives of believers, its role in spiritual growth, and its ability to guide, convict, and transform the human heart and soul.

power of the Holy Spirit. Remember in the book of Acts, when the church faced tough times? Persecution pushed the believers out, spreading them far and wide. Yet, even in those challenges, the Spirit was with them, fueling their passion and purpose. Everyone has a part in God's story, and the Spirit stands ready to empower all who believe to share God's message.

Acts 8:1-4 1 And Saul was there, giving approval to Stephen's death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 God-fearing men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. 4 **Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went**.

Consider this: it wasn't just a handful who were pushed out and scattered. The Bible tells us, "all except the apostles were scattered". Think about that for a moment. All of these believers, regular folks, spread the Word wherever they went. They weren't just passive listeners; they absorbed the teachings of the apostles and felt compelled to share their newfound knowledge far and wide. Sharing and preaching isn't limited to a chosen few; the Holy Spirit's power and the ability to share God's message is given to every believer. While challenges and persecution were the catalysts, once the early church was set into motion, the Word of God spread far and wide. When you empower believers and place them out in the world, they don't just exist—they transform lives. We will look more at the power of getting every believer out into the world, but for now we see that God can and often does use everyone in the church to transform the world.

It's vital for us to truly grasp and believe that the might and strength we carry isn't about us—it's bigger than us. The real power, the force that can change lives, comes directly from the Holy Spirit. We are all merely vessels, chosen to share the gospel and make disciples.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

In 1 Peter 3:15 we read, "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." Peter wrote this to Church members living in the five Roman provinces of Asia Minor.[10] He wanted every believer to be ready to share what they believed and why. This is the foundation of strategy that is called Obedience Based Discipleship.

The phrase "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" is a teaching for all believers. Breaking down the meaning:

1. Always being prepared: This suggests that believers should be ready at all times. It implies a constant state of readiness, not just occasional or when it's convenient.

2. To make a defense: The word "defense" here translates from the Greek word "apologia," from which we derive the English term "apologetics." It means to give a reasoned argument or explanation.

3. To anyone who asks you: This part indicates that this readiness isn't just for formal occasions, debates, or scheduled discussions. Believers should be ready to share their faith in everyday situations, whenever someone expresses curiosity or questions about it.

4. For a reason for the hope that is in you: This centers on the essence of the Christian faith, which is hope. The "hope" here refers to the confident expectation believers have in the promises of God,

[10] I Peter 1:10 "1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance."

especially concerning salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ. The verse suggests that believers should not only possess this hope but also understand why they have it and be able to articulate it to others.

So, in essence, the verse is encouraging all believers to be ever-ready to thoughtfully and respectfully explain their Christian hope to anyone who might inquire about it. It is not just ordained Christian professionals who can answer questions and share their faith, it is a skill that every believer should have and be ready to give "to anyone who asks".

Obedience Based Discipleship: Be Careful

True disciple is always obedience based discipleship. I want to drive home the point that there aren't two categories here: there are no 'regular' disciples and 'obedience-based' disciples. Disciples of Jesus follow his teaching and seek to imitate his actions.[11]

John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

John 15:7-8 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

"In my experience of over four decades as a Christian, I've yet to come across a pastor who advocates for discipleship that's solely

[11] "A disciple of Christ is one who (1) believes his doctrine, (2) rests on his sacrifice, (3) imbibes his spirit, and (4) imitates his example (Easton Bible Dictionary)."

"Derived as it was from verbs meaning "to learn," discipleship denoted the learning process but its usage described in addition the necessity of the disciple adopting the philosophy, practices and way of life of his teacher (Encyclopedia of the Bible)."

rooted in learning without the corresponding act of obedience. There's a discourse within Disciple Making Movements (DMM) suggesting that conventional churches prioritize knowledge over action. However, based on my observations and experiences, this perspective isn't true."

