

Oikos AUSTRALIA

Making disciples who make disciples....

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... AS numerous
AS the STARS
in the SKY

HEBREWS 11:12

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Bessie's Story *Passionate Follower of Jesus*
- Missio Dei - The God of Mission *Frank Viola*
- The Priority of Discipleship - Christ's Disturbing Call *Phil Brown*
- Finding Your Person of Peace *5 Ways to do so*
- Of Methods and Movements *Craig Kirkby*
- AND MORE!

Oikos Australia

*Multiplying missional communities by
making disciples who make disciples*

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Next Edition: The Winter edition of OIKOS
Magazine will appear in June 2014.
Suggestions and news are welcome. Please
send them in by April 30th.

Cover Photo: Robert Holmes - Cootamundra

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 today.



Directions >>

THE KINGDOM IS GROWING!

I have just returned from attending an
amazing conference in Bangkok with some 250
leaders from across the globe who are excited
and passionate about making disciples and
multiplying churches and faith communities.
There were people from all of the major
regions including Western Europe, India,
China, the Asian regions, Africa, the Middle
East, North and South America and Oceania.

The goal with other partners is to disciple
10 million new discipling leaders and plant 5 million
new churches/faith communities by 2020, with a church for every 1000
people in every community. A church is defined in India, where there is much
growth, as having 15 or more adults attending with at least 10 baptized
members from 3 or more families. They have recently grown 4000 new faith
communities or churches, plus many groups that do not yet meet the above
criteria.

The reports of growth from many areas are amazing. Sub Saharan Africa in
many places has staggering growth. China and India are also seeing ongoing
growth and multiplication of disciples and faith communities. In Guatemala
over 300 new churches have been planted representing 5 generations of
churches- churches that grew other churches who multiplied other churches...

Some areas and cultures are more open than others. Some parts of the
Orthodox world are showing interesting developments where leaders are
showing the Jesus Video and even securing many copies to distribute at Holy
sites such as the tomb of the holy sepulcher. On leader in Moldova told of
how people who may be reluctant to go to churches were open to going to
meetings in homes

There is even growth in house churches in some parts of the Muslim
world due to the courage and faithfulness of believers. In one country a
significant leader described them as a virus and a real threat.

After a long decline in Christian faith, Western Europe is seeing many
youth involved in sharing their faith and strong prayer networks. Some feel
that postmodernism is dead and the culture is moving into a new era of
“hyper-modernism” with real opportunities for religion to play a significant
part in people’s lives. We hope that people finding Jesus, rather than other
diversions, meet this opportunity.

It seems that the time has arrived for the followers of Jesus to boldly reach
out and to share the story of Jesus with people and invite them to follow him.
However the discipling process is not complete until they “bear fruit” which
includes sharing their faith and making other disciples. Multiplying disciples
who make other disciples is the key goal. When disciples are made, they form
churches/faith communities who multiply further churches and faith
communities.

Creative new ideas and tools are being used. The digital revolution offers
many opportunities. One idea develop by a Mathias Langhans in Switzerland
enables people to share their story on line (see www.mystory.me). The Jesus
film on a phone app in almost every language is also being used extensively.

Prayer is a key factor and Christ day festivals in Europe mobilize over
100,000 people. Youth are involved in Thailand with goals to reach significant
portions of the Youth in that nation. .

Having intentional, simple, reproducible processes seem to be key in these
developments. One refreshing development is the development of mapping
processes to keep accurate records and data.

Partnership and collaboration of missional agencies and churches is being
seen on an unprecedented scale with over 50 organizations becoming
involved. It is an exciting time and I believe that with prayer and intentionality
we will see growth in Australia as well. I’m excited! I hope you are as well.
Nothing is impossible through Christ.

Bless you, Phil Brown

In this edition of Oikos Magazine we are giving an emphasis to MISSION. It's appropriate therefore to begin by looking at God's overall purpose in creation...

THE MISSIO DEI

FRANK VIOLA

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

The big sweeping epic of God's timeless purpose is centered on a bride, a house, a body, and a family. These four elements make up the grand narrative of the Bible. The mission of God—the Missio Dei—is wrapped up with each of them. God's mission demands more than a theological head-nod of agreement. It demands practical expression. The Lord wants a people who embody the bride, the house, the body, and the family in every city on this planet.

Communion

As the bride of Christ, the church is called to commune with, love, enthrone, and intimately know the heavenly Bridegroom who indwells her. Churches that excel in the bridal dimension give time and attention to spiritual fellowship with the Lord. Worship is a priority. Seeking the Lord, loving Him, communing with Him, and encountering Him are central.

The means of love-filled communion are many: prayer (in all of its forms), meditation (contemplation), worship through song, taking the Lord's Supper, interacting with the Lord through Scripture, etc.

Such means are not only to be practiced by individual members, but by the church corporately and/or in small groups. Imagine a church where the members pair off during the week—brothers with brothers and sisters with sisters. They seek the Lord together. Sometimes they will do this in groups of three, four, and more. What are they doing in these groups? They are allowing Christ to love them and they are turning that love back to Him.

They are also learning how to live by divine life. The church lives by the life of Christ. Jesus Christ is the source of the bride's life. God's purpose is that Christians live by His indwelling life. This is something that must be learned and practiced. The bridal dimension of the church makes such living a concrete reality. In fact, this dimension of the church can be seen as the engine that drives all of the church's activities. It is love from Christ and for Christ

that is the church's motivation, energy, and life.

The bridal dimension of the church is not peripheral. It's central to the church's life and mission.

Corporate Display

The church is called to gather together regularly to display God's life through the ministry of every believer. How? Not by religious services where a few people perform before a passive audience. But in open-participatory meetings where every member of the believing priesthood functions, ministers, and expresses the living God in an open-participatory atmosphere (1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Peter 2:5; Heb. 10:24–25; etc.). God dwells in every Christian and can inspire any of us to share something that comes from Him with the church. In the first century, every Christian had both the right and the privilege of speaking to the community. This is the practical expression of the New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The open-participatory church meeting was the common gathering of the early church. Its purpose? To edify the entire church and to display, express, and reveal the Lord through the members of the body to principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 3:8–11).

Today, many churches are stuck with only one kind of church service where a few people minister to a largely passive audience. But such services do not display Christ through the every-member functioning of His body. Equally so, they don't display the Headship of Christ, because He is not leading the meeting by His Spirit. Instead, human headship directs what happens, who participates, and when.

I've written on this extensively in my book *Reimagining Church*. Suffice it to say that every church should have a venue for the free-yet orderly functioning of every member of the house of God whereby each Christian offers spiritual sacrifices to God and ministers to the body. Through such meetings, God in Christ is made visible and the whole church is built up.

This dimension of the church is not peripheral. It's central to the church's life and mission.

