

OIKOS

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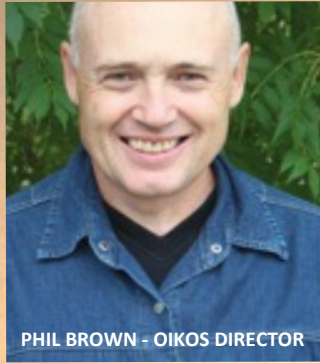
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Cyclone Marcia hits Yeppoon



PHIL BROWN - OIKOS DIRECTOR

DIRECTIONS

CONTEXTUALIZATION

THE GOSPEL IN DIFFERENT CULTURE SETTINGS

Our family has just returned from travelling to India, Nepal and the Philippines and meeting some very effective missional leaders who are developing some amazing movements. This has led me to rethink the challenge of how to contextualize the Gospel and what this looks like in a western context.

The apostle Paul said that he made himself “a slave to everyone to win as many as possible” becoming a Jew to win the Jews and a non Jew to reach non Jewish people. He was willing to “become all things to all men so that by all possible means He might save some” 1Cor 9:19-23.

Applying this principle requires discernment and wisdom. The challenge is to retain the central truths of the Gospel and Biblical teaching, and to discern which elements of Christian practise are cultural and therefore can be adapted.

In looking at movements in these places, it was challenging to see how leaders had thought through how to present the gospel and connect with these cultures in meaningful ways.

In cultures and world views shaped by major world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam there are still points of connection and even agreement that can serve as a bridge to the Gospel. For a Muslim, it can be a process of completing the picture like a jigsaw puzzle that now includes the gospel stories, grace and Isa (Jesus).



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REMAINING IN THEIR CULTURE

The most effective approaches let people remain in their culture and bring Jesus and his light into their world and context rather than extract them and impose a western style of Christianity and church upon them.

Significantly, when a western form of Christianity and church is imposed on them, it limits the growth of the gospel and church, whereas in contrast a contextual expression of faith allows movements to grow rapidly. New leaders and discipling groups are multiplied rapidly. Interestingly these movements tend to use simple forms of church and gathering of disciples.

Passionate, persistent prayer and strong faith and the miraculous are not uncommon, and usually persecution follows.

THE PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines one movement that we have been supporting the leaders in has seen 25-30 new simple churches planted over the past 2 years. Youth are involved and groups have formed in a high school resulting also in 5 teachers committing to Christ and baptism.

In Manila another movement amongst the more educated is experimenting with using Facebook to contact and connect with new people. Their conversational bridge to the Gospel in this Catholic country is how people can find infinite forgiveness and peace with God.

(Continued on page 14)

OIKOS Australia

Multiplying missional communities by making disciples who make disciples

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Lessons from the **STORM**

There are those who would see the judgement of God behind every storm and flood but I tend to agree with Jesus – these things are often just a part of our fallen world.

That doesn't mean that when Cyclone Marcia hit Yeppoon on the Central Queensland coast in February, carving a trail of destruction through the community, there were not lessons that could be learned. Jesus found lessons in the events and rhythms of life, and in the days that followed the storm, as I prepared for the Oikos Gathering that we were hosting in a few weeks' time, a few lessons grabbed my attention as well. Here are three.

IN A STORM BIG THINGS COME DOWN!

Even things that have been a part of the scenery for a long time and that seem immovable and permanent – they come down. Driving into or out of town in the hours and days that followed Marcia we marvelled at and lamented

the power of a wind that was able to bring down huge trees and whole forests, root systems ripped out and trunks snapped in two. And looking over our fallen trees we felt sad that much that we have loved and appreciated had come down.

However looking over the structures that make up much of modern western church and political life we often feel sad and frustrated that they are still standing, seemingly entrenched in our culture, their root systems often drawing more from the world's systems and culture than from the Spirit of God. We struggle to bless expressions of the church that we feel are actually a hindrance to the Gospel and to the emergence of true Kingdom life in our communities.

And sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that it's actually our job to try to bring them down. So, instead of giving our attention to the establishing of new plantations we huff and we puff, with our Facebook comments, our prophecies and

prayers and online petitions, with the hope that we'll expend enough wind to bring it all down. And in the process often finish up breathing out the very spirit that we oppose.

A cursory read of the Book of Acts, however, should be enough to show us that there is a wind from heaven that even the most entrenched religious and secular systems of man cannot withstand. Rome fell once and its legacy, found in much of our church structures, will fall again. The Temple was destroyed and its lingering legalism will come down as well. The wind that blew so powerfully in Luther's day will blow again.

Let's quit our huffing and puffing and use our breath to breathe blessing over the plantings of the Lord that will rise up in place of the old, their roots deep down into Christ, their branches a gathering place for the world.

WHEN THE LEAVES HAVE GONE YOU CAN SEE FOREVER!

One of the most common comments after the cyclone was that, with so much of the foliage gone, you could see neighbours that you never could see before! Indeed, from our rear balcony we can see a prominent mountain that previously had been hidden from our view. And I was reminded of Jesus looking for figs on a very leafy fig tree and finding none. It was all show – lovely but fruitless.

I tend to feel that the days of a fresh wind of the Spirit will be days of exposure. They will be days when our façade will be stripped back and the affections our hearts made bare.

In Psalm 84 the psalmist speaks of eternity running through our hearts. In other words, when our outer show is removed and our hearts made bare people should be able to see straight through to Jesus, unhindered by the foliage of our own shallow and short-term ambitions and plans. Under the leaves they should find fruit, the fruit of the Spirit of God, which is nothing less than a reflection of the life of the future and of the One who is to come.

And there is a mountain, the one that Ezekiel spoke of, that will rise in the

earth and to which the people will stream. Right now it is hidden, certainly here in the West. Lord, send a wind. Strip us of our foliage. Let the world see Jesus. Let them see a wonderful forever.

YOU CAN LIVE SIMPLY AND ENJOY IT!

Five days without electricity forces you to live more inventively and more simply. That's not to say that we were not glad to have the electricity back (as evidenced by my wife Esther's embarrassing yahoos from the front lawn), but the culinary delights and dining experiences that emanated from the combination of our one-burner gas canister camping stove and our Christmas solar lights are a lovely

memory. Of course those people who enjoy camping would have had no problems and already have many of those kind of 'around-the-fire' memories.

