

AUTUMN 2013

Oikos

MAGAZINE

AUSTRALIA

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Don't miss the

OIKOS 2013 NATIONAL GATHERING
BRISBANE May 24-26



Discipleship | Home Church | Simple Church | Organic Church | Missional Movements

Oikos Australia

OUR VISION - To network and encourage the new ways of 'being church' that God is bringing about in Australia today.

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Next Edition:

The next edition of OIKOS Magazine will appear in July/August. Suggestions and news are welcome. Please send them in by early May to editor@oikos.org.au

OIKOS Australia is a friendship ministry to home churches, simple churches and similar missional gatherings that are happening across our nation and around the world



Directions >>

Welcome to OIKOS Magazine.

Oikos has a solid and rich legacy of supporting house churches and fresh expressions of church, even before it was generally acceptable! While some of the following directions may be new, others have been part of the journey of Oikos for many years! The Journey that God is calling Oikos to is both old and new, past and future! Building on what the Lord has already given us in **supporting and networking** with other missional networks is increasingly vital. This allows cross

pollination to occur and learning and mutual support to be given. There is a real possibility of more direct collaboration of resources and involvement with other missional networks. Developing Forums that bring people together to connect, learn from each other, and foster collaboration and momentum are part of what Oikos is becoming involved with.

Prayer. All movements are birthed and sustained in prayer. Further developing and working with prayer teams and intercessors is vital.

Inspiring vision and mentoring. The Oikos team will continue to be involved in recognizing and fanning the sparks that God is igniting in peoples lives, and helping people to see the broader picture of the kingdom and of God's activity in our neighborhood.

Actively fostering Missional movements. The growing vision is not only to support, but to seek to grow new leaders and groups who are multiplying and becoming movements. Oikos supports these developments, and can increasingly be proactive in encouraging these around Australia. Oikos can play a part in helping to connect these leaders and groups.

Relational streams. Oikos means *household* referring to the extended network of people in a household which involved immediate and extended family and others. The Gospel spread through these relational networks and so Oikos is involved in reaching these relational streams with the Gospel of the kingdom, not just focusing on a place to meet such as houses

Jesus and Discipleship. The focus needs to be on the life and ministry of Jesus and his command to make disciples. This starts with sharing Him with those closest to us in our families, groups and communities.

A fresh focus on discipleship is called for including the development of discipling processes. One leader in Oikos encourages the groups he serves, to focus on the "spirituality of Jesus." I have found this to be quite different from being "religious" and generally more attractive to many Australians.

Reaching new people groups. Australia is a multicultural society and there are many ethnic groups to reach, as well as various demographics or age categories. A special focus is needed to involve Generation Y and the 18-30 age group who are often largely missing from church attendance demographics. The **4-14 window** is the period in which most people make decisions for Christ and so discipling families and children is a vital focus. How this is done in missional groups needs ongoing attention so that families do not feel the need to send children and youth to programs in the established churches to provide for their spiritual development.

www.christiantoday.com/article/414.window

Offering missional experiences in Australia and even exposure to movements overseas are powerful ways of awakening vision and is an area that Oikos can develop in the future.

Communication is an ongoing challenge. The Challenge of reaching Gen Y requires relationships and investment in the forms of communication that they typically use such as social media, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and personal stories.

Fostering a kingdom focus. The Kingdom of God as demonstrated by Jesus brings transformation, righteousness, healing, justice, deliverance and the gospel to people in the everyday world, not just in church based gatherings. So often the focus is on the gathering of believers rather than on what God is doing in the lives of people. A Kingdom focus includes the *gathered* church, but also the *scattered* church. God is also at work in peoples lives in the broader community including the workplace. A number of missional groups are involved in working in the wider community as well as in the missional groups.

Partnering with God in his redemptive mission to this world is a dynamic and exciting journey full of serendipitous outcomes. We look forward to it with expectancy and are committed to the journey.

Blessings ... Phil Brown



Connecting with GenY

DAVID NOTT - ON REACHING A NEW GENERATION FOR JESUS

Passionate, Full of energy, Fearless, Outspoken, Experimental, Open to change, Spiritual, Not held by boundaries or traditions, Ready to fight for a cause.

In all my encounters with young people that are not yet Jesus followers these are some of the qualities I continue to see in each one of them. This can be hard to believe when they are so often linked to the negative anti social or destructive behaviour portrayed in the media. These qualities just need to be reorientated to be used for good. Society has always recognised that youth culture is a powerful force and has generally erred on the side of caution and tried to tame or control that energy for fear that when it is combined with a lack of wisdom and direction the outcome can be disastrous.

Today we often hear the terms, "Police State" or "Nanny State" and "Cotton Woolling". These terms are often used to describe the actions of governing bodies, community groups and overprotective parents to control and overprotect in reaction to negative influences in society and to stem any risk to public health.

The reality is that as we grow older we prefer the status quo. Our comfort is a higher priority along with maintaining control of our environment. Change no longer excites us. Tradition becomes our stronghold. We've worked hard for our comforts and place in the community. Let me enjoy it without being disturbed is our cry. Yet Jesus lived for change and pushed against all the boundaries and social norms because he was inviting people to a more fulfilling life in the kingdom

that celebrates the qualities that youth display.

Given the opportunity and direction young people do want to change the world for the better. They do want to make a difference and believe they can. And in God's kingdom this is happening all around the world. Empowered and equipped young Jesus followers are making a difference, forgoing a comfortable life to see God's kingdom grow. The life of Jesus excites them because Jesus dared to live on the edge, challenge the status quo and fight for what he believed in.

World Changers:

There is a suburb in the city of Rotterdam in The Netherlands that a number of years ago was declared by the government as a "no-go" zone for the police. Populated by Dutch Antilles refugees, the area had become so violent and out of control that it was unsafe for police to venture there alone or in small numbers.

About a year after this declaration two young men, Setkin and Daniel, who worked with Youth for Christ in the Netherlands, approached their National Director, Edward, with what seemed like a crazy idea. They told him that they had been praying about the situation in Rotterdam and felt that God was calling them to establish a ministry in the Dutch Antillean community. They wanted to go into the "no-go" area and try to set up a youth centre. So compelling was their vision and call that Edward finally agreed to let them at least investigate the possibility of establishing a ministry in this hostile and needy community.

Fuelled by a calling and passion for the Antillean young people, these courageous young men went into the area and somehow managed to

connect with representatives of the local community. They told them they were with Youth for Christ and that they wanted to set up a youth centre to serve and care for young people. The response to their request was disappointing. They were told that Christians were not welcome; that Christians had visited the area in the past, and all they had done was "Preach at us, told us we were going to hell, and then left without helping the community in any way at all."

Undaunted by this disheartening news, Daniel and Setkin said they were different; they were there to stay. In fact, they said they would move into the area with their wives. They also made a promise to the community representatives that they would not "preach". They said they would simply serve the community in any way they could—and that is exactly what they did.

They moved into the area with their wives. They were given the use of an old abandoned government building that was being used by crack dealers to "cook" cocaine. They cleaned up the building and set up a small youth centre. The building was constantly vandalized. Threats of violence were common. But these young men and their wives persevered. They loved and served the local community without preaching at them—providing a place for young people to hang out, inviting people to their homes, serving and meeting the needs of the people.

After about two years one of the local gang leaders came to them and told them he and some of his friends wanted to know more about this Jesus they served. Setkin and Daniel told this young man that they would be happy to share more

about Jesus and invited him to come to the youth centre on Thursday evening. Around fifty young people turned up, including the gang leader and forty members of his gang. Setkin and Daniel had invited an Antillean who had found Jesus while in prison to come and share his story. After this man had told the group how Jesus had changed his life, Setkin and Daniel explained who Jesus was and what it meant to be a follower of him.