Community Life

Properly conceived, the church is a colony from heaven that has descended on earth to display the life of God's kingdom. By its way of life, its values, and its interpersonal relationships,

the church lives as a countercultural outpost of the future kingdom—a kingdom that will eventually fill the whole earth "as the waters cover the sea." God's ultimate purpose is to reconcile the universe under the lordship of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:20; Eph. 1:10). As the community of the King, the church stands in the earth as the masterpiece of that reconciliation and the pilot project of the reconciled universe.

In the church, therefore, the Jewish-Gentile barrier has been demolished, as well as all barriers of race, culture, sex, etc. (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:16). The church lives and acts as the new humanity on earth that reflects the community of the Godhead.

Thus when those in the world see a group of Christians from different cultures and races loving one another, caring for one another, meeting one another's needs, living against the current trends of this world that give allegiance to other gods instead of to the world's true Lord, Jesus Christ, they are watching the life of the future kingdom lived out on earth in the present. As Stanley Grenz once put it, "The church is the pioneer community. It points toward the future God has in store for His creation."

It is this "kingdom community" that turned the Roman Empire on its ear. Here was a people who possessed joy, who loved one another deeply, who made decisions by consensus, who handled their own problems, who married each other, who met one another's financial needs, and who buried one another. This community was living in the presence of the future. It showed the world what the future kingdom of God will look like, when Jesus Christ will be running the entire show. The church's allegiance was exclusively given to the new Caesar, the Lord Jesus, and she lived by His rule. As a result, the response by her pagan neighbors was, "Behold, how they love one another!"

We live in a day when the Western church has enshrined rugged individualism and independence. As such, many modern churches are not authentic communities that are embodying the family of God. Instead, they are institutional organizations that operate as a hybrid of General Motors and the Rotary Club. The spiritual DNA of the church will always lead its members toward authentic, viable community. It will always lead Christians to live a shared life through the Holy Spirit that expresses the life and values of Jesus Christ. In other words, it will live as the family of God. In this way, the church becomes *(Continued on page 15)*

*The Priority of **Discip***

Christ's Disturb



PHIL BROWN

My friend, whom I will call *James*, a man in his late 20s, came to our home to attend what he had thought was an anger management course we were running. Actually it was a course on blessing families. While feeling a little miffed, he sensed his need and accepted Christ in the first session. God dealt with the anger by removing its source and

bringing peace into his life and freedom from addictions. A Christian friend took him through a thorough discipleship process and I supported him in meeting weekly to read scripture and pray. He is now reaching out to his family, talking to people at work about Jesus and studying the bible with them. I constantly marvel at his growth,

spiritual depth and growing maturity. There is no greater calling or honour than being a disciple of Jesus.

I have found myself investigating and exploring how a person becomes and grows as a follower of Jesus. At best available space here permits only the touching of some key aspects of discipleship.

Discipleship

Building Call

The great need in the church today

Increasingly “discipleship” is recognized as *the* great need in the Christian church today, including the western countries. Despite all the preaching, multimedia tools, and seminars we still have deficiencies in this area of making new disciples and seeing people’s lives deeply transformed.

Various words describe this reality. A disciple of Christ is a *follower, learner, pupil or apprentice* of Jesus. It is the life calling of each follower of Jesus. Unfortunately the word has come to mean many things to different people, such as a course of Bible instruction or teaching.

For some a dichotomy has been made between “reaching out” to the lost in doing evangelism, and “building up” or growing disciples to be spiritually mature and deep. Rather, *discipleship* is the whole process, not separated into evangelism and a person then coming to faith and being then taught Biblical knowledge, but rather the whole process of a person being attracted to Jesus and then becoming a committed, passionate, “sold out” follower who in turn leads others to follow Jesus. It is not simply a matter of how many prayed the “sinners prayer” and accepted Christ, but how many have become “fruitful,” and spiritually deep, fully devoted followers of Jesus who multiply other disciples and see the formation of new faith communities.

It is helpful to take a brief look at discipleship in the teachings of Jesus and the early church although it would take much more space than permitted here.

Jesus’ teaching on Discipleship

The starting point for Christian discipleship must always be the life and example of Jesus Christ. Discipleship grew out of a close personal relationship between the Master and the learner (Watson 1981:22). Christ followed a mentoring pattern of discipleship

involving the disciple first observing His life and teaching, then putting into practice what they had observed and been taught (Matt 7:21-23). The disciple returned from experiences in ministry to spend more time with Christ and receive further training, before being released to serve. It was a relational and experientially based process as opposed to didactic, intellectual abstractions divorced from life and practice. Obedience to living out these teachings in one’s life, empowered by the Holy Spirit in a personal relationship to Christ was imperative.

Jesus also gave direct teachings on discipleship, which is vital to understanding discipleship today. The relevant Biblical passages include Matthew 10:24-25, Luke 14:26-33, John 8:31-32, John 13:34 and John 15:8-12.

This includes having a learning

relationship with Christ and a teachable spirit, giving up all to follow, holding to the teaching of Jesus, loving others and fruitfulness. These are the key features which Jesus chose as identifying features of true discipleship.

Significantly, doctrinal belief, though important, is not what Christ chose to emphasize as most essential. Discipleship in the experience and teaching of the early Church extended from these core premises.

Discipleship in the early Church

The book of Acts narrates the experience of the early church primarily as it reached out to people groups in new geographical areas following the essential pattern of the Gospel being preached in “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The narrative embodies the realities and major emphasis of the lives of the people involved in the fledgling Christian movement. Hence evangelism is a major component of the book of Acts. This may in itself be instructive, in that mission and discipleship are integrally connected.

Secondly, imitation and modeling were vital components of the discipleship in the New Testament as taught and demonstrated not only by

Christ but by early Christian leaders. Paul urged the believers at Philippi to “join with others in following my *example...* and take note to live according to the *pattern* we gave you” (Phil 3:17). Five times he urges the churches to “imitate him” while also twice affirming examples of successful imitation (Longenecker 1996:121). This pattern involved endurance, suffering, maturity and perseverance. Hirsch (2006:114) extends the concept of imitation of Christ to that of “embodiment, which involves patterning and modeling”, which means it is lived out and practically demonstrated in everyday life. Paul writes of how the early believers at Thessalonica had become “imitators of us” which included endurance in the face of severe suffering (1Thess 1:6). In this case the believers had become an example to others, demonstrating that

It is not simply a matter of how many prayed the “sinners prayer” and accepted Christ, but how many have become “fruitful” and spiritually deep, fully devoted followers of Jesus who multiply other disciples and see the formation of new faith communities.

discipleship and learning had been successfully transmitted to the next group of believers. As such, the process of “discipleship” is communally as well as individually focused, involving the wider faith community in the spiritual growth and maturation of each follower of Christ.