My friend once told me, "I am so tired of every sermon telling me to do more and try harder." He went on to say that almost every sermon he hears tells him he is not doing enough. This is so often the case. In most Evangelical churches, the sermons often revolve around actions - what we should be doing and often a push to try harder. While there's a place for emphasizing commitment and diligence, there's a significant aspect that sometimes gets overshadowed: understanding our identity in Christ and growing in our knowledge of Him.

Delving deeper into who we are in Christ can bring about a transformative understanding of our inherent value, purpose, and the immense love that God has for us. When we truly grasp our identity in Him, it can drive us to live out our faith not just out of obligation, but out of genuine love and gratitude. There's a profound richness in the scriptures about our position as God's beloved, our spiritual inheritance, and our ultimate destiny in Christ. By placing more emphasis on these truths, the church can foster a community of believers who are not just duty-driven but are deeply rooted in the love and assurance that comes from knowing who they are in Jesus.

Obedience to all that Jesus taught or obedience to the great commission?

Jesus command us to go. That is the commandment in Matthew 28:19. We also told to make discipleship, baptize them, and teach them to obey everything Jesus had command his followers.

What did Jesus command his followers to do?

1. Above All Else Love God and Your Neighbor: Cultivate a deep and intimate relationship with God and actively show love, kindness, and empathy towards everyone, regardless of their background or status.

2. Seek the Kingdom of God: Prioritize your relationship with God and align your life with His purposes, looking forward to the fullness of His kingdom. Jesus taught on the kingdom of God more than any other subject.

3. Embody the Beatitudes: Develop the character traits mentioned in the Beatitudes, such as being humble, merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers.

4. Practice Forgiveness: Forgive others for their wrongs against you, releasing bitterness and grudges, understanding that God's forgiveness towards us is contingent upon our forgiveness towards others.

5. Exercise Faith: Maintain steadfast trust in God's promises and providence, even in challenging circumstances.

6. Count the Cost: Understand that following Jesus might come with sacrifices, persecution, or hardship. Dedicate yourself to His teachings, regardless of the cost.

7. Understand and Live Out Parables: Reflect on the deep spiritual truths in Jesus' parables and incorporate their lessons into daily life.

8. Believe in the Resurrection: Recognize Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. Live in the hope and assurance of eternal life, understanding that death is not the end for those in Christ.

9. Serve Others: Adopt a posture of humility and servanthood in all relationships and endeavors, always looking for ways to serve and uplift others.

10. Go and Make Disciples

Balancing Obedience Based Discipleship and Living Like Jesus

The Discipleship Making Movement places an emphasis on obeying what is already known from Scripture. The focus is on practicing the truths of the Bible more than just understanding them. This is fantastic, but I think we need to be careful. One might mistakenly believe that the essence of discipleship is merely the multiplication of believers, overshadowing other vital dimensions of the Christian journey.

The following seems to be the core message the DMM seeks to impart, “Churches have relegated discipleship to a select few – the clergy, the missionaries, the professionals. But the truth is: every believer, irrespective of their title or role, is commissioned by Jesus to disciple others. The undue emphasis on leaving discipleship to the 'experts' has inadvertently stymied the spread of the Gospel. If we truly aspire for the life-transforming message of Jesus to reach every corner of the world, then every Christian must rise to their calling, stepping into their God-given role as disciple-makers.”[12]

Almost forty years ago while I was attending the Fuller School of World Missions we learned about George Patterson. Even at the time, having very little experience in any kind of Christian work, I worried about having a list of seven commandments that made us disciples.
In evangelical Christianity, discipleship is not primarily about adhering to a list of "do's and don'ts." Instead, it's about a relationship with Jesus Christ, transformative change from the inside out, **and** a life lived in obedience to His teachings.

[12] A hypothetical representative from the Discipleship Making Movement might articulate the following sentiments.

It's important to clarify that rules and guidelines, as found in the Scriptures, play a vital role in Christian living. But, following these rules in and of themselves does not make one a disciple.