When Setkin and Daniel had finished sharing, the local gang leader who had requested the meeting jumped to his feet, and addressing his gang members stated, "We need to do this; we need to give our lives to Jesus." Daniel tried to discourage them from taking this step, because he thought they must have misunderstood what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. But they insisted that they all wanted to make a commitment to follow Jesus, declaring they knew exactly what they were doing. And so that night, an Antillean gang leader and forty members of his gang surrendered their lives to Jesus.

The community was transformed. More young people started coming to the youth centre, invited by the core group of former gang members who were now followers of Jesus. Additional staff were recruited, including many volunteers from churches in the Rotterdam area. Community programs were developed that served single mothers, drug users, illiterate young people and victims of rape and abuse.

Setkin and Daniel now have a thriving youth ministry reaching many young people in the area. The youth centre has been expanded to include a woodwork area in which young people are trained in carpentry and furniture manufacture. There is a room full of computers in which young people learn computer skills. Christian business men and women mentor young people helping them to establish small business ventures, sometimes even providing loans.

The crime rate in the area has gone down 70 percent. The police have assigned a full-time police woman to work with Youth for Christ in serving and liaising with the local community leaders. It is now safe for anyone to enter the area, including the police and government workers.

At the request of the Antillean community a church has been

established and is currently being
4 pastored by Daniel. The church was

named "Thugz Church" by the Antillean young people, alluding to a song titled Thugz Mansion by popular rapper 2Pac which is about life after death and heaven for criminals. The young people said they chose the name "because it tells everyone that they are welcome. It doesn't matter what you have done. God loves you and wants to give you a new start." *Story from YFC International website: www.yfci.org*

So how can the church embrace a culture of empowering and equipping young people to be radical agents of kingdom growth?

Plant a seed:

When young people capture what life in the Kingdom is 'like'. Here is an illustration Jesus used:

The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it is the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches. Matt 13-31:32.

For those of you who are parents or a person who has influence among young people perhaps it would be good to reflect back to your own time as a young person. What was it like when you were young, full of energy and ready to change the world? Were you encouraged and empowered to pursue those dreams or were you told to leave it to the experts or wait till wisdom and maturity had taken the edge off your passion.

Sixteen years ago when God called me to youth mission with Youth for Christ Australia I made it a point to speak to older church people I respected for advice about stepping into fulltime ministry. At the time I was a carpenter by occupation, reasonably new to following Jesus and had no theological training. All I had was a passion for Jesus and sharing him with the young people of my community. As it turned out each of the people I sought advice discouraged me from such a move. Perhaps something about my youthful uneducated passion scared them.

Fortunately one man who was a mentor to young guys like myself challenged us to seek first God's kingdom. He often asked questions like. "In 5 years from now what do you want to say you have done for the kingdom?" He never looked at our weaknesses or faults but focused on the

person God created us to become. When others saw the need for these young men to be reined in and disciplined he gave us a kingdom focus and permission to dream and have a role in helping God reach the world.

Jesus did the same with the disciples. He was willing to take a risk and enlist ordinary unqualified men to take his message to the world and he continues to empower ordinary men and woman today.

It begins in the family:

As parents we are the first role model to our children. Our lifestyles reflect our values and our children learn values from watching how their parents live. Today many parents have opted to outsource their child's development to child minders, educators, children's church teachers & youth leaders.

Many parents are missing the most important time in their child's life to help them become authentic and active Jesus followers.

For about 10 years my wife and I helped lead a church youth group. Some of the parents of these youth were active Jesus followers sharing their faith and God's love with all who crossed their path. Their children got to see what life is like for others who don't know Jesus or have the support of a church community and they got to see Jesus come into the lives of these hurting families and transform lives. These parents allowed their children to have a role in kingdom activities recognising that the best way for their children to learn how to be a follower of Jesus was to live it not just hear a sermon about it on Sunday.

And there were other parents of children in this youth group whose faith revolved around everything that happened within the four walls of the church on Sunday. The rest of the week was about building and maintaining a safe and comfortable life for their family.

Years later all of these young people we ministered to are adults themselves and have their own families. For many their life revolves around the same things their parents modelled to them. Some have chosen to focus on building a safe comfortable life for their families and express their faith by religiously attending church events. Others have grown into
(Continued on page 8)

Some have chosen to focus on building a safe comfortable life for their families and express their faith by religiously attending church events.



Speaking of ...

JESUS!

... the art of NOT - evangelism

CARL MEDEARIS

The following is a chapter from 'Speaking of JESUS - the Art of Not - Evangelism' by Carl Medearis. See Book Reviews - page 12

Notice I didn't say speak "about Jesus." Notice Paul said, "I preach Christ," not "I preach *about* Christ." So what's the difference? I talk *about* Denver Broncos football. I talk *about* politics and religion, but I speak *of* Jesus. I only speak *of* that which I know. Do we know Him? *Really* know Him? What does it mean to know Jesus? I'd suggest three things:

WE READ OF HIM

1. *We know Him from what we read about Him.* (Although, there's that pesky word *about* again.) I grew up reading a lot of Old Testament and a lot of Paul. For some reason the Gospels felt like the background story to the good stuff. You know, Hebrews and Romans and Galatians and then Revelation when you were megamature.

So I didn't spend a lot of time in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And when I did, it was mostly in John. The synoptic Gospels (the first three) didn't have much theology in them. Just stories of what Jesus was doing. And parables that were odd and confusing. Of course we needed the Gospels to let us know He died and rose again – so we could understand more of the good stuff like justification, atonement, salvation and redemption. But I never had much time for the Gospels. Seems funny looking back.

Now I tell people that if you want to get to know Jesus, the actual person, then read the four Gospels. Read them until they become part of you. Eat and breathe them. I went through a period in the mid '90s when I read nothing but the Gospels for several years.

Now don't get distracted or misunderstand this point – I think all the books of the Bible are important. All sixty-six of them. They're all helpful. They are all inspired by God. Together they make up His Word. But two things are called 'the Word': the Bible and Jesus. All of Scripture points to Him. I remember hearing a story about Charles Spurgeon debriefing his young intern preacher after he delivered the sermon. Dr. Spurgeon told that young man that he did a great job, but that he missed one key element. The young preacher asked what that was. "There was no Christ in your message, son. We preach Christ here at New Park Street Church." The intern was shocked. "But, sir," he replied, "I was preaching from the book of Ezekiel."

Spurgeon responded, "Son, until you can find Christ in Ezekiel you will not share my pulpit again."

Jesus is the Word. Ezekiel is the Word. And then the Word became flesh and lived with us. And now dwells in us. All of the Bible is helpful, but it is a signpost to the ultimate Word of God – Jesus Christ. We do not follow the Bible. We don't worship the Bible. We love it because it directs us toward the One who is everything. So while all of the Bible is God's Word, it is not all equal in weight. Is Matthew more important to know than Numbers? Yes. Numbers has its place and it's part of the

story and from God's Spirit, but that doesn't mean it carries the same weight of importance Matthew does.

I used to think that in order to share my faith effectively, I had to know and defend the entire Bible. Every single word! Has this ever happened to you? You muster up the courage to finally talk to that person you've wanted to share your faith with....and before you know it ... *wham!* How can you believe that God created the universe in six days when everybody knows the universe is fourteen billion years old? What about all those people God commanded the Israelites to kill in the Old Testament? Do you actually believe that a whale swallowed Jonah? I feel your pain. It has happened to me, too. I used to get so frustrated until it dawned on me that I don't have to defend or understand everything in the Bible in order to share my faith. Jesus is the point of the Bible. It points to Him. I don't have to be the Bible's defence attorney. All I have to do is speak of Jesus and He will draw people to Himself.