The life and example of Jesus became the pattern for his disciples. Paul’s famous passage on humility urges

disciples to have the same spirit, purpose, humility and attitude of Jesus in his incarnation and sacrificial death for us on the Cross (Phil 2: 1-11). Theologian Michael J Gorman (2001) popularized the term *Cruciformity* to describe how Christ’s humility and love, demonstrated by his sacrificial death on the cross, are to shape the lives of his followers. The spirituality of the Cross, leads to a subversion of the status quo of rank and status. “One of the central dimensions of Paul’s experience of Divine love and power in the crucified Jesus is his discovery that God is the “great subverter of the status quo” (Gorman 2001:17). He coins the term: the *cruciform* love of God. God is known and revealed in the crucified Messiah (Gorman 2001:19). This has obvious implications for the nature of the church and leadership that should not resemble that of the Gentiles but that of a servant (Matt 20:25-28). (Continued on page 8)



Bessie's Story



In the spring of 1991 some people involved in home churches and small Christian communities gathered in a Melbourne backyard for a barbeque. After the shared meal, they sat around and listened to one another's stories. They were amazed that others around Melbourne shared a similar journey and were encouraged and enthused. At the end of the evening everyone said that they must "stay in touch".

For Bessie Pereira that "staying in touch", initially just an A4 one-page newsletter, was the beginning of an unexpected apostolic commission that consumed her passion and her energies for the next 22 years, as OIKOS Australia was born.

Following the first National Gathering of Home Churches in Australia, in April 1993 in Canberra, the need to keep in touch across the nation resulted in OIKOS, as a connecting ministry, starting to move out wider, with the support of some of the members of home churches in other states. For Bessie this simply meant a larger mail out and it wasn't until she attended the first Cell Church gathering, at Kihilla, NSW, with Ruach and YWAM, that it seemed clear before the Lord that her involvement with home churches in the near future was not to be a home church planter but to be a networker, through OIKOS, to the wider Australian scene – the very thing she most longed to be involved in.

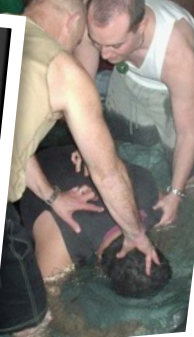
Gradually a team of people with the same passion formed, including David Wilson, Principal of Kingsley College (Wesleyan Methodist) in Melbourne, and Phil Plowman, Senior Pastor of Burwood Apostolic Church. Jean Teale and Lynnette Coupar helped with the photocopying and collating and later John Sapsford came on board with an injection of new life and professionalism into "OIKOS", still at that stage basically an evolving newsletter.

Coinciding with the birth of Oikos, however, was a phenomenon that would open up interest in simple/house churches to a growing underground of people hungry for change. The Internet was here and Bessie, with her apostolic passion to get the message out, was not slow to take hold of new ways to communicate. And so alongside the newsletter came a website and later a blog site. Meaning more writing, editing and time at the computer catching up with a growing worldwide network of other housechurch entrepreneurs.

But none of this blessed her more than getting out, meeting with and encouraging a growing Australian network of simplechurch believers that she was now in contact with. A perusal of the newsletters of the past ten years (all archived on the Oikos website) show Bessie, despite increasing ill health, touring churches from Perth to Townsville, eating and preaching, laughing and building up the saints where ever she could. And in the process building a team of likeminded people, happy to come alongside, share the passion and the burden, and maintain the vision.

During 2012 however, not long after the twentieth anniversary of that initial newsletter, Bessie began to wonder whether Oikos had completed its mission. Never one to keep a thing going beyond its purpose, and struggling with ill health, she contemplated drawing the work of Oikos to an end. *"I look(ed) back over the beginnings and continuing journey of OIKOS and (to) the point when I knew I could not be at the helm any longer,"*





she wrote. "I was thinking that maybe OIKOS was past its useby date and needed to close. It would have grieved me to see OIKOS close, not because of personal loss of ministry which I knew must happen, but I was acutely aware that the unique ministry of OIKOS is needed now more than ever. New movements are emerging both within and independently of traditional church, and the networking friendship links, resources and broad understanding of global trends, coupled with the proven track record we have of being a voluntary open ministry that doesn't bring any group or people 'under' us, could have a vital role for many."

How blessed she was then, when during a conversation with Phil Brown (current director of Oikos) God showed her that Oikos was indeed to continue and that Phil was His provision for it to do so. It was time now for her to step back, hand on to a new and

enhanced team (see the website www.oikos.org.au for a better view of Bessie's team building skills and legacy) and write her memoirs.

And for a while she was able to do that. However the second half of 2013 saw Bessie's health deteriorate seriously, until in November the Lord took her home. And we said goodbye to a woman of God who we loved, and of whom it could truly be said, like King David of old, "she served her own generation, by the will of God." (Acts 13:36).

David Wilson, one of Bessie's earliest team members and encouragers, writes the following of her.

Sometimes on the journey of life we meet people who seem to be so incredibly self-giving that you wonder if they're from another planet, and have been kept free of the evils of self-centeredness that this world seems to be addicted to. Not often, but sometimes. I've met a few in my 61 years and Bessie Pereira was one of them.

She was an amazing lady, but I don't think she ever realized it. She was so given to empowering others and making others look good and letting others know that they were OK. But that attitude didn't rob her of confidence or of courage. She was no wet blanket and she showed her strength in the resilience she had in the midst of hard knocks and loud detractors, not to mention driving her old Kingswood up and down the east coast of Australia. She was a remarkable person.

I first met Bessie when she was just getting going with Oikos. She had heard that I was involved in a Home Church Network and she wanted to talk to me about accountability...not for me, but for her! She was looking at establishing a Committee around her so she could be held accountable for her use of money (which in those days was all her own anyway) and time and the way she communicated. She wanted a group of people to keep her in check as far as motivation and passion was concerned (one of the easiest jobs I've ever had).

And so, the Oikos Committee of Management was formed. I continued with that group for a few years until other responsibilities forced me to prioritize my commitments but Bessie and I would often catch up so she could in her words "make sure she was still on the right path". She held the Oikos ministry lightly in one sense in that she often said if she was getting in the way then she would move on. But in other ways she kept a firm grip on the passions and objectives that motivated her to begin Oikos and to keep going through some very lean times which often brought her pain.

One of the fears she had was that other people might think she was setting herself up as a pastor to all home churches in Australia. That's not a bad fear to have because it tends to

(cont.)



Bessie's Story

keep the ego in check if it ever gets out of hand.... But I never witnessed anything like that in Bessie. You didn't have to sit for very long with Bessie to know that her whole motivation was to empower you and to serve your leadership rather than to set herself up as any Grand Guru so to speak.

