

# OIKOS

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*The* **IMPORTANCE of**  
**5-FOLD**

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## Sowing and Reaping. Stepping up to the mark!

I regularly receive email and phone calls from people across Australia looking for a home church in their area. Sadly, we often do not have any that we know of in their location and I encourage them to start one, but few seem to do so. We need more individuals and families to step onto the mark and to make a start!

It isn't just about a simple way of doing assemblies and gatherings (church) but a call to reach out intentionally and consistently and sow much more Gospel seed. The more that we sow the more harvest we will see.

As we know not all Gospel seed mature into a harvest. In the parable of the sower, Mark 4, we see that only one of the 4 soils resulted in a harvest, but the farmer wasn't discouraged - he knew that if he sowed enough seed he would see a harvest.

Over the past few weeks, I have been reading through large parts of Romans and Galatians again and I came across a passage near the end of Galatians that spoke to me in a fresh way. Paul had been writing to the Galatians warning them against legalism and seeking salvation through the Law. In chapter 5 he speaks of believer's freedom and of living and walking in the Spirit and not gratifying the desires of the flesh or sinful nature. He then encourages believers to care for each other and to carry each other's burdens, so fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal 6:2).

He then speaks of how we reap what we sow - either to the sinful nature or to Spirit and resulting in eternal life. Interestingly he then encourages believers not to become weary in doing good, for we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (Gal 6:9). "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (v 10). I noticed that sowing and reaping isn't only for our personal lives and salvation, but to produce a harvest - if we don't give up.

I am challenged to be a person who doesn't give up, who does good to all people - especially Gods people - and to not be weary.

As I listen to stories from around Australia and beyond it is apparent that we need lots of people who are doing good and involved in their community with people from all backgrounds. As we do we discover the Holy Spirit opening doors and prompting us to listen to people stories and needs and to speak the Gospel in appropriate ways. We need to be good at then inviting these people to join us in reading the stories of Jesus and exploring what this means for their lives. This is a simple Discovery Group. As more and more people do this we will see more and more simple churches forming naturally through the relational networks of people in everyday life. There will be a harvest - God has promised it.

Recently I attended a very moving funeral service of a lady who really loved her family, grandchildren, neighbours and everyday people that she met and made friends with - many of who she involved in reading the Bible with.



About a week ago Kate and I had a family stay with us who have opened their home and *(Continued on page 7)*

## OIKOS Australia

*Oikos exists to build the Kingdom of God by multiplying disciple-makers and simple church*

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# Why the Gospel Requires Presence

Ben Sternke

**I**t's interesting that the angel didn't just preach the gospel to Cornelius the Centurion in Acts 10. Instead Cornelius is told to fetch Peter, and of course at the same time an angel told Peter to allow himself to be fetched.

It's interesting that it was important for Peter to go to Cornelius' house, to be present with this Gentile in order to preach the gospel. Peter's presence mattered in this encounter. Why?

Because the gospel isn't just "information." Because God is creating one new humanity in Christ out of all the ways we come up with to divide ourselves. And the oneness of this new

humanity must not remain an abstract concept but must become an incarnate, embodied reality.

Peter must cross the threshold of a Gentile home. He must preach to them, lay hands on them, baptize them with water, and then stay with them. The church's unity is not a nice ideal, it is a sacramental reality, enfleshed in the bodies of Peter, his companions, Cornelius, and his household.

So of course Peter must be present for the gospel to truly be preached in its fullness. If the angel had just given Cornelius the gospel "information" there would have been two parallel churches.

This would be a bastardization of the gospel.

The church is the one new humanity that God is creating. This is not a nice ideal for us to think about, it is an incarnate, embodied, sacramental reality. It requires that human bodies learn to be together, stay with each other, and love one another.



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# Making God Smile

*When I run fast, I feel His pleasure.' Eric Liddell*



**The above quote is attributed to Scotsman Eric Liddell who won the gold medal for the 400 yards (400m) in the 1924 Olympics in Paris. He did this after refusing to run in his best event the 100 yards, as well as other races, because the heats were to be held on Sundays.**

This Liddell testimony to the priority of God in the Christian life has echoed down the nearly 100 years since that time. The movie 'Chariots of Fire' tells the story. After the Olympics he went to China as a missionary, dying in a Japanese POW camp in 1945. His testimony raises the question as to whether we who claim to be Christians are bringing God pleasure, or to put it another way, 'Making Him Smile'?

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This article is a follow up to one I wrote last year with the title 'Is God Crying?'. The basic argument of that article was that-

*'Evidence of God's pain, even tears, is a theme throughout the history of Israel, the people He had created and chosen to be His vehicle for the salvation of humankind. as they regularly rejected the purpose for which they had been chosen, by turning their mission into legalistic, self-centred (and I might also now add idolatrous) religiosity.'*

To support that argument, I referred to various Old

Testament examples of God's pain at the behaviour of His chosen people (particularly Isaiah 5:1-4; Jeremiah 14:17; and Amos 5:21-24), as well as the event of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41-41. I do not think it unreasonable to argue that the same self-centred, and also idolatrous, religiosity is a major characteristic of the Church of our time, both at individual and institutional levels.

*In this article however, let us take another more positive tack and ask the question as to what, rather than bringing God's tears, will actually give Him pleasure and bring a smile to His face?*

The Bible has some answers to that question.

\*\*\*\*\*

One can assume, speaking of God anthropomorphically (as if He was in human form), that when He is pleased He would be smiling. The point that can be drawn from Liddell's statement is that God is pleased when His costly-won children (1 Corinthians 6:19,20) use the gifts He has given them for His purpose and Glory; that is when they 'offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God'. (Romans 12:1).

The Bible answers the 'what makes God smile' question in a number of places, not the least of which is the Parable of the

Dr. Martin Bragger

Lost Son in Luke 15. This is the story, which has to be understood in the Jewish context of 2000 years ago, of a son who despite having, and being the heir of, all the privileges of a rich aristocratic family, chooses to take his share of his Father's estate and goes off to do his own thing. Consequently, he blows all the money and ends up as a virtual beggar having trashed his life. Subsequently, he 'comes to his senses' in regard to the stupidity of turning away from his father and decides to return home.

We then see the beautiful picture of the undeserving rebel being welcomed back by his father and restored to his original honoured status in the family. It is not that hard to see that this is an allegory of the Grace of God, showing the willingness of the Father (God) to accept back the repentant sinner (us), no matter how much of a mess they have made of their life. Importantly, the rebel is not just welcomed back but the Father (God) restores him to his full status as an honoured son, and in addition throws a great party to celebrate the event. We can be sure that on that occasion the Father would be smiling, and with joy!

God smiles when His disciples make disciples (Matthew 28:19,20), when rebellious Lost sons and Lost daughters are found and brought into the Kingdom. The two short parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin at the beginning of Luke 15 reinforce the point that there is 'rejoicing in heaven' over the return of the Lost. From that we can infer that God is part of the celebrations, and that He would be smiling.

It is true that we are saved, not by works, but by Grace as clearly taught in Ephesians 2:8 and 9. However, the flow of argument doesn't end in verse 9, as quite frankly many congregational members seem to assume it does, but continues into verse 10

which tells Christians what they are saved *FOR*. That is we are- 'Created in Christ Jesus (made a part of the Body of Christ) *to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*'.

What those good works are for each individual Christian each one has to prayerfully, and in consultation with others, work out. One can assume that, while it is disobedience to that which brings God's tears, as my previous article covered, it is obedience in the use of our abilities and resources to carry out the works that 'God prepared in advance for us to do' that gives God pleasure and makes Him smile. The pronouns are plural which negates the idea of the 'individual Christian' and reminds us that Christianity is a 'team sport', a team (the body of Christ) in which God expects everyone to play their part as their gifts allow.

I would argue that a primary aspect of this is about obeying Jesus' commission to make disciples. This has never been so important as now, given the catastrophic and long-standing implosion of Christianity in Australia, indeed in the West generally, with all the, daily increasing and very obvious, consequences for society that entails.

As the Westminster Confession puts it, 'The chief end (purpose) of Man is to Glorify God'. Indeed, Christians are saved that they 'might BE (exist) for the praise of His Glory' (Ephesians 1:12).

It is by using our gifts for the works He prepared for us to do that we bring Glory to God and, in Liddell's words, give Him pleasure, and so Make Him smile. Church services and Bible study groups have their value but (as the devastating condemnation of Amos 5:21-24 reminds us)

*ONLY* if we carry-out the works, the agenda, God has prepared for us to do beforehand.

