

# OIKOS

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## DIRECTIONS

### The power of participation, involvement and relationships.

One of the great advantages of simple church is its potential to cultivate close relationships, and to involve and support people of all ages in discovery learning.

At the recent Melbourne Oikos Regional Meeting there were over 25 children present. As we looked at the final meeting time, Dean the host took the kids and said "I haven't prepared anything, its all up to you to contribute". The children chose the story of Joseph and for 1.5 hours drew out the lessons relating to favoritism, jealousy, forgiveness and Gods plan that are implicit in the story. Wow – kids taking time to explore the Bible themselves and to identify the lessons for their own lives! At the same time they are learning a simple but powerful way of reading and applying the Bible to their lives!

I have found that Discovery Bible Reading (DBR) is such a powerful tool and offers a process that immerses people in the Bible and in seeking to apply and obey what it says. We usually use the SOS acronym -

- S** - What is it **saying** as a passage? What is it saying about God/Jesus, about people? Is there a principle to apply, a warning to note?
- O** - Stands for **Obedience** – how can we follow what it is saying on our life?
- S** - Who can we **share** this story or the story of Jesus with? – Is there an opportunity have a spiritual conversation, or pray with someone? Can I invite them to accept Jesus?

In larger groups we have found it works best to ask a person to tell the story/passage in their own words and then they get to choose the next person and ask if anything was missed out. It keeps everyone focused. You may be asked next!! When it comes to exploring the scripture in a larger group of mixed ages, it works well to break into smaller groups of 3-4 and have them discuss the passage and then report to the larger group what was discovered. This allows the quieter people to participate and contribute. I have noticed that when people are involved they learn more and are more focused. I have observed that multi-generational interacting is healthy as younger and older people listen and value each other's contribution.

Involvement is not limited to meeting times. As people shared their kingdom stories a kaleidoscope of kingdom experiences began to emerge. Some were involved in working in schools with young people, or as sports chaplains, pastoring the wider community, prayer ministry, parents at sporting events or visiting elderly people in retirement villages. I met one couple who breed Australian butterflies and invite local people from the community to participate in the caring of them! And the list continues.

One's personal interests or hobbies and the Kingdom can often overlap so well. Everyone gets to contribute something. The richness of the body of Christ being salt and light in the community is evident.

One of the problems is that if we focus only on "the church" it limits involvement to an overtly Christian focus, whereas our hobbies and work and general lives touch a wider range of interests and relate to a wider group of people in all parts of our wider community – people involved in schools, clubs, work places, sports, special interest areas etc.

Connecting people in loving relationships, missional faith communities, and involvement in the kingdom, are some of the keys that Jesus offers his followers to participate in his mission. Amazingly it can be enjoyable and even at times, dare I say it, a lot of fun!

*bleess you, Phil Brown*

## OIKOS Australia

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# DON'T GET STUCK WITH A STICK!

By Stuart Gramenz

I was thinking about the many truths being restored to the church, when the Lord began to reveal some of the things that would hinder believers from receiving and entering into what He is presently doing. To help me understand, He reminded me of some aspects of Moses' life. Israel was told they were going to enter a Promised Land, a land of rest. (Heb. 3 and 4). Even though he was Israel's leader and a great man of God, Moses did not enter into the Promised Land.

## WHY?

"Why was that?" the Lord asked me.

God of course had used Moses to do many great miracles using his rod. He had cast it onto the ground and it became a serpent; used it to turn a river into blood and divided the Red Sea. (Ex. 4:3,4; 7:17; 14:6.) At one stage of their journey in the desert, water was needed for the thirsty Israelites and the Lord instructed Moses to use his rod once again.

*"Behold I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and the water will come out of it, that the people might drink". Ex. 17:6*

And Moses did so...

At a later date the same problem arose and, once again, Moses was given an instruction by the Lord. However this time there was a difference in the procedure.

*"Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water..." Num. 20:8*

What did Moses do? Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly. (Num. 20:11)

Moses was told to speak to the rock but instead he hit it with his rod. What was the result?

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Num. 20:12

Wow! He was going to miss out on the big one...the Promised Land.

At first glance it seemed to me that Moses was judged rather harshly. All he did was to hit the rock instead of speak to it. After all it accomplished the same end result and they received their water. Why was God upset with him over what would seem a minor mistake? After all Moses was a good guy, he knew God's word backwards and would have obeyed the Ten Commandments to the letter of the law.

## A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

First of all God was expecting far more from him than simply obeying the previous commandments. The reason; Moses had a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord.

*So the Lord spoke to Moses as a man would speak to his friend Ex.33:11*

God had additional specific and individual instructions for Moses to follow and He expected him to hear and obey.



# Even though Moses knew God's voice, he didn't have an ear to hear this particular tailor-made instruction. He failed to be open to the new way that God wanted to move and instead acted out of past experience

## PAST EXPERIENCE

Secondly, because those instructions were different for each particular occasion, He expected Moses to be adaptable. Even though Moses knew God's voice, he didn't have an ear to hear this particular tailor-made instruction. He failed to be open to the new way that God wanted to move and instead acted out of past experience.

Moses had many years experience of using that rod. God instructed him to use it to do miracle after miracle. He knew how to get water out of the rock; he'd done it before and knew the method. The method worked, but God was displeased. Why? It wasn't what Moses achieved; it was how he achieved it. God was trying to wean Moses off using the rod onto another way of releasing His power; that of simply declaring what the Lord told him to say.

## WHY THE STICK?

Why did he have to use the stick at all? Did it have some magical power? Of course not! A rod was used originally to help someone when walking on a journey. It was like a crutch or form of support.

God initially told Moses to go and speak directly to Pharaoh (Ex. 3:18). Moses, however, was totally insecure.

*"But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"* Ex. 4:1

Moses needed some support, a crutch.

So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod"

And He said, "Cast it on the ground."

So he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent.... Ex. 4:2-3

God did of, course, do other things to reassure Moses but the rod was used time and time again.

## MADE BY MAN

The Lord went on to show me that the stick wasn't something that He created... it was man-made. He simply used something man had leaned on and then used it to achieve His purposes. God was transitioning Moses from using something

made by man to simply relying on His words.

## OUR PROMISED LAND

We are told regarding Moses and the people of Israel;

*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings to us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 1 Cor. 10:11-12*

Their Promised Land was a life of rest. Heb. 4:11. The church is also given a promise of a rest.

*There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. Heb. 4:9*

Some commentators see it as a future rest, the time we enter heaven, however there is a present day rest that we can enter into.

*For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Heb. 4:10*

Jesus is our role model for this life of God's rest. However, He didn't sit around with his feet up all the time. How did He rest? He only did what the Father told Him to do.