We live in the day of switched on, entertainment church. Professional high powered worship is a flick of a switch away. PowerPoint sermons

mean you don't have to open your bible – it's up there, verse by verse, with a lovely sunset background. Or streamed onto your iPhone if you didn't manage to get out of bed in time. And after a while it's the easiest and most sophisticated way to go. That doesn't mean that it's bad but like all good things we can finish

up so hooked that when the electricity crashes so do we.

Unless, like father Abraham, we've learned to love camping. Unless, by choice, we have supplemented the above with a love for the simple and the unsophisticated. The acoustic guitar and the hand drum. Or the silence. The "everyone has a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation...", the two or three gathered, with Jesus in the midst. And it may be that in the days ahead, as the Lord strips the church back – whether by storm or otherwise – from its dependence on mode and method, and brings us back to Jesus only, we will discover a joy, an inventiveness and a quality of Kingdom life such as we have striven for but not known.

No-one wants a storm. And I don't really believe it is the Father's favourite way of bringing change. But the Lord is on a mission. One way or another He WILL shake those things that can be shaken. He WILL flood the earth with the glory of Jesus. The Church is his instrument for bringing in the Kingdom and therefore judgement begins with us.

Let us not wait for a storm but let us embrace the simple. Let us give people a clear view of the eternal. Let us give our labours, not to bringing trees down, but to raising up new ones, rooted in Christ, their glory – His glory – covering the earth.

Thank you Marcia.

Phillip Walters backyardbelievers.com



When our outer show is removed and our hearts made bare people should be able to see straight through to Jesus, unhindered by the foliage of our own shallow and short-term ambitions and plans.



A CRACKING TIME

in YEPPOON

AT THE CENTRAL QUEENSLAND OIKOS GATHERING

On March 22, on the heels of Cyclone Marcia, Oikos held a Gathering in Yeppoon, Central Queensland, with participants coming from as far south and west as Kingaroy, Burrum Heads, Biloela and Rockhampton. Our guests were Phil and Kate Brown (Oikos), accompanied by youngest son Kieran; plus Praxeis director, Dave Lawton and wife Colleen, all from Victoria. A packed day and a half of useful and challenging teaching followed, broken only by some excellent food and fellowship and a long walk on the beach.

One of the highlights of Oikos Gatherings is the local stories and we were blessed to hear the stories of ordinary local saints stepping out into extraordinary adventures and endeavours. And while we were listening to the stories, the kids took Kate Brown off to tour some of the cyclone-damaged housing in the surrounding area and to put

together a movie of their experiences of Cyclone Marcia (which you can find on the Oikos website). Finally Lex Carey, after inspiring us earlier with some of the successes and challenges of his years of ministry (see page 6), finished the weekend off with an impromptu whip-cracking class for the would-be cowhands among us.

And so ended a cracking weekend. We left feeling equipped and eager to return to our various fields with the tools to go make disciples and see the Kingdom extended - and then get back together again next year.



CARL PORTER - YEPPOON



KATE BROWN takes in Yeppoon beach



REUBEN WELLS



DOUG MOSELING - KINGAROY



During the weekend of the Oikos Gathering held in Yeppoon in March many of the participants were invited to share their stories. I had prayed and asked God but was unsure what I should share, when, during a conversation with Dave Lawton on the subject of evangelism, he asked me a question which gave me my direction. I was sharing with Dave how we had seen the Lord draw many people to Himself over the years in different places where we had served, and he asked if there had been a common factor involved. As I thought on this I realised that there had been at least two in every situation – fervent believing prayer (by ourselves and others), followed by God moving through miraculous power.

I felt to share two stories where I had seen God move in this way; both are from different places and both occurred many years ago, but in each case many people came to faith in Christ afterwards. Why did God give me examples from the past rather than how He is working today? I don't know, but maybe it has something to do with the fact "that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever," and He doesn't want us to lose sight of that fact.

MARY VALLEY

In the 1970's we were based in the Mary Valley in Queensland. This was a quiet country area where only a small number of people attended church. However for many years faithful prayer had been going out across these districts and God was ready to move. After we had been there about a year I received a phone call from an elderly lady, Ivy, who loved God and worshipped in Kenilworth. She had a serious heart condition which was making her critically ill. She said, "I have been reading James, chapter 5 verse 14, and I want you to come and pray with me so I can be healed." The next day a friend and I did as she asked, prayed and anointed her with oil for healing. That night she was rushed to hospital by ambulance apparently worse rather than better. That hadn't been the news we were expecting but by the next day after many tests the doctors discovered she was having a reaction to her medication. She had taken this medication for years but now her body was reacting to it. The doctors slowly took her off all of it and sent her home declaring that her heart had returned to normal. She lived a healthy life for many more years, able to enjoy various activities that had not been possible before. Her husband, Dick, was greatly touched by Ivy's healing and wanted to rejoice in God's goodness by raising his hands in worship, but with two frozen shoulders this

The Mir WEIPA

LEX CAREY (Queensland)

hadn't been possible. One Sunday morning as he worshipped God he suddenly felt a warmth on his back and his shoulders were released and he raised his arms to worship the God that he loved. The news of these healings travelled through that small country town and many people reached out to God because of what they had seen and heard. Many people came to faith in Christ during that time.

WEIPA

We went from the Mary Valley to Weipa, a remote mining town and aboriginal settlement on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. What a contrast for us in every way. We had left family and friends, sold a lot of our belongings and moved to a town where most people had no interest in the God we served. Several well-meaning people advised us "not to expect much spiritual response from the people as they were there chasing the God of money." After some time in that hard place I began to believe those words and this robbed us of faith. One day in prayer God challenged me about my negative confession; I repented and began to confess God's love and plan for the people there.