From my (now long!) observation, this (biblical) way of thinking and acting is not something most church members engage in a great deal. So it is highly likely that God is not smiling! The tragedy of biblical history is that it is often one, even mostly, of God's tears at His people's disobedience and rejection of His love and grace. Given the apathy and lack of real zeal and passion for the works 'He prepared in advance for us to do' exhibited by most western Christians, we can only surmise that God is weeping still.

The only thing that will make God smile is thankful energetic obedience to the call of Jesus to self-denial, sacrifice and discomfort in the Gospel cause. That will require a radical change on behalf of most who call themselves Christians. It will require the passionate use of gifts; the widespread liberal sprinkling of the corruption-fighting SALT and the shining of the LIGHT of Christ (Matt. 5:13-16) to overcome the tide of consuming, destructive Satanic darkness overwhelming 21<sup>st</sup> century western society.

So, at this seemingly little recognised inflection point in the history of the West, as we see its ongoing cultural disintegration, like watching a slow-motion train wreck, there is a stark choice for every western Christian, and there is no fence-sitting. The choice is will we mirror once again the tragedy God's people recounted in the Old Testament, a story of disobedience and God's tears, or will we passionately engage in the costly task of Gospel Mission in order to 'Make God Smile'?

**MARTIN BRAGGER** lives with his wife Sandie in Thirroul, on the south coast of NSW. He is the founder of Unbounded Church. A former atheist, painfully dragged kicking and screaming into the kingdom of God, he is working with others in trying to write a map for the missional journey down the road we have not yet travelled.  
[unboundedchurch.com](http://unboundedchurch.com)





Photo: gabrielhambleton

# Small Groups

# Missional Communities

# & Microchurches

**W**hile small groups certainly existed beforehand, the growth of small group ministries came about primarily with the rise of the mega-church and the church growth movement in the 1980s.

Many churches recognized that lots of new people were coming in the “front door” but just about as many were leaving out the “back door.” Churches discovered that if people were connected with each other in small groups, especially meeting in homes, they were less likely to leave and attend another church. Simply put, small groups became an assimilation strategy. They helped make a large church smaller, and when functioning well, they created a space for life-on-life accountability and authentic care.

While it is a good thing to help people connect relationally, the outcome was that “community” became the organizing principle of most small groups. Instead of using the collective

gifts and resources of the group members to engage in mission, they focused on utilizing the latest small group curriculum. The problem wasn’t with small groups. The problem was that small groups were hijacked by the subtle influence of consumerism.

This can also be seen in the manner most people see the gathering as a way to define their small group. If you ask people about their group, they will tell you *when* and *where* they meet, rather than the vision, values, or mission of the group. The hope has been that over time people in small groups would be disciplined and eventually engage in mission. However, while that process sounds good “on paper” the reality is that genuine discipleship and missional engagement rarely take place when community is the starting point.

**MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES**

The organizing principle of a missional community is mission. A missional community sees itself as a network of

relationships with a common mission, rather than being defined by a meeting that is attended.

A missional community can be defined, as a ***committed group of Jesus followers, the size of an extended family (12-25), empowered by the Spirit, to participate in God’s mission of redemption in a particular neighborhood or network.***

There are 7 key phrases in this definition:

***Committed group.*** They are devoted to each other and to the mission of the community.

***Jesus followers.*** They are maturing disciples who are following Jesus’ lead.

***Extended family.*** The group is small enough to care, yet large enough to dare.

***Empowered by the Spirit.*** They are formed and sent by the Spirit.

***Participate in God’s mission.*** The *missio Dei* is the organizing principle of all they do.

***Of redemption.*** They will engage in both Gospel proclamation and demonstration.

**Neighborhood or network.** They are embedded in a neighborhood or network of relationships as an incarnational expression of the church.

This definition offers a framework to differentiate a missional community from a traditional small group, but at the same time, it provides enough flexibility not to be too rigid. It is important as you define what a missional community looks like in your context that it not be too prescriptive. Each missional community needs to be unique to its context and mission.

### MICROCHURCHES

While microchurches share several of the same characteristics with missional communities there are a couple of differences. Like missional communities, microchurches see mission as the organizing principle of their existence. However, microchurches not only focus on particular neighborhoods and networks of relationships, but others will engage in specific problems in a city.

These areas of missional engagement could include a wide variety of poverty issues, human trafficking, education, crime, homelessness, mental health and other areas of brokenness where gospel restoration is needed.

**SOWING & REAPING** (Cont. from page 2) have had a Bible study group on Tuesday nights for about 30 years. Many have come to faith though that experience and it continues to reach people. This lady and her husband are very open about their faith and readily talk to people and often have people over for meals. If you can't do that you can go to their homes and have meals! (Luke 10: 8). In our culture another way is to invite people out for a coffee or do some activity with them.

In Australia at this particular time it is often the ones or twos, but I'm praying and believing for whole families and people groups to be reached with the Gospel. In due time we will see a harvest that will surprise us - God has promised!

For me, the language of *microchurch* also provides a broader umbrella to

encompass a variety of church expressions.

*How and where* microchurches gather and engage their missional contexts will be very different. Some of them will meet in homes, as that approach often makes sense for reaching a neighborhood or a social network. But others will meet in coffee shops, cafes, pubs, community centers, apartment complexes, and many other informal public places. There will even be some microchurches that operate around business ventures or non-profits created for

the sake of the city.

All microchurches will not (and should not) look alike. Mission is the mother of adaptive ecclesiology. This simply means that if we begin with God's mission (missiology) then there ought to be lots of wild and wonderful expressions of church (ecclesiology). Thinking outside the conventional paradigm for how

All microchurches will not (and should not) look alike. Mission is the mother of adaptive ecclesiology. This simply means that if we begin with God's mission then there ought to be lots of wild and wonderful expressions of church

mission, community and worship intersect in smaller gatherings is essential. There is no *one* way.

Perhaps the greatest distinction between a missional community and a microchurch is that microchurches are seen as the church in its smallest, most nimble, and potent expression. Most (not all) missional communities are closely "tethered" to the larger church. Missional communities are therefore seen by many as an outreach expression of the mother church. Microchurches, on the other hand, give special emphasis to empowering people to use their gifts and resources to engage in God's redemptive mission. They provide an opportunity for indigenous leaders to create and contextualize fresh expressions of the church. They give both the license to lead, but they also give leaders the creative control over what they lead. This does not negate the benefits of networking microchurches together for the sake of training, coaching, accountability, and movement, however those resources exist to support the microchurches not for the microchurches to support the network.

**BRIAN SANDERS** is the founder of the *Underground Network*. Brian has lived with his wife and six children in intentional community in the inner-city for more than twenty years, embodying the ideas that drive him and is now living and working in Dublin, Ireland with his wife and two youngest kids. For more on the topic of micro-churches read *Underground Church and Microchurches* [undergroundnetwork.org](http://undergroundnetwork.org)



Recently I was doing a discovery DBS bible reading with a family member and I started to think and pray for the people I know who could be open to this. If enough of us step up to the mark, are prayerful, Spirit-led and faithful - we will be surprised at what happens. Will you be one of those faithful people/families?

As we reach out I always encourage people to plant the discovery group in the space or homes of new people so it is their group and they can invite their friends. From there it is a fairly simple progression to establish and run a simple church.

One person who has recently come to our group said he and his wife like how everyone "gets to contribute and have a say." They love the fellowship.

God is also working supernaturally. A lady and her husband contacted me and told of how she had a dream calling her to work in a town on our area. They are now planning to move into the area midyear. God is building his church. I expect we will see more of these promptings, dreams, and amazing "coincidences." Yes, the enemy is very much at work - but so is the Holy Spirit!

And remember there are over 40% of Australians who identify as Christians on the census who don't regularly attend a church. A lot of Australians need a spiritual home!!

*bless you, Phil Brown*  
OIKOS DIRECTOR

# The Importance of 5-Fold (APEST)

Brad Brisco

*In the biblical sense all Christians are priests and clergy, and this is a crucial starting point if we are to rediscover the true concept of ministry and leadership within the church. David Watson*

*In the New Testament there are functional distinctions between various kinds of ministries but no hierarchical division between clergy and laity.*

*Howard Snyder*



Photo: tamastuzekatai.unsplash

**B**efore addressing a specific way to look at the gifting and functions of the body of Christ, let's consider a general view of leadership that in many ways has kept the church from fully realizing its calling. I am referring to what is considered the clergy-laity divide.