So reading the Gospels is where I'd start in getting to know Jesus.

WE EAT HIM

2. *We know Him by eating Him.* Have you ever wondered why Jesus said this in John 6:53-56?

I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.

That's crazy talk. The kind of stuff that got Jesus killed. In fact, a few verses later, we see that many of the disciples no longer followed Jesus. This teaching was just too weird. But in the gospel of John, the primary metaphor Jesus uses to describe Himself is that of bread to eat and water or blood to drink. It's pretty clear Jesus wants us to eat and drink Him. Not to understand what that means about Him as a point of theology, but to actually imbibe Him. Inhale Him. So...how does that work?

I have no idea.

But here are a couple of my best guesses.

First, I think we need to believe that it's possible to have Him in us. Really inside of us. Believing that what Jesus asks of us is possible should always be Point Number One. When He heard the disciples grumbling (John 6:60-64) He said that He knew some didn't believe. It seems there is a direct connection between eating Jesus and faith in Jesus. Maybe they're the same, I don't know. I find conscious awareness that Jesus is alive in me right now—at this moment—very helpful. I often (sometimes several times a day) ask myself this question: If Jesus were living my life right now and He were doing what I'm doing, would He be pleased or want to do something else?

I think that's a better question than *what would Jesus do?* We can never be sure what Jesus would do if He were here now. We do know, however, what Jesus *did*. So I think we should ask this question: Based on what Jesus did (which requires you to know that) - what would He do through me right now, since He lives in me? Or ask it this way: If Jesus had my life to live today, how would He live it?

WE PRACTICE ACTING LIKE HIM

3. *We know Jesus by practicing acting like Him.* I'm not really that good at *being* like Him, so I *act* like Him. I'm acting. Pretending. But doing it with the desire to be like Him. That's what I want. But because I'm a knucklehead, I act. Of course, our ultimate dream is to really be Christlike. To have every part

of us so in love with God that we find ourselves, almost as an afterthought, like Jesus.

So practice. Practice acting like Jesus. Review the Gospels several times a day. I know them well enough now that I can literally scroll through all eighty-nine chapters and find several examples of how Jesus acted or spoke in a given situation and attempt to do something similar in my current circumstance. You can't imagine how helpful that is if you haven't done it. In order to do so, you have to know the Gospels inside and out and recognize that you have Jesus residing in you by the Holy Spirit's power. Get used to this and it'll change your life. We speak of what we know. Know Jesus and you will speak Jesus.

WHAT THE HELL? A DEMONSTRATION

To close this chapter, I'd like to demonstrate the power of what happens when we strip our 'witnessing' of its religiosity and focus simply on the life and teaching of Jesus. A friend of mine named David send me the story below. May his experience be your experience.

Last summer I was working in northern Canada planting trees. I worked in a camp with about thirty-five other planters. Tree planters have the reputation of being 'rough around the edges.'

Anyways, as I got to know people within the camp it was clear there was a lot of pain, hurt, and frustration towards Christianity and the church. Yet as I talked about how I was trying to reach out to the poor and marginalized, striving to bring peace into areas of violence and live a life that wasn't consumed with possessions, they were very

intrigued and loved carrying on long conversations about these things.

Once again, I discovered that people are so turned off by religion, but yet so attracted to the things that Jesus taught.

So I came up with an idea.....I wanted to introduce people to the biblical Jesus – I wanted them to be able to experience Him for who He really was, rather than who people think He was based on our misrepresentation of Him to the world.

Honestly, one of the common questions that comes to mind when I read the Gospels is, 'What the hell?' I kinda laugh thinking about that I think it's part of my rebellious nature rising up within me, but this truly comes into my conscience when I read. What the hell does this mean? And then, how the hell do we live this out? As I thought about this, I felt like God was saying that this was supposed to be the name of a group. It would not be a 'Bible study' because that sounds way too churchy. But the group would be called *What the Hell?* And the purpose would be to read about Jesus and ask two questions: What the hell did Jesus say and how the hell can we live it out?

I proposed the idea to several people and there was overwhelming support for doing something like this. So we did.

I never announced it publicly (to the entire camp at once), but rather let the idea of the group spread more like a rumour or gossip throughout the camp. People were very confused, but interested nonetheless.

At our first meeting we had ten people (it was usually between ten and fifteen). And I gave a quick picture of how I thought we could run the group, but made it clear that I wanted it to be 'our' group and not 'David's' group. They all liked this and added their input as to how *What the Hell?* would be formatted. I also made it clear that many people view the Bible in different ways—some as the words of God, some as simply good things to live by, etc. I said that no matter where people's beliefs fall, most at least agree there are good suggestions for life within the Bible, and that it would benefit everyone to be aware of what it says. Everyone in the circle shook their heads in agreement. So I did not make it clear that the Bible was inerrant and flawless and gave us

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I don't have to be the Bible's defence attorney. All I have to do is speak of Jesus and He will draw people to Himself

The easiest way to plant a house church

It's probably not what you think! Most Christians, especially those from a more traditional form of church background, assume the obvious way to start any kind of church is to invite a few Christians to their home for fellowship. As other believers join them and the group gets large enough, they will multiply out into two churches and so on.

This is not the best way for several reasons:

1. The Christians will bring all their preconceived ideas about church with them. It will be more of a challenge to think in the fresh, out-of-the-box ways that simple/organic church requires. The temptation will be to do "Honey, I shrunk the church!"
2. It is more difficult to be missional. Existing believers tend to focus on the gathering. Many Christians don't have non-believers within their sphere of influence.
3. You are trying to create community where a natural one doesn't exist. Yes, there is a "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" with all other believers, but as you add people to a group, it will take time for people to share their everyday lives together outside of meetings.
4. Multiplication usually occurs very, very slowly.

It is far easier to make disciples of those who don't yet know the Lord, and to work within their existing sphere of influence. As their family and friends find the Lord, multiplying churches are the natural result.

The advantages:

1. The problems and issues that come up are those of life, not theology or ecclesiology.
2. Community already exists and their shared lives will continue outside of the meeting context.
3. New disciples have a natural mission field all around them and evangelism follows spontaneously along relational lines.
4. It's easy to create a vision and expectation of multiplication.

Felicity Dale

An Example: Cesar, Man of Peace

By Ross Rohde

"What church are you guys from?" Cesar* asked this as my friend Ryan and I passed out donuts and coffee on Sunday morning to Hispanic day workers waiting for a job.

"We are from a network of little churches that meet in homes, restaurants, anywhere really. We do this to find people who would like to have a church in their home. We could do it at your house if you wanted."

"Would you really do this at my apartment?"

"Yes, but here is the deal; we are not looking for people who already go to church. If you or your friends go to church, stay there and worship Jesus there. But, if you and your friends want to meet Jesus, then you have an important role to play. You have to gather your friends at your house and I'll introduce all of you to Jesus. Oh, and one more thing, I won't be your pastor or priest. My job is to teach you how to follow Jesus himself. Once you and your friends are doing that, I'll leave you to it, but stay in contact with you."

That was May, 2012. Since then I've been meeting Cesar and his friends. Sometimes I meet with them, sometimes they meet by themselves. However, Cesar has never failed to play his role with gusto. He often invites his friends to come and meet Jesus.

Cesar is a man of peace (Luke 10:6). He is playing the same biblical role as the woman at the well in Jn. 4. He is playing the same role that Cornelius played in Acts 10. He is playing the same role that Lydia and the jailer played in Acts 16.

