

Kingdom kids

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OIKOS Australia

Multiplying missional communities by making disciples who make disciples

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THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A MISSIONAL FAMILY

Recently our second oldest son remarked with a smile, almost in passing, that he had shared the “God man story” at the Scout camp he had recently been on. This is an overview of the Bible story and God’s plan for us. As parents, my wife Kate and I were delighted, as it showed he had embraced being missional in seeking to make disciples and to share Jesus with his friends.

Being a missional family is both very rewarding and challenging and I feel somewhat inadequate to write about it. Our 4 children (3 sons and a daughter) are aged 11 to 19, so we are very much a work in progress along with us as parents. To write about it is a conversation or dialogue on an unfinished task, where we are all learners. We experience both successes and failures and ultimately our children all grow up and make their own choices.

However, we will consider that we have been successful (amongst other factors), if our 4 children grow into adults who are firstly and foremost passionate disciples of Jesus, who are making other disciples and raising their future families to do the same. One writer, writing on leadership, suggested that we need to “start with the end in mind.” Well, if the above is our end-goal then we can work back from this point to ask, “How do we reach this destination?”

Here are some of the ingredients that we are finding important (so far). We are also keen to learn from other families who are ahead of us with their own grown families.

WIN THEIR HEARTS

Firstly, a key goal is to win our children’s hearts and keep them open. This involves initial instruction, but much more listening and discussion as they grow older, so that they internalize the values as their own. As children mature this is far more important than compliance to a “rule”, which will invariably fade when a parent isn’t present but is retained if it becomes their own choice.

This is also linked with helping each child to develop a personal relationship with Jesus and learn to listen to the Holy Spirit. We have daily family worship times (morning and evening) with our family and often encourage our children to listen and then share what the Holy Spirit is bringing to them. This may be a picture, Bible text, word or song etc. We also encourage daily personal time reading the Bible and praying.

Kate and I have “discipling times” when we talk individually to our children about their walk with God and what they are discovering. Sometimes I take each of our children out for a meal or snack. I ask about how they are going with God, relationships, study, life goals and other current events in their life, etc.

We further spend time helping our kids to learn to share their story of their experience and relationship with God (their testimony).

INVOLVE THEM


Whenever we are able, we try to involve our family in missional activities. This has included prayer walking our neighborhood, or praying for friends, or meeting people in market stalls and other contexts. Our daughter and a friend talked with and prayed for a lady at a local market stall who was offering “spiritual readings”. They talked about Jesus and prayed for her needs!

Our family has been blessed in that we have been able to take our children into various ministry contexts such as with indigenous groups in the North West of Australia, to church groups, to refugee camps and micro credit projects in Thailand and the Philippines. This has confronted them with poverty and need, and made them aware of our relative material affluence. We have also been challenged by the faith and passion of many impoverished peoples. This has challenged our family’s awareness of our western cultural consumerism and preoccupation with material things. *(Continued on page 15)*

THE CHURCH AT MY FEET

Blurring the lines between parenting and discipleship of your kids

BRANDON CHASE



Think about this: The best churches in your community will average about forty hours in a typical year with your child if he or she is actively involved in most of its programming. Those are important hours where other leaders in the wider circle can influence your child's faith. But there are only forty hours. The average fourth-grade student who goes to church and gets forty hours of influence will spend about four hundred hours that same year playing video games. What about the time you have at home? While the average church may only have forty hours to influence your child, you as a parent have nearly three thousand hours each year. Don't miss the potential of this detail. (Excerpt From: Parenting Beyond Your Capacity by Reggie Joiner)

As a young man with a young family, following Jesus outside of the religious system inevitably put me on a crash course with the question, "What about my kids?" In being broken from a Sunday School, VBS mindset of outsourcing, suddenly my eyes were becoming newly opened to the deeper reality of discipleship with my children.

This reality goes beyond parenting, transcending the honor it is to simply raise a child – and finds itself somewhere along the lines of a Brother and Sister dynamic spiritually, where one follower of Jesus walks with another perhaps less mature in the faith follower of Jesus.

It is family, but it is more – it is a picture of the Family, the Family of God.

But how is that practically done? There are lots of books and resources on parenting. There are lots of books and resources on discipleship.

There are not many books and resources (if any) on the intersection of parenting in the temporal sense; and the eternal reality of walking in an (Continued on page 11)

What am I SHOOTING FOR?

KATE BROWN encourages parents to aim high for their next generation



Over the past year I stepped up to coaching my 15 year old daughter's netball team, and for the first time in the team's 8 year history they won the finals! High fives all round! Now I must admit I was amazed, as you see I had never played a game of netball in my life and I hardly knew the rules. Nobody else was available to step in and I was delighted to spend some time hanging out with my daughter and her peers. Thanks to a little phone AP and some fast learning we got through!

My journey into missional faith communities and raising my children as passionate disciples of Jesus has been a similar journey, the journey of setting our little family on a course outside of traditional religious norms – took a huge step of faith! Many times I've been brought to my knees in despair wondering if we are on the right track.

Knowing something wasn't working around us we pastored in a more traditional setting and saw young people busy attending every program on offer, yet struggling with following the ancient ways of Jesus – that make life work. Some Christian researchers suggest that at least 50% of young people in western churches walk away from faith.

As missional faith communities we share the challenge of seeing our children live passionate about following Jesus – knowing who they are and His purpose for their life. We are a new generation of parents, passionate about Jesus but without a road map, we haven't done it before and many of our Christian family and friends are still involved in traditional contexts.

A challenge for many families who have removed the weekly cycle of church services, youth groups and Sunday schools is we can fill their lives with sports, clubs and afterschool activities – and find whilst we encourage them to be missional they can become absorbed in those things, with hearts far from God.

John Maxwell writes, If you don't plan your own life someone else will fill it for you! Families can find themselves on a roller coaster attending everything that is put out by the school, clubs and groups – and pretty soon missional families can find their living children living secularised lives.

A couple of great fun tools we have loved in living intentional disciple-making lives has been the Flag Page flagpage.com, a great resource in looking at personality types and our personal preferences. We spent a great morning laughing and reading our profiles out. Another tool for teens is Life Purpose Planning, lifepurposeplanning.org. This little booklet is great and could be used in a missional group or even better as a great parent/child bonding time and helps to design a plan of action to faithfully carry out the purpose God has for you.

We need to guard time – it's both quality and quantity! One of the great joys of missional life has been serving and working together as a family and not being segregated. Living in simplicity – not living life to the edge in rushing around in deficits of time, debt and health. Just stopping, being still and knowing that He is God! Getting out on nature walks daily, and having time to eat simple healthy 'slow foods'. This has been one of the



Kieran being baptised by dad and older-brother Braydon

riches of home schooling - having so much time to sow into the lives of our kids. We have found them more rested in their spirits because they aren't swamped by peers, media and a constant busy schedule.

