

OIKOS

australia



The Hurdle of UNMET EXPECTATIONS

Krista Cue

The All by Itself Kingdom *Neil Cole*

The DOWNWARD PATH of JESUS *David Alan Black*

MOVEMENT KILLERS *Alan Hirsch*

SHUT THE TEMPLE DOORS *Erroll Mulder*



Hello everyone.

Before you get into the meaty articles in this edition let me tell you about an equally life-changing seminar which Kate and I are hosting on October 6/8 in Eagle Point, Victoria.



Shift m2m (from Ministry to Movements) is an exciting seminar and process which provides a very useful base for moving from just doing *ministry* to praying and working towards developing *Movements* that can impact our

nation. Christian movements are when God's spirit is working in amazing ways with his followers who are reaching their relational streams of family and friends and new contacts. This results in new disciples being made and reproduced rapidly, like a virus spreading, so that many people in the area and nation are impacted.

Shiftm2m is a very insightful study of 50 days in the life of Christ and the key stages in the ministry of Jesus along with the key principles He used to initiate and develop the Christian movement which continues today! It also helps to unpack the principles and practices that Jesus used and how we can follow and apply these in our own lives and situations.

Kate and I are hosting this seminar which includes 3 intensive blocks starting Oct 5- 8.

It will be a great time of sharing and growing together, food, friends and impact! We also get to hang out together - lots of fun, sharing and discovery. I highly recommend it, and hope that you would seriously consider doing it.

I have found it to be one of the two most impactful seminars that I have participated in.

For more information and booking regarding the **Shift m2m** seminar on **October 6/8** see the Oikos Australia website.

www.oikos.org.au/resources/events/shift-m2m-1

bless you, Phil Brown
OIKOS DIRECTOR

OIKOS Australia

Oikos exists to build the Kingdom of God by multiplying disciple-makers and simple church

DIRECTOR: Phil Brown

EDITOR: Phillip Walters

SUB EDITOR: Phil Brown

MAIL:

OIKOS Australia
25 Oak Street
Bentleigh VIC 3204

EMAIL:

philbrown@oikos.org.au
magazine@oikos.org.au

WEBSITE:

www.oikos.org.au

MOBILE:

0409 137 988 (Phil Brown)

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

To subscribe to OIKOS Magazine please go to the Website or contact us.

COPYRIGHT: The articles and graphics, except where noted, are copyright to OIKOS Australia Inc. If you wish to reprint articles please contact us. Permission is not generally refused, except where it is not ours to grant.

DISCLAIMER: OIKOS Magazine is not affiliated with or connected to any other magazine of the same name

NEXT EDITION: The Spring edition of OIKOS Magazine will appear in October. Suggestions and news are welcome. Please send them in by September 30th.

The “All By Itself” Kingdom

NEIL COLE

Inherent in the kingdom of God itself—within its DNA—is the impulse of a movement. It doesn’t need to be manipulated or supplemented for movement to occur, but simply released to be what it was made to be. That is the core conviction behind 100m. Jesus gave us a parable of how the kingdom of God grows. He said: “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:6-29) Spontaneous growth is an “all by itself” expansion. The Greek word translated as “all by itself” is the word “automate,” where we get the word automatic. The genetic outcome of the Kingdom of God results in a spontaneous multiplying movement.

Below is a recent picture describing the spontaneous multiplication of an organic disciple-making movement expanding beyond four generations. This is not a third world nation where ministry like this seems easier, but a Western nation where the church has been in steep decline for over a century. These are real people who were lost in deep, self-generated bondage brought on by poor

choices and bad habits that have been passed down for generations. These are people who are now set free and passing the good news of freedom on to others in their sphere of influence without needing permission. Only in the early days is tracking a movement like this possible. It eventually expands beyond one’s ability to keep count or manage. If it is indeed an “all by itself” growth, however, it doesn’t need management of tracking to continue.