The word *laity* comes from a Greek word (*laos*) that means "people." Today we often use the related term "layperson" in distinction from the word "professional." A layperson is someone in a particular discipline who is seen as an "amateur"—someone who dabbles in a certain area but doesn't operate with a high level of skill or expertise. The professional, on the other hand, is the expert. He is the one "in the know." She has the expertise to operate at a high level.

While there may be a place for this division in the business world or perhaps in the area of sports, there is no biblical basis for such a distinction in the church. Eugene Peterson writes on this division of language in his book "The Jesus Way." Within the Christian community there are few words that are more disabling than "layperson" and "laity." The words convey the impression—an impression that quickly solidifies into a lie—that there is a two-level hierarchy among the men and women who follow Jesus. There are those who are trained, sometimes referred to as "the called," the professionals who are paid to preach, teach, and provide guidance in the Christian way, occupying the upper level. The lower level is made up of everyone else, those whom God assigned jobs as storekeepers, lawyers, journalists, parents, and computer programmers.<sup>[i]</sup> Ministry, therefore, is not set aside for some professional class within the church, but instead all the people of God are called and commissioned.

In the classic book, *The Community of the King*, author Howard Snyder speaks to this issue:

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

We need to "deprofessionalize" ministry and give it back to the people of God. However, this does not mean that we don't have leaders. Any significant movement that makes an impact has definite leadership. We simply shouldn't confuse leadership with a call to participate in Jesus' redemptive mission.

Ephesians 4 tells us that when all the members (*laos*) are properly working together, the body grows up into maturity. It further states that the body will experience the fullness of Christ (4:15). Such maturity and fullness is not possible if only 10 percent of the body exercises their gifting.

When we look at the early church (and every other movement that has had a significant impact throughout



history), we see that everyone is regarded as a significant agent of the King and is encouraged to find their place in the movement. In other words, in the church that Jesus built, everyone gets to play. In fact, everyone must play!

### THE IMPORTANCE OF APEST

Now that we have made the case for activating all the people of God, let's move to a specific way to accomplish the task. Part of the solution of diminishing the clergy-laity divide and helping the *laos* engage in mission and ministry involves broadening our concept of ministry. We need to move beyond ministry being framed simply by the traditional pastor-teacher model of the church to a fivefold understanding of ministry giftings as described in Ephesians 4:1-16. This fivefold framework, or topology, is sometimes referred to as APEST: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd and Teacher.

Expanding our application of the Ephesians 4 passage does not diminish the irreplaceable roles shepherds and teachers play in the life of the church, but it does or should expand our view of ministry and help the church engage God's mission more fully.

Let's begin by examining the Ephesians 4 passage. But before reading the text, consider a rarely discussed aspect of this passage. In the vast majority of cases, we have read this passage as a leadership text. In other words, we normally understand the gifts that are mentioned as leaders given to the church for the purpose of equipping the rest of the people of God. However, one of the most revolutionary aspects of Ephesians 4 is that it is not a leadership text—it is a text about the ministry of the whole church. In other words, rather than a leadership text, it is a body text. Paul is stating that the gifts given to the church are actually given to the *laos*—the whole people of God.

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and*

*in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:1-16, NIV).*

In this passage, Paul is presenting the logic of the church's ministry. Consider it this way:

In verses 1-6, Paul calls us to realize our fundamental unity in the one God.

In verses 7-11, he says that APEST has been given to the church by Christ.

In verses 12-16, he says why APEST is given. So that we might be built up, reach unity and become mature.

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

Sadly, most churches have traditionally operated with only two out of the five: namely shepherding and teaching. In most cases, the ministries of the apostle,

prophet and evangelist (APEs) have often been minimized, if not completely relegated to the margins, out of the vocabulary and ministry of the church. According to Ephesians 4, we essentially cut off three-fifths of our capacity to grow and mature as the body of Christ, which has done serious damage to the church's ability to be the fullness of Jesus in the world.

### APEST SUMMARY

To gain a better understanding of each of the functions or gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4, here is a brief summary, [\[iii\]](#) along with possible immaturities. [\[iv\]](#)

### THE APOSTLE "One who is sent and extends"

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

### Apostle's Immaturity

Those with an apostolic calling can be so goal oriented that they run over people, or run people ragged. They can often place unhealthy emphasis on achievement, and at times lack gentleness and patience when people don't understand them. They can be overly driven and overly demanding. They have trouble being part of a group they're not leading. When they experience resistance from others, they tend to push harder rather than stepping back and evaluating.

### THE PROPHET. "One who questions and reforms"

Prophets are sensitive to God and what is important to Him. They often have a sense of what truth needs to be emphasized for their time and place. Essentially, prophets are guardians of the

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

### **Prophet’s Immaturity**

They can be overly critical being hyper focused on what they dislike and disagree with. Can be stubborn and argumentative in the face of unfamiliar information. Judgmental in sizing others up. At times, they can be internally arrogant and self-righteous while disapproving of others. They have a hard time with ambiguity and desire immediate resolution of a problem. They often feel they have to point out every inconsistency they see. They can attach to idealistic expectations about how things “should be” and bitter when they don’t pan out.

### **THE EVANGELIST. “One who recruits and gathers”**

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

### **Evangelist’s Immaturity**

They are so enthusiastic that they can be unwise in their decision making. They have tendencies to exaggerate or even lie in order have people engage with them. They tend to be poor listeners, practicing selective hearing because they are only listening for what they deem is important. They might over-share information about other people. They avoid conflict because they want people to like them. They can be easily

discouraged when things are difficult and no longer exciting.

### **THE SHEPHERD. “One who protects and provides”**

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

### **Shepherd’s Immaturity**

They are can be so sensitive to the feelings of people that they can be guided by the fear of offending. They can be panicked and unable to live with disappointing others. They often overextend themselves because they don’t know how to set up appropriate boundaries.

They are slow to act because they get anxiety about all the possible negative outcomes. They are so attuned to pain that they can be overwhelmed by their own pain and problems. They tend to pick up other people’s offenses.

### **THE TEACHER. “One who understands and explains”**

Teachers find great satisfaction in helping people learn truth and wisdom. As the more philosophical types, they grasp complex, systemic truths and then help people understand them. They often formulate curriculum and pathways of learning. They ensure the truths of Scripture are passed along from generation to generation. Their ministry could be said to be primarily instructional in nature.

### **Teacher’s Immaturity**

They can be exacting and obsessed with accuracy that they project right and wrong. With the ability to collect vast amounts of information and systematize it, they can be rigid in areas with little practical experience, thus knowledge can be valued over wisdom. The teacher can

value their relationship with information over their relationship with people. In their hunt for clarity, they can offend people with their bluntness, lacking empathy. Teachers are prone to become zealous, setting up certain knowledge and behavior requirements as litmus tests for being a “serious” Christian. They can speak in black and white terms that have a hard edge to them. Because they connect with information they tend to think right thinking fixes people rather than being present with people.

### **APEST and Church Planting Teams**

When considering the importance of

developing a church planting team, it is essential to note that there is no one solution for every context. In other words, there is more than one good way to cultivate a team.

However, planting a multiplying church that is effectively engaging its context will no doubt involve team dynamics that are informed by the five-fold typology of Ephesians 4. But practically speaking, how would you go about incorporating APEST into the development of a team?

Here is one way to frame the conversation by sharing five sequential points:

1. The church planter needs to first understand their own gifts in light of APEST because it will influence where they focus much of their ministry. (i.e. if

We need to “deprofessionalize” ministry and give it back to the people of God. However, this does not mean that we don’t have leaders. Any significant movement that makes an impact has definite leadership. We simply shouldn’t confuse leadership with a call to participate in Jesus’ redemptive mission.

a Teacher they often move quickly to the Sunday gathering so they can teach, if a Shepherd they will lean towards the gathering community, etc.)

2. The planter needs to understand the make-up of their planting team and recognize what gifts may be missing. If you are a gifted shepherd then you need to make sure you have someone more apostolic on your team or you will never start something new. But likewise, if you are highly apostolic or prophetic you have to have a shepherd on your team or you will likely push people too hard and run the risk of burnout.

3. The planter will need to determine how each gift will have equal input into the mission and ministry of the church plant? Remember a key aspect of the passage is that the church will not reach maturity unless all five gifts are being activated and exercised, therefore how will you make sure each gift is being listened to?