As well as the mining town of Weipa I also served in the aboriginal community of Weipa South, now called Napranum. I met with a group of older aboriginal ladies each week and we had been studying Mark's gospel together. One evening they

acle in



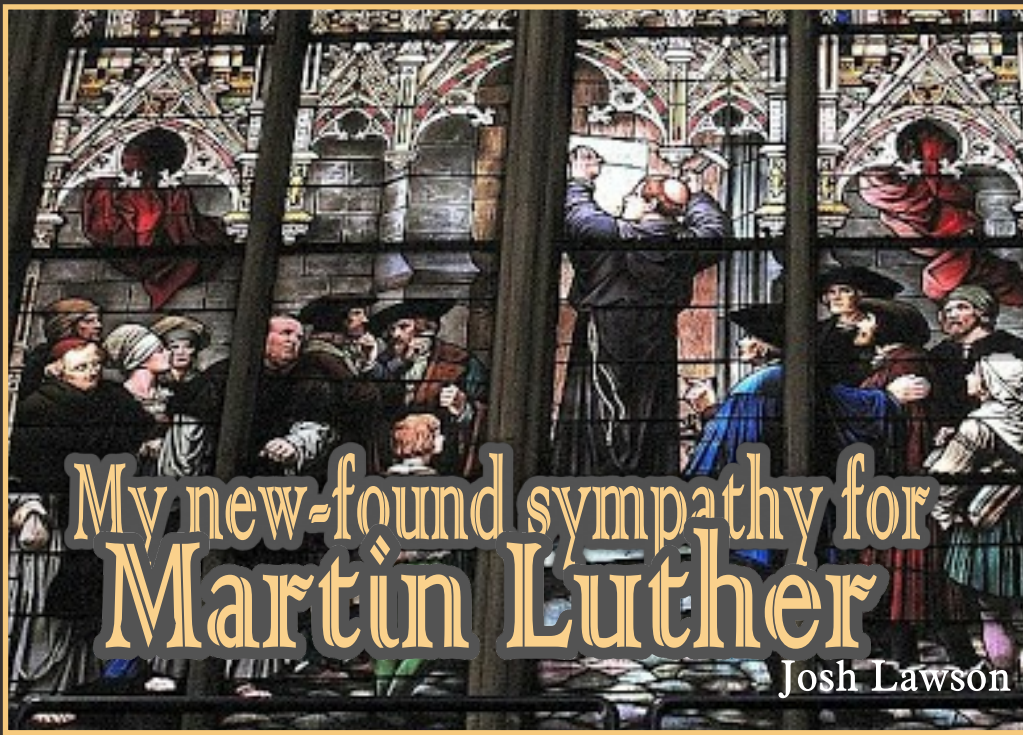
brought along a younger lady who had lived with a disability from birth; she didn't have muscle function in her arms and legs, so had been unable to walk or care for herself in all of her 28 years as her limbs were so twisted. I thought it was nice of them to bring her along for an outing, wondering how they had got her there. As we were preparing to finish up one of the elderly ladies leant over to me and whispered that they had brought her to be healed. I must admit I was very challenged by this but couldn't see any way out. We all gathered around her and prayed, asking God to heal her. Within a few minutes, before our eyes, we watched a miracle take place as her muscles developed and her limbs began to straighten out. She stood up, like the beggar in Acts 3, and began to run around the church building, praising God. We rejoiced together, thanking God for His goodness. I saw her several times during the next few years, down on the beach getting bait and fishing with her friends. This seemed to take our faith to a new level and we experienced many more miracles in that place, both in the aboriginal community and in Weipa itself. We saw many people come to faith in Christ, especially in the mining town, and we saw God at work in all sorts of other ways, in and around their lives.

These are just two incidences that remind us that the Kingdom of God advances, not just through words but with a demonstration of His presence and power. And there are many more things that could be shared

because Jesus Christ is the same today as yesterday and has continued to draw people to Himself in this way, right up to this present time.

LEX AND RHONDA CAREY live in Burrum Heads, Queensland, where they have retired after many years, both in traditional ministry and in simple church planting. After Weipa they moved to Armidale and then to outback Winton, from where they led missions teams, from Perth to Townsville. Finally they were sent to Sarina, a small town south of Mackay, where they met Bessie Periera and where, after 23 years in traditional leadership, a major paradigm shift into house church ministry began, continuing over the next ten years. Though retired they are kept busy with their local home church and grandchildren. Lex is also a skilled stock-whip maker and as such is kept very busy.





gospel with hand and mouth.” That is why all he could do was preach to them.

And that is why most Protestant pastors today can do little more than preach to their people.

As I reflect on the two experiences of organic church life in which I’ve been privileged to participate, the one thing that immediately stands out is the *people*. They were spiritually alive and hungry for God. They *thirsted* for Him as a deer pants for the stream (Ps. 42:1). Where that thirst is absent, or when it dries up, so goes the Church.

So I’m sorry, Martin. It wasn’t you after all. I get it now.

Of course, the “right kind of evangelical order” doesn’t require perfect people. Far from it. But it does require a certain *kind* of people. A people who are “all in” and committed to the life of discipleship together. A rare breed, unfortunately.

Some of my Reformed brethren will protest to this. Perhaps they clicked onto this post because the headline mentioned Martin Luther, and now they think I’m saying that all their churches since the great German monk have been illegitimate. Well, that’s not exactly what I’m saying. All I’m saying is that I agree with brother Luther. A genuine expression of Christ takes more than Sacraments and expository preaching; it requires the right kind of people.

Broken and redeemed people. Kingdom people. People with a vision of God’s purpose and a heart to fulfill it. People who embrace the way of the Cross.

In the words of another well-known Lutheran, “The only man who has the right to say he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). Those are the kind of people who make up “the right kind of evangelical order.” Until you have them, you will never have the Church.

Selah.

Joshua Lawson
insearchofthecity.com



When I first began to study the history of the Church outside Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, I found this quote from Martin Luther:

The right kind of evangelical order cannot be exhibited among all sorts of people, but those who are seriously determined to be Christians and confess the gospel with hand and mouth, must enroll themselves by name and meet apart, in one house, for prayer, for reading, to baptize, to take the Sacrament, and exercise other Christian works. With such order it would be possible for those who did not behave in a Christian manner to be known, reprovved, restored, or excluded, according to the rule of Christ. Here also they could, in common, subscribe alms, which would be willingly given and distributed among the poor, according to the example of Paul. Here it would not be necessary to have much or fine singing. Here a short and simple way of baptism and the Sacrament could be practiced, and all would be according to the Word and in love. But I cannot yet order and establish such an assembly, for I have not yet the right people for it. If, however, it should come about that I must do it, and am driven to it, I will willingly do my part. In the meantime, I will call, excite, preach, help forward it, until the Christians take the Word so in earnest that they will themselves find how to do it and continue in it.