The man of peace, or more commonly today, the person of peace, is a strategic key in the ministry pattern in which Jesus trained his disciples in Matt. 10; Mark 6, and Luke 9. This is the exact pattern he latter taught to 72 others in Luke chapter 10.

The pattern is simplicity itself. Like Jesus and his disciples, apostolic workers (sent ones) go out and with their life, words and actions, announce that the Kingdom of God is at hand. The idea is to make disciples. That is what Ryan and I were doing by passing out donuts and coffee to poor, hungry day workers in San Rafael, CA.

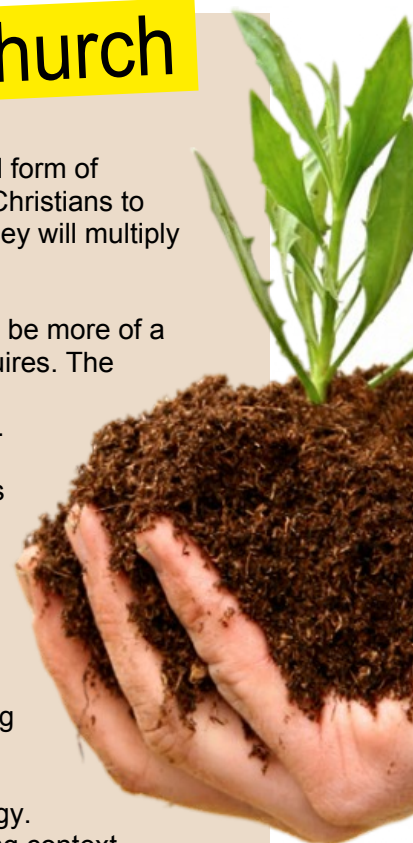
Next "the sent ones" wait for the person of peace to appear. There is no pattern for this. It just happens; every time is different.

The person of peace takes the workers to their "household." A household is one of the translations for the Greek word *oikos*. It can also be translated house, family, or even sphere of influence.

Sent ones plant communities of faith (churches) among this group of people. The Kingdom is placed in this relational network of people (the *oikos*) not a building called a house. That is exactly what I'm doing with Cesar. Because Cesar has taken his role so seriously I've had a chance to offer the Kingdom to Calisto, Andres, Blanca, Alonoso, Fabio, German, Estevan, Edgar and Erwin**.

I do however want to make a few of points with this story. First, while the pattern that Jesus taught remains consistent, it unfolds differently every time. I've planted a number of simple churches among many different spheres of influence. Yet I've never seen the person of peace/sphere of influence pattern repeat

(Continued on page 8)



itself the same way twice. Jesus leads this process. The most important thing is to follow him, not rely on the pattern as some technique.

Second, this is ministry done under the lordship of Jesus and his direction. There is no technique for finding people of peace. Jesus knows where they are. He knows how to get us to them. I can't make Cesar into a man of peace, he either is one or he isn't one. Either he takes me to his *oikos* or he doesn't.

Finally, since Jesus leads and controls this whole process, one enters it and remains in it through prayer.

How do you find the man of peace? You pray, you listen to Jesus and you obey what he tells you to do. Apostolic ministry without prayer is like a sandwich without bread; completely pointless.

**Cesar is not his real name, but he is a real person.*



Ross Rohde is a house church planter and house church planting coach in the San Francisco Bay Area. A missionary for nearly twenty years, he has worked as a consultant and speaker on the effects of postmodernism on the European church. He has been married for thirty years to his wife Margi. They are the parents of three daughters and grandparents to four grandchildren. See Book review p15

CONNECTING WITH GEN Y (Continued from page 4) authentic Jesus followers and actively participate in seeing God's kingdom come here on earth. And unfortunately there are some who found the whole experience so boring and irrelevant that they chose to completely walk away from the church and a life of faith.

Don't teach an old dog new tricks instead give a puppy something to chase besides it's tail.

In 16 years of mission to young people with YFC Australia I have come to understand that the best people to reach our current generation of young people are their peers. They are best equipped to understand the culture and needs of this current generation.

I can spend a lot of energy trying to retrain past generations to reach the current one with limited success or I can equip, release and support this generation to be a movement of world changers.

These were his instructions to them. "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. Luke 10:2.

The first step in reaching this generation of youth is to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more workers. Then we will have eyes to see that the workers we have been given to equip and send are our own children, and the children and young people of our faith communities and extended networks. From there a movement of world changers will spread out into the world.



David Nott, with his wife Wendy, have been involved in youth ministry for the past 20 years, most of that time with Youth for Christ Australia. They live in Warragul, Victoria and both have a particular passion for the young people of our nation and seeing them become disciples of Jesus.

They also love the adventure and challenge of being part of a small relational community of faith that is committed to going deeper with Jesus and seeing disciples and faith communities multiply to

transform our community. David and Wendy have a daughter and can be contacted at david.nott@yfc.org.au

SPEAKING OF JESUS (Continued from page 6) ultimate truth, but rather presented it as a book that many people have found helpful as they ask life questions, and that we may be able to learn from the things within it.

We met for probably six or seven times throughout the summer, and mostly stayed within the Sermon on the Mount. Some topics included not judging others, not worrying about the future, loving our enemies, and the stories of the Good Samaritan and the woman caught in adultery. Each night the discussion was lively and everyone enjoyed throwing in their perspectives. I did not see myself as the 'leader' but I tried to be a facilitator of sorts, trying to keep the conversation from drifting in different directions.

I would also try to clarify what I thought people were saying so that other people could stay with the discussion. It was difficult at times to bring all the ideas together and reach a conclusion, but all in all, it was a lot of fun! These people that many would consider far from Jesus were seeing Him for the first time, and they were drawn to Him. When they read that Jesus tells us not to judge others they would applaud in agreement; when we talked about caring for the broken and hurting people in our

means sacrifice on got excited. They believe that Jesus of the stone- save the life of the rightfully could have

At the beginning of they would always be Christians being all that kind of stuff, able to get past that admitted that we all

'hypocrite category.' But part of me actually likes when they recognize that in general, Christians don't really live up to their title. It is good to realize and admit that being a 'Christian' is not always synonymous with trying to follow Jesus. But rather than criticize, we need to get our eyes off of others and just focus on ourselves, our lives, and how we're striving to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

The people attending *What the Hell?* were identifying key characteristics of Jesus' life, and I believe many were drawn to the Jesus we were reading about in the New Testament.

Even though the group had a very "nonreligious" feel, there were still some people who wouldn't come because they thought the Bible was full of crap. But God was working in their hearts as well, and often when I was out planting during the day these people would come and ask me what we talked about the night before, and I would share the words of Jesus with them. I hope and pray that these individuals were able to catch a glimpse of what Jesus was and still is like.

These people that many would consider far from Jesus were seeing Him for the first time, and they were drawn to Him

lives, even if it our parts, they could not stood in front throwers to woman they stoned. our meetings talking about hypocrites and but we were when we

fall under the



Carl Medearis is an international expert in the field of Arab-American and Muslim-Christian relations. He is the author of the acclaimed book on these issues, "Muslims, Christians and Jesus"

Carl, his wife Chris, and three kids lived in Beirut, Lebanon for 12 years. Through their unique and strategic approach around the Arab world, they

encouraged university students, business professionals and political leaders to live their lives by the principles and teachings of Jesus in order to change their societies and nations. Today Carl spends much of his time working with Western and Arab leaders with the hope of seeing the Arab Middle East and the West experience full and fruit-ful relationships through the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. . Catch Carl at www.carlmedearis.com.