Those of us involved in Home Churching, or relational churching as I now prefer to call it, owe a great deal to Bessie Pereira. She taught me a lot and I'm richer for knowing her. The last time I spoke with Bessie was when she was in hospital. She rang me to ask if I would look over a chapter of the memoirs book that she was finishing. It was a chapter on a fairly painful part of her journey and she wanted me to make sure that she wasn't being bitter or vindictive. I read it and reported back to her that the chapter was in fact filled with grace and forgiveness. Such was the life of this remarkable lady. Bessie Pereira, enter in, you good and faithful servant, enter in!

Dr David Wilson

Bruce Kerr (Queensland), another long-standing friend of Bessie, former Newsletter compiler and member of the Oikos team, writes the following...

Bessie Pereira was a woman raised up by God to help many understand the heart and purposes of the Lord for His people and I for one want to acknowledge the influence she had on my wife Rose and myself.

She was a woman who had no other motive than to help people know the Lord and His ways. Like Jesus said about Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" We met over 10 years ago while visiting Melbourne where she asked us if we could be regional leaders for Oikos in S.E. Queensland. We were surprised in her asking us as she didn't really know us well, but we realised later she was able to discern people and their motives very quickly.

We travelled with her and her grandson Jack in a motor home up in North Queensland visiting different house churches, where we had a wonderful time together. We laughed a lot and talked a lot and got challenged a lot as well. She encouraged me regularly as I tend to lack confidence in many things, even doing the newsletter quarterly she would tell how good I was doing it even though I made many mistakes.

She was a real encourager to many people and I know there are many who would say the same thing, so thank you Bessie for who you are and were. Bruce Kerr

Lastly, Phil Brown (current OIKOS Director), in summing up the legacy that Bessie has left, comments ...

Bessie Pereira was to us all a woman of faith who had a vision of what church could be and was unafraid to step out and pursue that vision, regardless of the cost. She was a woman who passionately pursued Jesus, saw that the task was primarily about Him and kept Him at the centre. This is the legacy that she leaves us - that and a charge to continue the same journey; to see a multiplication of simple faith communities committed to bringing in the Kingdom. Thank you, Bessie. We love you.



(DISCIPLESHIP Continued from page 5)

The church has frequently embodied a hierarchical structure rather than a servant style of leadership, which is an area that some churches are wrestling with (Gibbs 2005:84, Easum 2000:134).

Some historical and contemporary expressions of discipleship

The practice of discipling has developed and changed over the centuries. Alan Kreider in his book *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (1999) outlines the rigorous process of

Catechumens learning that the early church engaged in prior to Constantine to ensure that the conversion of new members was through. The church engaged in a comprehensive process involving four stages of resocialization that could take several years before the applicant received baptism, could take the kiss of peace and the eucharistic meal, and be fully accepted into the church (Kreider 1999:21-32). While the processes varied with place and time, the general goal of Christian leaders and teachers was to see evidence of changes

in the applicant's life in belief, belonging and behavior with an emphasis on putting the teachings of Jesus into practice (Kreider 1999:22). This could for example involve high officials giving up purple and status to serve the poor and visit the sick.

Using documents from North Africa, Palestine and the apostolic tradition (attributed to Hippolytus) these stages can be outlined. Stage one was *Evangelization* (Kreider 1999:21). This involved contact between Christians and potential believers that was informal, resulting in some who became attracted to Christianity and

approached church leaders for instruction. If approved, the applicant moved to stage two, the *Catechumenate*, one who was committed to the conversion process and met several times a week for instruction that focused on reshaping their behavior (Kreider 1999:22). Stage three involved *Enlightenment* and focused on belief, exorcisms, and preparation for Baptism. Stage four led to *Belonging* as a full member of the church and involved baptism and the explaining of the eucharist rites which the new believer had just experienced (Kreider 1999:22).

It appears that people were attracted by the beliefs of the Christian faith aided by the work of Christian apologists, which was then demonstrated by the “beauty of life” which encouraged people to join the fledgling Christian movement (Kreider 199:18). The church grew “because it was addressing people’s needs and liberating them from the compulsions that were disfiguring society” (Kreider 1999:106). From the fourth century onwards, the church also grew rapidly but this time by becoming more “conventional and compulsory” (Kreider 1999:106).

Today

One current and very influential and intentional discipling process has seen 1.7 million baptized new disciples made in very difficult countries in some 10 years since 2001. It is known as Training for Trainers or T4T (Smith & Kai, 2011). It is a simple, reproducible process, focused on obedience not just knowledge. This process will be explored in Part 2, “Making disciples.” It is intentional and has a rigor in asking people to share their faith and to equip new disciples to be trainers of new disciples.

The radicalness of true discipleship.

The challenge is be “fruitful” in making new disciples but also in seeing the Gospel transforming all aspects of the disciple’s life and relationships with others. The fruit of the spirit must be evident (Gal 5:22-25).

Being a follower of Christ is far more than “getting saved” and regularly “going to church.” It is to be an agent of the kingdom of God. This kingdom “is not of this world” yet it impacts this world and stands in tension between the present and the future Kingdom when Christ returns. It breaks into our world bring transformation and blessing.

It firstly sets our mission and purpose in life to make other disciples, and to

share how our lives have been impacted by Jesus. When questioned about the “weightier matters of the law” Jesus summary was to love God passionately with all our being and to love people as ourselves (Matt 22:37-40).

Discipleship leads to changes in our relationship to our selves, to others and to God

It is becoming a “revolutionary” in terms of our society’s values and practices. Our belief in God in Christ informs our values and beliefs systems that put disciples at odds with much of current western culture. The pursuit of personal enjoyment, “fun” things and money as the prime priorities of life is subverted. Being a disciple puts us at odds with consumerism, selfishness, and materialism and every other “ism” God becomes the focus of our life.

To be practical, it will lead us to change our financial priorities to move out of debt and this world’s financial system to “seek first the kingdom of God.” It will touch and should transform our relationships with others, with an emphasis on loving and caring for people, especially the widows and orphans and needy and those in the family of God.

It will change our approaches to parenting and our goals for our families and children. It should also change and bless our marriages. The divorce rate in the Christian church is testimony to the need for discipleship to be applied to this vital area.

Being a disciple of Christ will transform our attitudes to sexuality and its expression, despite the increasing strident demands of the opinion makers, backed by the political elite, pressure groups, Hollywood and the media, to enforce a value system which seeks to promote almost every form of sexuality except that within marriage.

It will or should change our political outlook and allegiances as we seek for righteousness, justice and compassion to be expressed, which may put the disciple of Christ at odds with many of the powers and structures of society.

These may be political, economic, social or even religious.

Some of the tragedies of recent history include the Bosnian and Rwandan genocides, which saw professed “Christians” involved in “ethnic cleansing.” Discipleship that does not transcend ethnic and political alliances is not true discipleship.

Discipleship should also lead us to care for Gods created world and its creatures.

Being a follower of Christ is learning to daily “live in the Spirit” resulting in personal transformation, as the fruits of the spirit take root in our lives. Learning to more deeply love God and others is the process of a lifetime for a disciple.