4. The team will need to determine how to ensure the equipping of the saints? In other words, how will the church encourage and empower those with the gift of teaching to equip other teachers? How will those who have an apostolic calling fan the flames of other “sent ones”? How will the gifted evangelist equip others who have the evangelistic calling?

5. Finally, how will they measure “success” from an APEST perspective? How can APEST become the new (and more comprehensive) marks of the church? If these are functions of the community then here is one way to frame language to measure how the church is doing in each area:

- Missional Impact (A)
- Covenant Faithfulness (P)
- Gospel Proclamation (E)
- Reconciled Community (S)
- Deep Wisdom (T)

Remember, a church plant that is able to bring together, encourage and capture the gifting of a *fully functioning team* will succeed in whatever it is seeking to achieve. Each of the APEST vocations adds a necessary ingredient to the overall missional fitness and maturity of the church, but each vocation needs to be informed and shaped by the others in

order to anchor the church in the fullness of Christ’s nature and mission.

### Possible Objections

In the midst of conversations around APEST there are occasionally questions on the significance of the Ephesians 4 passage. People will sometimes ask a question like; “aren't we putting too much emphasis on the idea or concept of APEST, especially when it seems to be based on one single passage of Scripture?” A second question that is often raised has to do with the other gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians and Romans 12. People ask why should the “gifts” in Ephesians 4 be given greater prominence than the gifts mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament? All of these are good questions, that deserve a response. Here are a few initial responses that may help to address concerns you may have when considering the importance of APEST.

**First**, the biblical commentators have long-held Ephesians as something of the constitutional document of the church. Like all constitutions, it is meant to guide all subsequent thinking and action in the organization. The book represents the best thinking about the church—at least how Paul understood it.

**Second**, Ephesians 4:1-16 presents a promise that *no other* passage of Scripture claims, that is maturity and fullness of Christ (11-16). In other words, if we desire unity (1-6) and strive for maturity (11-16) it is extremely difficult to discount the significance of the connection point between unity and maturity with the diversity of gifts given by Jesus in verses 7-11.

**Third**, Ephesians 4 is *not* the only passage APEST is mentioned. Apostle (“*sent one*”) is used over 80 times in the New Testament. Prophet is used nearly 800 times in Scripture, over 150 times in the New Testament.

Evangelist is also used in Acts and 2 Timothy. Shepherd is used 23 times in the New Testament. Teacher is used 129 times in the New Testament. Compare that with the use of the word Pastor (which we have no problem using as the catch all word for leadership) is

used *once*, and it is in this Ephesians 4 passage.

**Fourth**, if you have an issue with thinking about these gifts as personal callings, or vocations, (note they are certainly *not* roles or offices) then at least consider them as communal *functions* of the church. Ask is the church to be apostolic? Is the church to be prophetic? Evangelistic? Is the church to be a shepherding and teaching community? Of course, the answer to each of these questions is a resounding yes! These five functions should define what the church does.

**Fifth**, the keyword in 1 Corinthians is “manifestations” or gifts of the Spirit. The keyword in Romans passage is “praxis,” which is more skill based, while Ephesians 4 are callings/vocations that are actually given to the body by Jesus. The “gifts” in Ephesians 4 are actually the people (the body of Christ). They are how we are “wired” instead of spiritual gifts given to a person. As a possible metaphor think about being a carpenter. If my calling, or vocation is to be a carpenter, I am wired and gifted to do carpentry work. However, as a carpenter I have several tools (or gifts) that I will use, including a level, saw, hammer, router, etc.

Another illustration that might be helpful. Think about exercising the spiritual gift of hospitality. Someone who is “wired” as a Shepherd may very well provide hospitality as they desire to welcome people into their home to provide a place of care and safety. However, I am a very high A (apostolic) and a very low S (Shepherd) but I still have the desire to be radically hospitable, but with a very different motivation. I want to start something new. Pioneer a new work. I want to form a new venture by welcoming others into that new adventure.

**Lastly**, consider the representation (or existence) of the APEST gifts to be broader than Ephesians 4. Some would argue that we can actually see APEST in the created order—the fivefold pattern can be discerned in and throughout all of God’s creation, and not just the church. In other words, APEST is laced by God throughout His creation. Are there teachers in society? Shepherds? Evangelists? Etc.

Further, and this is *incredibly* significant, APEST is incorporated fully into the life of Jesus. He is the perfect archetype of each of the gifts. He is the ultimate Apostle (“*sent one*”). The perfect Prophet. He was the good news, Evangelist. He was the good Shepherd. Jesus was the great Rabbi Teacher.

#### Resources to Learn More About APEST

- *The Forgotten Ways (Chapter 8)* by Alan Hirsch
- *The Church as Movement* by J.R. Woodward and Dan White Jr. (every church planter should read this book!)
- *The Permanent Revolution* by Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim
- *5Q* by Alan Hirsch (and check out [5Q Collective](#))
- *Primal Fire* by Neil Cole
- *Church Zero* by Peyton Jones
- For a very powerful team-building tool structured around APEST check out [MPACT](#).

#### Footnotes:

[i] Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways Jesus Is the Way* (Eerdmans, 2007), p. 32.

[ii] Howard Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1977), pp. 94-95.

[iii] Much of this section is adapted from *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (Jossey-Bass, 2012) and *The Permanent Revolution Playbook: APEST for the People of God: A Six-Week Exploration* (Missio Publishing, 2014) by Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim.

[iv] J.R. Woodard and Dan White, Jr. *Church as Movement*. IVP, 2016.

[v] Alan Hirsch, *5Q, 100 Movements* Publishing, 2017.



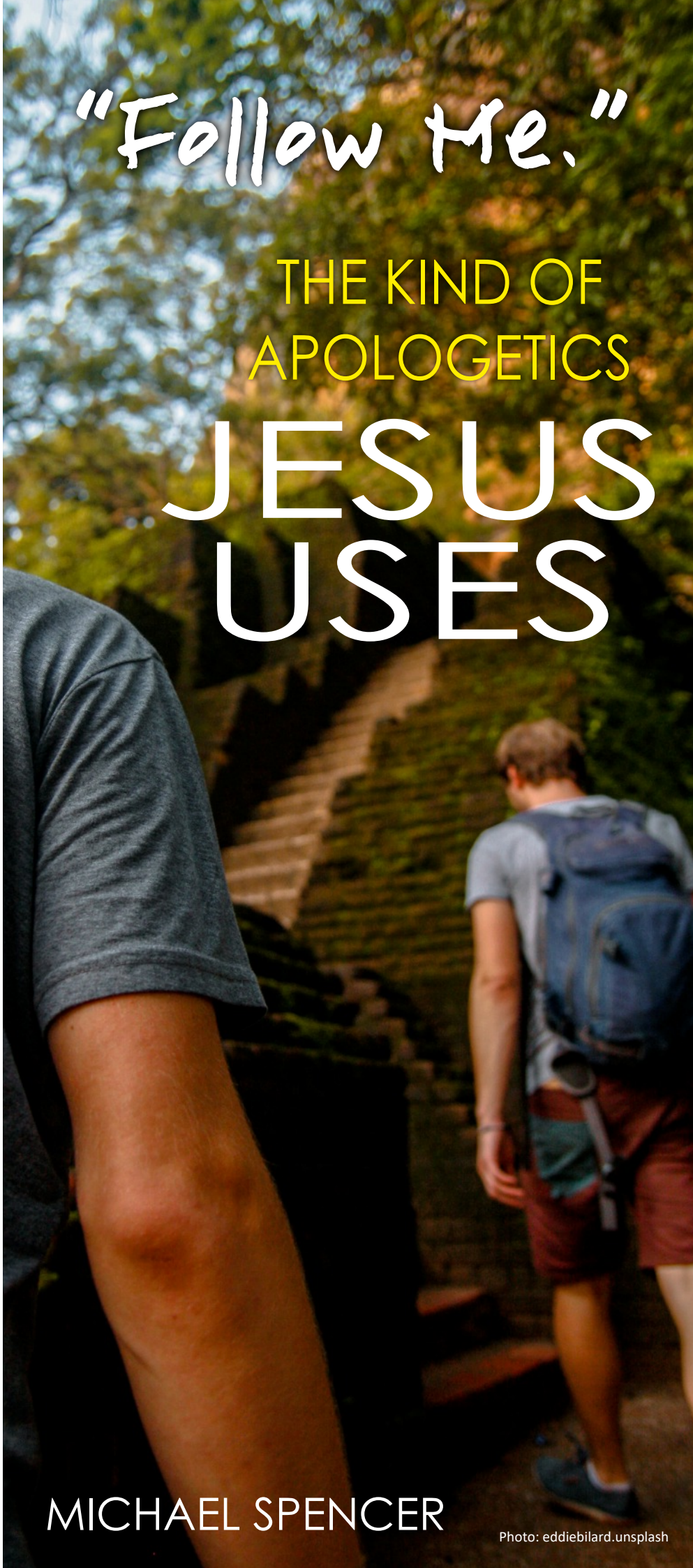
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congregations in transitioning in a missional direction. He and his wife have three children and have been foster parents to more than fifty other kids. Connect with Brad on twitter @bradleybrisco. sendinstitute.org

# "Follow Me."

## THE KIND OF APOLOGETICS

# JESUS USES



MICHAEL SPENCER

**You can find debates on the resurrection here and there, and Christians are excited about their skill in presenting the evidence for a risen Christ; yet this culture asks us to present not only the evidences for the resurrection of Jesus but the evidence of a resurrected Christian life, community, and ethics.**

There will always be Christians who will rightly and necessarily point out that we must present Christ and not ourselves.