I was bemused with the struggle one young mum was reflecting on in an article written in a church magazine. She was exploring the question young families were asking, about whether they should allow their children to play with the iPad during the worship service. They had debated the fact that IPADS were just the electronic version of Christian books, fuzzy felts, bible games and other 'wholesome' activities to keep the little wrigglers quiet during church. I think most Christian parents hope their kids will grow up to be passionate followers of Jesus and find themselves in despair when the activities they participate in don't always give the desired results. Whether it's faithfully sitting through a sermon each week, a Sunday school or a smorgasbord of youth and children's events... parents are dismayed when their children grow up and leave the church.

As I reflect on my typical 'simple church' weekend, it usually begins with putting on my comfy slippers, filling the room with worship music, and flicking on the electric frypan ready to cook up our Saturday morning family special of 'mega' stacks of pancakes, with as many creative toppings that the kids can devise. We often invite neighbourhood families to join us as we create special moments that capture a glimpse of the Gods Kingdom. We light a special candle, share the Lords Supper amongst our meal or pray individual blessings over the children which we have found really touches the hearts of our friends. We have discovered they love to bless their children even though many have never prayed before.

We have taken the challenge of discipling our kids very personally, and in early times we had many self doubts, wondering if our kids would miss out or grow up somewhat deformed in their Christian walk. As a family, who love Jesus passionately, we are attempting to live out our conviction of being in a

missional community, infiltrating our neighbourhood with His love. We are getting more and more excited as each year we grow in confidence that the decision we made has borne good fruit. Being a homeschooling family has helped to create an atmosphere in our homes without many of the distractions of peer pressure from youth and school groups. Minimising computer games, TV & other forms of media has helped our family delight in the simple, wholesome activities of life. When our regular stream of 'yet to believe' friends visit, they experience a taste of God's Kingdom amongst us. As parents this journey constantly brings us to our knees in repentance and seeking healing for our own brokenness. We have to be open to healing, make choices to grow in our weak character areas, be passionate in our own walk with God and daily seek an infilling from the Holy Spirit.

Last weekend, I wondered why the kids were late for breakfast, I peeked into my 14 year old's bedroom. She was perched in bed reading her bible, with her devotional and spiritual study material piled high on her bedside table. Her cupboard door is covered with pictures of happy moments of our family and favourite scriptures – she says to remind her heart of what God thinks about her.

I wandered into the lounge area and there, cuddled my 9 and 12 year old sons, snuggled together reading through their 'Bible in a year' challenge and practising the latest chapter of the gospel they are memorising by heart!

My 17 year old was out for his early morning bike ride and left his open bible on his bed, the tell tale sign of his earlier devotions. I continue to thank the Lord they are growing deeper in their walk with him.

After another animated discussion around the pancake breakfast table of our reflections on the best and worst of our week, we shared our weekly family blessing time and prayed and listened to God together. We wrote, as we often do, in our

family prayer journal, the pictures, scriptures or words God gives us. We then spent the rest of the morning visiting a sick friend in hospital, laying on hands in prayer for him.

At lunch we joined some friends from our missional faith group for a market stall where we ate together, prayed between customers and chatted with many neighbourhood friends as they passed by. We sold some second hand goods to raise funds for a mission trip, where 6 of the teens from our faith group will visit to build houses for widows. I meet a lady selling soaps in the stall opposite and after talking asked if we could pray together. During this market stall, two 14 year-olds from our group felt led to befriend the young lady in the 'Spiritualist Reading tent' they listened to her story and shared about the hope that Jesus offers her. In sharing her story later, my daughter said Jesus would have loved her, and we need to be Jesus to her.

Later in the day I dropped my 17 year old off at his mate's house. This friend recently committed to follow Jesus through baptism. Neither of them 'attend any church or youth group' but weekly challenge each other to live as men of God, keeping their sexuality for marriage, sharing their faith with their mates, praying and reading the word of God daily. They invite friends to hang out with them weekly as they read the word of God and eat together.

During the week we enjoy our evening family devotions, reading together books on great Christians in history, memorising passages, and reading through scripture together. Dad meets regularly with each of our kids in one on one discipleship time, and we as parents will pray daily for them and seek to listen to his voice in how we guide them. We are purposeful in helping them to know who they are, and where they going in their lives.

Kate and Phil Brown (OIKOS Director) and their family live in Eagle Point, Victoria

Snapshots of Community

GOLD COAST 'CARAVAN CHURCH'

Several years ago a bunch of us home churchers sensed God calling us to focus our efforts on a neighbouring caravan park called "Dreamtime". This park has a high proportion of permanent dwellers together with some short-term and overnight holiday makers who may choose this place because of its close proximity to the Gold Coast theme parks. Typical of these parks, we see a higher than average concentration of unemployment, mental illness, substance abuse, relational conflicts and associated crimes of violence, theft, drug use etc.

We've held quite a few different activities here as the park constituency has changed time and time again. Sometimes there are more young families or single parents with kids or teens. Other times there are mostly men or older couples. Consequently over the years we've offered children's activities, craft groups, sporting/games options, bands and a range of different and seasonal community events such as on Australia Day, Christmas, Easter, Fathers'/Mothers' Day etc.



For a time there was a house church or more accurately a "caravan church" where a small group met for share, prayer and support over a weeknight meal. Times changed again and nowadays we run a fortnightly BBQ and distribute bread items donated from a local bakery. The BBQ is attended by a group of regulars together with different visitors, often resulting in discussion on life related issues and sometimes prayer for those with personal needs or illnesses.

At strategic times we televise significant football matches on a large outdoor screen together with a shared meal. We prayed for



and God provided an unlikely but ideal "man of peace" who is still the key person within the park for all the activities and events. Glenn met Jesus while in jail and warmed to our low key style of church gathering and the peaceful natures he saw within the team members.

The management welcome our involvement at "Dreamtime" and often express their appreciation for the positive influence and the subsequent change of atmosphere that has occurred through a small band of ordinary people who seek to demonstrate the nature of God's kingdom to these beautiful yet needy people.

Graham Wheat - Gold Coast

PERTH COMBINED GATHERING

All too often church communities work in isolation from each other and maintain for a variety of reasons very clear boundaries of separation. This is in spite of Paul's instruction that all barriers of division have been broken down because of Christ's death for all humanity.

In February two Perth house church groups from the same locality came together to share in the joy of a baptism. In the past the degree of separation would have been enough for each group to have conducted their own in house baptism. Both groups were small in number and each had one person working together a larger group of 16 people met in a lounge room to share and deepen their understanding of the biblical model for new kingdom focused communities.



Following the baptism in a backyard pool we shared a meal together including communion and were able to celebrate with food and a collective prayer for the Holy Spirit's anointing of both women. Neither had any previous church connection. Both groups were blessed and the visitors who came to witness and support their friends were introduced to a vibrant house church gathering. A seed was sown and God was honoured. The power of networking and cooperation is a vital kingdom value and I intend to follow this model and work more often with several groups at once.

Peter Fowler

SO WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Simple church is about ordinary people doing ordinary - and sometimes extraordinary - things for Jesus. We'd like to hear your stories, especially when they involve community. Let us know what is happening around the nation - events, stories, gatherings, missional happenings. Drop us a line at editor@oikos.org.au

Featured Simple Church

ACTS UNIVERSITY NETWORK, W.A. Marilyn Östring

The ACTS University network was initiated in Western Australia in 2006 by Dr. Sven Östring, who has a passion for empowering students to share their faith and seeing God's Kingdom grow on secular campuses.

It first began with Sven meeting up for a weekly bible study with a few Christian students that he knew of from his denomination on the secular campuses in Perth. He found that as he connected with students in this way, he was able to encourage them through prayer and growing through the Word, but also was able to inspire them with a bigger vision for what God could accomplish on their campuses.