*For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. John 14:12 NIV*

He was totally led by the Spirit of God... at one with the Lord. This absolutely fulfilled Him, resulting in complete peace and joy...a life of rest.

We are given this Promised Land scripture;

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to My Father. John 14:12*

Many believers have tried to be obedient, going all out to witness to people, attempting to pray for the sick and working hard for the Lord. They didn't feel rested. They felt worn out, tired and frustrated because they saw minor results in comparison to all their efforts. They were certainly faithful in obeying the Lord's commands in a general sense, but they didn't do it like Jesus.

Jesus didn't read His Bible and simply try to keep the rules. He only did what the Father told him to do.

As with Moses, this promise goes way beyond learning the Scriptures and trying to

obey them. We are to have a personal relationship with the Lord and He desires to have "face to face" talks, giving us specific and individual instructions. This is the Promised Land, a new era, which the Lord is taking us into, where we cease from doing our works (even attempted "good" works). It's the fulfilment of Jesus' prayer for us.

*...that they may become one as We are one. John 17:22*

## TWO GROUPS WILL NOT ENTER

However here are two different groups of believers who will **not** be able to move into this restoration truth

### GROUP ONE

There will be one group of Christians who will find this new level of relationship and ability to hear from God hard to believe. The majority of Israel, including the leaders, knew of the giants in the land and they could not believe they could enter in. The task was too great and overwhelming.

*So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief Heb. 3:19*

Like Israel there will be some who will not be able to enter this truth. The thought of a Spirit led life is too gigantic, too overwhelming. Some leaders will find it hard to believe for themselves, let alone the people.

### GROUP TWO

There is, however, a second group of believers who believe in, and are expecting, a greater flow of God's love and power through His people, but, like Moses, they will not be able to enter in.

As with Moses, the church in the past has been very insecure. We have seen scriptures that tell us we can walk and talk just as Jesus did, but the majority has not been able to totally fulfil it. Many have not had the confidence, faith or understanding of how to live a totally Spirit led life. We have needed a crutch, something man-made for us to lean on. As with Moses, God operated at the level of faith we were at and the power and Spirit of the Lord flowed.

The things that have supported us come from various sources. Unlike Jesus, many



have relied on printed material to hand out, "packaged" gospel messages and "getting people to church" to see people saved. One of the greatest crutches has been the dependence on the Sunday church meeting. We have looked to the pastor, the song leader, and the musicians, depending on them and the meeting to release the flow of the Spirit.

As baby Christians there is no initial problem with this, for little children must depend on others. However we are supposed to be equipped at meetings, enabling us to grow into sons who are led by the Spirit ... just as Jesus was. (Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 8:14). If we are expecting the church meeting to be the only place the Spirit moves, or if we are looking to it as our total support and crutch, we will not grow into the fully matured person God wants us to be.

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He leads me beside the still waters Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. Ps. 23:1-2,4*

He is our Shepherd. He is the one who leads us. He is to be our crutch and our support. The Lord is taking us into greener pastures where we are fed and led directly by Him.

*...the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. John 10:4, 27*

Jesus is our only role model. He didn't rely on buildings and programs. He wasn't burdened by mortgages and administration and was free to hear one voice...His Father's. Every day there were meetings....meeting with His Dad, and then meeting the needs of others.

This does not mean that the Lord won't use something in the natural or man-made to achieve His will. When Jesus prayed for a blind man He put mud in his eyes. However, it only happened once. It wasn't a method He depended on.

The Lord is now weaning us off our dependence on anything apart from Him and His leading. Is there anything that you are using as crutch, which would hinder you from hearing His voice? The indicator or evidence of this would be a loss of your peace and joy.

### OUR FAMINE

Many of us are praying for the many famines seen around the world, little realizing the enormous spiritual famine besetting us.

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." Amos 8:11*

There would be many who would think this could not possibly apply to us today. The bible is the best selling book in the world. We have an incredible amount of printed material now being made available. However it doesn't say there is a scarcity of the Bible or reading His word, it says the area of starvation is one of "hearing the words of the Lord". He wants us to hear His daily words

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go, I will counsel you and watch over you. Ps. 32:8*

### LEADERS WHO DON'T GET IT

There will be some present day leaders who, like Moses, will not be able to make the transition into this new Promised Land. They may have been highly successful in the past and have used buildings, programs and entertainment to see people saved and for the Spirit to flow. Again, as with Moses, God has used these men to see the people receive the benefits of His Spirit.

Nevertheless the size of the outpouring that God is now releasing, is far too great to be contained in a building.

Like Moses, these leaders have been faithful and obedient to God in days gone by.. They can honestly say, "God told me to do it this way!" However it's a new day. Just as with Moses, if they continue with the way they've always done it, they will miss the new move.

Will the people still be blessed? Yes! Even with Moses' disobedience the people still received the water. The people will receive the blessing, but the leaders won't enter in. This will be the hardest part for them to grasp. Not understanding what God is now saying, they will think that, because there is still a degree of blessing, they are in God's will.

### A DISTANT VISION

After disobeying God, Moses was led by the Lord to a high place and shown the Promised Land from afar. Many leaders have seen the upcoming move from a distance. They know there is a great out pouring of the Spirit on the horizon. Unfortunately, they can only see it from

afar and are unsure how it is going to happen. They are still looking to the old ways.

Under Moses, all the people watched as the Lord worked through him, but in the Promised Land God took the land through the people. In our present church system, most of the people still look to the leader as God works through them. In the new move, God is going to take the land through the people.

The Lord wants leaders to discard the rod... the rod on their backs. He wants to release them from the worry of buildings and stress of administration, enabling them to do what they are anointed to do. They are to imitate the works of Jesus in their daily walk relying on His specific guidance and as a Christ-like role model, equip others to do the same. They too will then be able to enter the rest.

The apostle Paul said:

*Not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.... Php. 3:12-13*

**Don't get stuck with a stick!**



(Continued on page 7)



# Why, O Why Didn't I Take the **BLUE PILL?**



*Maurice Smith (The Parousia Network) reflects on his struggles with organic church.*

It amazes me how certain movies become cultural icons. Yet it shouldn't surprise us. Despite the "bombs" Hollywood has a tendency to turn out - movies which cause all of us to collectively groan the words "You actually spent money on that?! What were you thinking?" Yes, in spite of all that, Hollywood is still able to occasionally turn out a movie (maybe one or two a year) which speaks to the human condition and touches a "mythological" reality that resonates with a vast cross section of society. The Matrix is one of those movies. Now since it isn't my goal here to do a movie review or a treatise on "Myth, allegory and gospel" (which I do want to do sometime), let me move on to my point, namely, the painful reality of having taken "the blue pill". Let me explain.