Unfortunately, this is not the kind of growth we usually see in the Western church. Here we must put forth great effort and invest much money to see a little church growth; it isn’t automatic at all. Perhaps it is because we have limited our vision to growing an organization rather than God’s kingdom. We have put all our faith in strategies that meet that end and not released the power already latent in the people of God. We feel like we need some kind of an organization with a brand and a budget to show the world that we are a success, but Jesus didn’t die for brands or budgets, but for real people who need to be set free. Far too often, in our church culture, what is actually addition is called multiplication. I have suggested for years that the true proof of multiplication is to reach the fourth generation. The biblical example is from 2 Timothy: first Paul, then Timothy, then faithful men and finally others also (2 Tim. 2:2). Don’t call what you are doing multiplication until you get to “others also” or fertile great-granddaughter churches.

If we keep confusing addition with multiplication we are never going to get things right. If NASA confused addition and multiplication people would die. How would you feel if your pharmacist confused multiplication with addition? If our banks got the two processes confused economies would collapse. It is

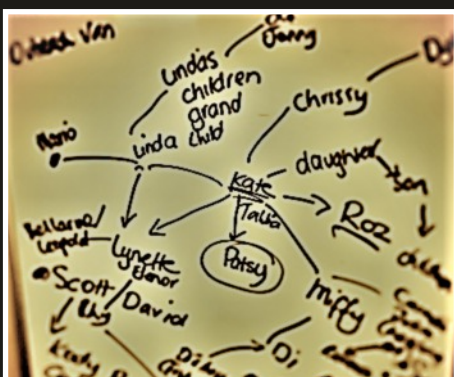
time for God’s people to learn basic math. We cannot afford to fail on this test any longer.

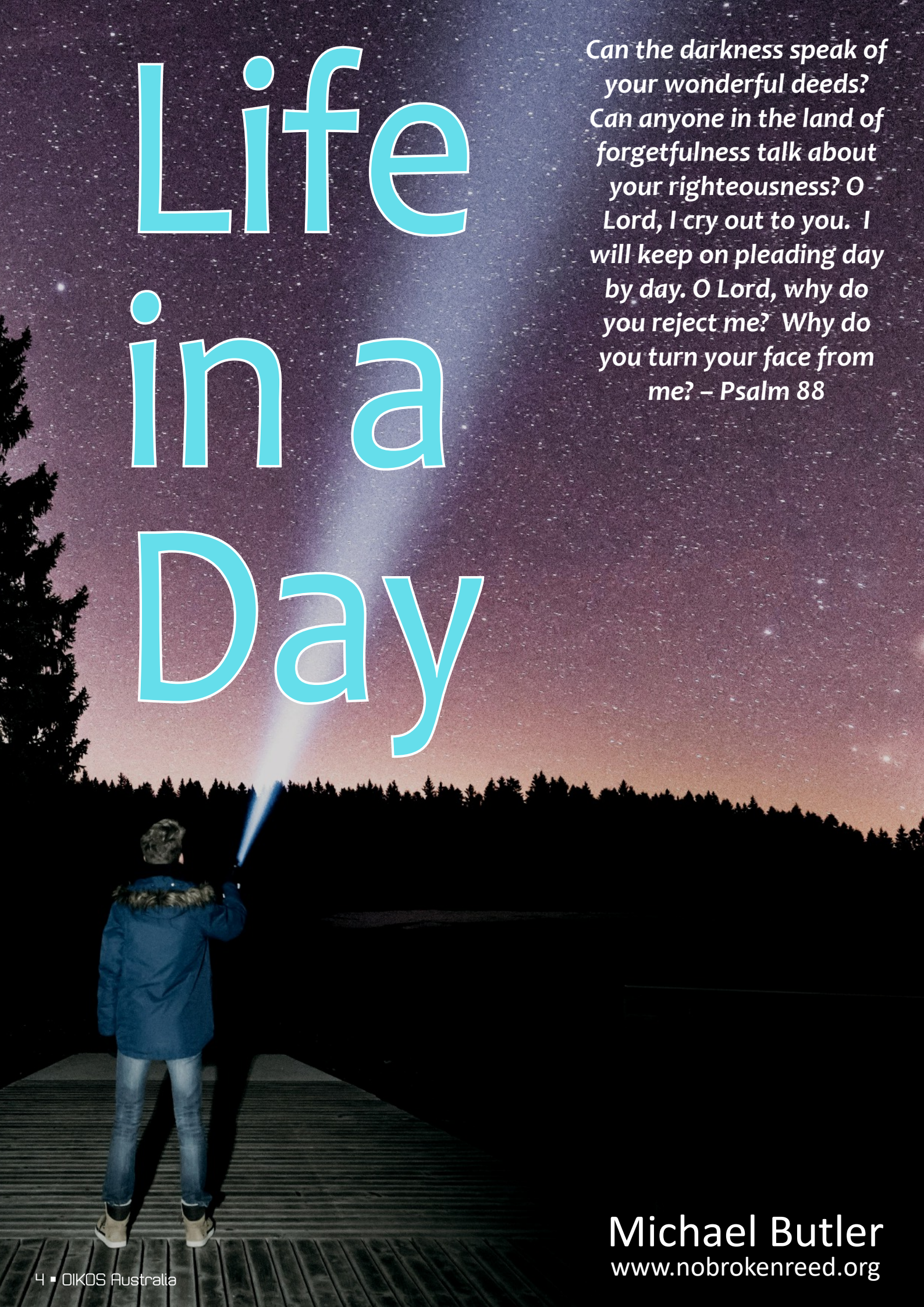
The result of all our efforts and expense in the West is usually just church growth by addition at best. In a sense, we need to stop pushing the + button on our calculator and move our finger to the x button. That is an intentional move to invest energy and resource in a different direction.