What are the spiritual practices the spiritual DNA that keeps Jesus as the Rock in their lives? What are we shooting for? One of the keys is 'Children learn best what they live'! When they see parents with a balanced life, good character qualities, a healthy marriage, active in sharing faith and a personal

relationship with Jesus. It sets a great foundation for their lives.

Creating memorable spiritual moments creates the community they might miss in being part of traditional church life; fun days in the park with our missional group and friends, regular gatherings of bringing regional missional families together for a camp or gathering, visiting shut ins, helping sick neighbours and praying for them, serving at the local neighbourhood house, eating meals with the destitute people in a food kitchen, sharing our faith and including our kids in the exciting moments of inviting our friends to accept Jesus.

What am I shooting for in helping our kids to be Disciples of Jesus? I'm looking for the fruits of the spirit (Gal 5:22-23) in their lives, that they are dressed in the armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) and know the reality of spiritual warfare, and that the principles of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) are played out in our lives and in the Kingdom of God that we are a part of.



KATE BROWN is married to Phil Brown (Oikos Director) and together with their 4 children, Brayden, Ellyse, Jamison, Kieran, they reside in Eagle Point in south-eastern Victoria

It's CAUGHT more than TAUGHT!

AILSA MATESIC (NSW) joins the conversation on discipling a generation.

My children are now in their teens but I recall when my oldest son Aaron (19) began school. The reluctance so many of us feel because we are sending our innocent lambs into the world of wolves! While seeking the peace of God somehow I was inspired to read John 17 where Jesus prays for His disciples. I scribbled in the Bible these words: Ailsa prays for her children. It has since been a key scripture for me as a mum. The biggest lessons being firstly, Pray, and secondly, Give them the WORD. You should go count how many times Jesus emphasises this in His prayer! I'm convinced if we, as mum and dad, as grandparents, as uncles and aunties and also those in our spiritual family can do these two things **CONSISTANTLY**, we can win this battle against the world for our children.

Of course PRAYER and the WORD can take root in so many different ways. One on one, as a family around a meal, as they are going out the door to school, before a footy match or a special race, in the car - making the most of all those trips! It's important to see all the teachable moments in our days. And believe me there a sooo many. If you are an adult having your own consistent relationship with the Lord, it won't be hard to capture the moments. Remember making disciples, especially of our children, is **CAUGHT** more than **TAUGHT**!

One of my favourite statements, which I use a lot as my kids leave in the morning or get out of the car, is LOVE JESUS...LOVE PEOPLE! It is my way of reminding them that they have a mission out there, wherever they go, whoever they are with. Along with these simple reminders and often prior to them, usually at breakfast we spend time together in the Bible and in prayer for our friends who don't know Jesus. Hospitality is key! We regularly encourage our kids to bring their friends home and we intentionally engage and serve them. By doing this we feel we are partnering with our kids and helping them reach their friends. So many of us wonder where to start and who to reach, when God is just asking us to love those in front of us, our kids and their friends! Remember our family really is our first church!!

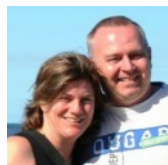
Recently I felt a growing desire in me for us as a family to serve the Lord more together. Yes we have gone on regular mission trips and this sure has been a blessing and I recommend it! But I want to keep hearing from the Lord on how we can do this. I feel that boys benefit a lot from practically serving the Lord and doing things together as a team. I am thankful that the church is now so much more fluid, and there are really no limits to how God can use us, and especially our children.

My hearts cry is for kingdom hearted men and women to come along side of children.



A younger Jaad on mission in the Philippines

Each of us as mums and dads know we could do with the extra support. It is sad that we have segregated the generations, but I believe that is changing and we are being restored to be the multi generational family we were meant to be, therefore discipleship could happen at a more accelerated rate. I am anticipating that as we come together in our towns, in our regions and as a nation we are going to notice more and more young people and children amongst us. I am seeing this already. I pray when we gather that we embrace those younger ones, include them, ask them questions, ask for their thoughts. Or maybe we need to leave our adult conversation and go kick a ball or paint a picture, or something. God is calling forth spiritual mums and dads. I think He has enough instructors!



AILSA & CRIS MATESIC live in Albion Park, NSW, with their three children, Aaron, Jaad, and Destiny. Ailsa serves on the OIKOS National Team.

One of my favourite statements, which I use a lot as my kids leave in the morning or get out of the car, is **LOVE JESUS...LOVE PEOPLE!** It is my way of reminding them that they have a mission out there

The more people in our kids' lives that they trust and that are telling them the same truths we are, the better.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE KIDS

When Aaron and I were dating we had two couples in our lives that mentored us and helped us in our journey with the Lord and with each other. They were probably a little bit younger than we are now, and each had young kids in their home. The husbands were monumental in Aaron's life and the wives were monumental in my life. I remember that I would go to their homes at night after their kids were in bed and we would chat while they folded clothes. Those nights were so wonderful to me and I didn't care that we were sitting around laundry while chatting. When the kids were awake, I didn't care that they were screaming. In fact, I loved their kids and their girls were actually in our wedding. Carrie & Amy both hold special places in my heart as landmarks in my Christian faith.

I'll never forget one time what Amy's husband, Kyle, told us. He said that when people love your kids, you love them more. At the time I didn't truly get it. I knew that I loved their kids, and I knew that I loved them, but I didn't truly understand the impact on their family.

Now I get it.



Having four kids myself, and having several people in my kids' lives that love them, makes me so happy and so proud. My boys have countless men to look up to in their lives. Brett and Logan are two young men that have both been mentored by Aaron over the past few years, and they love my boys so well. For that I'm eternally grateful. Two men that love Jesus and pursue him in their lives are leaving a legacy for my boys. My boys look up to them and think they are the coolest people in the world. When they take the time to talk to them or wrestle with them they are joining us in our walk as parents.

My friend Meghan loves my Story-girl so well. It's nothing for her to text me to see if Story can sleep over or go with her to visit her grandparents. I mean, why would I say no to that!?!?? Of course I love the break, but for me it's way more than that. It's one more person pouring into her life that loves Jesus passionately. Meghan pursues God in her life, and that will overflow into her love for Story. Meghan knows Story well and sees the same potential in her that I see. She sees a leader and a girl that will do big things.

Recently Meghan took Story to her grandparents' house and of course everyone loved on her. Her love bank was so full when she got home, and as a momma, I'm so grateful for them all for loving my girl.