Discipleship is intensely about being in a learning and transforming relationship

with Jesus and his life and teachings and having a teachable spirit. It is relational, obedience focused, and calls for the same sacrificial humility and servanthood of Christ. It is empowered by a daily connection to the Holy Spirit and results in fruitfulness both in outreach and personal growth to become like Jesus. It involves loving God passionately and others like ourselves. Discipleship is intentional, simple and results in disciples making more disciples. It also invades and ultimately transforms every area of our lives, and is often thus considered subversive by the entrenched powers and authorities in society that are not conformed to Christ and His teaching

To support discipleship, accountability within small groups, having mentors, and daily practical application of the life of Jesus to our lives are essential. This process will be further explored in the next issue of the magazine.

PHIL BROWN

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OF METHODS AND MOVEMENTS

“Are you the house church people?” and “Are you part of the simple church movement?” are both questions I’ve fielded often over the past decade. My honest and sincere question to both these questions is: no.

Yes, I’m fully persuaded that the best means for spiritual growth and mission—the God-designed means, in my opinion—is a *spiritual family where faith is a lifestyle that revolves around our dwelling places and work spaces*, rather than a schedule of meetings or programs. And yes, I certainly hope we’re cooperating with the *moving of the Spirit* in our day (even as I acknowledge that this is not the only avenue in which He is moving today).

Following Jesus unquestionably involves movement. As the Master said, **“Follow Me and I will make you...”** (Mark 1:17). *Our job is to follow; His job is to make something out of our Christ-centred lives and Christ-filled communities.* (When we assume God’s job, we default on ours; we stop following and start settling).

Methods and movements

However, if we align ourselves with a particular method of ‘doing church’, and classify ourselves as a specific ‘movement’ per se, we’re in danger again of championing ‘our thing’, of defining too tightly the untamed mysteries of God, of concocting a ‘who’s in and who’s out’ list, and sometimes, even contriving a ‘what works’ formula ... in a nutshell, we set up camp around one truth—which we ultimately end up having to defend.

Like movements before us—who were also fully persuaded that they were true to Biblical revelation and on the cutting edge of what God was doing in their day—we too can become entrenched in a one-dimensional understanding of God’s unfolding truth, and miss the *manifold, multi-dimensional wisdom of God* (Ephesians 3:10). As one man quipped, *“movements oft become monuments, and ultimately, mortuaries”*.

Yes, movements that were once free-flowing eventually crystallize into restrictive forms and structures—the river of life stagnates into swamps and marshes. Then the cycle is repeated: some brave pioneers, at risk to life and limb, have to break free from the shackles of another dead (and controlling) movement, and we miss another generation that’s able to usher in the Kingdom. Pioneers, in such cases, Abiding in the Presence of Christ in our midst, resting in the Father-heart of God, is a profoundly spiritual *and* deeply practical way of life. Abiding in the Presence of Christ in our midst, resting in the Father-heart of God, is a profoundly spiritual *and* deeply practical way of life. spend their energies *breaking out from* man-made structures, never truly *breaking into* our full God-given inheritance.

In my opinion, our identity is found in nothing less than the King and His Kingdom come. Our only safeguard against settling for false finish-lines lies in being aligned to Christ Jesus, taking our cues from Him, and defining our purpose around His Kingdom mandate.

Some will no doubt contend that, while this is both foundational and obvious, it’s too easy to pay lip service to such a creed. Doesn’t everyone claim they’re consistent with the Kingdom?

I agree that it’s terribly convenient to use Kingdom terminology without embracing the way of the King. So, along with our resolve to align with the King and His Kingdom, I think it’s important to identify the *Kingdom values* He is highlighting today. I for one have had my fill of methods and movements; I’m trying to discern and treasure the values of the Kingdom. As Tony Fitzgerald regularly reminds us, “Methods are many, values are few; methods change often, values never do.”

Values are like the riverbanks that support a flowing river, and here are a few Kingdom values that I think are pertinent today.

1. The Presidency of Christ

Abiding in the Presence of Christ in our midst, resting in the Father-heart of God, is a profoundly spiritual *and* deeply practical way of life. From *this place of rest*, we all learn to participate, to discern and to respond to His prompting in our individual and communal lives.

2. The Priority of Mission

Defining what we do from the heartbeat of Jesus, allowing the mission of Christ in the world to be our framing reference. From *this place of perspective*, we learn to support each other in His mission to *our world*—wherever this plays out, in our neighbourhood, a niche of society, or even other nations.

Abiding in the Presence of Christ in our midst, resting in the Father-heart of God, is a profoundly spiritual *and* deeply practical way of life.

3. The Primacy of Relationships

Recognising those whom God joins our heart to, whether it’s for a season or a lifetime, and intentionally walking the way of love together. From *this place of safety*, we learn to serve each other sacrificially and selflessly, knowing we

neither own one other nor do we owe each other—except to love (Romans 13:8). Slaying both a spirit of obligation and entitlement, we release each other into new seasons or new adventures as the Lord leads.

4. The Process of Discipleship

Grasping the dominion call as we learn to govern our own lives in submission to Christ, and learn to govern together over the issues of this life—including the collective sphere of influence God entrusts to us as a self-governing community. From *this place of growth*, everyone is released into their Kingdom destiny, and a decentralised multiplication of missional life is not just possible, but expected.

5. The Place of Leadership

Taming our default reactions to and fears of leadership, we freshly engage with the importance of servant-leadership in the context of the family of God. From *this place of empowering*, we respect mature spiritual parenthood and support gift-led initiatives.

Of course there are many other Kingdom values, and each one listed above could be amplified on (follow the links for more), but this is where I'm at, the issues I'm fussing with. The critical issue for me is this: God is calling us to *unearth ancient values, not merely construct modern methods*¹. And as we live consistent with

the values He's revealing, the river of life keeps flowing.

Could we be the generation that refuses to settle for mere methods and movements, who instead, *proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel of the Kingdom*—ushering in the will of God on earth, as it is in heaven?

A generation of 'nobodies'—loving and living and learning in spiritual families—who care not for methodology, or formulae, or movements, but who care only for the Kingdom of God, taking their cues personally and collectively from the King.

Sign me up!



¹ Yes, helpful methods can flow out of our values, and if we're intentionally seeking to apply our values, this will no doubt happen. However, methods imported into our situation because they 'work elsewhere' seldom produce fruit, and sadly muddy our discovery of the values themselves.

One of the limitations of 'movements' per se is that 'members of the movement' (whether this is officially stated or not) attempt to copy-paste the movement's trendy distinctives on to their unique situation. The result is often pressure, performance and disappointment ... not "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"—the hallmark of the Kingdom (Romans 14:17).

Even methods born in the application of our values must be kept secondary and subservient, or else we'll again misplace our dependencies.