At the time I saw this as a cop-out on Luther’s part. I judged him as not being *willing* to establish a truly New Testament/organic/insert-your-own-favorite-term-here church, like, for instance, the Anabaptists were. But after repeated personal attempts to bring together different groups of people around Christ, I see what Luther meant when he said “I have not yet the right people for it.”

Most folks simply do not have *time* to pursue Christ in community with one another, nor do they desire to gather around Christ in true New Testament fashion. Trying to “call” and “excite” most people to this is like trying to jam a square peg into a round hole. It just isn’t happening.

So I have more sympathy for Luther than I used to. I still agree with Wilhelm Reubin’s estimation of the Reformers, who said, “we know from experience that your preachers are comparable to poor carpenters, who have, to be sure, torn down the church of the pope, but have not yet built a church of Christian order,” but at the same time, I get it. Luther was limited by the field in which he labored. He could only do so much with Christians whose personal devotion to Christ was halfhearted at best. If the Church was truly his goal, he lacked the proper building materials.

Does that sound harsh? I am only repeating what Luther himself confessed. Judging from his quote it is apparent that most of the people who followed his message of “grace alone through faith alone” were not “seriously determined to be Christians” who would “confess the

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Description or prescription?

A few years back I was in the office of a respected denominational pastor here in Ecuador. As I was seeking his advise on a number of church-related matters, he looked me in the eye and said, "Guido, do you know what your problem is?"

I know I have a lot of faults, but was completely blind-sided by what he said next...

"Your problem is you believe the Book of Acts is still relevant for today. You are trying to make 1st-Century practices the norm. You don't seem to understand that Acts is a historical account of what happened in the early church. But little of what is recorded there applies to us today."

I tried to respond, but he ploughed on...

"Acts tells us about the birth of the church, but we have grown far beyond the infancy stage described in its pages. I for one, am not going to lead anyone to go backwards; I want to lead my church forward building upon all that been learned through 2000 years of church history. Why go back to diapers?"

I was left speechless.

DESCRIPTIVE OR PRESCRIPTIVE

Is Acts solely a historical description and non-binding on us today? Or is the record meant as a prescription--a kind of road map Jesus meant we are to follow?

Many take a middle-of-the-road approach. The parts we like we tend to classify as "prescriptive." For example, we like Acts 1:8 where we Gentiles are included in Jesus' Great Commission. As Evangelicals we believe we have the responsibility for taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

The parts we don't experience or practice today, we tend to label as historically non-binding narrative. After all, where in Acts are we *commanded* to sell our house and lands and lay the proceeds

at the Apostles feet? That is something they chose to do, but we don't have to follow their example. Instructive for us? Yes. Obligated to obey? No.

To me, that is the problem of the middle-of-the-road Acts position. We tend to pick and choose which parts we like and will try to put into practice. Those practices that aren't part of our tradition we classify as descriptive narrative--the same way we do with large portions of the Old Testament.

SO WHERE DO I STAND?

I tend to lean towards understanding Acts as standard for us today, in the same way it was for the believers back in the 1st Century. To me the question isn't so much whether Acts is descriptive or prescriptive; rather, why am I not seeking to live up to its higher standards?

So, if I lean towards Acts being prescriptive, why haven't I sold my house and lands and laid them at the apostles feet? Well, for starters, we have no house of our own to sell, nor lands, nor even the car that we drive. So what about other possessions like our furniture, stove, bank accounts or even the floor fan blowing on me as I type this post on my laptop?

THE GOD OF THIS AGE

This is where we many of us (including myself) come face-to-face with the true god of this age--materialism. I struggle with Shelby Smith Jr's thought-provoking quote, "**We are always willing to sacrifice that which is not our treasure to hold on to that which is our treasure.**" What is it in my heart I hold on to? What am I NOT willing to lay at the Jesus feet (or as Acts describes, at the apostles feet?) Whatever THAT is, this is what we tend to categorize as descriptive/narrative portions of Scripture.

Do we really believe like the above pastor that Acts is the Church in diapers?

Has today's Church really progressed beyond what we find in the pages of Acts and the Epistles? I will admit that in *practice* we believe like this pastor. At least he was being honest! But I cannot personally get away from the conviction that Acts and apostolic teaching was given to us not only as historical record, but as a prescription for healthy church expansion and life. To ignore, discredit, or seek to improve upon what we find in Acts/Epistles seems to me to be dangerous ground.

Paul gives strong indication that there were definite standards about the way things were to be done in the churches he had planted. Variations of his words, "...and so I direct in all the churches..." can be found many times in Paul's writings (e.g. 1 Cor.7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 16:1, 2 Thes.2:15.)

If there was, and is, a standard of church practice, wouldn't it make sense that what we find in Acts and the instructions given in Paul's letters are standards intended for the church down through the ages? What right do we have to think we have progressed beyond Paul and the Apostles "diaper" instructions for the young churches? Seems to me we would do well to go back to relearn the lessons that apparently have been forgotten by today's advanced, modern church practices!

J. Guy Muse grew up as an MK (Missionaries Kid) in Ecuador where for 28 years he and his wife, Linda, have also served as missionaries. Their vision is to see every believer making disciples, every house a potential church, and every church building a training center and house of prayer. Guy and Linda minister in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Follow Guy at The M Blog guymuse.blogspot.com



5 COMMON MYTHS

about the GREAT COMMISSION

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

This passage is “The Great Commission.” Jesus spoke these words to his followers before ascending back to heaven to be with the Father. His followers were left to discover the Holy Spirit and to change the world through one simple process—making and multiplying disciples [learners] of Jesus.

Many people teach on this passage, most of us don’t regularly obey it. Below are five of the more common myths about the Great Commission that lead us to miss out on disciple making.