The challenge we face is that the things that make you successful at addition will prevent you from any success in multiplication. You can’t add and multiply with the same strategy or organizing principle. The two kinds of growth can exist simultaneously for a time, but they cannot be produced by the same strategy. You can’t get multiplication by hitting the + sign on the calculator no matter how hard or fast you push it. The two ways of functioning are not the same and require different practices and organizing patterns. We must get our confidence back in the “all by itself” Kingdom rather than in our strategies and mechanisms. Changing our language is not enough if we only end up mislabeling things.

Jesus never shook His head and commented with a disappointing sigh: “Oh ye of little strategy. If only you had more resources.” It is not more strategy that we need but more faith in the King and His reign. We must become what we were redeemed and sealed to be. The spontaneous element is already within us—it’s just forgotten and atrophied.

Neil Cole was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA. Neil travels around the world sowing the seeds of God’s kingdom, catalysing the development of organic church networks and coaching leaders. Catch his blog at cole-slaw.blogspot.com





Life in a Day

*Can the darkness speak of
your wonderful deeds?
Can anyone in the land of
forgetfulness talk about
your righteousness? O
Lord, I cry out to you. I
will keep on pleading day
by day. O Lord, why do
you reject me? Why do
you turn your face from
me? – Psalm 88*

Michael Butler
www.nobrokenreed.org

We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy. This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. – 1 John 1

Over the past months and even years, there have been some incredibly dark times; as we look to go into the world and make disciples, to build a different sort of community, we have at times felt so lonely. Perhaps our writings portray something different? I hope not. At times, the darkness has been overwhelming. Recently especially, we have felt attack. The enemy is very real.

I don't want to malign any church, but it would have been easy at times to walk into a ready made 'fellowship' and commit to the programmes on offer. But is that what we are called to do? We don't believe so. For anyone pioneering disciple making and ultimately church planting, I would suggest that it can take years of seemingly fumbling around in the dark, wondering which way to go, how to structure things, where to find the support? Are we sure we heard the Lord correctly (let's ask him one more time, just in case).

The times where people have wandered into our fellowship, speaking of the desire to do something different, out of the ordinary have been numerous. They are tired of church, how their church looks so different to the church in the Acts. But we have no building, no pastor, no sermon, only occasional music and a desire to be intimate and all share the load. We try to be a kingdom of priests here on earth, each one of us. We expect our everyday lives to reflect our beliefs, and give each other permission to speak into each others lives. While Sunday is a special day, we try to meet throughout the week, and on Sunday, our 'service' might last most of the day, with a good part of it spent on the streets and in the neighbourhood talking to people about Jesus. We take Jesus' final words, 'go into the world and make disciples' quite literally.