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I went in response to a revelation...

I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel. (Galatians 2:2 NIV)

How important it is that every fresh undertaking in work for God should come by revelation to those chosen for it. Because God has so spoken and given revelation to some chosen instrument and a truly spiritual work has been done, others have taken it as a model and have sought to imitate it in other places. The result has been, and is, that they are called upon to take responsibility for it – find the resources of workers, funds and general support. This, in turn, issues in many sad and pathetic, if not evil and worldly, methods and means being employed, and those concerned find themselves in a false position. Conception, not imitation, is the Divine law of reproduction. Anointing, not human selection, is the Divine law of succession.

The fact is that the work of God has become a sphere for so many natural elements to find expression and gratification. Man must do something, see something, have something. Ambition, acquisition, achievement, etc., have found their way over to Christian enterprise, and so, very often (let us be quite frank) things have become 'ours' – 'our work,' 'our mission,' 'our field,' 'our clientele'; and

jealousies, rivalries, bitterness and many other things of the flesh abound.

It is a very difficult thing, a crucifixion indeed, for the natural man to do nothing and have nothing, and especially to know nothing. But in the case of His most greatly used instruments, God has made this a very real part of their training and preparation. The utter emptying of all self-resource is the only way to have "all things of (out from) God" (2 Cor. 5:18). On this basis, even Christ elected to live. We need not remind you of Moses' "I am not eloquent" (Exo. 4:10), and Jeremiah's "I am a child" (Jer. 1:6), and Paul's "that we should not trust in ourselves" (2 Cor. 1:9). These were of a school in which the great lesson of the difference between natural and spiritual was taught experimentally.

By T. Austin-Sparks from: *What is Man?* Chapter 5



Photo: @DartmoorGiant, Foter

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HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Want more help or information on making disciples or doing simple church? How about a seminar in your area? Or a contact with someone from one of our Regional Teams? Or maybe you'd like to support the vision of Oikos Australia. Ring us on 0409 137 988 or email us at philbrown@oikos.org.au

Snapshots of Community

Some readers may remember Molong Nacua (Cebu, Philippines) from a previous issue. After the recent devastation of Typhoon Haiyan, Molong and his apostolic community, with the help of a number of western simplechurch donors, were busy comforting believers, distributing food and rebuilding homes - and in the process baptising many new believers. Here's an interesting report that came out of their labours.

"My church was destroyed, brother Molong." A pastor friend in north Cebu came to me asking help. He meant the building then. So many church building were wipe out too. I came to rescue and help him and his family with food supply, and packs for the members and finances for him and other families.

"I came for you because we're friends. Your church building I can repair or rebuild but I won't waste any of my time and money on that. Another storm can wipe it out and people are starving for food. Church is you and me and our family 'being' family together. It's our relationships that's making the church. If our relationship is destroyed then how can we help each other?"

"You were the first person we thought about after the typhoon." he said, "We even wanted to put a sign on the road "Molong, this way..." because you might not find the right road leads to us."

We help each other because there is relationships. And even if there is not, we still would do but how much more if healthy devoted relationships are formed among the saints?

Church is not a building, it is the people. Yet, it is not only the people of God but it is their relationships. Many churches have building and people but not a lot relationships.

Church is relationships "loving God and people and neighbor." It is created for two or more people. Same as the word 'love', it's created for people. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.



Photo: ChicagoMan.Foter



Cookout and invite Christians and non-Christians. Flee the Christian subculture.

2. Walk, Don't Drive.

If you live in a walkable area, make a practice of getting out and walking around your neighborhood, apartment complex, or campus. Instead of driving to the mailbox, convenience store, or apartment office, walk to get mail, groceries, and stuff. Be deliberate in your walk. Say hello to people you don't know.

Strike up conversations. Attract attention by walking the dog, taking a 6-pack (and share), bringing the kids. Make friends. Get out of your house! Take interest in your neighbors. Ask questions. Pray as you go. Save some gas, the planet, and some people.

3. Be a Regular.

Instead of hopping all over the city for gas, groceries, haircuts, eating out, and coffee, go to the same places. Get to know the staff. Go to the same places at the same times. Smile. Ask questions. Be a regular.

I have friends at coffee shops all over the city. My friends at Starbucks donate a ton of left over pastries to our church 2-3 times a week. We use them for church

Missional is not an event we tack onto our already busy lives. It is our life.

Mission should be the way we live, not something we add onto life: "As you go, make disciples."; "Walk wisely towards outsiders"; "Let your speech always be seasoned with salt"; "Be prepared to give a defense for your hope."

We can be missional in everyday ways without overloading our schedules. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Eat with Non-Christians.

We all eat three meals a day. Why not make a habit of sharing one of those meals with a non-Christian or with a family of non-Christians? Go to lunch with a co-worker, not by yourself. Invite the neighbors over for family dinner. If it's too much work to cook a big dinner, just order pizza and put the focus on conversation.

When you go out for a meal invite others. Or take your family to family-style restaurants where you can sit at the table with strangers and strike up conversation.

8

Easy Ways to be Missional

gatherings and occasionally give to the homeless. Build relationships. Be a Regular.

4. Hobby with Non-Christians.

Pick a hobby that you can share. Get out and do something you enjoy with others. Try City League sports. Local rowing and cycling teams. Share your hobby by teaching lessons. Teach sewing lessons, piano lessons, violin, guitar, knitting, tennis lessons. Be prayerful.

Be intentional. Be winsome. Have fun. Be yourself.

5. Talk to Your Co-workers.

How hard is that? Take your breaks with intentionality. Go out with your team or task force

after work. Show interest in your co-workers. Pick four and pray for them. Form mom groups in your neighborhood and don't make them exclusively Christian. Schedule play dates with the neighbors' kids. Work on mission.

6. Volunteer with Non-Profits.

Find a non-profit in your part of the city and take Saturday a month to serve your city. Bring your neighbors, your friends, or your small group. Spend time with your church serving your city. Once a month. You can do it!

7. Participate in City Events.

Instead of playing X-Box, watching TV, or surfing the net, participate in city events. Go to fundraisers, festivals, clean-ups, summer shows, and concerts. Participate missionally. Strike up conversation. Study the culture. Reflect on what you see and

hear. Pray for the city. Love the city. Participate with the city.

8. Serve your Neighbors.

Help a neighbor by weeding, mowing, building a cabinet, fixing a car. Stop by the neighborhood association or apartment office and ask if there is anything you can do to help improve things. Ask your local Police and Fire Stations if there is anything you can do to help them. Get creative. Just serve!

Don't make the mistake of making "missional" another thing to add to your schedule. Instead, make your existing schedule missional.

Don't make the mistake of making "missional" another thing to add to your schedule. Instead, make your existing schedule missional.