MYTH 1: IT WILL JUST HAPPEN

Many Christians think, consciously or unconsciously, that we can make disciples without changing anything in our daily lives; that as we go about doing our own thing, disciples will be almost accidentally made. This

comes across in phrases like, “I will just live my daily life and if someone wants to ask about the Gospel, I will share it,” or, “I just ‘do life’ with others and pray that they will start becoming interested in Jesus.” Many Christians are willing to talk about or declare the Gospel, but only if opportunities pleasantly come

their way. They are waiting for the perfect moment to drop from the sky upon them to actually verbalize the Gospel or start demonstrating the Gospel. The myth here is that merely “doing life” with others is a straight path to making disciples. Like all pervasive myths, this contains a nugget of truth, but it is incomplete. Living your life with others is a part of making disciples, but without intentional proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel, just doing life with others will not alone lead to making and multiplying disciples. The ministry of Jesus is a great

Without intentional proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel, just doing life with others will not alone lead to making and multiplying disciples

example. Jesus did life with others, but every step of the way he prayed, planned, and pursued intentionally the growth and transformation of his followers. Jesus lived a very intentional life. For example, he did not just happen upon 12 disciples accidentally. He spent all night in prayer before selecting his disciples. He carefully, strategically and prayerfully developed his followers. Thus, he modelled a distinct process of how to make disciples (for more on this process, see the classic outline in Dr. Robert

Coleman’s book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*).

In fact, the Greek text of the Great Commission conveys intentionality. There is a participle in the Greek used in the Great Commission that implies “going” is the intentional action that has to take place in order to achieve “making disciples.” The nations will never become disciples if people do not go to them. In other words, “going” is the prerequisite of “making disciples.” Intentionality is built into the very words of the Great Commission!

The bottom line here is that the Great Commission will be completed only by intentional action and resoluteness. Jesus commands us today to set our eyes on the goal of disciple making and pursue that goal with stubborn focus. This means that unless you pray and plan to make disciples, you won’t do it!

MYTH 2: CROSSING CULTURES IS A STEP BEYOND THE GENERAL MANDATE

This myth holds that only select missionaries are called to cross cultures in order to make disciples. The rest of us should only focus on people like us, in our culture. The problem with this myth is that the actual Great Commission commands otherwise. Incredibly, Jesus gave a commandment

to his mostly *Jewish* audience to go to a mostly *Gentile* people and make disciples! Jesus commanded his Jewish followers to go to all people groups (all *ethnos*, the Greek word for “nations”). In other words, the Great Commission itself is a mandate to cross cultures!

Furthermore, the model of Jesus mandates crossing cultures. Jesus left his home (with the Father), his culture, his language, his people (the trinity) to come to our home (earth), to our people, to speak our language, to grow up in a Jewish culture, and so on. Jesus was a cross-cultural missionary and he commands us to follow in his steps, cross any boundary, live incarnationally and make disciples.

MYTH 3: JESUS WANTS CONVERTS

The most interesting thing about the Great Commission is that it does not command us to make converts of Christianity. Instead, we are to make disciples of Jesus. The difference between convert making and disciple making is crucial. Converts change religions. Disciples change masters. Converts follow a system. Disciples follow a Person. Converts build Christendom. Disciples build the Kingdom of God. Converts embrace rituals. Disciples embrace a way of life. Converts love the command to “baptize them” in the Great Commission, but that is all. Disciples baptize others but only in context of “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” Converts love conversion. Disciples love transformation.

Are you making converts or are you making disciples? One way to answer this question is to evaluate your relationships with unbelievers. What do you feel when you share the Gospel with others and they blatantly reject it? If you are offended by them and their rejection, perhaps you are too interested in “being right” and in making a convert rather than a disciple. Jesus grew frustrated with the disbelief of others but his frustration grew out of

his love and compassion for others rather than his desire to merely be “right” and “win a convert.” Another way of discovering if you making converts or disciples is to evaluate whether those you lead to faith in Jesus Christ endure to the end. A disciple maker has their eyes fixed on the goal of helping others finish well (either in death, or in the return of Christ). A convert maker has their eyes on the goal of converting others well. Do you lose focus on your disciples after their conversion? If so, perhaps you are mostly interested in building your resume of converts.

MYTH 4: WHEN I AM READY AND ABLE, I WILL START MAKING DISCIPLES

This is the ultimate delay tactic. Have you ever told yourself that you aren’t capable for some reason—lack of training, lack of experience, lack of skill, etc.—of making and multiplying disciples like Jesus? Have you ever thought of someone who is making and multiplying

*Converts change religions.
Disciples change masters.
Converts follow a system.
Disciples follow a Person.
Converts build Christendom.
Disciples build the Kingdom of God.
Converts embrace rituals.
Disciples embrace a way of life.*

disciples as a super Christian? Have you ever said or prayed something like this, “We just ask you God to send out to the nations the best among us, yes, Lord, send out our marines!” If so, then you are believing the myth that making and multiplying

disciples is for “elite” Christians.

I think Jesus knew the gravity of the command that he was giving in Matthew 28:19-20. He was asking his followers, most of them unlearned and lower/middle class, to go to every conceivable people group on earth by multiplying disciples of a Person who is physically unseen (after giving the Great Commission, Jesus ascended to heaven). This is a heavy-duty command! The reason I think that Jesus knew the gravity of this command is that he buffers his commandment here with two powerful promises of his authority and presence. Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and

said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’” Matthew 28:20b, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” In the Great Commission, Jesus gives a command along with a promise of His power and presence.

To completely put off practicing the process of making disciples now in your life because you claim that you need more equipping or growth, therefore, is actually unbelief in God’s promises! Is having the promise of Jesus’ power and presence not good enough for you to get started in the process of making disciples?

MYTH 5: MAKING DISCIPLES IS GREAT ADVICE

Cultural Christianity loves this myth. Cultural Christians love to sing the praises of disciple makers while simultaneously avoiding, through the most crafty cop-outs, personal obedience to the Great Commission. In other words, when it comes down to it, many view the Great Commission as merely great *advice*.