Needless to say, most have not stayed and have moved on. Many move back to church. On the odd occasion, we have even asked some to leave.

Read through the Acts and Paul's letters carefully, and you may realise that the description of the early church seems more like a family than a service, where people interacted with Jesus and each other, moment by moment. If it's anything like ours, it will be messy, disorganised and spontaneous. We spend time looking across from one another, rather than at the back of each other's heads; everyone has an equal voice, an opportunity to share what the Lord has been saying, and what they in turn have been saying to others. The question, "who are you speaking to about our Lord this week?" is a common one you will hear. There is expectation, even a demand perhaps. How are we obeying?

For some, this is too much. On the odd occasion, when we have had no interest from those we talk to on the streets, and nobody has turned up to a gathering, life has been very bleak. Darkness is not far away. Is this really what God wants us to do? Have we been disobedient? Loneliness.

We say this to those reading, wondering whether it will be worth trying something different, or for those who have tried or are trying to move into the realm of making disciples and feeling they are getting nowhere. Is this what it is meant to be? The truth is perhaps yes it may be.

Yet pursuing Christ is not an exercise in darkness, but an activity filled with light. Take last week as just an example. In our small group, we had children and older people mixing together throughout the morning. We prayed into each other lives, beginning to confess to each other some of our fears, hurts and joys. As we talked, we stopped throughout to pray, to invite Jesus then and there to speak and move on the issues as they came up. We celebrated and prayed specifically for those each of us were ministering to in the world. We discussed when we would meet, and asked for continual prayer. We celebrated communion, along with Christ.

Later we went through a 'Discovery Bible Study'; we read a small passage, seeing what the Holy Spirit says as he leads us together through the passage. Is there

something to share, to obey? What does the passage tell us of God, or of man? What questions do we have, what pierces our heart? Then, at the end, a challenge – who will we share this with this week?

Some left us at this point, while others of us had a brief lunch before we headed for the streets for the afternoon. There we spoke at length with a young Muslim man about Christ, convicted by the Holy Spirit to continue on, even when we felt the urge to stop. In the end, we prayed for the Lord to open his eyes, after we had explained the Gospel. Others spoke with a woman, and brought her up to the step of turning towards Christ, before we decided it was better to meet with her again later this week. We pray she will be available as we spoke to many others as well.

This is our Sunday, our church – a family of believers, living and sharing together, and moving out into the world filled with the Spirit with "God making his appeal through us." It is the Light breaking into the 'sometime darkness.'

We hope to share more of the real life we have over the coming weeks, but let us be truthful as well. There are times when we feel isolated, when God seems to have deserted us, surely as Christ must have felt often. Yet there are times of indescribable joy, when we get a glimpse that we are moving, walking, right where God wants us to be.

It doesn't get any better. We are learning to be content.



MICHAEL AND SALLY BUTLER
lead Manly Disciple Makers, a gathering in Sydney. These are people who want

to move out into the world and follow Jesus' command to "go and make disciples." As a group, they go out most weekends onto the streets of Manly and preach and share the Gospel with anyone the Lord leads them to. Along the way, they have had hundreds of conversations with Muslims, atheists, agnostics and believers who have lost their faith. You can read of some of the adventures on nobrokenreed.org or get in touch at justbutlers@gmail.com

Healthy Assembly Life (Part 2)



Jon Zens

"Honor one another above yourselves" (Ro 12:10)

One of the most staggering goals of Christ's work is set forth in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again." One of the unending lessons of discipleship is to take up our cross daily and follow Christ, to consciously by the Spirit's power stop living for ourselves and serve Him. In terms of our life in the body of Christ, one of the key ways we demonstrate a selfless life is to put others' needs ahead of our own.

Think about it. If each believer was preferring others ahead of oneself, everybody's needs would be met. We would all be looking out for each other. No one would be forgotten. It sounds so simple, but we all know that body life does not work out that smoothly because each of us struggles with putting ourselves ahead of others.

In terms of our life together as believers, and in light of our responsibility to work things out in the body, one of the central ways we manifest non-self-centered living is by listening to the concerns and burdens of others. James 1:19 says, "let everyone be quick to hear, and slow to speak and slow to anger."