As parents we need others investing in our kids, and here's why: when Cayden turns sixteen and he all of a sudden thinks his parents are weird and don't know anything, you know who he's going to trust? Brett & Logan. When Story is in middle school and is over-the-top-dramatic (dear Lord help me b/c I think our drama level is high already), Meghan will be a

voice she will listen to and trust. They have invested in them and care for them. This makes me so happy because I know that those men and women will be telling them the same things we are. We're on



the same team. The more people in our kids' lives that they trust and that are telling them the same truths we are, the better.

Parents, when you invest in young adults' lives, they in turn invest in your kids. It's a win-win for everyone involved. I want to encourage you to look around you and see who you can bring into your family. Find someone you would want investing in your kids, and then start engaging them and investing in them. Have them at family dinners. Invite them into your family outings. Encourage them to spend holidays with you if they have no other family. Allow them to join your family.

It takes a village to raise kids, and single friends, you are monumental to my village. Thank you!

Jamie Ivey is married to Aaron and lives in Austin, Texas with their four children. She writes a great blog jamieivey.com which is a lot about their family and the things God teaches her through being a wife and a mom. She loves to read, family nights, and going on dates with her man!



Jamie Ivey agrees

“It takes a village to raise kids.”



Hey it's Destiny...

The following Facebook post was posted on the Oikos Facebook page by Destiny Matesic and is reproduced as posted - well almost - some minor editing has been done to make it readable to a non-texting generation.



Destiny Matesic

19 mins · Albion Park

Hey its Destiny again, just keeping you updated with my journey! well recently I've got the gift of speaking in tongues, which is great... i received it amazingly, by the holy spirit touching me and i even got an interpretation! Previously that day i got so many opportunities where i remembered the verse 1 peter 3:15: 'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.' Someone asked a question along those lines and i was able to have a huge conversation about my faith and the hope i have (also about church, heaven etc). On monday mum got to share her testimony to heaps of girls in year 8, since then I've had many opportunities, where the girls have connected me and mum together, then (the girls i don't really know) figure out I'm a christian, so thats started sooooo many conversations its amazingly ridiculous. One girl keeps calling me the christianity girl, i got to share to her about my faith is a relationship with jesus and how i have church at home at breakfast time sometimes or about church being a few together talking about jesus. She found it very hard to understand that i wasn't some crazy religious person... but how i believed what i do. Other times in my oz tag team the girls have somehow decided that i should do my little speeches at half time (being put in the centre isn't always the greatest, but mum says to take it, and speak what i got to say). Mostly its about trying to aware the girls to not get frustrated and to let bad calls or mean girls not get to them. Also without me telling them all, they've figured out i don't swear, and one girl (kinda like the leader, or 'cool' one) keeps saying to everyone to stop swearing coz i don't swear, and i don't like it... something like that. So on the field one girl from my team - i think - might of swore and so she yelled across the field 'sorry destiny i swore' and i kinda am like whhhaatt, it was actually quite funny. But anyways I've learnt to let small things like swearing go and not say anything, and to focus on things more important, so i guess my actions are bigger then words! Other times I've talked about my faith walking home from school, its been amazing and I'm so thankful to god... I'm kinda actually waiting for a trial to pop up because its not like I've been really judged for sharing my faith at school yet, well at least not to my face. I guess i would like prayer for people to become more softer towards jesus, and maybe soon mum and i are thinking of asking anyone who's interested in reading the bible. It kinda seems impossible because if you heard the girls, saw their life and how they don't believe in god at all (most), but then i think of peters transformation in the bible! so prayer would be amazing :) Destiny xx

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We later contacted Destiny and asked her to fill us in with a little more of her journey. Destiny is one of the children of Cris and Ailsa Matesic, Albion Park, NSW (see Ailsa's article on page 5).

Hi my name is Destiny. I'm 14 and I love Jesus. Over the past few years I've grown very close in my relationship with Jesus and have had a few very supportive people encouraging me and keeping me accountable throughout my journey. I thought I'd share some great opportunities I've had with the people around me as part of God's awesome plan he has for me!!!

When I was living in the Southern Highlands (New South Wales) in year 5, my mum and Amanda (very close family friend, HUGE role model) and I, felt like God wanted us to get a group of friends together and hang out and share the truth of Jesus with them. So it kind of just happened by inviting a few friends along (having little knowledge of God). Each Friday we'd get together, hang out and talk about Jesus and learn to keep each other accountable throughout the week. Many other kids from school started to come too. It planted a seed in each and every girl and a few boys' lives.

Out of the majority of the people, Reahna, a good friend of mine, was the one always questioning God. But now we are all in high school she is the one who is continuing her relationship with Jesus and living it out!!! Amanda meets with her weekly (as I've moved down the Coast now). They keep each other accountable in prayer etc. About a week after making her decision we went down to Kiama and Amanda and I baptized her in the ocean. It was very encouraging.

I have recently moved down to Albion Park and started at the local high school. I enjoy the school because at the moment

everyone is a 'not yet Christian', so everyday I'm challenged to share my faith and act as a follower of Jesus. I've had so many great opportunities to share my faith with heaps of friends and students in my year. Often it's difficult to be different and not follow the crowd but I am learning to be myself and fear God, not man.

I had an awesome conversation with one of my friends and I stepped out in faith and asked her if she wanted to read the Bible with me. She said yes at first, but long story short, now I'm just trusting Jesus to work in her heart. Also for many more opportunities like these.

I find it important to say to someone who I'm sharing my faith with that believing and living for Jesus doesn't make you some crazy religious person. But that it's a relationship. Also I like to share what I believe is truly church. One example I use is how I have church at breakfast with my brothers and parents. We read the bible, talk to Jesus, pray for each other and pray for our friends at school etc.

I've been learning recently from Jesus that my actions are bigger than my words. Also I need to give every day over to God and to be obedient. Reading my bible consistently and learning to understand it. I need to pray to God for people and be expectant.

With Jesus alongside me I want to help others come to know the truth, so that they can be followers of our God. I know that Jesus has a great plan for me, that has already began, and I want to encourage any other younger people to go out into the world and be children of God, fearing only him and not people. A real challenge for all! 1 Timothy 4:12 says, Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example to the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

DISCOVERY BIBLE

DAVID LAWTON

DAVID LAWTON (PRAXEIS) shares a tool that his teams have found extremely helpful as they reach out to marginalised communities in Australia

The Discovery Bible Study Method is something I learnt from David Watson in South Africa. I was invited to go out with their team as they were planting churches in the townships of Cape Town.

The DBS (Discovery Bible Study) is an awesome model. It has within it empowering discipleship, accountability, simple church and multiplication. While I was there I shot a quick (rough) video of 'Nicky', a worker with Floyd McClung's 'All Nations' group. The video was taken in the home of a new believer, one now planting fellowships, (you can see him walking in the background).