The fact is, though, that the Great Commission is a *commandment* coupled with the commissioning of Jesus. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15) Jesus expressed the same truth inversely, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; *whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*” (John 3:36, emphasis added) In other words, the measure of one’s love for Jesus is one’s obedience to Jesus!

You cannot love Jesus and not obey him. Stated inversely, you cannot disregard the Great Commission and claim to love Jesus. The command is simple—go and make disciples. Ask yourself, “Am I currently making disciples of others?” If not, why not ask yourself, “Will I today commit myself to beginning the process of making disciples of Jesus?”

JS SHAW describes himself simply as a global disciple making practitioner and more importantly, a child of God. Read his writings at www.vergenetwork.org/author/jsshaw/



the **ONLY WAY**
to **MAKE**
DISCIPLES ...
PATIENTLY

LOGAN GENTLY sets out the transformational process to becoming a disciple and urges us not to rush it. For 'American' read 'Australian' – in this context we're not that different.

The only way to make disciples? Patiently...

It's also the only way to make a community, multiply a community, and plant new communities in a healthy way.

But it's also not the American way, nor the American church way. We want to treat discipleship like it functions on a factory assembly line, having people line up at the front, add specific theology, life, and behavior along the way and come out the other end as a perfectly equipped disciple. That's a program for education and not a process of discipleship.

Patient Discipleship

Discipleship is really messy and more of a slower process than we want or realize. The strongest amongst us can find ourselves in the most difficult of circumstances, the lowest of spiritual times, and even find ourselves in difficult patterns of sin. The same is true of every believer.

Discipleship has often been viewed as an up-and-to-the-right straight process of successful growth, but discipleship is way messier than that, involves setbacks, patience, and a belief in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to overcome every sin, struggle, and trial. The only way we will make actual disciples of Jesus instead of religious look-alikes is to embrace the

mess, get dirty ourselves, and push through the mud to model Jesus' incarnation.

I recently was asked to teach on discipleship and wanted to provide a definition. I settled on discipleship is a process of becoming like Jesus Christ in our affections, our thoughts, and our behavior.

I'm sure I stole this from someone, somewhere, or mashed it together from the many blogs and sermons I've listened to over time, but I don't remember where. I'm sure someone will graciously email me to let me know. There is nothing new under the sun.

A Process of becoming like Jesus Christ

The scriptures all point to Jesus and Romans 8 directs us to the aim of our salvation as being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. It begins with God's work of regeneration and in Romans 8:30 it moves quickly from justified to glorified, but a lot happens in the middle.

The stress, struggles, and sinfulness of life gets in the way to remind us that we are not like Christ at all. We find ourselves discouraged if we keep looking at these snapshots of our lives that involve fear, guilt, and shame. It can leave us wondering if we will ever "get there" as a disciple.

If we begin to see discipleship as a process with much iteration, like the iOS system on an iPhone, we would find more peace, joy,

and hope in the struggle of everyday life. Each day then allows us to experience more of God, realize more of our need to be conformed and trust that God's word is true, that He will conform us to Jesus.

We can then see ourselves as being formed into a beautiful statue worthy of the Louvre, but needing pieces carved away, refined, and added to fully look like the artist's design.

Our Affections

The first area that God seems concerned with is our affections. When Jesus is asked what is ultimate, He immediately goes to "love" in the greatest

commandments. He follows that with the great "one another", revealing we are disciples by loving fellow brothers and sisters as Jesus Himself loves us. Only then does mission make any sense.

Our desires overwhelm our thoughts and move us to action. The most intellectual can be swayed by the cravings within them. Each day our actions reveal a depth of desire that needs to find its spring in Jesus and no longer in our self.

In light of this, worship, scripture, prayer, fasting, and other devotional practices actually appear to be the gifts that God declares them to be, the means by which our affections get redirected and conformed appropriately.

Our designer recognizes our need and gives us a new heart in our new birth, so

our affections can have a reset button to be more like Jesus.

Our Thoughts

But God has not made us as beings only governed by our heart, which is great news for all of us. As He gives us a new heart, He has also written eternity on it so that it can join God's word in renewing our mind.

In Romans 12, Paul calls the Romans to not be conformed to FOXNEWS, CNN, or your favorite cultural narrative, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. The challenge from the scriptures is to take every thought captive and conform it to Christ, but we are typically too lazy and prideful for this activity. In comes Sunday gatherings and church community where we need the space to be challenged, have our thoughts exposed, and find a hospitable place where we can be vulnerable about the natural thoughts of the mind. Instead of embracing our individualism, we must embrace our identity in Christ as the new definer of our thoughts.

We will then begin to see that right loves with right thoughts lead to right behavior.

Our Behavior

Our behavior is where most of us in church start as we consider what needs to be changed, which is so American self-help therapy of us. More than that I'm sure is our natural desire to make everything a religious do-this, don't-do-

that law that would make our hearts and minds satisfied.

The order of my definition was intentional. God's covenant promise is to change our hearts, purifying us by the blood of Jesus Christ, transforming us by His death and resurrection, so that our lives will be drastically different. Lasting and significant change comes from the inside out, not merely by cleaning up the outside.

I've seen no one change their behavior for a long period of time without their loves and thoughts changing first. Anyone who has tried this has found that they become more frustrated in life, and begin to live 2 different lifestyles without any real joy.

But we also can't shy away from calling people to change in their behavior to be like Jesus. Our behavior reveals our thoughts and our affections, allowing us to address the full breadth of conformity to Jesus.

One day the process will end...

The good news is that one day the process will end. The mess will become marvellous, the ashes will become beauty, and the perishable will become imperishable. Jesus will come to get us at a trumpet's blare or welcome us home at physical death and we will experience that final rest and perfection we want.

Until then, Jesus promises rest, peace, joy, and patience as His Spirit works in us to be reminded that we are sons or daughters of God by faith in Christ, not our progress in the process of discipleship.

This gives me great freedom from obsessive navel gazing, great freedom to repent and turn to joy in Jesus, and great patience with myself and others. We believers are all on this same path together regardless of our roles in the church.

In some churches and missional communities, this means that we need to chill out on the constant challenging of one another, have a little fun, and enjoy life as we enjoy Jesus. In others, we need to stop being so shocked that sin exists in our leaders, the long-term Christian, and the newest member of the community.