What we should emphasize in discipleship

1. Heart Transformation: A genuine encounter with Jesus that leads to repentance and a changed heart.
2. Relationship: Daily walking with, talking to, and depending upon Jesus through prayer, meditation, and reading the Scriptures.
3. Love for Others: Jesus emphasized love as a hallmark of discipleship (John 13:34-35). The greatest way we show love to the world is to introduce them to Jesus.
4. Obedience out of Love: Following Jesus' teachings not out of obligation but out of love for Him (John 14:23).
5. Continuous Growth: A disciple is a learner, always growing in understanding and application of the faith.
6. Commission: Participating in the Great Commission, making disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20).

In essence, while moral and ethical guidelines are valuable and play a role in the life of a believer, simply adhering to them will not make one a disciple. True discipleship goes beyond mere rule-following; it's a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ marked by continuous growth and love.

If you use the Disciple Making Movement approach, make sure and not have a limited view of discipleship. Often obedience to Jesus' commands goes beyond the one command to, "go and make disciples".
Again, here is my description of a disciple: "*A disciple is someone who loves Jesus, anchors their life and faith in Jesus, cherishing every word and lesson He imparts. They long for His presence and seek to imitate Him in every action and decision*."

On one hand, we try our best to live by Jesus' teachings and show his love in our actions. On the other, we know we'll never attain his perfection. We can imitate Jesus and live by his commandment, while at the same time know we will always fall short of His perfection. This understanding helps us in two big ways: it keeps us humble, knowing we can always do better, and it reminds us that God's love and forgiveness are always there when we fall short. Christianity is a continuous journey of spiritual growth and the lifelong process of sanctification.

Understanding this balance helps us avoid two traps. One trap is getting too down on ourselves when we make mistakes. The other trap is thinking too highly of ourselves, believing we've got it all figured out. Instead, we aim for growth while leaning on God's love and grace when we fall short. This balance is at the heart of the Christian journey.

While Christians can celebrate milestones and spiritual victories in their walk with Christ, the overarching theme of Scripture encourages continuous growth, learning, and reliance on God. The journey of faith is lifelong, and believers are called to persevere, always seeking to know and love God more deeply.

Why do I want to emphasize this distinction? The church throughout the world is poisoned by the religion. At the center of most of this ugly religion is legalism.

What is legalism?

Legalism is an excessive adherence to the law or a set of rules as a means of earning or maintaining salvation. It's the belief that righteousness and favor with God can be achieved through human efforts and adherence to rules, rather than through faith in Christ alone. One of my favorite authors, John Piper defines legalism, “legalism is the conviction that law-keeping is the ground of our

acceptance with God, the ground of God being for us and not against us." He goes on to write,

> So what we want, what I want in my life, is not just to be free from a principled legalism — you know, a theological legalism that says you get to heaven, or you please God, or you win his favor by keeping the law. I want to have a gracious spirit, a gospel spirit, not a legal spirit that comes from a failure to be amazed at my being saved by grace.

Here are a few aspects of legalism:

1. Legalism can imply that one can earn salvation or God's favor by good works or following specific regulations.
2. Strict Rule-Keeping: This might mean observing certain rituals, dietary laws, days of worship, or other specific regulations, and holding others to these same standards.
3. Judgmental Attitude: Legalists might look down on others who don't follow the same set of rules, leading to a sense of spiritual pride and superiority.
4. Missing the Heart: Legalism often focuses on the outward actions rather than the inner heart transformation. It might prioritize ritual or rule-keeping over genuine love, mercy, grace, and relationship with God.
5. Misunderstanding of Grace: Legalism can undermine the understanding of God's grace. The gospel message teaches that salvation is a gift from God, received through faith in Jesus Christ, not something we can earn. In the New Testament, particularly in Paul's letters, there's a recurring theme of cautioning believers against legalism.