Check out Nicky's DBS explanation on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPCL9w6LIJE (or find it on our site at www.praxeis.org.au)

Now to the methodology...

In most situations, it is best to start with two or three (or more). Try and reach a community, not just an individual. This will give the meeting a sense of community from the beginning. Jesus disciplined people in groups and it is one of the best ways we can learn.

It's as simple as A-B-C

A. ASH

Ask what has been good this week? It's important to be specific. Not a vague 'how are you?' but 'what has been good for you?' This will force a person/group to say what good thing happened. Asking such a direct question will then teach people to praise and thank God.

Then ask, 'what has been hard, bad or challenging this week?' This will lay the foundation for praying for one another. As you pray for needs, whatever they are, it allows God space to break through and do a miracle.

Finish 'A' by praying together, thanking God for what is good as well as for what people need. Keep your prayer(s) simple, easy and to the point. Praying quickly will allow time for other people to join in too. Make your

own prayer(s) really simple, so it doesn't sound religious or 'professional'. Doing so will help new disciples overcome the intimidation of learning how to pray. It's important to teach people how to pray, with other people, out aloud and it's also a vital component of making disciples.

B. BIBLE

From the beginning the aim is to teach self-discovery. To not rely on a teacher, but to understand that the Bible, with the Holy Spirit as revealer, is sufficient. Self-discovered truth that is applied by the person stays with the person. It sticks. It is their truth. It is personal and owned. Jesus did this a lot in his discipleship. He asked the disciples 'Who do men say that I am?' and 'Who do you say that I am?' and 'You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being'.

Why didn't Jesus just tell them? Why didn't he just say, 'Hey guys, I am the Messiah, the Son of the living God!' No, Jesus let the process of discovery happen over time. He let it come via revelation from his Father. He allowed people to go through a process to discover who he was.

BIBLE STUDY

The same goal and practice is employed by the DBS discipleship method.

Choose a passage of scripture that is simple, not too long and to the point. A story or narrative is useful. I have pasted 20 lesson plans on our site that have been devised for Muslims. Feel free to chop and change this, or study a scripture that is applicable to a person's question(s) and/or context.

Read aloud

If the person is bi-lingual, read it aloud in *their* language then re-read it in English. If the person is not bi-lingual it may be helpful to read again, but in another version.

Reread.

Helpful to 'mull' over the story. Use a different version, for bi-lingual people a different language.

Paraphrase

Re-telling is really important as it cements the story in our minds. Retell the story as you would tell it to a friend. The re-telling of the story should be a group affair. One person can attempt to re-tell, and other people can chip in and add to the picture. In this way the story is painted by the group.

Then ask 'so what?'

The key is for the leader (you) not to jump in too quickly and teach! Let them think and talk. What do *they* see in scripture? Don't be afraid of awkward silences. If they ask you to explain, turn it around by asking them, 'what do you think?' Sometimes it is good to simply be quiet and let them come up with the answers. This is very hard to do, as we are so used to providing all the answers, but is the key discipline for this process. It's all about self-discovery, not what you know! The teacher/leader's job is to give space for people to learn. To put in their own words what they can see. You have to trust the Holy Spirit!

You can ask and prompt with questions like: 'What does this say about God?', 'What does this say about us?', 'Are there areas you are bothered by?', 'What do you like?'

If you are talking more than the disciple, then you are talking too much. You know if you are being successful if the other person is talking more than you. Keep it centered on scripture. If the person is veering off course, bring it back to scripture by saying 'Where do you see that in *this* scripture?'

C. COMMIT TO OBEY

Jesus described making disciples as 'teaching people to obey everything I have commanded you'. We often miss the words 'to obey'. Our discipleship processes are usually knowledge based and not obedience/action based. However a DBS is different, it's focus is obedience! A question you can ask to do this is, 'So, what will you do about this?', or 'What will you do (or not do) this week from reading the passage?' Let the person come up with their own commitment. It might be something like 'I need to respect people' or 'I need to be thankful'. Or it may be something really specific, like 'I need to stop shouting at my kids!' Whatever it is, it needs to be listened to and respected. It is ok if it is a simple application. When someone commits to obey, truth that has come via scripture and revelation, in this process, becomes lived, personal and owned.

Finally, the last key is to 'tell someone this week what you are learning'.

This is part of the 'commit to obey'. So sharing and multiplication is built into discipleship from day one. Even before they 'get saved' they start spreading what they have been learning. It's all about making disciples from the beginning that multiply. Talk about who they are going to share with!!

Concluding remarks

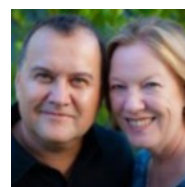
So it's as simple as A-B-C. It begins with worship and thanksgiving Then scripture is the centre. The teacher empowers the person and doesn't have all the answers. The disciple discovers the truth in the Word and learns to obey and share with other from day one.

Our focus is making disciples, allowing for salvation to come through that process, rather than the traditional way of trying to get someone 'saved' (usually say the 'sinners prayer') and then discipling them. It takes time. We are not in a hurry.

In this process, we are letting people discover God's story, the big picture. It is about re-shaping peoples world-view around this *new* world-view. A biblical world-view. This is important. For Hindu's, Muslims, Buddhists and now most Aussies, they need to re-discover God's story.

This method is simple, but very powerful. Thousands of churches have been planted through this methodology. It is sometimes so simple that people walk by it and miss its power. I believe it is the best discipleship process I have seen. It's worth giving it a go a few times and not giving up on it too quickly. There will be great times and other times where it does not seem to work. Keep at it, I am convinced it bear fruit.

And all this should be easily done in under two hours!



DAVID LAWTON heads up PRAXEIS, an Australia based disciple-making ministry reaching into some of the forgotten or marginalised areas of

Australia and overseas. Praxeis, according to their website www.praxeis.org.au 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). This is our hope, that we would be a continuation of all that Jesus began to teach and do."

Dave and Colleen spent time as missionaries in India and as pastors in Australia. Taking lessons they have learnt from exploding movements, they are mobilising an army of workers in Australia and beyond.

They live in Melbourne, where, November 21-22, Praxeis are having their Big Splash Celebration. It's free and will be well worth attending. Go to their website for details.

CORRECTION

In the last issue of OIKOS Magazine Phil Brown was quoted from the National Missional Summit as saying that we need 2000 new missional communities to keep abreast of the nation's growth.

The real figure should have been 21,000! Wouldn't want anyone to become complacent.

MULTIPLYING GROUPS

with *The Crucible Project*

Peter Fowler (Perth, WA) ponders the difficulties of group multiplication and shares a story of God at work among a group of men in Western Australia.