At the start of 2007 Gale and I were blessed to be able to attend the CMA Organic Church Movements Conference in Long Beach. It was excellent. The opening message of the conference was given by Neil Cole. His "title" for the message was "The Dark Side of Organic Church," but the title which stuck with me and most people was "Why O Why Didn't I Take The Blue Pill?"

O.K., the reference is to the first Matrix movie. And I need to "set up" two scenes. In the first scene Neo (the Christ figure in the movie) meets Morpheus who offers Neo a choice. He can take one of two pills. Take the blue pill and he will wake up in his bed, nothing will have changed and life will go on as it always has.

Or he can take the red pill and learn the truth about the Matrix, but if he does so, there is no going back. As Neo reaches for

the red pill Morpheus says, "Remember, all I am offering you is the truth." Neo takes the red pill, his world changes and he is introduced to the truth about the Matrix. In the second scene, after Neo has learned the truth he has a conversation with "Cypher" (who will later betray Neo and the gang) who says, "I know what you're thinking, 'Why O Why didn't I take the blue pill.'"

Welcome to the reality of organic/house church! Neil proceeded to enumerate (sounds so much better than "list") a variety of struggles that those of us involved in organic & house church have experienced to one degree or another. (He even read parts of an e-mail he had received from someone who had come to the point of wanting to "throw in the towel" on the whole deal).

Maybe you've experienced some of them yourself:

- Organic church is a mess; it's un-organized and it isn't easy;
- We see small gains with big pains;
- We wrestle with our own drive for success;
- Others think we're stupid for doing this;
- We don't see any fruit for all the labor;
- This stuff doesn't pay my bills;
- Hurting people (who doesn't have some of those) hurt people.
- Leaders fall away after you've shared their "success" stories with others
- Other people in ministry condescend to you with insightful and encouraging comments like "How's that little house bible study of yours doing?" (Thanks, Job's friends!)

Yep, organic/house church is messy, and there are days when those of us in the organic/house church movement wake up asking ourselves the same question Cypher asked Neo: "Why O Why didn't I take the blue pill." But we all know that we've taken the red pill and there's no going back. We all need to confront the realities:

- Organic/house Church isn't a job or a career; it's an adventure and a calling.
- Jesus had his Judas, Paul had his Demas, and we will have our own painful relationships and betrayals '
- Organic Church is messy, so "build a bridge . . . and get over it!"
- It isn't my responsibility for someone else's bad decisions.

Our focus should not be on either our "successes" or our "failures" but, as Jesus told the seventy, our focus should be upon our standing with God. *"The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.'"* (Luke 10:17-20)

On Friday Evening Neil was followed by Reggie McNeal, author of "The Present Future" and a couple of books on leadership. Reggie works among the Southern Baptists and speaks to numerous traditional church groups on issues of church and leadership. He was "scheduled" to speak on "Qualities of a Missional Leader." But God had other



plans. Roughly a week before coming to the Conference Reggie was diagnosed and operated on for a melanoma on the back of his head. As he told us Friday evening, "I died this past week." Facing your own mortality does funny things to a person . . . and we were the beneficiaries.

The effect on Reggie was to throw caution to the wind, along with throwing away his planned talk, and to speak from his heart . . . and from "the other side of the grave." I was literally too awestruck to take notes, so I am relying here on my memory of his talk, and on my wife who was able to take a few notes. It was a powerful talk, and I told Reggie afterwards that I could leave the conference now and be blessed. Here is what Maurice heard and took away:

It isn't about church. It's about the Kingdom. People aren't looking for a "good church experience"; they are looking for a good life experience as part of their personal journey into the Kingdom of God. Church should be like an airport, a place you pass through and that helps you along the way of your journey into a good life experience with God. An airport isn't a destination; it's a place that helps you on your way to your destination. But imagine a major airport - like Jackson-Hartsfield - whose goal was to accumulate as many planes and people on the ground at one time as possible without letting any of them go anywhere? Sound's silly, even stupid, right? Yet that is exactly how many Churches view themselves - as a destination where Christians should be accumulated rather than as a way-station Christians pass through. We need to change our understanding of Church. Life isn't about church, it's about the Kingdom, and church is just one step along the way on the journey.

Along the same line:

- There are lots of "loops" in the Kingdom of God, and most of them are longer than our life-spans. God may begin a "loop" in someone's life which will not be completed in our life-span, and that's OK.
- God is in the people business, and we should be in it, too!

- You and I can't force a "organic/house church movement." If there is a movement, it's God's movement, not ours (ouch!).

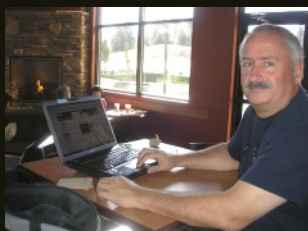
With respect to the Kingdom of God, God wants to give His church two gifts:

**1. Humility/Servanthood** - Reggie expressed how appalled he is at the amount of pride in the Church today. God is unable to use that pride, so He must break it. He does this usually by allowing pain, suffering and brokenness into the Church and into our lives. The greatest unifier among believers and unbelievers is pain and brokenness. How the Gospel has been written in you as a result of this pain and brokenness is what people around you will read.

**2. Confidence** - God wastes nothing! You and I have been chosen for this time and this place. God is confident in the out-breaking of His kingdom and in His ability to use us in the process. Listen to the confidence in Jesus' answer to John the Baptist in Luke 7:20-28. The Kingdom is busting out!

Finally, Reggie ended with this observation: we're doomed so . . . we might as well die in what we love! Spoken like a man who has been

confronted with his own mortality. Thanks, Reggie.



**MAURICE SMITH**

*Maurice*

*resides in Spokane, Washington with Gale, the love of his life for 35 years. Together they have practiced organic house church for the past 15 years. They coordinate Rising River Media, a non-profit Christian media and publishing company, which you can access via their website at*

[safehousesofhopeandprayer.org](http://safehousesofhopeandprayer.org)

*Apart from writing Maurice is a keen radio presenter and the instigator of Feed Spokane, a coalition of meal providers and community partners in the greater Spokane area who work together to serve free meals to those in need.*

*You can watch Neil Cole's original presentation at [vimeo.com/19267079](https://vimeo.com/19267079)*

*DON'T GET STUCK (Continued from page 5)*

## MY CHALLENGE

As I have begun sharing about this new move, there have been a few who seem to have been unsettled by it. Criticism began coming my way in various forms and, without realizing it, I started to become defensive. There was a propensity to become critical myself. Fortunately, God was on hand to give me this correction in the form of a prophecy.