Please don't get me wrong, I am not against teaching new believers that they should help fulfill the great commission. I think that would be fantastic. I think it can also be highly effectively. If we keep the following in mind. Jesus' call to obedience is not about ticking boxes or fulfilling a list of duties. It's a heart-oriented obedience, rooted in

a deep, personal relationship with Him. The foundation of this relationship is the profound realization of the depth of God's love for us, demonstrated through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus. When we truly grasp the magnitude of what Christ has done for us, our obedience is no longer a burdensome obligation. Instead, it becomes a joyful response.

This kind of obedience springs from a well of gratitude. We obey not out of fear of punishment or to earn favor, but out of sheer thankfulness for the unmerited grace we've received. The profound gift of salvation changes our perspective. We begin to see God's commands not as restrictive rules, but as guidelines that lead us to a fuller, more abundant life. They become the natural expressions of a heart that's been transformed by the knowledge of God's love.

Furthermore, when we operate from a place of gratitude, our actions and choices reflect the character of Jesus. We no longer merely "follow rules" but seek to embody the love, mercy, and grace that we have been shown. In this way, obedience becomes an act of worship, a daily offering of our lives to the One who gave His life for us.

Foundational Concepts

What is Cultural Relevance in Missionary Work?

In missionary work, cultural relevance refers to the conscious effort made by missionaries to understand, respect, and appropriately engage with the customs, values, and beliefs of the local culture where they are ministering. Rather than imposing foreign customs or traditions, culturally relevant missionaries seek to present the Gospel in ways that are meaningful and relatable to the local populace.

Key components of cultural relevance in missionary work include:

1. Contextualization[13]: Adapting the presentation of the Gospel to fit the local culture without compromising its core message. For instance, using local idioms, stories, or symbols to convey biblical truths.

2. Understanding Local Practices: Taking time to learn and appreciate the local traditions, ceremonies, and rituals, and discerning how they might align with or diverge from biblical principles.

3. Building Genuine Relationships: Engaging with the community not as an outsider but as a listener and learner, building trust and understanding.

4. Respect for Local Leadership: Empowering and supporting indigenous leaders who can lead and shepherd their communities with an inherent understanding of their culture.

5. Avoiding Ethnocentrism[14]: Recognizing that one's own cultural norms and practices aren't universally applicable or superior. Respecting cultural differences and avoiding imposing one's own cultural biases.

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[13] Certainly! Let's use an example from history involving the Christmas holiday to illustrate contextualization in missions:

When St. Boniface, an English missionary, arrived in Germany in the 8th century, he faced the challenge of introducing Christianity to a people who were deeply attached to their tree-worshipping practices. Instead of condemning this practice outright, he sought a way to contextualize the Gospel message within this cultural framework. Legend has it that St. Boniface used the triangular shape of the fir tree to describe the Holy Trinity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He then declared the evergreen tree, with its enduring foliage amidst winter, as a symbol of the eternal life that Jesus offers. Instead of worshipping the tree, the people were encouraged to adorn it with candles (and later, ornaments) as a symbol of Christ's light in the world. This approach allowed the Germanic people to retain a cherished cultural practice, but with new Christian significance. What's fascinating is that this contextualized approach didn't just remain localized to Germany. The tradition of the Christmas tree spread and became an integral part of Christian Christmas celebrations globally.

[14] Ethnocentrism refers to the belief or attitude that one's own culture is superior to others. This can lead to a tendency to view other cultures through the lens of one's own cultural norms, values, and practices. It's crucial for missionaries to be aware of and actively combat ethnocentrism in their work. Doing so not only respects the dignity and value of other cultures but also facilitates more effective and meaningful sharing of the Gospel message. Recognizing the universality of the Gospel – that it is good news for all people, in all cultures – is essential in moving beyond ethnocentric tendencies.

6. Using Local Resources: Rather than relying solely on foreign materials or methods, utilizing local songs, art, stories, and other resources in worship and teaching can make the message more accessible and relatable.

In essence, cultural relevance in missionary work emphasizes the importance of connecting with people in their heart language and cultural framework. This approach respects the local culture while sharing the universal truths of the Gospel, ensuring that the message is both understood and transformative.