They will say that we are in danger of entwining law and gospel. They will warn that we will confuse our hearers if we talk about the call and substance of discipleship and not the gospel, the gospel, and only the gospel. I concur completely with the danger these watchmen see and find of great concern, but I would counter with a similar set of warnings.

We must not separate one Christ into several. The Christ who called and trained disciples is the Christ on the cross, is the mediator and Lord in the Epistles, and is the one, exalted, reigning King of the Kingdom that will triumph.

We must not think ourselves wiser than God. Discipleship is the ongoing process of sanctification, growth, and maturity, all biblical admonitions. It is God who puts these components of the Christian experience into one life of faith. We cannot call legalism what God has called the power of the gospel in real time.

We must not think that we defend the gospel when we make discipleship less than what Jesus did with the months and years he invested in his disciples. He did not just preach to them or teach them. He trained them for ministry. He released them to serve. He created community. He confronted and corrected their characters. He sent them among the

hurting. He taught them the reality of the kingdom of God.

But that was not all. He took them to the cross and to the empty tomb, gave them the Sacraments, and called them to build the church. His investment in discipleship was deep and ongoing. It was his constant and ongoing invitation to them to live their "yes!" to the good news. As they learned all that the good news comprehended, their definition of discipleship expanded.

### Dynamic Discipleship

We must remember that discipleship includes the dynamic processes of Christian experience: knowing, growing, building, serving, forgiving, loving, and risking. It is the transforming knowledge of God in the Spirit that experiences the transforming power of the Word.

Yes, discipleship will always be imperfect. We would be greatly mistaken to think that anything we do as Christians will shed anything other than an imperfect light on the gospel, but Jesus said we are light and salt nonetheless. We are a community on a hill. We are exemplars of a kind of kingdom that this world will only know in Jesus. As disciples, we are the first outposts of that kingdom. As our pioneer has staked out the ground and given it to us by his blood, we come to build a city that glorifies our King and live out the fullness of the Savior's gospel. Imperfect as we are, Jesus says, "Follow me."

It will be flawed, but so will be our theology, our debates, our worship, our preaching, and our teaching. In all these things, we depend upon Jesus to be what we can never be. We are properly warned not to obscure the gospel by a wrong emphasis on discipleship. I suggest we not hollow out the gospel by disconnecting it from discipleship. What can evangelicals do?

- We can include the economic and lifestyle questions in our discipleship, and we can actively look for examples and mentors to show us how to answer those questions with integrity.

- We can actively critique our consumer culture and particularly seek to find

ways to see how our involvement in that culture dilutes and pollutes discipleship.

- We can listen to the church of the poor and the voices of the church in developing countries, churches that have much to teach us about living with suffering and simplicity.

- We can listen to church history and see where Christians have integrated discipleship and lifestyle constructively and where we went astray.

- We can learn from communities in various traditions that have found ways to forge a church community that embodies lifestyle values that reflect a serious engagement with Jesus' view of money and possessions.

In the 1940s, Clarence Jordan was a recent graduate of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with a doctorate in Greek. Instead of teaching Greek, Jordan went back to his native Georgia and founded an interracial community farm called Koinonia. For the next twenty-plus years, Jordan and his fellow Christians were disciples of Jesus as they studied, preached, taught, worked, lived together, sold pecans, and gave a witness to racial reconciliation.

It was the church, Jordan's own Southern Baptists, who gave him the strongest opposition. Eventually, the Klan and local racists began to inflict intimidation tactics and violence on the little community, but they stood firm. It would be three decades and more before the application of the gospel of Jesus that was read in those segregationist churches made it into the hearts of the white believers in the surrounding county.

Jordan loved the Bible, loved the gospel, loved academic study, and loved the church. He also knew what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus. There was no choice about living the life. Racism was not an academic challenge. It was a challenge to the life Christians claimed to be living.

It is this discipleship, a discipleship that illuminates the fullness of the gospel, that we desperately need in our churches. Without demoting our response to the intellectual and rhetorical challenge, we are now called out of the classrooms, conferences, and church auditoriums to demonstrate the life that adorns the doctrine.

**MICHAEL SPENCER** (1956-2010) was the founder, the primary writer, and editor of *Internet Monk*, *Jesus Shaped Spirituality*, and the moderator of the *Boar's Head Tavern*.



## TRAVELS WITH WAYNE

*Wayne Crockford is a retired academic and business consultant who resides in Canberra but who is currently on the road, visiting simplechurch groups up and down the Eastern Coast.*

Multitudes seek for authentic Christian lifestyle as church in the New Testament. Many know there is something more than what they have experienced in formal, organised systems of Christianity. They are 'done' with these denominational systems or congregational organisations. They have left institutionalism but not their faith in Jesus.

They journey to discover closeness of relationship with fellow followers of Jesus and their Lord.

The Matesic's and their friends in Shell Harbour characterise these 'Dones'. They have a wide network of people, Christian and non-Christian they serve. If you asked them, they would say being involved in the lives of others is fulfilling but not without problems. Would they go back to formality and serving organisation? I don't think so. Their life, as their table and couches, are full of people who love them and are loved by them.

In Caves Beach (NSW) the Eastaways and their small cohort meet each Sunday sharing and being there for one another. They seek to be church to each other. They are on a journey of discovery. I had the privilege of ministering and being ministered to by their group.

Unfortunately, there are those who leave wanting 'none' of church or Christianity. The discrepancy between what is proclaimed from the pulpit and what happens in church is blatantly obvious to them. They reject with integrity the falseness of claims of love, community, and family not lived out in the midst of congregations they attended.

How is the church in many locations in such a mess that love and care of one another are absent?



Caves Beach gathering

## THE GREAT SHEPHERD

The leaders of these systems tend not to have the Great Shepherd's gift of being a pastor to His people. They are Chief Executive Officers concerned with managing organisations buying into non-Biblical corporatisation. They do not leave the ninety and nine to go after the ones who are lost, the ones who have faithfully served, given and poured their life and finances out for what they believed is church. Indeed, in my travels, all too frequently the people I met left formal organised church never to be sought by those they served unto the Lord. They are the sheep without a shepherd, scattered upon the hills with no one seeking or searching for them.

The Lord says, "I, Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. I will feed my flock, and I will make them lie down. I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick". Ezekiel 34

Does this sound like Jesus? Yes, it does. I offer this hope to those lost, hurt, wounded, disconnected from organisational Christianity or disillusioned due to disaffiliation. Jesus is not like those who have not cared for you, who have not sought you, who have not provided for you! He comes to His church to take it back from the hands of men and women who think church is all about them, their position, power, privilege and prestige. Church does not exist for itself!

Christianity without the Cross is no Christianity at all. We are called to lay our lives down for one another.

Travelling Australia I have listened to God's precious saints, their hearts broken and wounded, desperate, they seek the company and community of like-minded believers. They wander in a wilderness somewhere between the Promises in the New Testament and the practical possession in their daily lives. It seems to elude most.

J. Lee Grady, the former editor of Charisma for eleven years clarifies their struggle. They see the church "have exchanged honesty, integrity, purity and humility for hype, fake anointing, manipulated photos, inflated attendance reports, sensuality and boastful swagger." He says, "God forgive us."