In the time I have been involved forming new groups and teaching house church principles, the challenge has always been to empower groups beyond their initial formation to position themselves to strategically plan to multiply the Kingdom of God by starting new groups from the parent group.

It is not difficult to form new groups, what is difficult is to instil the DNA of kingdom multiplication within each new group from its beginning. Without a willingness to operate from this intention the default is to become just another group meeting outside the walls of traditional church. The almost predictable track is the focus on the enjoyment of fellowship; the building of friendships with the freedom to meet in a way and style that is simple. The newness of the experience becomes a very compelling reason to maintain the status quo. However, this default does not multiply the influence of the church in reproducing itself with

the intentional training and releasing of new disciples into the community.

If groups have not added new people or transitioned to multiplication within eighteen months to two years they mostly revert to becoming a bible study fellowship. Eventually the purpose of gaining more knowledge becomes meaningless and the group loses its initial momentum and disbands. What keeps a group relevant is when the newly acquired knowledge is put into action every week and is able to be reported on the following week.

Despite my best efforts to lay the foundation for disciple making and group multiplication it is a step too far and seemingly too hard for those groups who have had a strong tie to traditional church.

It is difficult to shake the cultural mindset that the expression of church is a time, a place and a meeting with somebody leading. House church groups that do not have a very clear intention to train and multiply will default to the very behaviours they left behind when they moved out of traditional church.

THE CRUCIBLE PROJECT

The one environment where this has not been the default has been with The Crucible Project (TCP). This international Christian

men's organization is focused on initiating men into a responsible manhood, teaching them to take care of their families and community as men who have a life mission to make the world a better place. It begins as a practically crafted weekend camp followed by soul group gatherings that take place over a number of weeks. In this small group context men are able to review the weekend experience and are trained to use new life skills.

What is foundational to the success of TCP is the DNA of reproduction. The men who were new for the last camp now become the support staff for the next camp and each new man who attends is supported by a man who has previously completed a weekend. In this way a man has the opportunity to carry forward his experience to bless other men. Before each new camp those who have previously done a weekend recruit the next round of participants by inviting them to an information night.

The majority of the men who have participated in TCP would be on the fringes of church life, have a background of attending church when they were young but have long stopped attending. There is also a growing number of men



attending the weekends who have no Christian background or knowledge who have been invited by their mates. TCP does not expose men to traditional religious forms but to an expression of spirituality that is grass roots, more akin to Jesus style of meeting people where they are.

Every man is given the opportunity to wrestle with God in the same way Jacob did when his deceptive past caught up with him. As part of the weekend



Only one man is a Christian, who invited another man who invited another man. Three of these men 6 months ago had no connection with any faith community. Today they sit in circle with Christian men and are inviting their non Christian friends to TCP weekends.

experience men also follow the life of Jesus into descent, death and resurrection to begin their new life. Over the weekend every man is introduced to biblical stories and principles of true masculine behaviour and life purpose. The experience is transformative and lives are changed.

The men following the weekend are encouraged to tell their personal story to another man. It is from men sharing their weekend experience that new men sign up for the next camp. Without this factor built into the DNA of men sharing their stories the camps could not succeed with 23 new men.

House churches with the vision to multiply must also have the same DNA principle at work, each person sharing their new understanding and telling their story to somebody and boldly inviting them to their next house church gathering. TCP men are passionate about sharing their experience and connecting it with their faith and belief in Jesus. They know that men sitting in circle works. It is my conviction that when House church communities tell their stories people will come because there is a growing interest

and enquiry by people who are interested in spirituality, they just don't want to pursue it within the culture of traditional church.

(At present the Crucible project is only run in WA but interested men do fly in from interstate and New Zealand to do the weekend. Information on TCP and the registration details for the next WA camp are at www.thecrucibleproject.org)



PETER FOWLER and his wife Cheryl are both West Aussies although they have spent a considerable amount of time on the East Coast. In mid 1995 Peter was fighting for his life having contracted a very virulent form of malaria. God gave him a dream of a new church and told him he would live to see this happen. Since that time, he and Cheryl have been on a very exciting journey and now believe that the house church movement is where God wants them to be. Peter serves on the Oikos National Team

reign of Overcomers toward the bringing together all things in Christ? These are important questions that the Church has not fully plumbed the depths of, in all forms of church, and they need to be explored.

In the mean time, I'd like to share with you as a way to get the discussion opened, a few practical ideas that I've encountered in my own home in recent months.

1. We cultivate a culture of honor. We honor our kids. We teach them to honor us. All of this is done to honor the Father. We don't have "chores." Instead, we all contribute one-another, to keeping an environment that is honoring. We clean up after ourselves because that is the honorable thing.

(Continued on page 13)

CHURCH AT MY FEET (Cont. from page 3) ntentional, organic, Kingdom relationship with your kids – following Christ together in one-anothering discipleship. Especially if you don't "go to church."

So, with the Lord's Grace, I'm going to write one.

My friend Aaron Snow, a House2House Magazine contributor, and I are sitting with the Lord together as He is showing us what this looks like. We are asking, listening, watching and documenting as we learn to live out "the Church at our feet." Later, when the time is revealed, we will co-author a story of what the Lord shows us.

We welcome your prayers, and your engagement in this important conversation.

CHILD LIKE FAITH

In three of the Gospels (Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 18) Jesus scolds his disciples for trying to stop parents from bringing their children to Jesus to be prayed for. They thought they would be "bothering" the Lord. Jesus says, "Let the children come to Me. Don't stop them. For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children."

What is the fullness of what the Lord wants to show us about child-like faith?

Why do we so often shuffle the kids away, as if they are a "bother" to us, or the Lord Himself, so that the adults can have their Jesus time? What are we forfeiting in seeing Jesus in them by removing them from the gathering?

Why do we so often see kids have simple faith, child-like, (real faith?) – but then lose it and walk away from it as young adults? Something shifts between this beautiful early faith and the point at which they deny it. Could it be that for many, the religious system, "church" as most do it, is not real discipleship? Not allowing kids to find, exercise and practice gifts and identity, thus stealing the Testimony of Jesus that was once real in baby faith?

Could the most basic, yet perhaps most profound expression and revelation of the Kingdom of God at hand – be found in the family home?

What if there was a vibrant, organic Ekklesia in every family home operating under the Headship of Christ and exercising the rule and



From Seating Capacity to Sending Capacity>>>

Why an Incarnational Kingdom on Mission is Very Attractive by Neil Cole

If we think that a model of church is our solution to reaching the world we are already in a bad place, whether that model is a mega church or a micro church.

There is a vast difference, however, between an attractional posture and an incarnational/missional understanding of church. The difference is not in the organization, but in the release and flow of God's kingdom. The church is not meant to be sedentary but sent—"one holy, apostolic (sent) church."