Jesus has grace and patience when His disciples sin, when He confronts someone new to His ideas, and He takes a long-term approach to them and us as He loves us to make us like Himself.

This makes it clear that there is only one way to make disciples...patiently.

Logan Gentry

is currently serving as the Executive Pastor at Apostles Church in New York City.

Logan blogs at Gentrified, is a regular contributor at Gospel-Centered Discipleship and has contributed to The Gospel Coalition. Logan is married to Amber, they have three children and live in Manhattan



OIKOS australia

THE OIKOS VISION

Multiplying Missional Communities by Making Disciples Who Make Disciples

OIKOS Australia began back in the early 90s as a housechurch/simple church support ministry. Over the years, however, the emphasis has changed. Our vision and emphasis has matured as God has broadened our understanding of the vision and also the language we use to describe it.

Now the emphasis is much more on the importance, not only of how we do church, but of the priority of being

missional, multiplying disciple-makers and faith communities, and growing the Kingdom of God. God is raising faith or "kingdom" communities, to love and serve their local communities and bring a unique taste of the Kingdom into reality in these places.

OIKOS Australia is a loose gathering of people around the nation, who are involved in such endeavours and in new expressions of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. We exist to encourage, promote and support those who are often exploring faith and disciple-making outside the traditional structures of the church.

We do it through the OIKOS Magazine, through our website oikos.org.au, and

more importantly through seminars, gatherings and telephone/online support.

We invite you to join the vision, to share your story, to explore alongside us.

Ring Phil Brown (Oikos Director) on 0409 137 988 or email us at philbrown@oikos.org.au



Review

THE DAY I MET JESUS

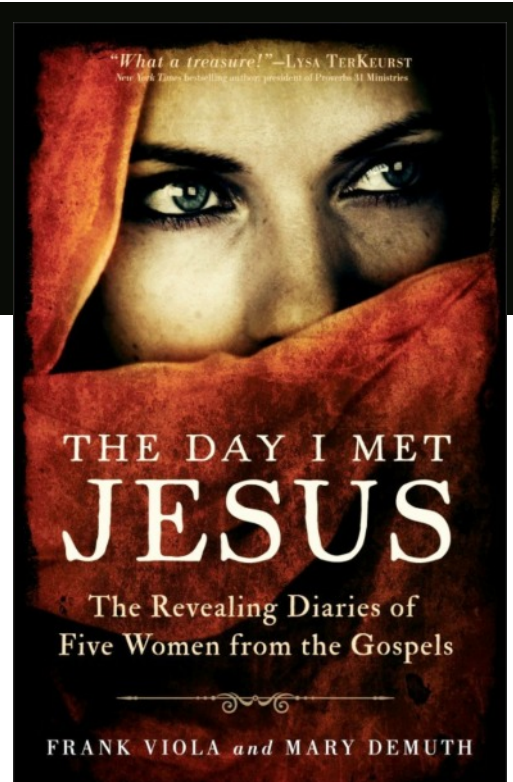
Frank Viola and Mary DeMuth

The Day I Met Jesus is a look back into the past with a forward view into the present. This book takes us "there" during the days and times of Jesus Christ when He walked, talked, and healed the despicable, desperate, down-and-out, untouchable and sinful.

Mary DeMuth skilfully weaves the details found in five women's stories, women who lived in biblical times, who experienced first-hand the healing touch of the Master Teacher through his infinite love, offer of grace, amazing restoration and full transformation. We view each story by walking in the shoes of women with

strikingly different stories. Each one pulls us into the storyline as we feel their emotion and understand their confusion and pain. Hope is found in the shape and form of Jesus Christ, Who, with His God-love, reaches them in the inner soul and connects through life-giving God-based union.

In addition to their stories, Frank Viola provides the reader with further study and analysis to unlock the beauty found within these amazing encounters. Each woman's story is not for the purpose of entertaining, but, rather, is for the purpose of teaching us something we need to hear and that resonates with us in our world today. Culture may have changed, but the human heart has not. DeMuth and Viola take us to the point where one human connects with another human in a highly spiritual way. A book based on the gospel accounts. [N. L. Brumbaugh](#) (Amazon review)



(Continued from page 2)

In a post Christian, multicultural Australian context, here are a number of cultural contexts and sub groups within which we can connect to people.

JUSTICE AND COMPASSION

Possible connection points could be justice and compassion projects connected with helping the poor and disadvantaged – especially in developing countries. We have seen an atheist medical doctor come to faith by being involved in a trip to help the disadvantaged in a developing country. This taste of the Kingdom of God in action could be part of developing a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life even for the more educated and affluent segments of Australian society.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Nature, the environment and the created world can be a bridge towards God for others. Kate and I saw a person professing evolution change her beliefs as she was involved in caring for butterflies and experiencing the

miracle of God's creation. A group from the western desert region felt more at home with God in the outdoors, meeting together in a dry creek bed or around a fire, than in a church building. Another Christian group of indigenous people in Newman, a mining town in Western Australia, met in a large shed rather than a church building. Our vision needs to be broader than the church and where and how it gathers. It needs to focus on the kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke so much of, which penetrates and brings transformation and the life of God into so many different contexts.



Cameron Butler

SPORTS CLUBS

Amazingly many Australian sports clubs are welcoming Christian chaplains to help serve their members and their families. The potential to serve and contact people is large. Around 30% of

Australians are directly involved in playing weekly organised sport. This means that it touches 75% of all Australians according to Cameron Butler

from *Sports Chaplaincy Australia*. Sport chaplains can meet and be a connection to the Kingdom of God for many people through their families and their needs. Finding meaning, focus and experiencing healing from brokenness and dysfunction are important to the overall success of the members of sports teams.

FAMILIES

Another key is family and belonging. People have been impacted by coming into functional loving Christian families. For example we have seen some 6 youth or backpackers come to accept Jesus in the process of living with us in our home over the last 2 years.

The anti-institutionalism attitude and the negative view of the church held by many Australians are significant barriers to be overcome. For many the Gospel needs to find them outside of these contexts.