*Do not drop your guard in regard to criticism and start moving in the flesh. It is my works ... don't try to prove the work. By your reactions you can allow a critical spirit to enter the work. Guard against this. Be all things to all men. This is a special work I am preparing; established movements will not understand the working of my Spirit. In this case, only those that I choose to open their eyes will see. It is not your concern who accepts or who rejects the work. You move on and do what I have told you to do. Guard your emotions. Do not let them dictate your peace.*

I included this simply because, as with me, there is a possibility of others losing their peace and joy...the very things the Lord is trying to establish in our hearts. Some believers may be openly critical, others will be afraid, just as the Israelites were and many will simply not understand, thinking it's all too radical. Pray for revelation for them.

## HONORING PATRIARCHS

The Lord asked me, "Moses was disobedient and didn't enter in, but how do you remember him?"

"I really only think of his humility, leadership and the great things You did through him." I replied

"There will be many of my faithful humble servants who will see this from afar but they will not be able to enter in. Honor them as you would honor Moses."

Let's ensure that we do not become critical of those ones who have served the Lord magnificently in their generation. Instead let's remember the great things they have achieved and remember:

*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings to us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 1 Cor. 10:11-12*

Let's not be like Moses and get stuck with a stick.

**STUART GRAMENZ** [www.spiritledacademy.org](http://www.spiritledacademy.org) is no stranger to the Body of Christ both here and abroad, having preached the gospel, with signs and wonders following, to hundreds of thousands, he has been equipping believers to release the power and gifts of the Spirit for over twenty-five years and is the founder of Spirit Led Academy, an online ministry school, currently being widely used in Africa and Asia. Stuart's radio program 'Destined to Win' airs over Vision FM around the nation. Stuart lives in Brisbane with his wife Mary and two sons.



# 12 THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO TELL EVERY NEW CHRISTIAN

**Joshua Lawson**

**Foundations are vital. The principles established in the beginning of a person's life will determine the health and stability of that life in the long-term.**

The Christian life is no different. Paul, in particular, saw himself as a “father” to those whom he brought to faith in Christ, and he cared for the churches as a mother cares for her newborn child. As an apostle, he was a “wise master-builder” who built the House of God on the foundation of Christ.

Unfortunately, many Christians today are given weak foundations by those who minister to them. With that in mind, here are twelve things I would say to every new Christian in an effort to establish them on the road to being a disciple of Jesus Christ:

**1. God will not meet your expectations.** In fact, you'll be disappointed repeatedly by how He acts in comparison to how you think He should act. Your plans will be upset as you discover again and again that you didn't know His voice as well as you thought you did. Learn how to deal with this now or you will inevitably become offended and may even stop following Christ because of it.

**2. The kingdom of God is entered through suffering and hardship.** This message went hand-in-hand with the apostolic proclamation of the gospel and it should be listed on the syllabus of every seminary and Bible class as “Christianity 101” today. So don't be surprised when the road gets rocky. To know the Lord is to know His cross.

**3. God's will is bigger than where you work or who you marry.** Don't fret over particulars until you've seen the one great end He is pursuing—His eternal

purpose. Without this knowledge you'll be all over the map and easily led into bondage; with it you'll be well-equipped to make wise decisions based on their relationship to His over-arching desire.

**4. Your spirit and your soul are two separate things, and you are meant to live from one and not the other.** But you have no idea what this means and only the Lord can teach you the difference. Don't try to figure it out by reading books, just keep it in mind and be on the lookout for His illumination on the matter.

**5. There was no golden age of the church.** The first-century was commendable in many notable ways compared to what has prevailed since, but it was not perfect and neither were the people who lived back then. Learn from the past but don't live in it; otherwise your effectiveness in the present will be severely limited.

**6. Idealism is one step short of idolatry.** At one point or another your ideals will hinder your personal growth as well as your ability to relate well with other believers whom you feel to be less advanced or enlightened than you. Let it go and embrace the messiness of the present with your fellow sojourners. Learn humility and low-mindedness.

**7. Your personal convictions belong to you and no one else.** Thus they are not meant to be the standard by which you test people for fellowship or coach them to conform. Follow the Lord as He reveals Himself to you in your heart, but don't expect others to always track with your personal vision.

**8. Other Christians will drive you crazy,** especially the ones who take themselves and their doctrine too seriously. You will often feel like God has more liberty to work among non-Christians than among your fellow believers, and this is sometimes true. Suffer with your brothers and sisters anyway.

**9. The local church is bigger than the particular group of saints you meet with each week.** Recognize that fact and find ways to practice a church life that involves all God's people. Sectarianism is a plague to be avoided at all costs.

**10. Your New Testament in its present arrangement is all out of whack.** Before you delve into topical lessons, theological doctrines, and Greek word studies, learn the entire first-century story from beginning to end in the order it actually happened. You'll be amazed how this helps clear up so many of your questions.

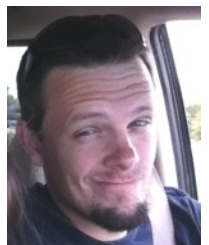
**11. God's love for you is not determined by your circumstances.** Nor is His favor evidenced by how other people treat you. Time and chance happens to us all, and the rain falls on the just and unjust alike. Just trust Him and go on.

**12. Leaders and teachers are a dime a dozen,** and they all have a vision or five-step plan for you to implement. But men and women who minister Christ and show you how to follow Him for yourself are inestimable. If you're fortunate enough to find one of these rare breeds, follow them as they follow Christ.

**As a bonus I would add this: Always take time to remember your first love.**

When the Spirit's work inside of you deepens and the cost of discipleship begins to take its toll, the memory of those early days with the Lord is always refreshing and will stir your heart to new life.

**JOSHUA LAWSON** lives in Portsmouth, Ohio, with his wife Sarah and their three kids. His free ebook, “In Search of the City”, is reviewed on page 14.







# When NOT to MULTIPLY YOUR CHURCH

BRANDON CHASE

**Many of the saints who, in regards to church,” have heard the call to come out of what they were in, and into something “more,” initially did so because of an attraction toward “being” and away from “going.”**

Part of making this shift from a “going” to a “being” mindset is allowing the Lord to unravel much of what you thought you knew about His things, including our concept of fellowship. When the Lord calls you outside the camp, part of what He is after is your letting go of needing to fill yourself with “church” as you’ve known it – and begin filling yourself with Him alone.

Because of this, sometimes freedom will require a necessary process of breaking down the idolatry of community or fellowship.

We may need to be broken of the delusion of a “perfect church” or fellowship. No such thing exists.

We may need to be released from the shackles of meeting for meeting’s sake. If we are meeting for any other reason but for the Lord’s mind and need – then we may not need to be actually meeting.

We may need to be released from the lie that community is for what we will get out of it. A “going” mindset is a “getting” mindset, and it needs to have the Cross move it to a “being, giving and serving” posture.

This mindset and posture transcends form or style of fellowship, community, and even “church.” This includes that of the House or Organic Church.