What is the "Three-Thirds Process" in Small Group Settings?

The three-thirds process, often associated with Chruch Planting Movements, Training for Trainers (T4T) and other disciple-making movements, is a structure used in small group settings (like Bible studies or discipleship groups) to foster holistic growth, participation, and multiplication. The process divides the meeting time into three distinct segments:

1. Look Back (Review and Worship):
    - Accountability: Participants share how they applied what they learned in the last gathering, reporting on commitments and any outreach or sharing they did.
    - Worship: This can include prayer, singing, or other forms of worship.
    - Vision Casting: Encouraging the group to think about expansion and reminding them of the bigger vision of making disciples.

2. Look Up (Study God's Word):
    - New Lesson: Participants explore a new passage or topic from the Bible. Often, this involves reading a scripture passage, discussing its meaning, and identifying applications for daily life.

- Practice: Participants may practice sharing the lesson or story to ensure they can communicate it effectively to others outside the group.

3. Look Ahead (Plan and Practice):
   - Planning: The group makes specific plans for applying what they've learned and for sharing it with others.
   - Prayer: Closing in prayer, often with a focus on seeking God's help in applying the lesson and reaching others.

The idea behind this process is to ensure that groups aren't just "studying" the Bible but are also actively applying its teachings and are always looking forward to how they can share the message with others. It's a method intended to promote both spiritual growth and multiplication.

What is Reproducing Evangelism?

Reproducing evangelism, often associated with movements like Disciple Making Movements (DMM) and Church Planting Movements (CPM), refers to a method of evangelism that emphasizes not only sharing the Gospel with others but also equipping and empowering those new believers to immediately share the Gospel with others as well. The aim is for each new disciple to reproduce their faith by making other disciples, who in turn make disciples, and so forth.

The key components of reproducing evangelism often include: Immediate obedience, multiplication, simplicity, empowerment, and rapid reproduction.

By focusing on reproduction from the outset, this evangelistic approach aims for a rapid expansion of the Gospel in a way that can become self-sustaining within communities.

What is “Reproducing Leadership?”

Reproducing leadership in the church refers to the intentional development and multiplication of leaders who, in turn, develop and multiply other leaders. Instead of leadership being limited to a select few or a single individual, the goal of reproducing leadership is to continually increase the number of capable leaders within a church or ministry. Here are the core concepts:

1. Leadership Multiplication: At its core, reproducing leadership is about training leaders who can then train others. The Apostle Paul captured this concept in 2 Timothy 2:2 when he wrote, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

2. Empowerment: Leaders are not just developed to take on tasks but are empowered to take on significant responsibilities, making leadership decisions, and carrying the vision forward.

3. Cultural Shift: Reproducing leadership often requires a cultural shift in the church. Instead of "hoarding" leadership, there's a generous handing off of responsibilities and roles.[15]

4. Intentional Development: This isn't about a spontaneous or occasional mentoring moment; it's a deliberate and systematic approach to leadership development.

5. Modeling: Current leaders model what they desire in future leaders, providing a tangible example for others to follow.

6. Continuous Cycle: As new leaders emerge, they are integrated into the same process, ensuring that leadership reproduction becomes a continuous cycle.

[15] For information on “Culture Shift” go to the section, “What is a culture shift in church leadership?”

Reproducing leadership ensures sustainability and growth in a church. As the church grows or faces transitions, there's a pool of trained and equipped leaders ready to step into roles as needed. This approach reflects Jesus' method of investing deeply in a few to ensure that leadership, teaching, and mission would continue and multiply beyond His earthly ministry.

What is a Cultural Shift in Church Leadership?

A cultural shift in church leadership refers to a significant change in the values, practices, and beliefs that inform how leadership operates within the church context. This kind of shift can manifest in various ways and can be driven by different factors. Here are some examples and reasons for a cultural shift in church leadership:

1. From Hierarchical to Collaborative Leadership: Traditional churches often operate on a hierarchical model where decision-making resides mainly with senior pastors or a select group of elders. A cultural shift might move the church towards a more collaborative model, emphasizing team-based leadership and broader congregational involvement in decisions.