This Article by **JONATHAN DODSON** was taken from the Verge website. You can download, for FREE, an expanded book on being missional, entitled *Simple Ways to be Missional*, by going to www.vergenetwork.org



5

Ways to Identify Your Person of Peace by Alex Absalom

Since 2010, I've served as the leader of missional innovation at RiverTree Church, in Northeast Ohio. As part of a team working to help the church move further down the missional path, one of the first things we taught was this missional strategy called Person of Peace. It is the strategy Jesus gives to help us naturally and easily identify where we are called to go.

I believe that many, many disciples can be released to go out as witnesses simply by implementing this basic strategy. The Person of Peace concept contains within it the essence of missional DNA. As a result, it is flexible enough to fit into a wide range of church cultures and alongside whatever models for witnessing and disciple making you may already use. Lived out in practice, finding your Person of Peace accelerates your mission.

So how do you identify your Person of Peace? Below are five characteristics I've found quite helpful in identifying the Person or Persons of Peace we've encountered.

Your Person of Peace is not a Christian (this is about reaching lost people who won't otherwise be touched by the Gospel), yet is someone who:

1. Welcomes you
2. Receives you (and thus, probably unknowingly at first, receives Jesus in you)

3. Serves you
4. You intentionally invest in
5. Operates as a gatekeeper, opening relational doorways into their network of relationships.

I often summarize it as, "They like you and you like them." Part of the liberating factor for us as Christians is that the Person of Peace only works properly with those who are willing, so it is the very opposite of manipulation.

Put simply, whom would you most love to see become a disciple of Jesus? The question really is that simple—whom do you sense God has called you to love the most? Who is your heart best shaped to reach for Jesus?

We taught this repeatedly to the men and women at RiverTree who would become the leaders of the first generation of missional communities. (For more on missional communities, visit my blog alexabsalom.com). We kept bringing them back to the challenge of this question: "Who are you called to love

intentionally?" When people are stuck, we sometimes frame the question a different way: "Who do you most want to see saved?" If someone replies, "The whole city," narrow the question: "Who specifically would you most love to see reached for Jesus?"

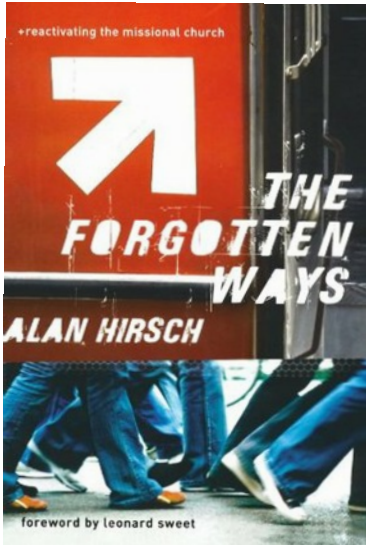
If the answer is a particular community (e.g., bikers, high school students, those in a local juvenile correction facility, families with preschoolers, young adults—all of

which are real examples from RiverTree), then probably that context will be where your Person of Peace is, since clearly you feel called to that neighborhood or network of relationships.

As a family, we have lived this process. Originally from England, in 2007 God called us as missionaries to the United States. Our journey of faith saw us landing in Oklahoma City, finding ourselves in a new country where we had no favor, knew hardly anyone

and barely understood the culture—or even the accent! So Hannah and I did what we always do: We prayed and asked God to show us our Person of Peace.

In England, our Person of Peace had been the principal at the kids' school. This



the primary missional strength of the gospel and God's people. He expresses that this strength lies dormant in each Christian and local church that seeks to follow Jesus faithfully in any time. The problem, he rightly recognizes, is that today's Christian culture has forgotten how to access and trigger it. Hirsh writes this book to help reactivate it so Christians can transform the world by living transformed lives.

Hirsch identifies in the book six simple but interrelating elements of missional DNA, forming a complex and living structure. They are:

- 1) Jesus Is Lord: At the center and circumference of every significant Jesus movement there exists this very simple confession.
- 2) Disciple Making: This is the life-long task of becoming like Jesus by embodying his message. Hirsch believes that this is perhaps where many of our efforts fail. Disciple making is an irreplaceable core task of the church and needs to be structured into every church's basic formula.
- 3) Missional-Incarnational Impulse: Hirsch examines missional movements that seed and embed the gospel into different cultures and people groups.
- 4) Apostolic Environment: This relates to the type of leadership and ministry required to

sustain metabolic growth and impact.

5) Organic Systems: Determining appropriate structures for metabolic growth.

6) Communitas, not Community: Too much concern with safety and security, combined with comfort and convenience, has lulled us out of our true calling and purpose.

Hirsch wisely spends much attention as to how in the modern and the postmodern situation, the church is forced into the role of being little more than a vendor of religious goods and services. Which is why many of it's members have become passive. The church is supposed to radically change society and to do so we must tell an alternative story

Hirsch ends quoting church consultant Bill Easum. Easum is right when he notes that *"following Jesus into the mission field is either impossible or extremely difficult for the vast majority of congregations in the Western world because of one thing: They have a systems story that will not allow them to take the first step out of the institution into the mission field, even though the mission field is just outside the door of the congregation."* (p. 252)

Bruce Hopler

THE FORGOTTEN WAYS Alan Hirsch Amazon.com

(In *The Forgotten Ways*) Hirsch does a masterful job in showing how the church of the western world has forgotten the way to be a Christ follower. As Hirsch puts it, "... all God's people carry within themselves the same potencies that energized the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church." (Hirsch, 2006, p. 22) Hirsh then introduces the

term: Apostolic Genius ,which

time, the "she" was a "they"—a family who lived in our neighborhood. They were out walking past our new house when I happened to be doing yard work. A first conversation ensued, and before I knew it our family had been invited for dinner, and our new friends were busy serving us with gusto. The couple became (and remain) truly close to us. We love them dearly and would do anything for them—and know the same is true in reverse.

They opened up a whole network of relationships for us in our neighborhood. These various households became our extended family—adopting us foreigners at all the holidays, doing life together, coming and going out of homes and generally building great relationships. Gradually, God conversations began to

surface, and over the course of several years there was a sweet spiritual awakening in that place. And so we went on the journey of discipleship together, helped by a missional community that our friends graciously allowed us to begin in our neighborhood. Looking back, it really was such an easy and enjoyable journey, with Hannah and I just listening to God and obeying the simple steps He gave us along the way.

In hindsight, I think our key step was that we began by asking Jesus to show us the harvest that was already around us—by identifying our Person of Peace. Below, I've listed a few questions to help you identify your Person of Peace and draw him/her/they to Christ, as well as help others to do the same:

Who are you called to love intentionally? Who comes to mind in response to, "They like you and you like them"? Who is your heart best shaped to reach for Jesus? Who is already responding positively to you? What is Jesus saying to you as you pray about this?