We all know countless people who are isolated and know nothing of community – but that have their butts in pews,

surrounded by people every week – or are even “plugged in” (we ourselves may well have been this way). Conversely, some of the most relationally connected and healthy people can be those who never attend a “formal” gathering, of any kind.

This all speaks to authenticity, transparency and trust. Community and Fellowship at their core are Father, Son, Spirit – and you. From there, if you walk this life out in that kind of intimacy with just a small handful of others, in addition to your spouse and kids – you will indeed

**The Lord is not after more groups, gatherings, fellowships, plants, networks or communities – especially those who remain grounded in religious things apart from Himself.**

**Instead, the Lord is after abiding branches – those in whom He can supply and express His Life**

be rich, and free. To attain this is a far greater treasure than being amongst hundreds of others to casually fellowship and commune with (or significantly less people, but nevertheless the same heart-attitude, in a living room).

Very simply, it is all too easy for groups of people in any form, institutional or not, to become inwardly focused and ingrown. It is human nature for fellowship to be self-centered. It is common for community to become our God. Freedom is not found in these. Freedom is fellowship in and with

the Divine, and community in the Vine.

## IS JESUS ENOUGH?

Is Jesus enough? Your answer will reveal much about your receipt of freedom. Without question He is. If you were to spend the rest of your days in human isolation, you would have everything you need, and all the fellowship you’d require – in Him.

Thankfully, this likely will not be your journey, however. After all, Father is after a family and a house. Jesus is after a Bride. We will all live in a Kingdom. We all are part of a Body; branches on a Vine. Fellowship and Community are our destiny, and reality in Christ.

But we must receive this in proper order and posture. Jesus is the Firstborn in this Family and the Cornerstone of this House. Jesus is the Bridegroom to this Bride. Jesus is the King in this Kingdom. And Jesus is the Head of this Body, the very Vine Himself.

Fellowship and community approached on this ground is freedom. Fellowship and community approached on any other ground is just a getting together for a potluck or a ball game – and freedom dwells there not.

If “fellowship” and “community” are built upon anything less than Christ – rooted in the Life of His Divine fellowship and community – then any thought of “multiplying” needs to be rejected.

In certain cases, instead of birthing new communities, or “churches,” that share the DNA of “fellowshipping” or “communing” – the healthiest thing to do would be to NOT multiply.

*(Continued on page 10)*



# FANNING THE FLAMES

## AT THE MELBOURNE OIKOS REGIONAL GATHERING



***Last year the National Oikos Team made the decision to run a number of Regional Gatherings on the east coast, starting with one in Melbourne at the end of February and another in Yeppoon, Central Queensland, on March 21-22. Here's the feedback from the Melbourne Gathering.***



The theme for the Gathering, held at the home of Dean and Chris Beveridge, was *Fanning the Flames* – learning how to make and multiply disciples, share faith and be disciples of Christ. Well over 50 people attended, from a range of backgrounds and involvement - pastors, missional group leaders and members, city and country groups, some new to simple church, others well experienced. One couple just looked up house church/simple church on the website, found Oikos and turned up on the Sunday morning!



Over the Saturday and Sunday Roy and Deb Dunn led us in some great times of praise and worship, followed by a loosely packed program which included a mix of teaching times plus the sharing of kingdom stories. We also took in some excellent workshops on sharing faith in our everyday environment, changing the world by prayer, and



discipling families and kids. Dr Paul Whetham, a clinical psychologist from Adelaide, used the Gathering to launch his new book, *"Built for Adventure"*, (see Surfing Simple Church p16) and, together with John Boland, enriched us with some lifeboat stories touching on Australians, spirituality and mental health.

Various resources for equipping the saints were also shared, including bookmarks on Discovery Bible Reading, some discipling-toolbox DVDs (available on the Oikos website), and the Oikos magazine.

The interaction, sharing and inspiration, around good food and fellowship, were encouraging. Many great connections were made or renewed with many people sharing their details and wanting to stay in touch.

Thank you to Dean and Chris for opening up your home and facility. The kids loved the pool, and the teenagers the tennis court. The momentum in simple church is building....

Phil Brown

### ***WHEN NOT TO MULTIPLY Continued from page 9***

This might look like pushing the pause button. Taking a break. Shutting the gathering down, even. In other words, taking intentional time to examine the life and purpose of the group – in order to find that Christ Himself and His fellowship and community of life – are

the only true expressions of life and purpose.

The Lord is not after more groups, gatherings, fellowships, plants, networks or communities – especially those who remain grounded in religious things apart from Himself.

Instead, the Lord is after abiding branches – those in whom He can supply

and express His Life – or, in other words, fruit. When He finds such as these, multiplication (fruit) of that life happens. It can't not.



### **BRANDON CHASE**

**NOTE:** This is adapted from part of the eBook *"The Path of Freedom: Few find it. Fewer walk it. Be one of the few."* You can get a FREE copy at [www.brandonchase.net](http://www.brandonchase.net)



# The CHALLENGE of being a MISSIONAL FAMILY



Some of the Beel family in India at the wedding of their second son, Aaron, whose amazing story can be heard at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3O3gx82WsA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3O3gx82WsA)

*In the Spring edition of OIKOS magazine Phil Brown wrote about the challenge of being a missional family. Sharon Beel (PERTH) was inspired by it and sent us the following window into her (and Andrew's) family.*

Well, our family is not much further along (from Phil and Kate's) as our four now range in age from 23 down to 16 (also three boys and one girl). But recently we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary and one of the things both Andrew and I spoke about was the delight it has been watching our four kids grow up into young people who want to serve God missionally and radically with their lives.

Just to give you a small example of what our children are doing, last year at one point our two oldest boys decided that they would let go of all their worldly possessions and go to Indonesia to serve with some friends ministering to ladyboys (male prostitutes) in the slums and to see if God might be calling them to stay there and minister long term. They stayed a couple of months and were called back to Australia but it was a wonderful experience for them in a number of ways and was a preparation for the things God is now leading them to do. Another example is our daughter, who recently felt God calling her to stay in India (we had gone there for a short visit). This was a time when God called her to give up everything including her wealthy boyfriend and a lifestyle of comfort and called her to a future of ministering to women and children in Uttar Pradesh (a part of India where women experience a horrific level of abuse and prejudice). This calling will be a long term goal for her. Our youngest is still at school and speaks out about his faith boldly. We couldn't be more proud of our kids.

So here are some of the things we did that have contributed to influencing them in this direction.