2. Empowerment of Laity: There's a growing emphasis on equipping and empowering lay members to take on leadership roles instead of leaving all leadership to ordained ministers.

3. Relevance and Adaptability: As society changes, churches sometimes undergo a cultural shift to remain relevant. This might involve adjusting worship styles, utilizing technology, or rethinking ministry approaches.

4. From Maintenance to Mission: Some churches experience a shift from focusing primarily on maintaining existing structures and programs to prioritizing outreach, evangelism, and community impact.

5. Generational Transitions: As older leaders retire or move on, younger leaders may bring in fresh perspectives, values, and visions that lead to a cultural shift.

6. Inclusion: As the global church becomes more interconnected and societies become more varied, there's a move towards more inclusive leadership that values a range of cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

7. Renewed Theological Emphasis: A renewed emphasis on certain theological principles can reshape leadership practices, such as a heightened focus on the priesthood of all believers or a return to early church practices.

8. Adopting New Methods: The introduction of new strategies like church planting movements, disciple-making movements, or other missional approaches can create shifts in how leadership operates.

A cultural shift in church leadership is significant and often requires intentional navigation. Such shifts can lead to growth and revitalization but can also be accompanied by challenges as members adjust to the new leadership culture. Effective communication, patience, and consistent vision-casting are essential during such transitional periods.

What are “Microchurches”?

Microchurches, sometimes also referred to as "house churches" or "simple churches," are smaller, more intimate gatherings of believers that meet outside of the traditional church setting. They can convene in homes, cafes, workplaces, or other informal settings. Here are some of their main characteristics:

Size: Typically, they consist of a small number of people. The size makes it possible for everyone to participate actively, build deeper relationships, and ensure that everyone's needs are met.
Simplicity: They don't require large infrastructures, paid staff, or complex programming.

Flexibility: Meeting locations and times can easily change based on the needs and schedules of the members.

Leadership: Often led by laypeople rather than ordained ministers. Leadership can be shared or rotated among members.

Organic Growth: They can multiply easily. As one group grows, it can split into two or more smaller gatherings.

Focus on Relationships: The small setting fosters deep, personal relationships, discipleship, and mutual care among members

Who is Francis Chan and what is his perspective on the church?

Francis Chan, a former megachurch pastor and now a well-known Christian author and speaker, has been quite vocal about his beliefs concerning the church. Here are some of his key perspectives based on his writings, teachings, and interviews up until my last update in January 2022:

1. Intimacy with God: Chan often emphasizes the importance of a deep, personal relationship with God rather than merely participating in church activities.

2. Church as a Community: Chan believes that the church should be more than a place people attend once a week. He suggests that the church should be a community where believers live out their faith

daily and intimately with one another, much like the early church depicted in the Book of Acts.

3. Simplicity of Church Structure: In his book "Letters to the Church," Chan critiques the modern Western church model with its often complex organizational structures and large budgets. He advocates for a return to simpler, home-based fellowship groups.

4. Making Disciples: Chan places a high emphasis on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), which instructs believers to make disciples. He believes that every Christian should be actively involved in disciple-making, not just church leaders.

5. Concern about Consumer Christianity: Chan has voiced concerns about what he sees as a consumer mentality in many Western churches, where attendees come to get something out of the service rather than give and participate actively in the body of Christ.

6. Holiness and Surrender: He consistently teaches that Christians should pursue holiness and total surrender to God, highlighting the cost of discipleship.

7. Church Planting Movements: In recent years, Chan has been involved in house church planting movements, particularly in Asia. He believes that this model can be more effective in certain contexts and is more in line with the New Testament model of church.

It's essential to note that while many appreciate Chan's perspective and passion, others have critiques or differing viewpoints. As with any teacher or preacher, it's always a good idea to explore their teachings directly and compare them with the Bible.