After two years of connecting in this way, God raised up a team at Curtin University Bentley Campus, who pioneered the way for a Christian church by being Jesus' hands, feet and voice on their campus. Since then another group has started up at Murdoch University (2011), as well as ground work at Edith Cowan University (2011) and University of Western Australia (2012).

The specific keys for the groups starting-up, and continuing, are:

- Constant focus on Jesus and hearing where He wants to lead through prayer – emphasis on prayer walking and other forms of corporate and individual prayer.
- Making genuine friendships through students' social networks, classmates, joining various clubs on campus, or through stalls/surveys/other means to make new connections.
- Building, and working as, teams.
- Finding ways to corporately bless the university community through community service projects – assisting students with language assistance, Bread distribution, 'Cheap, Healthy, Quick' cooking classes, Resume help, etc).
- Doing life with people – hanging out, being there for others – and sharing Jesus with them on the 'path of life' by sharing His Story (simple gospel presentation) and 'Our Story' (personal testimony).



- Focus on discipleship (providing opportunities for people to grow in the Word through fun, interactive small groups exploring the Bible, one-on-one bible studies, accountability groups that help people grow in their individual relationship with God).
- Keep it simple so that it is easily reproducible by anyone!
- Constantly casting the vision and mobilising people to be involved and growing in leadership.
- Have fun! (Food, socials, celebrate, etc).



They praise God for the way he has been raising up new and vibrant leaders and the other amazing ways that He has provided for their groups so far. They are also excited about the 10 people who have been baptised in the 3 ½ years that the network has been fully up-and-running and look forward to God starting up many more groups and seeing a missional movement start on our university campuses in Australia and beyond!

Obstacles

High student turnover every semester means that students in the team and church are coming and going very frequently. Hence our emphasis is on seed-sowing and leadership development.

Extremely secular environment and therefore a difficult environment to sow seeds and see the fruits. So the focus is on finding where God is already working and how he wants us to work where He has us, and trust the end-result to Him. We've found that international students have been the most receptive to the

gospel so far.

Please keep the ACTS University Network in your prayers. They need prayer for God's protection and his help in raising up many more leaders who are willing to step out and shine for Jesus and start simple, meaningful faith communities 'on the path of life' that point people to Him.

LIFE IN COMMUNITY

Encourage one another daily (Heb 3:13)

Encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Offer hospitality to one another (1 Pet 4:9)

Consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)

Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Peter 3:8)

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13)

Agree with one another (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Wash one another's feet (John 13:14)



WHAT JESUS STARTED

STEVE ADDISON

A year after the publication of my first book, Movements that Change the World, Michelle was complimenting me on its success. I didn't realise she was setting a trap.

"So, you teach other people what to do, when are you going to do something?"

Ouch! And worst of all, God was speaking to me through her. I'd written a book on disciple-making, but I'd lost touch with making disciples.

Michelle and I lead a mission agency called MOVE. We're busy people. Instead of starting with what we couldn't do, we began with what we could do. We set off one Sunday afternoon to walk and pray around Box Hill in Melbourne, looking for what God might do. God had brought the world to Box Hill. Mainland Chinese, Koreans, South Americans, Iranians, Indians, Japanese, Taiwanese and many more nationalities.

As we prayed Michelle suggested we drop into the local Chinese bookstore. I pointed out we couldn't read Chinese. That didn't deter her. Soon after we entered the store a Chinese sales assistant, we'll call her Susie, approached us. We chatted for a while and then went on browsing. For the next thirty minutes she chased us around the shop wanting to talk.

Eventually we left. As we stepped out onto the street I told Michelle I had to find somewhere to sit down. I was overwhelmed. We'd lived five minutes drive from Box Hill for eight years. God had brought the world to our doorstep. The first time we set aside ninety minutes to prayer walk and discover what God was doing, he leads us to someone who welcomes us and is ready to hear the gospel.

We caught up again with Susie and met her circle of friends. Some of them came away with us on holidays. As we met people we discovered a need for English conversation classes. Michelle set up a weekly group, and our circle of contacts widened. We were up front with the gospel and invited people to learn more about following Jesus through Discovery Bible Study. We helped people with

English, with their resume's, we prayed for needs. We built friendships.

In the last six months Michelle and I have led more people to Christ and on to discipleship than in the whole rest of our lives.

How it all began

My interest in disciple-making movements began over twenty years ago when we were planting our first church. The new church was vibrant and growing. But in our second year we stumbled into a church fight. Now God had my attention. I knew he wasn't as impressed as I was with my initial success as a church planter. He had something more. I spent a lot of time in prayer handing over my ministry and my life. Then early one morning God spoke to my heart and said it was not about just one new church, on his heart was a disciple-making movement that would spread across Australia.

I've been on that journey ever since.

After our second church plant, I joined MOVE (formerly Church Resource Ministries) in 1992 and began to train and coach church planters. I developed strategies for multiplying new churches. I worked with denominational teams across Australia and New Zealand, Britain and Europe to help them fuel church planting movements. A lot of churches were planted and the rate of church plant closures dropped dramatically.

Then around 2007 I began to take stock of our progress and realised that we were not seeing disciple making movements. You're in a movement when typically the new groups of disciples and churches you form reproduce children, grand children and great grand children. We weren't even getting to second generation disciples, groups and churches.

From my study of Scripture and church history I knew the movements paradigm was the key. Why was it happening in other parts of the world and not here? I'd written my first book, Movements that Change the World, which described the characteristics of dynamic movements. My approach had been to teach the principles and let people wrestle with the implementation. That wasn't happening.

People were embracing the principles, but their behaviour wasn't changing.

Meanwhile I went back to the Scriptures and spent a lot of time in the Gospels and Acts. My question: What did Jesus do? What did he train his disciples to do? What did the Risen Lord lead the apostles, the early church and Paul to do? I spent time with people who had participated in disciple making movements in others parts of the world.

The answer was simple. The best principles are useless unless they are connected with obedience. I was sharing lofty principles but not teaching people what to do on Monday morning. We went back to basics. Then I wrote my second book, What Jesus Started out of the need to link movement principles with action that reflects the ministry of Jesus.

THE SIX KEY ELEMENTS

1. See the end

We need God's heart for a lost world and a clear picture of what he wants us to do. By the end of his short ministry Jesus visited every town and village in Galilee. That's 175 towns and villages. Two hundred thousand people. Just in Galilee.

What does it look like for God's will to be done in our mission field? It's not enough to ask, "What could I do?" We have to ask, "What needs to be done?" and trust God to get us there.

2. Connect with people

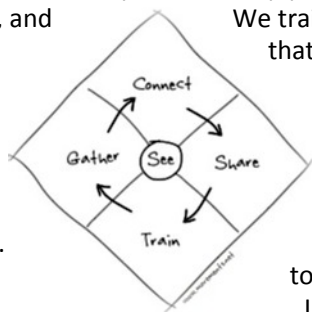
Jesus woke up most mornings wondering who the Father had prepared for him to meet. He was always connecting with people. On the road, by a well, among the crowds, at the synagogue, even on the Cross. He didn't connect aimlessly. He was looking for faith. He was looking for people God had prepared to take the gospel into their world. The woman at the well, Zacchaeus, the demoniac, Matthew the tax collector—they became disciples and immediately the gospel went to their community. We teach people to connect broadly. English club is our method of connecting. There are 1,000 different ways to connect. But unless you find

responsive people, you won't be making disciples.

3. Share the gospel

Jesus' loved people and he shared the gospel, prayed for a need, told a story as soon as possible which meant immediately. He didn't wait around for people to come to him. He went looking and he taught his disciples to do the same. When they entered a town they prayed for needs, they shared the gospel, and looked for responsive people, the "people of peace" in Luke 10.