**Whilst I can't say that we have been as organised and systematic as you guys have managed to be, we have also aimed to 'win their hearts'. The main thing we have done to achieve that has involved reading to them.** Reading testimonies of inspiring people whose lives offer the types of challenges that young people hunger for. I remember when I was a teenager reading Jackie Pullinger's *Chasing the Dragon*, David Wilkerson's *The Cross and the Switch-blade* and other stories and being so inspired. They grasped my heart and my imagination like no Sunday sermon or discussion ever could. This is what I wanted to share with my kids, I wanted them to discover that courageous sacrifice and obedience to God truly reaps a deeper, more meaningful life and intimacy with God and others than any safe life ever will. I also wanted them to get the full picture as to how that works out in a person's life. That is what reading these stories can do, they explain both the pain and the rewards of radical obedience, it's important they understand both. Over the years we have read many different such stories not only with our own children but with all the 'extras' God has sent to our home. These readings, along with Bible readings and prayer have created some of the most amazing conversations and led to some of the most radical decisions we have made as a family and individually.

**Secondly we, Andrew and I, have tried to live the example that we want our children to follow. That may sound obvious but it is often overlooked as a parenting skill and treated as less important than telling your children what to do.** And whilst we have by no means lived it perfectly we have made some decisions of obedience that might scare others. For example when Andrew was called to leave his job as a church minister we lost his steady income, superannuation, free accommodation in a lovely house and our long service leave money was used up on tiding us over (I had really wanted to take our kids to the snow). But God has been so faithful, beyond

our wildest imagination. I remember one of our sons objecting, "But Dad, what are we going to do when we need things?" and Andrew replying, "Well, you're going to have to learn how to pray, aren't you son." I was shocked. I wasn't sure that good parents were really allowed to tell their children things like that.

Actually about a year later we overheard our son telling his friend who was visiting our home, "You see this house? God gave us this house. You see this car? God gave us this car. You see this bike? God gave me this bike. You see this guitar? God gave me this guitar. You see this computer?...?" the kid replied, "Yeah, yeah don't tell me, God gave you that computer." "Yeah, he did." our son said.

Now I'm glad we had to tell our kids to learn to pray for the things they need because I can see that they are going to need that skill as they continue to follow God's callings on their lives and especially as they begin to have families of their own. Now days I see it was a far more necessary part of parenting, of preparing them for whatever God may call them to in the future than I realised. But we couldn't bring those circumstances about artificially, God had to do it.

I would agree with you Phil when you commented that it is a lonely journey for kids growing up in missional, house church communities. Not only did our kids feel isolated from non-Christian kids but they also felt they couldn't relate to kids from many other Christian families, youth groups and church gatherings too. There have definitely been times over the years when I wondered if we were doing the right thing by them. However as they have grown it has been surprising to watch how they have come to relate so well to, receive from and minister to, others in the whole community that our house church network has slowly become.

**SHARON BEEL**



*Jomie Pation, a member of a missional "apostolic hub" in Cebu, Philippines, led by Molong Nacua, shares an important lesson in his journey into making disciples.*

Many people love to share their successes in life or ministry but, as much as they can, hide their mistakes. This time I want to open a page of my life that's entitled: I did it my way! This is not to praise my shortcomings but I only wanted to share my learnings. I learn today as we had coffee together with my father in the Lord, Molong. He said that, "we cannot win from our mistakes, no one wins. The only way to win it is to learn from it."

Staying with the Ecclesia in Cebu for 6 years now I have become what Father wants me to be: a disciple maker. I have helped many people become disciples of Jesus. I learned how to live also, knowing many things such as cooking, sewing, gardening, repairing appliances, welding, cementing, landscaping, carpentry, painting, creating and innovating things. I grew up from not knowing how to hold a hammer to building a house. And most of all, I learn how to value people, to love and to serve them. I learn family.

And suddenly, in between this busy-ness of a disciple's life I was tempted by the "cares of this world." The devil whispered unto my ears saying, "What's your future here? What if you got married? How can you help your family?" All these questions making me start worrying and giving me fear. I was not thinking of leaving but Satan sends his messenger to entice me to go with him to Manila. Without hesitation I left, without asking permission to my family in Cebu. Everyone was shocked when they called my name because it was time to for dinner but there is no Jomie's voice to be heard. He cannot be found. To cut the story short I lost my connection, my relationship with them, every one of them.

I spent my days and nights in Manila working busy in a company but this time being busy but fruitless. No goals, no purposes, no life. After one wasted year I went back to Cebu. I was too ashamed. I was like a prodigal son but the only difference is that I have nothing to

*I did it*





squander. The family in Cebu was gracious enough to accept me back to the fellowship, to forgive me and start all over again.

Another year had passed and here I am again making the same mistake, but this time not going north to Manila but down south to Mindanao. Still I left without notice! I have actually roamed around my country just to find my security in life. There I did what everyone normally does: work, earn, pay taxes, burn and die. My life was twisted and I started living in the world and behaving like its own. I found out that north and south of my country has no difference. I did not find my security.

It was there I'm reminded where I really belong - in the middle of my country, in Cebu with my extended family. There the people loved me, and have taken care of me many times. One thing in common between my two trips in Manila and Mindanao is that no matter how I tried to make disciples I cannot do it, not even one person was made into a disciple. My life was so fruitless instead of fruitful in whatever I do "ministry wise." Then I prove to myself that I cannot do it alone. I miss the joy of making disciples. I realized I am in a big mess. I regret. I repent.

I started asking myself about what's my life purpose, how long can I stay with this kind of living. Every night I cannot sleep, I always think of my ecclesia in Cebu and even dreamed about them. I was reminded how they loved me and took care of me, especially my buddy friend and brother, Albert. Things we did together keep on coming in my mind. This gives me joy in the night and strength to continue for the next day's work. "What wasteful days" I said to myself.

### COMING HOME

Well guess what! I decided to go back home, again. But this time I stayed with my natural physical family. I wanted to go back to my ecclesia but I felt so ashamed because of what happened. I don't know how to face them anymore. I don't know how to start, not the life that I want but

the life that I need. Then one day Albert came to visit me and gave me a big hug and right there I knew that I needed to come back. Albert's visit was a confirmation. My extended family is waiting for me. Molong also arrived and he asked me to have a walk with him on the dusty road through the mountain not knowing where we are going. As we talk he rekindled the vision that has captured us: making disciples and serving people. And he reminds me of the place where I fit in and how important I am in God's plan. To cut the story short I was back in the family doing what I am designed for.

I was send then to places to make disciples, particularly to Malapasua Island to help typhoon victims, bringing with me house supplies. I made six disciples there and it grew to sixteen disciples! I began my fruitful journey again!

Now it has been a couple of months since I went there. So recently we go back with a team of disciples. We just got back the other night anyway. And here is the surprising result. You wanna know? One of the first persons in Malapascua that I made into a disciple happened to be on the boat. This guy is Christopher. He joined with us and shared about his journey of making disciples. He made two disciples! And this two are fourth generation disciples.