Some commentators see in James' remark a corrective to what was transpiring in early Christian gatherings. Curtis Vaughn and Earl Kelly note, "There may be an illusion [in James 1:19] to the free and unstructured worship of the early Christian assemblies" (James: A Study Guide, Zondervan, 1960, p. 35). Further, "It is possible that contentious Christian babes were taking advantage of the informal style of worship in the early Christian church to produce wrangling" (James: A Primer for Christian Living, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974, p. 69).

The point is that in our dealings with one another each of us must first of all "be quick to hear." Obviously, in any

configuration of brethren there will be those who will want to talk a lot, those who are very reticent, and others in-between. Those who have the gift of gab should take to heart James' admonition, "be slow to speak." They should prefer others ahead of themselves, and be sure that they do not stifle the input of others, either by dominating the discussion, or by coming across in such a dogmatic tone that no one feels up to contributing their thoughts. The verbally timid should be encouraged to share their insights by the rest of the group, realizing that each one of us has the potential of adding edifying content to the meeting (1Co 14:26). As William Barclay observes about the meeting described in 1 Corinthians 14, "The really notable thing about an early Church service must have been that almost everyone came feeling that he had both the privilege and obligation of contributing something to it Obviously this had its dangers for it is clear that in Corinth there were those

In our dealings with one another each of us must first of all “be quick to hear.”

who were too fond of the sound of their own voices” (The Letters to the Corinthians, Westminster Press, pp. 149-150).

In light of the exhortation for each of us to be “quick to hear,” what are some vital attitudes that we must cultivate in our body relationships?

1. We must be open to learn from brethren in various traditions.

We all tend to stick to some party-line and turn our heads away from information outside of our comfort zone. A.N. Groves wrote in 1833 concerning his relationship with J.N. Darby, “I do not think we ought to propose to be modeled unlike every sect, but simply to be like Christ; let us neither seek nor fear a name. I wish rather to have from every sect what every sect may have from Christ” (Roy Coad, A History of the Brethren Movement, pp. 114-115).

Are we willing to “listen” to multiple sources and discern from them what might help us discover the mind of Christ? Are we really open to be challenged by others to search the Scriptures and see what is indeed so? Thomas Dubay notes in this regard: “Since no one of us mortals, affected as we are with original sin, is perfectly pure in his desire for truth, no one of us is exempt from some degree of close-mindedness. It is only our God who is truth than can cure our reluctance to embrace all of his truth, however he speaks it” (“Communication in Community,” Searching Together, Winter, 1985, p. 11).

2. “We need to be humble,” says Dubay, “small in our own estimation. Finding the solution to a mathematical problem is possible without humility, but finding God’s will is impossible without this virtue. James 4:6 tells us that God resists the proud but gives grace (and light) to the humble” (“Communication,” p. 11). Whenever a group of believers bathed in humility gather together, great things can be

expected; but, as James 3:16 notes, where there is “envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” The truly humble put others ahead of themselves. They pay attention to what they hear from others.

3. We must always have a “willingness to be changed by what is going to be said

(without, of course, sacrificing genuine principles). One listens wholly only if he is willing to modify his present position if the evidence warrants it. People who are set in their thoughts and determined not to change their behavior do not listen to contrary evidences (Dubay, p. 11). If we confess that we do not know anything as we ought, then we will be open to new light from our brethren. We must listen to possible new evidence that has escaped our attention. As Eller noted, the church must always be open-ended toward God’s truth in Christ.

4. We must “grow in awareness that the person speaking is important, even precious, “God’s beloved”

(Ro 1:7). We pay attention to important people. To the proud person others are not important and so he is not inclined to take them seriously. Even more, we value the opinions of those we love. If I do not really care what my brother thinks, I had better doubt that I love my brother” (Dubay, p. 11). I have seen so many cases in assemblies where those who articulate things with razor-sharp logic bulldoze over the little person, and pooh-pooh any concerns they have. You may think that a question or concern coming from another is immature, or ill-timed, or very low on your list of priorities, but if you really love that person you must give your ears and heart to that fellow-believer who is precious to Christ. We must highly esteem the input of every part of the body, or we run the risk of missing the voice of Jesus in our midst. In Christ’s body we are instructed to heap more honor on those parts that seem to be

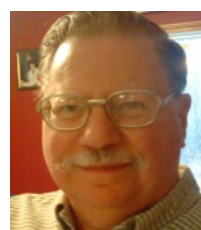
weaker and less honorable (1Co 12:22-24).