Billy Graham, some years ago wrote in a devotional. "... let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them and



Ailsa, Criss and Destiny Matesic and friends in a Shell Harbour NSW house gathering

show it by our actions. 1

John 3:18 (TLB) The Bible declares that we who follow Christ should be just as much in love with each other as God was in love with us when He sent His Son to die on the cross. The moment we come to Christ, Scripture says, God gives us supernatural love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The greatest demonstration of the fact that we are Followers of Jesus of Nazareth is that we love one another. Why not go out of our way to be a friend to someone whose skin is a different colour from ours? Love does more to solve our problems than anything else does. Of all the gifts God offers His children, love is the greatest. Of all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, love is the first."

When love is absent from the church, we are the less, our life and witness becomes hypocritical and a charade!

The people I met over the last six months are profoundly Christian. They love the Lord more than ever, they enjoy fellowship, sharing life together. They are not perfect, yet they seek to belong to each other in the One who is faithful and true. Like Jesus, I found myself spending time with the ones and twos, and small house groups, listening, dialoguing, sharing, encouraging and praying love into people's lives.

The Lord spoke into my spirit before I left on my travels, "Do not seek to be great or to do the big thing".

## DISAFFILIATION

Allow me to clarify disaffiliation. Disaffiliation impacts people's lives, the faith community and the church's ministry affecting both clergy and the so-called 'laity'. Worse, institutional congregational and denominational systems seem concrete in nature, unadaptable and not interested to respond creatively to the leaving scenarios being played out in their midst. What are the beliefs of church leaders in their ways of operating, that

they ignore or refuse to listen to their brothers and sisters?

A definition of "Disaffiliation is the process by which individuals change their commitment to a religious group either by joining another church or by no longer affiliating with any religious group."

Disaffiliation is not a new phenomenon in the church today. Over the last sixty years, numerous warnings in many forms have gone unheeded by the institutional church leaders as it continued business as usual, as if, what was, would always be.

In 1965, Billy Graham warned institutional churches, "Multitudes of Christians within the church are moving toward the point where they may reject the institution that we call the church. They are beginning to turn to more simplified forms of worship. They are hungry for a personal and vital experience with Jesus Christ. They want a heart-warming personal faith. Unless the church quickly recovers its authoritative Biblical message, we may witness the spectacle of millions of Christians going outside the institutional church to find spiritual food".

His prophetic warning has come to pass, in the USA with millions in house church, simple church, organic church, emerging church, user-friendly-church etc.

As I travel Australia, I am learning what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

My message is simple, it is the indwelling Christ in His people and the love He commanded. I am no one special, not particularly talented. I am okay with that. I care for those who the Lord sends across my path. There have been those in Baptist churches doing it tough, Pentecostal refugees forgotten and written off, small groups of 'Dones' at Caves Beach, Murwillumbah, the Matesic at Shell Harbour loving those around them, Wollongong and many places in-between.

I love the richness of those I encounter. They have a raw primitive take on being church to one another, simple and unaffected by corporatisation or organisation they reject. There are thousands of such groups throughout Australia today.

I believe in the days ahead, all who name the name of Jesus of Nazareth will be confronted with the eternal truth of His love in us and its practical outworking in our daily lives ... Australia will change because the church returned to the Lord to do life, ministry and relationships His way.

The question is, "What do you mean when you say to Jesus, 'I love you'?"

Priority is determined by what you allow to interrupt it.

## Things that fall off the back of a truck!

Talking about shepherds let me finish with a funny thing that happened to me on my current roamings, even if it does highlight the fact that, unlike the Good Shepherd, I tend to come in at best as a mediocre cowhand!

You do not expect the unexpected when you are tired and hungry and just want to go to bed at the end of a hard and disappointing day. I arrived in Glen Innes in the early evening after my caravan broke an axle in Warwick. I left the caravan at the repairers who said it may take a month or two to re-machine a new axle. The manufacturer did not have an axle in stock because my van was old. Apparently, too many caravan travellers were experiencing broken equipment providing caravan repairers with heaps of work. Good for them, but not for me.

After three months of travelling between Canberra and parts of south east Queensland in ministry, the caravan had become home for my dog Mickey and me. That night, I missed my home on wheels.

I settled into my motel in Glen Innes, then went looking for something to eat. I drove around Glen Innes to discover a decent feed instead of Maccas. Aaahh! The Highlands Restaurant looked like a top place, a little more swish than the normal quick affair. Not so the lass behind reception smiling informed me, "Sorry the kitchen is closed."

"What? You closed your kitchen, its only 8.34?"

Disappointed, I exited, saying to myself, "Looks like it's a Maccas night, ol' mate." I walked out of the restaurant across the well-kept lawn towards my car parked on the nearby New England Highway. That is when the adventure began.

The night was dark, uneventful as I walked on the grass. A little red cattle truck trundled by at speed.

'Plop!' a black calf dropped on its tummy onto the road in front of me.

"What!" I said.

Then, another black calf joined its friend, hitting the road hard, stumbling



onto its side, then staggering back onto its legs. I looked at the little red cattle truck, his rear door swinging in the breeze, open. I thought, "He is losing his stock. I had better let this poor bloke know."

So, running to my car, I climbed in, secured my dog Mickey and started my Hyundai Santa Fe in pursuit of the blighter. Man, he was moving! I could only see his taillights in the distance.

I pursued him at speed. Some five kilometres later I drove around a bend in the highway, hit the brakes and swerved, there another blackie, he stood in my headlights, dazed in the middle of the road. Maybe she was a female, anyway no time to discover the gender! I resolved to catch this blighter, poor cattle.

At last, got to a few hundred metres behind him, began blowing my horn, flashing high beam, but he continued!

Oh no! Two more cattle were about to fall off the back of the truck, slowing to a stop I watched the scenario unfold; they hit the road hard. Amazed, I thought, "How come they still get up after such a fall?" The little red truck was doing at least 80 – 90 kms per hour.

One of them, a creamy, lurched to stand on its legs in front of my car. Blood poured from an injury on the hind quarters and down its tail.

In the distance, the truck continued. Then, the left indicator blinked on.

I drove to within a few metres of the bewildered beasts.

Oooppchs! Way in the distance along the long straight stretch of highway, at least two trucks or semi-trailers were heading south on the opposite lane. I assessed both the cattle and me were in danger from collision.

Problem solving is a strength of mine having taught it in management for many years. I wish I had been better at it that evening!

I drove closer to the two beasts standing in the middle of the highway. I placed my car to (Continued on page 17)



# Ecology of a WORSHIP GATHERING

Dan White Jr

**T**he design of a space is never neutral; it always communicates some specific value. For example, what does it say about someone's values if they set their living room TV off in a corner, while all the furniture is turned towards a window looking out into the back yard? The way a room is set up communicates certain values. Physical spaces have a way of shaping our feelings and even behavior.

The church worship gathering is no different. How we design the physical space of our worship gatherings matter. How does our gathering space shape us for mission? How does it shape us for community? We already ask interrogating questions in relation to preaching since we are so intensely an information-transaction-culture. Yet we often forget to inspect the mediums we are using to communicate those messages. What if the medium we use has a message of its own?

The very spatial mediums we use to communicate those messages shape and architect us in powerful ways. In fact, as a medium, the literal physical spaces we use may actually subvert the very messages we are preaching. What if the arrangement of spaces are actually speaking louder than what we are saying in our sermons?

## TRAINED BY THE CLIMATE

This exploration into how physical spaces shape us is called an Ecology of Gathering. Ecology is the branch of biology that looks at how organisms relate to one another, and to their physical surroundings. If we apply this field of study to our worship gatherings, then the non-living components (abiotic)

of a worship gathering would be: the stage, the positioning of the chairs, the instruments, the volume of the instruments, the symbols, the place where the communicator stands, the video screens, the lighting, the communion elements etc. The living components (biotic) would be the people who are present at the gathering, including the collective vibe created by group dynamics. The premise of an Ecology of Gathering is that the non-living components dynamically interact and stimulate the living components (biotic), creating a living spiritual climate. This climate communicates a message, and over time, this climate-controlled message trains us into a certain way of thinking and behaving.