I still win because I learned from my mistakes.

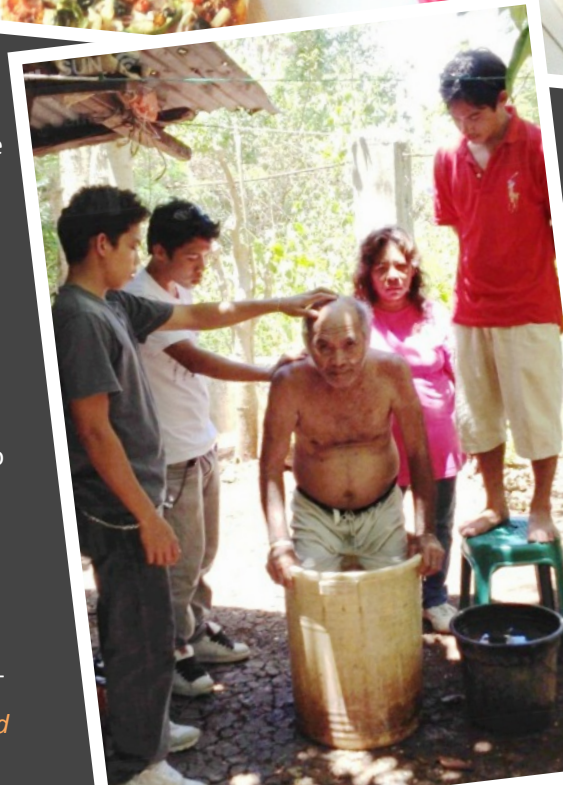
*You can encourage and support Jomie and Albert by connecting with them on their blog sites:*

*Jomie Pation's Making Disciples Journey*  
[www.pation.wordpress.com](http://www.pation.wordpress.com)

*Albert's Making Disciples Journey*  
[www.albertpacquiao.wordpress.com](http://www.albertpacquiao.wordpress.com)



Jomie and Albert in the kitchen and baptising in the village



# Way!



# 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](http://www.oikos.org.au) or  
[www.house2house.com](http://www.house2house.com)



**In Search of the City** Joshua Lawson  
eBook - [www.insearchofthecity.com](http://www.insearchofthecity.com)

This is an excellent book.

Not just because it's free but because it so speaks to where many are at, struggling with "house church" but too far into the journey and too tantalised by what's ahead to settle down.

In Search of a City is a record of the journey of blogger Joshua Lawson in his search for the kind of glorious church that the scriptures allude to and that is in the heart of God.

His journey out of traditional church, in which he was a bit of a rising star, was not the result of hurt or burn-out but began during a reading of Psalm 87, with expressions like, "*Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God*" and "*The Most High Himself shall establish her.*"

"These words cut across my entire understanding of the church," he writes. "My conception of the church was not much more than a voluntary institution for the spiritual benefit of individual Christians, certainly nothing you could apply such intimate terms to."

As he prayed for greater understanding he saw the church to be "the mystery hidden in Christ before the world began ... the reason for the cross and the object of his eternal purpose... the instrument through whom (that purpose) is worked out."

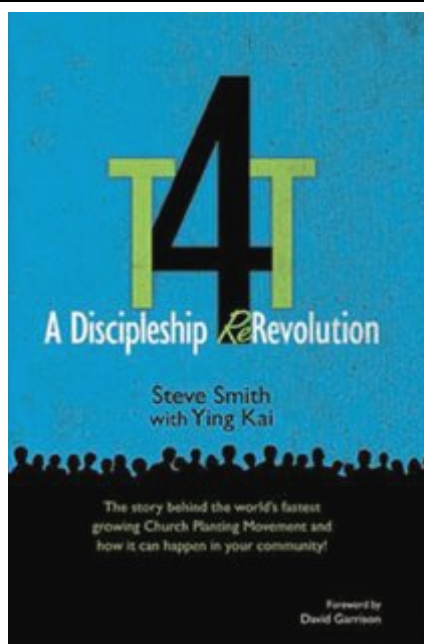
Over time he began to realise that that which he had always known as "church" did little to even scratch the surface of

what he was seeing. "So I began to find myself dreaming of other ways the church might express itself," he writes. "This is where the road started to get a little rocky."

Chapter 4, What it Cost to Go Outside the Camp, takes us on a journey that many readers will recognise. But it was the chapters on his experiments with organic church that I personally resonated with. The heights and depths, the frustrations and the blessings, all dealt with with the heart of a man captured by a vision, a man who would rather spend one day in the (true) house of the Lord than a thousand elsewhere.

I love also his heart for the Church of the City as the ultimate expression of the local church - one body, identified by locality rather than doctrine, where the priesthood of all believers flourishes, encouraged by true servant leaders.

I could add more but you really need to read it. It's free and can be downloaded as a PDF from Josh Lawson's blogsite [www.insearchofthecity.com](http://www.insearchofthecity.com), along with another book that he has recently finished, *Unquenchable Flame, the Story of the Early Church*. **Phil Walters**



**T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution: The Story Behind the World's Fastest Growing Church Planting Movement and How it Can Happen in Your Community!** Steve Smith with Ying Kai

T4T provides a comprehensive look at discipleship that will challenge your thinking! It begins with insights Ying Kai received from the Lord on Matthew 28:19-20: Go, not come; Everyone, not just some; Make trainers (disciples) not just church members. T4T gives a strategy for God's people to obey His call to make disciples who will make disciples who will make disciples.

This book carefully explains each aspect of T4T -- both why it is important and how to carry it out. It is full of practical tips, stories, and examples. Typically the church tells new believers to become mature before trying to teach others about Jesus. T4T presents a plan for training trainers that includes helping new believers mature in their faith as they share the gospel with non-believers right away. Rapid growth of many spiritual generations of believers is normal with T4T.

T4T has been successfully used in many parts of the world. It is an excellent tool to help God's people make disciples wherever they are. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is serious about discipleship. It will change you!

**Linda (Amazon review)**

Stay up to date with news, events and challenging articles on the  
**OIKOS Blog - [www.blog.oikos.org.au](http://www.blog.oikos.org.au)**



# THE STARFISH

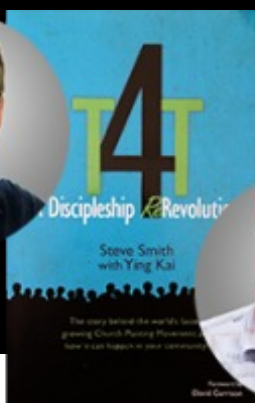
The starfish is an extraordinary animal that can serve us as a prophetic symbol. It displays one of the most unique reproduction abilities in the animal kingdom. Cut off the leg of an octopus, and – amazingly – it grows back. Cut off its head, and it dies. However, cut off a leg or two of a starfish, not only do the legs grow back, but also the cut-off pieces grow back into an entirely new starfish! Rather than a top-down structure, like an octopus or spider, with a minute head and dumb workforce that literally just does the legwork, a starfish is a brilliantly designed decentralized neural network, carrying its DNA in every part of its body.