A huge chunk of not living for ourselves, but for Christ, is displayed in how we defer to one another in the body of Christ. Without apology I say that to the degree a committed body of believers by God’s grace follows the perspectives set forth in this article, they will fare well and be able to tackle the inevitable bumps that come in the course of assembly life. If these perspectives are forgotten, neglected, or rejected, then a body will more than likely self-destruct. Functioning together in the ekklesia is like holding a bird in your hand. If you hold it too tightly you will kill it. If you hold it too loosely it will fly away. If believers are fueled by the love Christ had for them on the cross – “as I have loved you” – then they can successfully keep the bird alive by loving one another fervently.

After considering what has been said about body life, you may be thinking: “There is just one thing wrong with the biblical view of the church which we have been sketching: it does not seem to exist. The definition is fine, but the phenomenon it describes is missing” (John H. Yoder, “A Light to All Nations,” Concern #9, March, 1961, p. 17).

The fact that we are so far from where we should be is a valid cause for concern. But the truth that these attitudes and perspectives are the obvious will of Christ by the Spirit must give us great confidence that they can become realities in our assemblies.

“Lord Jesus, please enable us to give ourselves to the life of love you have revealed in your Word.”



JON ZENS is an active author and a travelling speaker, ministering in organic church conferences and best known for pioneering New Covenant Theology, which sees the entire Bible as a revelation of the gospel of grace fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

MOVEMENT KILLERS

2 articles from
100movements.com
on the reasons why
movements come to a halt

IT SLAYED THE MOMENTUM OF THE METHODISTS

Alan Hirsch

A movement killer is something that exists in the common life of the organization itself--the culture, thinking, and practices--that in effect blocks the inherent potential for growth contained in the system. In systems theory, all living systems are geared for growth and flourishing. They have everything in them needed to maintain life and reproduce healthily. The "killer" therefore is something now resident in the system that is in effect blocking the innate capacity to flourish. All organizations, including the majority of existing churches, do many things that hinder and block God's desire for them to flourish.

Take, for instance, the Methodist movement, which was founded in eighteenth-century Britain by John Wesley. Following a life-changing encounter with God, Wesley began to travel throughout Great Britain with a vision for the conversion and discipling of a nation and the renewal of a fallen church. He "sought no less than the recovery of the truth, life and power of

earliest Christianity and the expansion of that kind of Christianity." Within a generation, one in thirty people in Britain had become Methodist, and the movement was becoming a worldwide phenomenon.

In the opinion of Stephen Addison, a missiologist who has spent much of his professional life studying Christian movements, the key to Methodism's success was the high level of commitment to the Methodist cause that was expected of participants. This cause declined to the degree that the movement had moved away from its original missional ethos of evangelism and disciple making and degenerated into mere religious legalism maintained by institution, rule books, and highly professionalized clergy.

In fact, although Methodism in America had experienced massive exponential growth (35 percent of the population in around forty years), two critical "movement killers" were introduced into Methodism in America that effectively hamstrung the movement.

Heightened Educational requirements. In 1850 the leaders of Methodism had tired of the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians deriding them as "uncouth

and unlearned" ministers, so they decided that all their circuit riders and local ministers had to complete four years of ordination studies in order to qualify. Growth ceased straightaway!

Lowered discipleship focus. Ten years later (1860) they no longer required classes and bands—discipleship had become an optional extra. Methodism has been in decline in relation to percentage of the population ever since!

No prizes for guessing what the movement killers were here? Yes, the requirement for ordination studies in order to do what every believer has already received in his/her conversion--the agency and ministry of all believers. And the second of course is non-discipleship. Most churches in the West follow the same route. Guess what has to change?