We've learned to share our story, share a simple gospel outline, and to invite people to do Discovery Bible Study. When we train people, and they begin sharing and inviting, we start hearing stories of new disciples.



4. Train disciples

Discovery Bible Study is our method of making disciples. In Discovery Bible Study we look at a story or passage together. We retell the story in our own words and ask six questions:

1. What does the passage teach about God, or about Jesus who shows us what God is like?
2. What do you learn about the people in the story?
3. Is there an example to follow or a command to obey?

4. What will you do this week to obey what you have learned?
5. With whom could you share this story?
6. How can I pray for you?

Discipleship is obedience focused. It is simple — just a few questions and a passage. It is profound — the word of God does the work. Simple and profound means the method of making disciples is easily and quickly transferable.

5. Gather communities

We don't begin by telling someone they have to go to church. We share Jesus and help people discover him for themselves. We train disciples and disciples soon learn that you cannot follow Jesus alone.

We help new disciples discover what it means to be part of God's people. We open the Scriptures and do Discovery Bible Study on Acts 2:36-47. We get new disciples wrestling what it means to be church together.

In the past we've planted churches, so that we can preach the gospel and make disciples. Now we share the gospel so that we can make disciples and help them form church. Some join existing churches, some help form new churches.

6. Multiply workers

The focus of Jesus' ministry was the lost house of Israel. As he moved throughout Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem he was also training the workers who would go to the ends of the earth. He modelled, he

watched, he assisted and then he left them with the task. The result was a missionary movement.

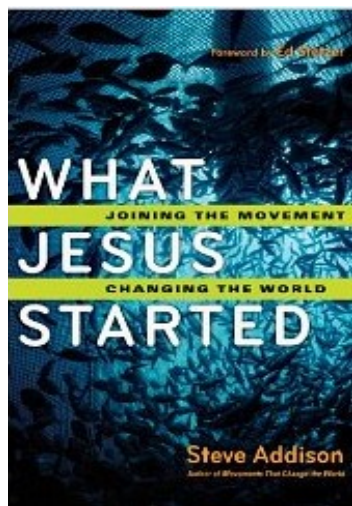
We're training workers across Australia in the basics of making disciples. We look for those who implement the learning and help them become effective practitioners. As soon as possible we help practitioners become trainers. Every follower of Jesus needs to learn the basics of sharing their story, sharing God's story, leading people through a Discovery Bible Study. Our methods must be simple, but profound so that we can spread contagiously among an ever growing band of workers. Their job is to make disciples and multiply groups and churches across Australia and around the world.



Steve's calling is to spark disciple making movements, everywhere. Steve began his research into Christian movements more than twenty years ago while serving as a

church planter in Melbourne, Australia. He carried that interest into his Doctor of Ministry with Fuller Seminary. He is the author of Movements that Change the World and the newly released What Jesus Started. Steve leads MOVE (www.movenetwork.org), a mission agency dedicated to multiplying disciples and churches — everywhere. Steve blogs at www.movements.net

Steve's partner in marriage and ministry is Michelle. Together they have four children and one dog and live in Melbourne.



What Jesus Started – Joining the Movement Changing the World by Steve Addison, Author of *Movements That Change the World*. Pub IVP Books. (Available at www.movenetwork.org as paperback and e-book)

I have known Steve Addison for 20 years and have always appreciated his passion for Jesus,

for the spread of the Gospel and his eagerness to keep pace with God's methods and mission. This book is further evidence of that. It is 'hot off the press' in what is needed now for all of us seeking to move forward in mission. Over coffee he demonstrated to me his understanding of mission using the table napkin as a teaching aid! He uses 'napkin' illustrations throughout his book. Steve outlines six elements that characterise the movement that Jesus founded and still leads today (see magazine article p13).

To quote Steve - "What would Jesus do?" is a helpful question to ask whenever we are faced with an important decision. When it comes to our mission, an even better question is "What did Jesus do?" If instead of asking ourselves "What would Jesus do?" we asked, "What did Jesus do?" our ministries would look very different. (p. 167)

Steve takes us back to basics and to the methods that Jesus, Paul and the early apostles actually demonstrated. He does so with skill and scholarship and quotes extensively from the Bible. He graphically presents examples of disciple-making, missionary outreach and church planting. I nearly skipped over the early chapters with the thought 'I know all this', but found myself being freshly challenged and excited

about how Jesus and the early church actually worked. Not only are the facts presented, but also the principles that we need to learn and to put into practice. These early chapters are valuable in providing the root, the reasons and the methods for missionary movements today.

I loved the 'Interludes' which are included at the end of each section. These are interesting stories of movements in various parts of the world today illustrating the principles laid down in Jesus' ministry. The whole book is very well written and well organised which makes reading and referencing easy and a pleasure.

Sometimes books about mission can leave one feeling discouraged and helpless. However I was excited to discover that Steve provides a 50 page Implementation Guide at the end of the book. This is an outline of a course that provides biblical study of principles, encouragement to share, and practical projects in disciple-making and community. And as Steve reminds us "There is a job for everyone to do". Not just for the 'missions experts' whoever they may be, but each of us is 'Jesus with skin on' in the network of relationships we uniquely have.

Bessie Pereira

Reviews

is it time for a *Checkup?*

Bessie Pereira takes a look at what makes for a healthy (or un-healthy) local church

Just like our human body, the local gathering of the Body of Christ is very complex made up as it is of many parts all interdependent to make up the whole. Just as our bodies need a health check from time to time rather than ignoring warning signs until something goes seriously amiss, so too the simple church gathering needs to

conduct a periodic self-examination to determine if an overhaul, some things added to the 'diet' or some wound healing is needed. A diagnosis followed up with remedies may be necessary. To ignore signs of sickness could eventually lead to terminal illness.

A healthy house/simple church is able to encourage disciple-making amongst its members with the result of a multiplication of simple churches. The two-pronged approach is needed for groups to reproduce healthy groups. For a home church to be healthy it is necessary for the group to be growing in depth as well as being outwardly focused and active into the community around them.

Perhaps running through this checklist with your group may help determine if remedies are needed -



- ☐ Is there a passion to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and to build one another for the Kingdom?
- ☐ Is Jesus the reason you gather? This may seem a strange question, but some groups lose sight of Jesus being central to why they meet and why they do what they do. They may be Bible centred or project or program focused but miss the reality of meeting around Jesus. There is a need for clear priorities.
- ☐ Is there encouragement for people to hear from the Lord? If the Lord isn't at the centre and the group isn't receiving their guidance and instructions from the Lord, to whom or to what are they listening?
- ☐ Is there freedom to move in the way God is guiding the group to be and to do? Be aware that it is always too easy to fall back into old familiar patterns or to replace freedom with form.
- ☐ Is there a sense of moving forward in God's purposes as a group as well as evidence of individual growth in following Jesus as Lord? Undesirable baggage from past church can hinder growth.
- ☐ Are prayer and the reading and study of the Bible both valued and encouraged?
- ☐ Is there openness to the opportunities growth that take the group or individuals outside their comfort zone? Is there room for a strong word?
- ☐ Is there willingness to build strong relationships with one another in the group? Is there growth in transparency, loyalty, honesty and integrity as people who bear the Name of Christ? Is there a deep commitment to one another and to the group?
- ☐ Is there growth in sharing life together outside the group activities?
- ☐ Is there the ability to deal with conflict constructively?
- ☐ Is there mature and godly servant leadership in place, and is the leadership acknowledged and supported?
- ☐ Is there a recognition and encouragement of the gifts of one another?
- ☐ Is there some sense of structure with flexibility to avoid chaos and dissatisfaction building?
- ☐ Does the group make sure that they have fun together?
- ☐ Is there a sensitivity that alerts the group when red herrings, doctrinal differences or dominating leadership, start rearing their ugly heads?
- ☐ Is there an outward focus into the community around them. Is there a burden for the needy and the marginalised? A positive and practical inbuilt focus on building relationships with not-yet-Christians.
- ☐ Is there training for those reaching out into the community with the goal of making disciples and multiplying simple churches? OIKOS can assist.
- ☐ A strong encouragement of disciple making.
- ☐ A desire to see the group multiply outwardly.
- ☐ Is there a connection with other groups in your area? An openness to share with other expressions of the Body of Christ?
- ☐ Is there some knowledge of the 'bigger picture' of what God is doing across the nation and globally?
- ☐ We would love to have your story in response to these questions. And maybe publish some. If you need assistance or advice regarding any of these, or other points, then don't hesitate to contact OIKOS.