I invite you to continue the conversation, and to explore how to contextualize the Gospel in Australia with its multicultural context. This will lead to different creative approaches amongst different people groups.

bless you, Phil Brown

The Highway of the Gospel

Ross Rohde

Our paths are interconnected with the paths of many others.

In a recent blog post, Three Patterns, I discussed the pattern Jesus taught his disciples to use to do ministry just like Him. And I commented that “following Jesus supernaturally into this pattern allows us to walk down the highway of the Gospel.” So how does one learn to walk down the highway of the Gospel?

Paving Stones

The Highway of the Gospel is paved with millions of connected paving stones. Each stone is connected to others which are connected to many more still. To walk down the highway of the Gospel you need to first plant your feet on a paving stone. So what is a paving stone? It is what is commonly referred to as a “house of peace.” Here is how Jesus described[1] it in Matt. 10: 11-13: Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.

Finding the Paving Stones

But how do you find a house of peace? First you have to find the person of peace, what Luke called the man of peace and Matthew called the worthy man.[2] It is the person of peace who leads you to the house of peace. For more on finding the person of peace read my post Finding the Person of Peace. This is all a supernatural process which Jesus leads us into and through.

Interconnected Paving Stones

Each paving stone touches many others.

It is understanding how a house of peace works and how they are connected to other houses of peace that helps us understand how to walk down the highway of the Gospel. The word used in the Gospels for house is the Greek word *oikos*. This word does mean the building we commonly refer to as a house. But it has a much richer meaning. It also means the nuclear family that lives in that house, the extended family of that nuclear family, the servants or slaves of that family and even the intimate friends of that family. In other words, it means anyone who would rightfully spend time in that home. A much better word would be “household.” That’s why I think translating this word “house,” which merely refers to the building in English, is a poor translation. The building is a house only because of the household that

lives in it. The people are the point, not the building.

When a person of peace (who is a part of the household) introduces us to their household we introduce them to Jesus and allow Jesus to dwell among them. But here’s the thing. Each one of us have numerous household or *oikoi*. Because intimate friend can be a part of a household and we can be a part of other people’s households our household is connected to many others. In fact, one way to look at the idea of “*oikos*” is to think of spheres of influence. One person can have many spheres of influence. Chrystal is part of her nuclear family. She is also intimately connected to her grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins and in-laws. But, she also has friendships and influence at work. The same can be said of her evening softball team and the PTA at her children’s school.

If Jesus connects you with Chrystal and she introduces you to her family you can bring Jesus to them all. But that is just the first step. Chrystal can introduce you to her friends at work, the softball league and the PTA so you can introduce them to Jesus. Or more ideally, she can just do it herself. And Chrystal’s husband Jeremy, who has friends at the bar and work and in the neighborhood can do the same. But let’s not forget what Annie, the pitcher on the softball team can do, or Jeremy’s buddy at the bar Rich who takes Jesus to the AA meeting. Rich’s cousin can tell her entire family, some of whom take Jesus to work, to their brother’s family who lives in France, and to the sailing club. Bill at the sailing club tells Conrad who gets so transformed by Jesus that he tell the entire workforce at the corporation he owns about it. Who knows where those people will take Jesus next.

Is this idealistic? That is exactly what happened in the first centuries of the Church. And it happened so fast that it got to Caesar’s *oikos* by Paul’s lifetime (see Phil. 4:22). It can happen today. There are a number of reasons why it doesn’t but a key one is that we no longer take the gospel to the households of the person we share the Gospel with. Instead, we wrench them out of their households and insert them into a new group of people we call a congregational church; which usually doesn’t act like an *oikos* at all.

And, in doing so, we put a roadblock on the highway of the Gospel in the first generation.

Ross Rohde is the author of *Viral Jesus* and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with his wife Margi.



December 09, 2014

When Disciple Making is Broken, the Church is Broken

Roger Thoman - simplechurchjournal.com

The church, of any form, is made up of disciples, followers of Jesus. When disciple making is not taking place, then the church consists of converts rather than followers. Too often we provide substitutes for disciple making:

- Church attendance
- Conferences and seminars
- Listening to our favorite teachers

All of these are good things, and some of the processes for making disciples may even take place in some measure. But too often we provide mediators for the word of God rather than invite people to discover and engage in the word of God for himself.

Disciples are formed as they engage with Jesus Christ personally. We make disciples by modelling this and by inviting people to:

1. listen to God through His word and Spirit – discovering what God is saying
2. act on His word by faith
3. experience His person and power as a result of those faith-actions, and thus encounter the living reality of God

A personal relationship with God develops through this process and believers become followers.

A key example of this type of disciple making is found in the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) approach. Such disciple making is simple, it keeps the word of God at the center, and it allows the Holy Spirit to speak to the person without mediation from others.

Restoring the simplicity and powerful reality of disciple making is key to seeing the church-universal come in to her designed glory in a greater measure.

Posted by [roger thoman](#) on December 09, 2014 at 01:54 PM | [Permalink](#)



For a short explanation of the **Discovery Bible Study (DBS)** go to praxeis.org.au/video-interviews/



Simple Church Online Course

The goal of this six-week, online course is for participants to discover more fully the principles of organic, simple churches. www.simplechurchjournal.com

9,572,666 people like Annette Land



Facebook social plugin

Surfing Simple Church Sites worth checking out on the Web

www.disciplemakingchallenge.com THE 90 DAY DISCIPLE MAKING CHALLENGE is for people who want to cultivate the habits of a disciple maker into their life. If you accept the challenge, you will get an email like the one below:

Call today's prayer partner. Go to a coffee shop, ice cream shop, or a bakery that you've never visited before. Buy a snack; make eye contact with your server; and ask them how they are doing. That's it. Have fun! - Paul.

Disciple making is a lifestyle, not a job, which means it has to become habit. And, we form habits by doing small things every day. The 90 Day Disciple making challenge provides a small reminder in your inbox to be intentional about engaging the world around you, to be intentional about becoming a disciple maker. Even better, if you hit 'Reply,' one of their coaches will get your email, read it, and cheer you on! Disciple making can be fun and easy. Better yet, you don't have to do it alone. Take a moment to sign up.

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