Today we expect the lost to come to us. In the Bible, God is always the Seeker going after those who are lost. He pursued Adam in a garden and Moses in a desert. He found Jonah at the bottom of the sea and Peter on top. Jesus found Matthew in an office and Paul out on the road.

God became a man and entered the world through a birth canal just like the rest of us. He chose to come to us on our turf, rather than expecting us to rise to His. Jesus preached everywhere that the kingdom of God has come near. He came to seek and to save the lost, and He now invites us to join Him.

Many ask: "How can we make the church more attractive to the lost?" If we start down this path we unintentionally leave our true path: Letting people see how attractive Jesus is! It's all about Jesus...not us. In a sense, for every step we take toward impressing people with our own strengths we move further from letting them become impressed with His.

God always prefers to reveal Himself in

weak things rather than strong. It is the simple vessels that often reveal God's glory more than having to find Him in the midst of laser lights and fog machines. The curiosity of a child's question; the embrace of a loving grandmother; the accepting handshake of a good friend; the smile of a proud father; the warmth of a soft shoulder to cry on—these are the things that reveal God's character more than any sermon.

Love for one another is a powerful ingredient in evangelism, but sitting in an auditorium listening to a preacher talk about it is not as powerful as being able to see it and taste it first hand. A "neighbor nudge" for two minutes on Sunday morning is not enough.

Coming into a home with a loving spiritual family—each praying, singing and sharing their inner lives—is amazing for someone who never learned to trust. Sensing the power of Christ working in and through those people can break even the most hardened heart.

More than once, I have seen toughened gangsters and drug dealers, weep in the presence of Christ among His people and pour out confession unsolicited. I have seen a Palestinian Muslim surrender everything to Christ in the midst of a faith community praying together. Four fraternity brothers gave their life to Christ

in a meeting at their frat house in front of their peers unreservedly. Christ in us is powerful; it is the hope of glory. Simply being another anonymous person in a pew is not so powerful.

The reality is most people are not even curious about what is happening in church. For the few who are seeking, the last place they want to look is in church. Why? Because church is seen as a passive religious event that demands allegiance but offers very little experience. We ask for volunteers all the time. We offer spiritual-gift assessments to see where people fit best in our program, but

we never really offer very challenging experiences for people. Handing out bulletins, directing traffic wearing a bright orange vest, chaperoning a youth function, or changing a diaper in the nursery may be helpful for the church program, but none of it is a task worth giving your life to. Many who struggle to do these things have a

nagging unspoken question: "Did Jesus come so I can do this?"

We must transition from seeing church as a once-a-week worship event to an ongoing spiritual family on mission together. Then people will see church as something worth giving your life for. Honestly, people need one another more than they need another inspiring message. You would be surprised what people will do for Jesus, or for a brother or sister, that they will not do for a vision statement and

We have raised the bar on how church is done so high that few believe they could ever do it themselves. The dark side of this endeavor is that we have lowered the bar of what it means to be a Christian so that simply showing up to the weekly one hour event with some regularity and a check book is all it takes.



a capital giving campaign.

One side effect of pursuing excellence in production is that common Christians become spectators who can contribute a percentage of their income to keep things going, but little more. We have raised the bar on how church is done so high that few believe they could ever do it themselves. The dark side of this endeavor is that we have lowered the bar of what it means to be a Christian so that simply showing up to the weekly one hour event with some regularity and a check book is all it takes.

My goal in life is to reverse this. I want to lower the bar of how church is done so that anyone can do it, and raise the bar of what it means to be a disciple so that they will do it.

I will never forget meeting with an organic church made up of high school students. As we were all singing praises to the Lord I felt His pleasure. I asked the students to share the biggest church they had ever been to. Southern California has many mega-churches. Several were mentioned, ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 attendees.

"I think Satan is more intimidated by this little church of 15 kids than by any of those Godzilla-sized churches," I said. They all snickered and looked around the room at one another with smiles, thinking that the old man had finally lost his mind.

I then showed them why I thought this way. I asked, "How many of you think you could start a church like one of those mega-churches?" No one raised a hand. I then asked, "How many of you think you could start a church like this one?" All raised their hands. The snickering stopped. It was one of those holy moments in life that are hard to forget. I then asked them to look around the room at all the raised hands, and I said, "I assure you, Satan is terrified by this. And he should be!"



NEIL COLE was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA. His journey in God's kingdom has brought him to serve in a mega church, a local community church and now small rapidly multiplying

organic churches. Neil travels around the world sowing the seeds of God's kingdom, catalyzing the development of organic church networks and coaching leaders. He has been married for over 30 years to Dana and has three adult children, Heather, Erin and Zach.

Catch his blog at cole-slav.blogspot.com

CHURCH AT MY FEET (Cont. from page 11)

2. We practice "Church" and "worship" as LIFE-style. These are not things we "do." They are what we "are." We engage Jesus' Church when we are together in any form and He is submitted to. We turn every part of every day into a ministry to the Lord. Tickling and playing with your kids is crazy good worship!

3. We encourage our kids to dream and vision. I am getting in a habit of asking my girls, "What did you dream last night? Was Jesus speaking to you through that?" "What are your visions, sweet girl? What do you SEE yourself doing in your life?" Whatever they say, I encourage them to talk to Jesus about their visions, as they likely are windows into His Vision for them.

4. We challenge them to see, declare and live the Kingdom. Right now we are in school season, so this has usually taken the form of a daily question or challenge – something to "be looking for." Before school, we'll pray, and I'll say something like: "Today, ask Jesus to show you a way to bless someone (serve someone, love someone, etc.)." Or, "How can you be a servant to another person, be Jesus to them today? I'm going to ask Him too, and I know He will show us and give us open eyes to see where these situations are. I can't wait to hear what He shows you, and tell you what He

shows me!" Later, we'll debrief and learn of the Lord through one another's scenarios.

5. We ask the kids open-ended questions. These are not only "open" in the sense of requiring more than "yes/no" answer, but OPEN in the sense of opening their minds and hearts to see and respond from eternity in them, with no limits. "What did Jesus show you today?" "What did you hear the Lord saying today?" "Is Holy Spirit saying anything to you right now?" "What does God's Voice sound like?" Tell/teach/show me something about Jesus – something He has taught you – will you share it with me?" "Do you ever see things that seem like they are "not real," like a movie?" "What do angels look like?"

What experiences can you share on how you have encountered the blurring lines between raising children, and walking in Kingdom relationship with Jesus alongside them? How can this be done more intentionally? What other thoughts or ideas come to mind? Please share, we want to know!



BRANDON CHASE lives in Texas, USA with his wife Marie and two daughters, McKinley and Delaney. He's a keen sportsman but prefers to describe himself as "a dead man, living by Jesus Christ".