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60 mid-sized missional communities and a strong disciple-making system have been planted in the past 3 years. This is an excerpt from his new eBook *The Viral Gospel: How Finding Your Person of Peace Accelerates Your Mission*. Download it for free at www.alexabsalom.com

the visible image of the triune God. By sharing in the communion of the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit, the church puts God's love on public display. It becomes His family in the earth in reality.

The family dimension of the church is not peripheral. It's central to the church's life and mission.

Commission

When Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He chose to express Himself through a body to continue His life and ministry on earth. As the body of Christ, the church not only cares for its own, but it also cares for the world that surrounds it. Just as Jesus did while He was on earth.

The pages of history are filled with stories of how the early Christians took care of the poor, stood for those who suffered injustice, and met the needs of those who were dying by famine or plague. In other words, the early Christian communities cared for their non-Christian neighbors who were suffering. Not a few times a plague would sweep through a city, and all the pagans left town immediately, leaving their loved ones to die. That included the physicians. But it was the Christians who stayed behind and tended to their needs, sometimes even dying in the process. One of the Roman emperors, a pagan, publicly lamented that the pagan temples were losing customers because "the Christians not only take care of their own needy, but ours as well!" The book of Acts and the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and John abound with examples and exhortations of how the church cared for the world. This particular theme is peppered throughout the New Testament documents. (Quoting all those texts would demand another book.)

In short, the early church understood that she was carrying on the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. She well understood that He was the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). That ministry is enunciated in Luke 4:18–19: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." We meet it again in Acts 10:38, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."

Throughout His ministry, Jesus showed what the kingdom of God was all about by loving outcasts, befriending the oppressed, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, caring for the poor, driving out demons, forgiving sins, etc. If you peel back His miracles, the common denominator underneath them all is that He was alleviating human suffering and showing forth what the future kingdom of God looks like. When Jesus did His miracles, He was indicating that He was reversing the effects of the curse.

In Jesus' ministry, a bit of the future had penetrated the present. Jesus embodied the future kingdom of God where human suffering will be eradicated and there will be peace, justice, freedom, and joy. The church, which is His body in the world, carries on this ministry. It stands on the earth as a sign of the coming kingdom. The church lives and acts in the reality that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the world today. It lives in the presence of the future ... in the already-but-not-yet of the kingdom of God.

For this reason, the church is commissioned to proclaim and embody the kingdom now—to bring a bit of the new creation into the old creation, to bring a piece of heaven into the earth—demonstrating to the world what it will look like when God is calling the shots. In the life of the church, God's future has already begun. This dimension of the church's mission has to do with how she displays the Christ who indwells her to those outside of her. It has to do with how she expresses Christ to the world.

Jesus fulfilled the mission of Israel in His earthly ministry (Gen. 18:18). But since His resurrection, He has commissioned the church to continue that mission. Hence, the church exists to fulfill Israel's original calling to be a "blessing to all the nations," to bring "glad tidings, good news [the gospel] to the poor" and to be a "light to the world" (Gen. 22:18; Isa. 49:6; 52:7). The church stands in the earth as the new Israel (Gal. 6:16). And she shows forth that the Jesus who walked this earth is the same Christ who has taken up residence within her members.

This dimension of the church is not peripheral. It's central to the church's life and mission.

Summary

So how does a local church carry out the Missio Dei . . . the ageless purpose of God?

Very simply: by loving the Lord Jesus as His bride and learning to live by His indwelling life (communion).

By edifying its members through displaying the Lord Jesus as functioning priests in God's house and as participating members of Christ's body (corporate display).

By living a shared life as the family of God, visibly demonstrating what the kingdom of God is like to a broken world (community life).

And by expressing God's image and exercising His authority in the earth—the very things that the first Adam was charged to do in the garden (commission).

What then is God's end?

What is His grand mission? It's to expand the life and love that's in the Trinitarian Community. It's to increase the fellowship of the Godhead and reflect it on earth. This is the goal of evangelism. This is the goal of all of the church's activities. This is God's dream, His eternal purpose.

To obtain a bride, a house, a family, and a body that is by Him, through Him, and to Him. The kingdom of God, which is the equivalent of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, is toward that end as well. This ought to give us a new view of the church and of God's mission for the planet. And that view should lead us to a complete recalibration of how the church expresses herself in the earth.

As I have said elsewhere, God's ultimate purpose begins in Genesis 1 before the fall, not in Genesis 3 after the fall. Failure to understand this has been the fundamental flaw of evangelicalism and much of the modern day missional movement.

To meet the beating heart of God, we must go back before the fall to discover afresh God's original intent. Doing so will change everything.



FRANK VIOLA is the well-known author of many books, including *Pagan Christianity*, *Reimagining Church*, and more recently *God's Favourite Place on Earth*. He blogs regularly at www.frankviola.org, which is rated in the top 10 of all Christian blogs on the Web.



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TIME TO BOOK!

2014 NATIONAL MISSIONAL SUMMIT MELBOURNE MAY 23-25, 2014

In May, 2014 Oikos Australia is co-sponsoring a National Missional Summit in partnership with Youth for Christ Australia, Praxeis, MOVE & Campus Crusade for Christ Australia

It's a gathering of people committed to making a difference, growing the Kingdom, transforming communities, making disciples of Jesus and seeing new faith communities develop.

WHEN? From 7pm Friday May 23 to 2pm Sunday May 25

WHERE? The Summit will be held at **Oasis Camp** at Mt Evelyn, in the foothills of the picturesque Dandenong Ranges, about 37 klms east of Melbourne. A shuttle service to the camp will be arranged to and from Tullermerine Airport. To find out more about the facilities go to www.oasis.asn.au

WHAT ARE THE COSTS? Full cost for 2 NIGHTS and all meals (adults & secondary students) is \$160.00.

DAY VISITORS are welcome at \$65 per day (includes meals).

BOOKING DETAILS: You can book easily online at www.oikos.org.au or by contacting Oikos Australia at

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*Come and hear the stories, join the conversation,
be inspired, challenged and equipped.
Be part of what God is doing!*



Surfing Simple Church Sites worth checking out on the Web

For the cybernauts among our readers you might like to check out

www.praxeis.org.au It's the website for one of the missional groups that is co-sponsoring the Summit (see above). According to their home page, "Praxeis is the Greek word for the book of Acts. It means to act. It speaks of adventure and action. We are inspired by the Acts of the Apostles or Acts of the Holy Spirit, as it may be known. Acts is the continuation of all that Jesus began to

teach and do (Acts 1:1)". Part of their passion is to see a movement of people that virally spread the message and multiply. Speaking of movements, check out

www.movements.net This is Steve Addison's site. Steve heads up MOVE (also at the Summit) and is the author of *What Jesus Started and Movements That Change the World*, which according to Steve are characterised by "white-hot faith, commitment to a cause, contagious relationships, rapid mobilization and adaptive methods." Check out his resource-filled site.

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