What is a Multiplication Model of Church Planting or Church Growth?

The multiplication model, especially in the context of church planting and growth, is an approach that emphasizes not just adding members but multiplying leaders, groups, and churches. It's rooted in the idea of disciples making disciples, who in turn make more disciples. Here's a closer look:

1. Rapid Expansion: The aim is for swift growth, not just through individual conversions but by training new leaders who can start new churches or groups.

2. Empowerment: Every member is seen as a potential leader or church planter. Training and discipleship are geared toward empowering individuals to take on leadership roles.

3. Reproducibility: Everything from church practices to discipleship materials is designed to be easily reproducible. The idea is that whatever is taught can be quickly and easily passed on to others.

2. Organic Growth: Instead of investing heavily in large, centralized structures, the emphasis is on starting many small, independent, self-sustaining churches or groups.

Growing in Cultural Understanding

In the realm of Foreign Christian Ministry, the idea of consistent daily learning and dedication holds significant importance.

To truly understand the intricate cultural, social, and spiritual dimensions of a foreign land, dedicating 15 minutes daily towards targeted learning can be transformative. Imagine allocating 15 minutes each day to study indigenous religious traditions, or understand regional cultural nuances. Over a span of six months to a year, this commitment would not only enhance your capability as a missionary but also deepen the bonds of trust and mutual respect with the community you serve.

Consider the potential impact: By investing 15 minutes daily for six months into researching a specific people group, you'd likely possess knowledge deeper than most of your peers. Persist with this regimen for one year, and you could be viewed (at least by no locals) as an expert on the subject.

While the duration might vary, the principle remains: 15 minutes daily can be the bridge between an average understanding and expertise. The relevance? In Foreign Christian Ministry, merely having surface-level knowledge might not suffice. To truly serve, connect, and make a difference, a deeper understanding could be pivotal.

Is such dedication worthwhile? Emphatically, yes. In the mission field, mediocrity can hinder the genuine connections and positive impact we strive for. Unless one is prepared to commit those precious minutes daily, the risk is remaining superficial in one's engagement, possibly settling for mediocrity.

Reliance on the Power of God

“When it is a question of God's almighty Spirit, never say, ‘I can't’" (Oswald Chambers).

Acts 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. *(Acts 1:4-8)"*

The significance of this verse in the context of church planting cannot be overstated. It signifies that we should not even start the process of making disciples until we are indued with power from on high. This empowerment is not merely a theological concept but demonstratable power that can be experienced and seen by the world.

It is the power of God that will propel the spread the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. This type of progression is what we want to see in any church planting effort. Dependance upon the Holy Spirit lies at the heart of church planting. It is the power that transforms ordinary individuals into extraordinary witnesses, emboldened and empowered them to carry the light of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Weather it is Alpha Course, the Church in China, or the Church Planting Movement, all have testimonies of the power of God working through their minister with signs and wonders.

Dependance on God has always been the case throughout the history of missions. Hudson Taylor, for example, emphasized the need for complete reliance on God's power, guidance, and provision. One of his notable quotes on this topic is: "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God's being with them." Taylor faced numerous challenges and obstacles in his life and ministry, but he relied on prayer and faith to overcome them. His legacy continues to inspire and encourage Christians to rely on the Holy Spirit's leading in their own lives and missions.

Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are as ships without wind or chariots without steeds. Like branches without sap, we are withered. Like coals without fire, we are useless. As an

offering without the sacrificial flame, we are unaccepted” (Charles Spurgeon).

The greatest cross-cultural missionary, Paul, admits to being with the Corinthians "in weakness and in fear and much trembling".

1 Corinthians 2:2-5 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The Apostle Paul’s humility serves as a powerful reminder that, despite our limitations and fears, we can still be effective instruments in God's hands. Our effectiveness does not rest on how talented we are but on the power of God. Our weakness can be an amazing conduit for God's strength to shine through. This should encourage us to seek his presence and the power of the Spirit in our own lives and ministries.