Viral Jesus - Recovering the Contagious Power of the Gospel

by Ross Rohde (Paperback - Amazon)
www.theviraljesus.org

Imagine a vibrant viral Christianity that spreads like the plague. Now contrast that with the institutional Christianity that many non-believers avoid like the plague.

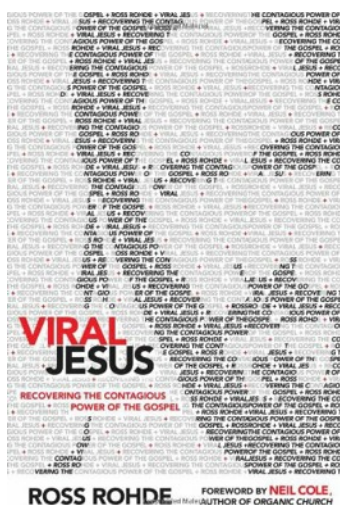
In *Viral Jesus*, Ross Rohde takes us back to the roots of our faith and the Church - back to the days when the Way was so attractive that it spread across the Roman world in just a couple of centuries. And then something went wrong and the viral growth and life transforming power left. In this easy to read book, Rohde describes the church of Jesus and His early followers and contrasts it to what the

church has morphed into over the last 17 centuries. He also describes how and why the changes occurred and what it will take to reverse the damage and let Jesus once again reign over a viral church - a church which will win the lost and advance the Kingdom of God.

Rohde shows us the church over the years, revealing the good, the bad, and the ugly. He gives us hope that the viral Jesus and His church can be restored and shows how it is being done in China as well as how there were "near misses" in the past in the West - viral movements that did not sustain.

If you are willing to put your ego aside, and think outside the box, this book will help reshape your vision of the Church.

Son Worshipper (Amazon reviewer)



speaking of Jesus



the art of not-evangelism

carl medearis

Speaking of Jesus - the art of not-evangelism

by Carl Medearis - Pub: David C Cook.

Available through Amazon as paperback and e-book or at www.carlmedearis.com

(This book) is a fresh look at what it means to share one's faith and the transformative love and power of being in relationship with Jesus. Carl Medearis sees much of traditional evangelism as counterproductive. He advocates sharing Jesus and avoiding the polemic battles. His way skips apologetics, struggles over polity and practices, and the other baggage that comes with religion and Christian tradition. Medearis strips away the theological doctrines, the religiosity and focuses on who Jesus was. He believes that people who have not yet come to faith are craving deep relationship. I agree that bombarding them with a massive array of doctrine and theology lessons is largely inappropriate. The key for one to follow Jesus effectively is by first knowing him as a friend and a man. An authentic relationship that transforms is essential to Medearis' brand of Medearis emphasizes loving wholeheartedly and sacrificially the people for whom Jesus died.

Medearis believes much of what happens when contemporaries share gospel from a posture of defensiveness where the focus shifts from sharing Jesus' message of hope and redemption to a theological explanation. He cautions that too often the emphasis is on

whether one is "saved or not" and if the individual is schooled in the tenets of the religious tradition. This focus on whether people are on the inside or on the outside and legalism is not particularly helpful. He also believes that underscoring guidelines for behaviours and explaining theology distracts. Rather attempt to put aside arguing people into faith and instead putting the focus on the Gospel of Jesus and a proper introduction to Jesus. Don't lose sharing the gospel of the "who."

Medearis' ideas about evangelism have been shaped by the twelve years he spent ministering in the Middle East. While living in Lebanon he learned that Muslims knew about Jesus as a religious figure but did not know Jesus as a person and his teachings. Those experiences informed how he viewed missions and the models that have been used for generations. Medearis argues that the church has lost sight that Jesus is the message. He points out that the scholars mistakenly interchange Paul's teachings with those of Jesus.

I appreciate this simple style of writing and keeping the main thing the main thing.

Cathleen Lawler - Amazon reviewer

Surfing Simple Church

Sites worth checking out on the Web

It has been said that the current worldwide interest in Simple/Organic Church owes a great deal to the invention of the internet. Certainly a quick google of 'home church' can open a Pandora's box of fascinating and challenging simple-church sites. Here's a couple worth checking out.

www.simplechurch.eu This is a great site which doesn't just provide an encouraging insight into what's happening in Europe but is also packed with great articles, videos, and fascinating stories. Stories like the one from the Ukraine on 'How an addict became a 'man of peace'. Or 'The church is dead.



Long live the King". It's a well produced and visually pleasing site and worth a visit.

www.starfishhouse.net This site was originally put together as a teaching resource for a small group of House Churches in South Central Oklahoma. It has a good collection of articles and videos by people like Wolfgang Simson, Tony and Felicity Dale etc., plus a collection of world-wide media articles covering house churches in the news.

www.oikos.org.au And of course there is our own site, recently revamped and updated, covering the house church scene here in Oz. Check out the Q&A page for answers to questions such as "What about women in house churches?" or "What about tithes and offerings".

blog.oikos.org.au There is also a link to the OIKOS Blog, which is worth stapling to your desktop.

And if you come across an interesting site or blog worth featuring in future editions, please let us know - editor@oikos.org.au - complete with a bit of a review.

Join us in Queensland for the
EXPANDED

OIKOS NATIONAL GATHERING BRISBANE MAY 24-26, 2013

There is a massive shift in the way God is developing his church right across the earth - we invite you to come to Queensland and explore it together

THE OIKOS NATIONAL GATHERING is a triennial gathering which in 2013 has been expanded to include ANYBODY who wants to explore and come to a deeper understanding of God's heart for Australia, and to explore ways OIKOS can grow in encouraging and supporting missional movements across our land.

As we move from a culture of traditional church to that of the Kingdom of God the people of God need to be in the right place according to his design and working and according to his purpose, no longer playing around with the consumerist, individualistic ways of the world around us but rather learning what it means to be authentic Jesus followers in a world that is crying out to know him—and that needs to find him with skin on—and that's us! This gathering will be a time to focus, to move forward and to come away with an enlarged vision and joy in expectancy as movers in the Kingdom's work.



WHERE ? The 2013 National Gathering will be held at the **Frederick Marsden Youth Centre**, located on the North side of Brisbane on 22 acres of pastoral farmland within 5 minutes of major highways - giving direct access to the City, Airport, Gold and Sunshine Coasts. To find out more about the excellent facilities we will enjoy go to - www.fmyc.org.au

WHAT ARE THE COSTS? Full cost for 2 NIGHTS and ALL MEALS is \$135 (adults & secondary students) \$115 (primary students)

BOOKING DETAILS: You can book easily on line at www.oikos.org.au or by contacting OIKOS at

OIKOS Australia,
PO Box 41, Bentleigh, Vic, 3204
0412 316 252
oikos@optusnet.com.au

See enclosed brochure for further details

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