Catch his blog at brandonchase.net

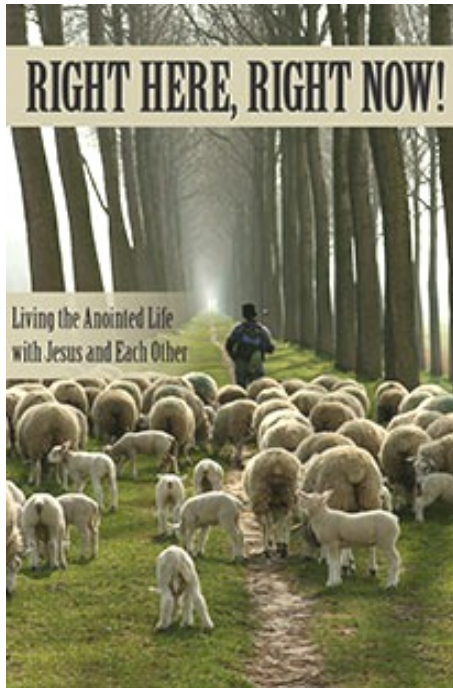
NSW SOUTH COAST GATHERING Bowral - Sunday September 28

On August 23rd twentyeight people, including children, gathered from the South Coast Region (including Southern Highlands). This first gathering also included eight people from two smaller networks. Some of the towns represented were Albion Park, Kangaroo Valley, Sanctuary Point, Robertson (Sth Highlands) and Bowral (Sth Highlands). The time together proved to be very encouraging. Ailsa and Cris from the South Coast Region, and those connected with them, believe a once per month Gathering would benefit many, especially as the people who came were the pioneers in their town, thus desiring and needing encouragement, prayer and support on a regular basis. This regular get-together will include meeting with the other networks every three or four months, which of course is optional. Our next get-together is **Sunday September 28 in Bowral**. If you would like to know more about these South Coast gatherings or have any questions please contact Ailsa Matesic on 0431 599 089

Reviews

There is an ever-increasing library of resources related to simple church and missional movements on the market.

For a broader selection go to
www.oikos.org.au or
www.house2house.com



Right Here, Right Now! *Living the Anointed Life with Jesus and Each Other: Where We've Been Going and Where We're Going*
www.jesuslifetogether.com

From the Garden until now, men and women have been hiding from God, and religion has been one of their favorite hiding places. But God is now calling men and women to lose themselves and find Him again! Through His Son and in His ekklesia, God is offering us Himself - not a religion of rituals and words in "special" places at "special" times, but an intimacy and friendship - right here and right now.

Every now and then a profound, life-changing book comes along which you

read, read again, and give away as many copies as you can. In my early days of surfing the internet for all things house church, I came across this book. It was free (they refused to receive even postage), no named author and no strings attached., the product of an organic community in the United States that just wanted to bless.

I got a box of them and finished up giving them all away, especially while I was working as a chaplain in the local prison, where guys took them and, hopefully, were released from religion and found a new way to relate to Jesus.

And that's the intention of the author, who, beginning in the garden of Eden, takes us on the journey of man's in and out relationship with God. It's a journey that moves fairly quickly from the immediacy of Adam's "here and now" relationship with God, through the fall and into the invention of a substitute for intimacy, "religion". Summed up so well as "special times, "special places" and "special persons".

In chapter two the author then introduces us to God's intermediate answer, His own "perfect" religion. Not base like the religions surrounding Israel yet still containing those same "special" elements. However, as God-designed as it was, this special religion proved itself to be as incapable of bridging the gap and satisfying the heart of God, as it's followers proved incapable of maintaining it in the pure form in which it was given. It did however have hidden within

it many clues as to what the Creator was after. Clues which pointed to Jesus.

Welcome then to Chapters 3 and 4 - *Paradise Regained: Life with Jesus!* and *The Early Church: Life with Jesus Continued.*

The advent of Jesus was not, however, the end of religion, as we all know. Rather it simply intensified a battle that raged through His time on earth and up to our present day. Chapters 5 and 6 thus follow the fascinating triumphs and failings of God's people in their quest for intimacy, down through the centuries and up to now.

Chapter 7 takes a hard and challenging look at the nature of today's church, calling us away from the deadening religious forms that we have inherited, and back to the simple intimacy and friendship, both with God and with one another, that Christ won for us on the cross.

And the book ends with a chapter full of tantalising and encouraging snapshots of the work of the Spirit in our day, as God, on target, is restoring simplicity and intimacy to His ekklesia, in nation after nation around the world.

To get hold of copies of **Right Here Right Now** (not to be confused with Alan Hirsch's new book by the same name) go to www.heavenreigns.com or www.jesuslifetogether.com. There's an e-book copy there. For a hard copy email realperson@heavenreigns.com

Surfing Simple Church Sites worth checking out on the Web

For all our Simplechurch Surfers

www.oikos.org.au The Oikos site has had a complete revamp! Yes, we've brought it up to date with a new user friendly feel and added content. In line with a move in our emphasis that embraces more than our house church origins, you will find new articles and Youtube tools on being missional

and making disciples. Another new help is a **national directory of simple churches**. If you are involved in a local gathering and would like to be included get in touch with us and we'll get your group on the register.

www.facebook.com/oikosaustralia And don't forget our Facebook page, which has a regular diet of articles and news.

Stay up to date with news, events and challenging articles on the
OIKOS Blog - www.blog.oikos.org.au

WHAT YOU MODEL IS WHAT YOU MULTIPLY

Why churches should move from sermons to facilitation.

They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Children grow up to be like their parents, imitating their values, their mannerisms and their way of life.

In the same way, raising generations of God's people in sermon-centric churches produces a vast sea of Christians who believe the only way to communicate God's message is through monologue and having all the "right answers".

We have a problem on our hands. The world does not want to be preached at. Who can blame them? I don't want to be preached at. I'm sure you don't, either.

Nobody likes being lectured, but every person on this planet longs to be listened to, to be known and heard and empowered and encouraged. We will open our hearts and our lives to those who take the time to relate to us, empathize with us, see us as we truly are and love and accept us.

Jesus did that. He spent time with people. He partied with them. He asked them questions. He showed compassion, empathy, respect and value for the ostracized and abandoned – the ones who were normally chastised and sermonized for their life choices.

Since we've been running "Church in a Circle" with recovering addicts, we've discovered the power of facilitation – a radically different approach to teaching and learning. Instead of giving people all the answers, we see the value in setting up thought-provoking stimuli and asking the right questions for people to learn for themselves. We see how powerful it is simply to ask

people to share their stories – and then listen attentively and respectfully. We see how people are capable of directly interacting with God's Word, not just listening to others interpret it for them. We see God's people taking ownership of and responsibility for their own learning, being empowered to move forward rapidly in their spiritual journey and dragging others with them.