## THE EARLY JESUS MOVEMENT

The 1st Century Church had an Ecology of Gathering. Over and against the Jewish Temple-centered practices and the Greek Mystery Cults of the first century, there was an Ecology of Gathering unique to the early Jesus-followers. The early Church went through a new but vital transition that did not allow them to rely on public temples as the primary space for gathering. Meanwhile, the Mystery cults were primarily clustered together by shared social interests and were characterized by a volume of impressive rituals. The early Jesus movement was not bonded together by mere social or political rituals. In 1 Peter 2:5 we can see the transition from the Old Testament model where only a certain group of people (Levites) could dictate the gathering, to a more participatory model where every person is considered a priest, opening

worship up to the priesthood of all believers. The clearest picture we have of an Ecology of Gathering is found in 1 Corinthians 10-14. Paul guides the Corinthians into a rhythm that centers on The Lord's Table, the expression of spiritual gifts, and the essential-ness of community. Paul was not only concerned about what they did, he was also concerned about how they did it. As an architect, Paul was paying attention to an Ecology of Gathering.

## CLASH WITH CONSUMERISM

The gathered church does not cultivate an Ecology of Gathering in a vacuum; it will always be formed in the midst of the wider culture. Consumerism is the current we swim in and is potentially the most exalted god in the Western context. We must become aware of how our approach to gathering has been shaped by the dominant cultural forces. The doctrine of Consumerism states that whatever dazzles us with words, with personality, with brilliant production, is worth our time. We measure our experiences by the immediate emotional return these things offer us. Consumerism is not so much an action as it is an underlying belief system, a narrative that tells us that meaning comes from the things we consume; what we take into ourselves. Consumerism sends us hunting for products that impress, productions that inspire and personalities that captivate in an effort to deliver us from our unsatisfying and bored existence.

Churches end up playing into this powerful narrative when they seek to find the relevant hot-spots for what people want, and then use them to



design their “services” and “market” it to church “shoppers.” The stage, the sermon series, children’s ministry that acts more like a glorified Disneyland-type babysitting service, all become covert tools to keep us coming back for more. This places all the emphasis on the veneer of the gathering not the ethic of the gathering. When we primarily design our gatherings around these marketplace sensibilities, the controlling questions end up being “Will people like what we produce?” “Is it quick and easy to access?” “How do we compete with other “service” providers?” We have to be cautious about how our gatherings can unknowingly malform towards consuming spiritual inspiration. Our worship gatherings must embrace an ecology that introduces frustrations to this stealth, rabid impulse to consume and judge the “presentation” purely based on how the experience makes us feel.

### DISCERNING AND DESIGNING

As an architect of community, you have to begin to grapple with an Ecology of Gathering. This means asking questions and making choices based on the end goal of re-shaping people into a new narrative of self-emptying love, others-oriented community and costly mission. (Philippians 2:1-11) We can no longer simply adopt what has “worked” in the past, what works at a popular church, or what works down the street. Just

because something appears to be “working” doesn’t mean it’s actually working for the good. The medium is the message, which means every aspect of your gathering is either supporting your message or subverting it.

How can we design our gatherings in ways that build in a measure of resistance to the cultural forces of consumerism? The following are three overlapping categories for discerning and designing that help in the diagnostics of the Ecology of your Gathering.

### FORM

- How is the room arranged?
- What values does it communicate?
- What is central in the room? What is peripheral?
- Is the furniture arranged for consuming or contributing?
- How is technology used in the room? What does it amplify? What does it reduce?
- Does the room communicate one group’s values over another?

### FUNCTION

- What is the purpose of the gathering?
- Does the order of worship encourage watching or participating?
- Does the liturgy perpetuate autonomy or community?
- Does the content reflect being sent people?



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- Does the communication exalt one person or the priesthood of believers?
- Does the worship communicate God’s transcendence and Immanence?

### FREQUENCY

- How often do you gather for worship? Every week? Every other Week? Monthly?
- What does the frequency communicate?
- How is the frequency of this gathering situated in the life of daily community?
- Is this our primary expression of being the church?
- Is this a service to attract the curious? or to gather the People of God?
- Is the marketing around our gathering sensationalized or over promising?

It is unhelpful to prescribe exactly how you should construct your worship gathering. The missional church is not a cut and paste model. As architects of community, we have to enter into deeper, ongoing reflection as to how the Form, Function and Frequency of our gatherings are shaping people’s imagination about what it means to be the church.

**TRAVELS WITH WAYNE** (cont. from Page 15) their right-side figuring if I did that they would go into the bush to the left away from my car and the oncoming vehicles. Thankfully, they scampered into the bush as I had hoped, with time to spare. That done, I drove to the next turnoff where I estimated the truck indicated it turned; no sign of the blighter in either direction.

I pulled my car off the road to phone the police. Civic duty done, I returned to Glen Innes with the thought, “Maccas it is tonight, Crock, old lad!”. Not happy, I felt like a decent feed. “Well, that’s life, ol’ mate. Sometimes a plan comes together, others, it sure doesn’t.” I laughed, bought my Maccas, shared it with Mickey boy, went back to the motel and went to bed.

Thought that’s the last I’d hear of it all. Travelling from Glen Innes to Newcastle to stay with my friend John Neil and to share with Rod & Bev Eastaway’s home church, the phone rings, pulled over

as hands free on the GPS is somehow stuffed.

An official voice sounded announcing he is a detective from Glen Innes, “Are you Wayne Crockford who reported the incident of the stolen cattle last night in Glen Innes?”

Me: “Stolen? They were stolen?”

“Yes, 25 head from the cattle sale yards. Would you go through the details for me? We are investigating. The truck was stolen too.”

I told him the story, with many questions and clarifications. Civic duty done. That was the first of many assistance calls to the constabulary. Later, a delightful detective senior constable from the stock squad phoned me to clarify some points for her. On the outskirts of Newcastle, she phoned to let me know they had recovered 16 of the 25 head but with creamy still missing; a search on horseback was in progress through the dense scrub for creamy. She questioned me about whether I was sure the vehicle had turned left in a

westerly direction. Hhhmm? I told her I would phone her back after I revisited the events of the evening. Later, I sat down checked the events as they unfolded. I realised I assumed the vehicle turned left because I saw the left indicator blinking. I did not see the vehicle turn.

I phoned her back, told her my assumption. Then, she informed me, twelve of the cattle were found to the east on a right access road after falling off the back of the truck. It became apparent, turning the left indicator on to go west was a ruse to throw me or the police off the trail. Cunning blighter!

Cattle duffing is alive and well in Captain Thunderbolt country in the northern highlands of New South Wales!

(Now repeated into folklore with my friends and anyone who will listen, providing much laughter at its telling!)

*Wayne*



# WHAT IS A THIRD PLACE?



Jon Dansby

**Y**ou've probably heard the term "third place" before. Starbucks used the concept in their marketing strategy. A third place was another space to frequent besides your work and your home. This third place is somewhere to find refuge and a sense of place.

## WHAT IS A THIRD PLACE IN A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY?

In a similar way, in the Church, we need to create a third place. Your first place is the Sunday gathering at your campus. Your second place is your weekly missional community meeting. And now we need a third place as a way to cultivate your mission together as a community: a place to introduce your lost friends to your community.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A THIRD PLACE?

The purpose of this third place will be to create some neutral ground. When we think including lost friends in our lives or getting them to meet our Christian

community, we usually only have two places to invite them for our "first ask": our Sunday gathering or our Bible study/missional community.

Unfortunately, for outsiders who don't already value these places, the invitation is usually a non-starter. The large Sunday gathering, as great as it is, probably has the most barriers with its religious language, foreign customs, "churchy" feel and expectations and the large, non-interactive format. A less intimidating first ask is your missional community, but it still carries some significant barriers. So, the answer to your first ask is an awkward, "No thanks. Not interested." Or an insincere, "Sure, maybe." Now you're left with just trying to inject spiritual conversations on your own or hoping that one day they will change their minds and come with you on a Sunday. Now, thankfully God can and does use this, but it completely bypasses your powerful community apologetic, arguably the most persuasive

argument you have for the reality of the gospel.

Your missional community needs to create a neutral space to go to that isn't the Sunday event and not your Bible study. You want a place where you can bring your lost friends that doesn't demand that they have to scale a barrier of Christian lingo and perceived preconditions. This is informal, casual and non-committal. They need to see and relate to Christians in a natural and relaxed (though deliberate) environment. They need to feel that your group really enjoys the just pleasure of being together. Your missional community's third place is the place for this.

## WHERE DO WE DO THIRD PLACE?

Your third place will be determined by your mission. You have to ask the question, "Where can I bring an outsider that will be a natural place for them to meet and enjoy my Christian friends?"