From the beginning of creation, everything that God made has the seed of its own multiplication built into it (Gen 1:10,11). Humans can only add, but cannot manufacture multiplication; only God can do that. The difference between addition and multiplication is the difference between growth and an explosion. This opens up entirely new possibilities and time frames for the Great Commission that Jesus gave us;

“Make disciples of all nations.” It either will happen “by power and might”, or by God’s Spirit. It either will happen through human endeavour in our typical additive, sweaty style of work – or it will happen God’s style: by multiplication. If the ekklesia shifts back from man-mode to God-mode, if she is taken out of the controlling hands of man and their bureaucratic systems that quickly have taken on a life of their own, and given back into the hand of God, it may not at all take another 2,000 years to finish the task God has given us. Under God and as a firm part of his Empire, with the specific blessings of God on individual disciples, churches, networks of churches and regional strategies, they will receive a dimension of fruitfulness and multiplication that is, for humans, out of this world. The consequences of that is that the global impact, the filling of the earth with the glory of God, and discipling of all nations, will become possible within an amazingly short time-span. It is the central thesis of this booklet that, under these conditions, it will take less than two decades to finish the task Jesus, our King, has left for us. Let us look closer into this....

A prophetic symbol ...

This is an extract from *The Starfish Vision* by Wolfgang Simson which can be downloaded as a free ebook at [www.cmaresources.org/files/The\\_Starfish\\_Vision.pdf](http://www.cmaresources.org/files/The_Starfish_Vision.pdf)



## #NOPLACELEFT

a multiplying movement of disciples and churches

FRI 29TH TO SUN 31ST MAY 2015 - DEER PARK, SYDNEY

with Steve Smith and Ying Kai, authors of T4T

**NoPlaceLeft** is a training event for Christian leaders, risk takers, and visionaries seeking a movement of multiplying faith communities and churches, asking the question, “What will it take for us to say in our nation that there is now “no place left” for us to declare the Gospel of Jesus, in the way Paul does in Romans 15:23?”

**Ying and Grace Kai** have been at the centre of one of the fastest growing church-planting movements in recent history. Their story has inspired thousands of people in reaching their cities and people groups for God.

**Steve and Laura Smith** are veteran missionary church planters with extensive experience in church-planting movements. Steve

trains people from all over the world in church-planting movement best practices.

**Together, Steve and Ying have authored “T4T: A Discipleship Revolution”** recounting their personal experiences practicing the biblical principles of dynamic church-planting movements.

**VENUE:** Youthworks – Deer Park Conference Centre  
Rathane Road, Royal National Park, Sydney NSW

**REGISTRATION:** [www.noplacelleft.net.au](http://www.noplacelleft.net.au)

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**QUESTION: What are some basic pitfalls we should avoid in starting simple church?**

**ROGER THOMAN**

*(www.simplechurchjournal.com) writes the following*

One of the most difficult things to communicate regarding simple/house church is that we really, really do not want to just re-invent a new (or ancient) form of church. Instead, we are seeking to re-capture the essential “church life” that Jesus taught—a way of life. We are, at the core, radical Jesus-followers lived out in the context of everyday life, *not* church-goers. The *form* (when and how we gather) should, simply and fluidly, *support* the dynamic life that Jesus’ lit-up followers are living and not *replace* it.

Andy Zoppelt wrote the following in an email:

*“We have an obsession for form. We find some new truth and we quickly create a form. In the past 41 years I have experienced every form possible, all of which is designed to replace the life and power of God. Today it is the house church form. Everyone is seeking some aspect of the New Testament to restore the church...”*

*“If there is a method in the NT church, it would be one based on life: humility, brokenness, love and faith.”*

Frank Viola stated the same thing:

*“When we raise up a church, we rarely if ever talk about form. We do not talk about the wineskin. We give the people the wine. We preach Christ. We give them Christ. We show them how to know Christ. Out of that emerges naturally the ekklesia.”*

We have been programmed in our mechanical culture to do just the opposite. “Build the structure and the people will come.” Planning, building, and organizing is so engrained into our way of life, that we are certain that if we put the externals in place then life will flow.

The result is that when people want to learn about simple/house church, what they come wanting to learn is how to structure the thing. They want to start with form. They want to know how to get this thing “right”—referring to the external “how tos.”

I am not saying that we cannot learn a thing or two, from one another, about how to gather: letting the Spirit lead and releasing the spiritual gifts of the entire community. But I *am* suggesting that we cannot start there. I *am* suggesting that when these “how tos” become the focus, we are back to elevating form and we will snuff out the life. Structures are meant to *support* life. When they become the focus then we will soon find ourselves following an external form of religious practices instead of following

Jesus. Before long, the structure itself replaces the living relationship and power of the Christian life.

Let me ask it this way. How much time did Jesus spend teaching on what to do when you gather for worship or prayer? How to do a Bible study effectively? What to do when the church gathers together? Conversely, how much did Jesus spend on the “way of life”:

- Love God with your whole heart
- Love your neighbor as yourself
- Let your light shine
- Do what you see the Father doing
- Give (live generously)
- Go into all the world

Following Jesus is life. Following Jesus is the way of life. Want to know how to do simple/house church? Do that: follow Jesus. Make it a lifestyle. Then find some friends who want to do the same thing. Then find some friends who do not know Jesus and help them to do the same thing. Then the rest will fall into place:

- You will learn how to share life with one another—building authentic community
- You will discover how to fully appreciate every person’s spiritual gift that you gather with
- You will continue to live missionally individually and as a group
- The dynamic life of a Jesus follower will multiply from one disciple (follower) to the next.

Voila! Simple church is birthed.

**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.**

## Surfing Simple Church Sites worth checking out on the Web

**www.lifeboatstories.com** This is the website of Dr Paul Whetham, one of the presenters at the Melbourne Oikos Gathering, and the place where you can download a free copy of his new ebook, *Built for Adventure: Toward Mystery, Meaning and Mental Health*. According to Paul, “we know many stories today but often not our own. We are so used to being passively entertained that many of us have lost the art of

storytelling and, in turn, have lost a sense of who we are. Our stories have become ‘thin’ as a result and many people go to psychologists to unpack their life stories or ‘thicken’ them up. But why wait to see a psychologist to tell your beautiful and broken story?” This website was designed by a psychologist to assist you to tell your life story and develop ways of finding ongoing support from the comfort of your own home.

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