There's a secondary effect to facilitation we didn't expect but which really excites us – everybody in the group seems to pick up facilitation skills along the way. By watching the leader ask good questions, and listen well, and be flexible to the needs of others, the whole group start to spontaneously minister to one another, both inside and outside of the meeting.

Christians who think sermonizing is the most effective evangelism tool drive away their friends and family by lecturing them and always trying to have the right answers. The world needs more Christians who can interact and listen respectfully, ask the right questions and admit they don't have all the answers.

What we model is what we teach. Sermon-centric churches produce passive listeners who only feel they are able to spread God's message if they have a seminary degree or can deliver a convincing monologue (which is rarely socially appropriate in any setting). Facilitation allows God's people to pick up helpful interaction skills which are valuable in developing kingdom relationships within and outside of the church community.

Children often grow up to look like their parents, and God's people often end up looking like their leaders. Let's encourage our leaders to move from preaching to facilitation, from speaking to listening, from performance to empowerment.

KATHLEEN WARD resides in Perth, Western Australia with husband Kevin-Neil. Catch up with their work at www.churchinacircle.com

DIRECTIONS (Continued from page 2)

Opportunities to serve and to contribute are vital to spirituality and to being missional.

On a practical level we have also found it necessary to limit time spent with TV and on social media and the internet such as Facebook and texting. In particular, like most parents, we encourage them to develop friendships with others who are committed to God, as well as reaching out to other friends who aren't close to God. A balance is needed in this area.

A weekly blessing time is a powerful Biblical practice that we have enjoyed sharing with each of our children. This involves recognizing, appreciating and affirming the good developments we see in their lives, reminding them of the meaning of their names and of God's future destiny for their lives. We now encourage them to enter into this practice for each other and, at times, even for visitors who come to our home.

BIG ROCKS FIRST...

To fill a bucket with stones and objects of various sizes we have found that you have to start with putting the big rocks into the bucket first, then placing the smaller ones in, and the sand and gravel last. We often talk of what are the big rocks in life, which need to be placed first.

At present we are working on a "life folder" and the family section includes values and practices that express these values. We also include goals and plans for our family such as hiking trips, family holidays, etc. We also list the character values that we want our children and family to express, and the family legacy we wish to establish.

CHALLENGES

One of the challenges facing a number of missional families is a sense of aloneness and that there are sometimes less youth for friends in missional and simple-church gatherings and communities. There is a

need for gatherings of likeminded families and youth to encourage each other and to provide for social interaction. It is important to be with others who share the same heart and vision and to be encouraged and re-motivated to share your story and to seek to make disciples or followers of Jesus.

THE HEART OF IT ALL

It is looking for opportunities to engage in spiritual conversations or to pray for people. Recently a friend of my eldest son came over and we were able to pray for the health challenges facing his daughter and wife. Being a missional family is about creating a family culture that seeks every opportunity to share Jesus with others and to bring God's kingdom or rule to save and bless people that we are in contact with. It is the greatest adventure and challenge.

bless you, Phil Brown



QUESTION: How do you deal with theological and doctrinal differences in your house church?

Part Two. Keith Giles
House2housemagazine.com
subversive1.blogspot.com.au

Keith: Our house church is made up of people from a wide variety of backgrounds: Baptist, Methodist, Brethren, Charismatic, Presbyterian, Vineyard, Calvary Chapel, Pentecostal, etc. Because of this wide diversity we have maintained our love for one another and our unity by simply not allowing any particular theological perspective to rise above the overarching practice of learning how to follow Jesus in our daily lives and how to love Him and love one another as He commands us.

Do we disagree on doctrine? Yes! But not intentionally, and certainly not during our fellowship time together. Exceptions to this rule are few, of course, but in general we try to focus our time on Jesus and allowing His Spirit to lead us. Sometimes our differing perspectives leak out, but in those cases we are all careful to express those differences with grace.

For example, one brother in our fellowship is a dispensationalist. I am not. Most of us are not, actually. So, if our perspective of a particular verse is informed by that doctrine we say, *"I believe XYZ because of the way I understand these verses ABC."* We try to allow for the possibility that we

could be wrong, and we allow others to voice their different view if they want to. But, the key is that none of us is attempting to impose our views on anyone else. We share our perspectives openly but we do not divide on those issues – and we never allow those differences to overshadow our time together in Christ.

One way we have come to understand these differences is by acknowledging that "we are all in process" and by that I mean that we all fully admit that there are convictions we hold today that we did not hold five years ago. We also know that the convictions we hold now could change in the next five years. We are all in process, and because of that we have grace for one another and we do not try to harvest green fruit or coerce people to agree with our perspective.

As you might have guessed, our house church does not have any formalized statement of faith. Whenever someone comes to our church and expresses a desire to join with us we simply say, "If you love Jesus and if you're sincerely trying to follow Him in your daily life, you're in!" That's it. If people aren't comfortable with this, they usually excuse themselves. (And some have, but not because we invited them to leave).

Here's one reason why we have not attempted to write any sort of Statement of Faith for our house church: Historically, every time the Church has tried to bring unity through the writing of doctrines it has always resulted in greater division because some will always disagree with that doctrine. Doctrinal statements have never resulted in increased unity, only increased division. That's why we allow people to grow in their understanding

of Christ and of the Scriptures at their own pace.

Does that mean there are no standards? Of course not. None of us would allow an outsider, or an insider for that matter, to introduce a teaching that was contrary to clear Biblical truth. For example, if someone came and wanted to convince us that Jesus was a space alien from Alpha Centauri, or the spirit-brother of Lucifer, we would all open our Bibles and demonstrate that Jesus is no such thing. The key, of course, is that none of us attempts to sway anyone else in our group to agree with them.

At a basic level, we believe that the Gospel is fundamentally about transformation, not about information. In other words, we follow Christ and we encourage one another to know Him more, to follow His teachings in our actual, everyday lives, and we work to put His Word into action rather than sit around and argue about it from a theological perspective.

Our variety of doctrinal backgrounds at our house church hasn't prevented us from "walking together" or serving together or advancing the Gospel together, or serving the poor together, or anything else. If anything, we learn from people who might otherwise be excluded from our fellowship because we welcome anyone who says, "I love Jesus and I am doing my best to follow Him in my daily life by the Grace of God."

I don't know about the rest of you, but I don't want to be in a church where everyone agrees with me on everything. Homogenization isn't our goal. Following Jesus, putting His teachings into practice and encouraging others to follow Him is.

If you have any questions for the Q&A column we'd love to get them. Drop us a line. Note also that the OIKOS website has a Q&A page that covers many frequently asked questions.

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