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As a missional community, where can you gather regularly and naturally? Is it at a park? A restaurant-pub? A fun sport? The community pool? A coffee shop? A bowling alley? A pool hall?

Wherever it is, it must be neutral ground and become a regular part of your community. And each member of your missional community should understand that coming to your third place is crucial. It is crucial to the mission, to the community and to their lost friends and to their own personal spiritual development. If we aren't pursuing our lost friends, seeking to wrap our lives up with them, then we aren't striving to be like Jesus. Jesus was so close with the lost that religious people accused Him of sinning with sinners (Lk 7:34). In fact, even the disciples didn't get it for most of the time they were with Jesus. We have to make spaces in our lives to allow for this kind of close friendship and interaction. Creating this third place is a way to do this.

#### WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT?

One rule that is important to adopt in your third place is this: NO INSIDER TALK AROUND OUTSIDERS. Insider talk is the Christian lingo that is natural for us, but undecipherable for an outsider. To an outsider with no relational context, it is confusing, exclusive and even intimidating. Now, it's fine if the outsider brings it up or it is a natural part of the conversation's flow. We're not pretending that we aren't Christians, after all.

One time I was at my third place with my missional community and somebody

brought Don. Don was a complete outsider to the faith with few inhibitions. When I asked him whether he had watched a sporting event the night before he replied, "Well, it was on at the nudie bar last night, so I watched some of it while there wasn't any dancing." I was taken aback, but I was so happy that Don didn't feel the need to put on a churchy front.

Don was enjoying our company and the night was really enjoyable. A Christian friend who wasn't in our missional community came up to the table. He didn't know what we were doing there, so he immediately began using all kinds of "insider talk." He was disappointed about sin in some person's life, he thought somebody was a "really godly guy," his friend was studying Proverbs, etc. Now, these are all things I could get into. In fact, I hoped that Don would someday be concerned about such things, but this wasn't the place. I could feel my temperature going up as I glanced toward Don. Then something striking happened that I will never forget. Don just stood up and walked away. He never came back to the table. I was stunned. My friend went to go get him, but he wasn't interested in being around us anymore.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

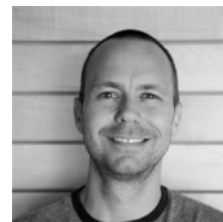
I learned an important lesson from Don. You see, the goal was that Don would begin to like the people in the community. Then he is free to include himself into our community where we are centered on Christ, the Scriptures and our mission to make disciples. After a

short while, we would invite Don to our Tuesday night missional community meeting where we "talk about life and God." He sees us, normal people, gathering around the Scriptures, striving to believe the gospel and submit to Jesus. He is lovingly and repeatedly confronted with the gospel in more than just one conversation. The community apologetic is at work, and by God's mercy, perhaps Don could come to glorify God by believing in Jesus.

#### WHO DO WE INVITE?

Keep in mind, having a third place isn't about reaching the people who work at and frequent your third place. It's primarily a neutral ground to bring the people you're praying for to meet your Christian friends. May God give us the opportunity to introduce the employees and regulars to Jesus, but that's not the first purpose. We are intentionally creating a place for our lost friends to discover our community. They can belong here before they believe so that they may hear the gospel from our lips, see it changing our lives and believe in Jesus at a later time.

Think about a third place or two where your community could commit to and begin gathering weekly. It could be the beginning of some divine moments for your lost friends.



*JON DANSBY is a proud husband to Amelia and father to 3 crazy kids. Currently pastors at Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, TX. He loves his church family. Sees his passion in ministry as equipping people to delight in the gospel so that they are on mission for God.*

# Oikos Regional Gathering

Northern Victoria – May 21-23

**Come and join us for another great time of encouragement in the magnificent setting of the Reynolds family farm, nestled in a beautiful region of Northern Victoria. Be challenged and inspired by vision, stories, worship, prayer and enjoy connection with others on the Oikos missional living and simple church journey!**

**When:** Friday May 21 from 4pm to Sunday May 23 wrapping up after lunch around 1.30pm **Accommodation:** First in best dressed – local billets, farmhouse beds or BYO Caravan or Tent **Costs:** Donation toward food and costs

**For any questions:** Accommodation & Food - Anita - phone: 0419 238 452

**General Enquiries:** Phil Brown - phone: 0409 137 988 and [oikos.org.au](http://oikos.org.au)



## WILL YOU BE NEXT? July 9, 2019

by Disciple Leave a Comment  
nobrokenreed.org.au

*Of this Gospel, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, given me by the working of his power – Ephesians*

It seems a fundamental difference between the church in the West and the East, is the concept around a minister. In the East, thousands of ordinary believers see themselves empowered to proclaim the Gospel, make Disciples and plant churches. From the get-go, new believers are taught that proclaiming the Gospel with a view to making Disciples is the normal Christian life.

I arrived late into Auckland airport this week, and it had been a long day already. My taxi driver was Ravi and we drove into town. Ravi was from Punjab, in the North of India and chatted away merrily, while I sat in silence, too tired to talk. Poor me. Along the way, I sensed the prompting of the Holy Spirit to engage, but I resisted. Time and again, I felt the prod to talk but as we all do, any sense of calling was pushed away until at last I relented.

Very often it appears that such brief conversations are a waste of time, but they're not ever a waste. As we arrived at our destination, Ravi told me an incredible story that had happened just a few weeks before. He had been driving down from the North of New Zealand, some 400km north of Auckland, and he came across a hitcher. As a taxi driver, the last thing Ravi would do is stop to pick up a hitcher, especially travelling at

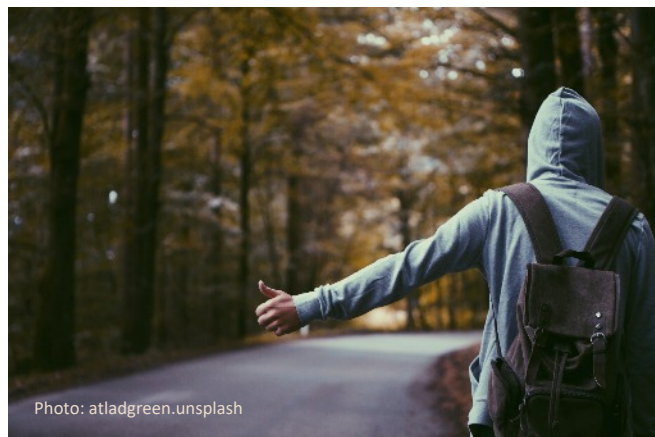
100k/hr but he felt a compulsion to pull over.

The man he picked up, was someone whose work was to help people discover Jesus. They spent the next 3 hours discussing Jesus and comparing him to Hindu gods. Along the way, the man told Ravi that he would normally have got a lift down with his friends, but Jesus had told him that he was to set out walking, as he wanted to introduce him to someone who would pick him up, which turned out to be Ravi.

Ravi was amazed that now two people who had been in his car would be 'sent' by Jesus. I was able to write down some Bible verses for him to read and showed him how to Google them on his phone. We prayed about his wife arriving from India, and how he might explain Jesus to members of his family.

All of us, as believers, are called to be ministers of Christ in any circumstance that arises. I fear that the Gospel for most is not a way of life.

If we as believers are walking in the Spirit, then every moment of every day we are listening, waiting for him to present opportunities. We simply need to respond. We need not be ashamed, or fearful or feel odd because we choose to share Jesus; contrarily, it must be a priority for all of us in our lives to follow Paul's example and minister Christ to others. We simply open our mouths in response.



The prayer Jesus taught his Disciples was firstly to Glorify the name of the Father and then bring his Kingdom and Will to earth. They are the priority – in a sense, our role is not so much to find out what the will of God is for our lives, but to find out what his will is, and become part of it. If this is true, then his will is abundantly clear, to bring others back to relationship with him, through Jesus Christ. Not some people, but all people. We don't get to choose, he does.

When Jesus leads you to the next person, the question for all of us is will we respond? At the prompting of the Spirit, will we be a part of sowing into Ravi such that someone can then reap, or as I have been guilty of so often, will we simply ignore the prompting of the Spirit. Someone else can take care of it.

Can we imagine the consequences on the last day, when those we have ignored, stand before Christ with an incomplete picture because of our unwillingness? What will Jesus say, how will we explain that to him? Surely, you and I, need to take our responsibilities as ministers, as Paul did, far more seriously. Let us be next when Ravi comes along.

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