(Source of info. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *The Churching of America*)



ALAN HIRSCH
(100movements.com)
is the author of *The Forgotten Ways*.
Known for his
innovative approach to
mission, Alan is

considered to be a thought-leader and key mission strategist for churches across the Western world.

HOW THE HERO NARRATIVE KILLS MOVEMENT

Jessie Cruikshank

Who are your heroes? Or if you don't have one, what would you be looking for in a hero? What are the qualities you admire in a leader?

If you ask the average person in the evangelical church these days the answer would likely include that they want a pragmatic, no-nonsense, get-things-done, charismatic CEO-type, who is able to inspire large groups. People often express they are looking for 'strong leadership' that can cut through the nonsense and make things happen. Like the sheriff in a western, the hero rides into town, won't take any back talk, cleans out the bad guys, and saves the day. Meanwhile the poor towns people, who were unable to do anything on their own behalf beforehand, watch, cower, applaud, and continue in their lack of self-efficacy.

The problem is that this kind of hero or leader narrative will kill a movement as stone dead as a shot from a .45 caliber Colt.

The hero narrative in our Christian culture looks like a sanitized, celebrity version of Peter or Paul, and not like Jesus. We have unquestioningly adopted the world's definition of the hero-leader, and then tried to spiritualize it. There is a difference between leadership in an organization and leadership in the Kingdom. Unfortunately, we often conflate the two, creating a singular hero-narrative. We look to create hero-leaders in our organization first, and then seek to apply them to Kingdom work. Instead, we should be creating leaders in the Kingdom of all people, and working with some of them to have the specific skill-set of larger organizational leadership.

Think about this: Jesus would never be described by the above terms. No one

would accuse Jesus of being a "strong leader who got things done." In fact, by all measurements of his direct CEO leadership, his movement was a failure and he died before it became anything. Jesus did not lead his people to greatness of any kind in his lifetime.

And yet, leading like Jesus is exactly what we are called to do.

Because of our hero-leader narrative, an overwhelming number of people disqualify themselves from having a role to play in the Kingdom. I know so many Christian pastors and leadership consultants that do not think anyone can be a leader or that everyone is called to leadership. This breaks my heart as it means they miss the gems (talents) of people in front of them

Every person can influence the life of another. Every person already is! When we nurture that fertile ground, teach skills, develop character, and created processes in it, we empower people to be the heroes God has created them to be.

while looking for the token hero that embodies a narrow set of leadership traits. This is decidedly un-Kingdom.

Let me put it this way: was Mother Theresa a leader?

How you answer that question will be illuminating as to your leadership bias. What would Jesus have to say about her?

Leadership is not simply an office or a title. Leadership includes skills, but it is not a skill set. A leader should have character, but leadership is more than a list of character qualities. A leader should be developed, but leadership is more than a process. Ultimately leadership is the characteristic of having influence in the lives of those around you.

Mother Theresa did not lead a congregation, nor did she lead thousands to Christ. The number of conversions she inspired is unknown. She did not speak at conferences, write many books, or solicit the world to come and work with her to learn her 'secret sauce'. And yet she inspired the world with her love and sacrifice. Even



the atheists and secular humanists know who Mother Theresa is and are inspired by her. She is a hero to them and she has influenced them.

If we are going to inspire, influence or lead movements, we cannot be looking to make people into the next (insert charismatic leader name here). We have to move beyond our leader bias, to see and raise up people who do not lead like us, who will never lead like us. We have to learn how to help people become the intentionally influencing, leader-version of the person God created them to be.

Every person can influence the life of another. Every person already is! When we nurture that fertile ground, teach skills, develop character, and created processes in it, we empower people to be the heroes God has created them to be. We may work to develop people to be leaders in our organization, but we have to work on helping everyone be leaders in the Kingdom if we are to be a movement.

There is only one Superman. There is only one John Wesley or Billy Graham. And the more we try to find the next Billy Graham, the more we make an idol out of a hero narrative and dis-empower the sons and daughters right in front of us.



JESSIE CRUICKSHANK is a demonstrated disciple-maker and experiential education neuroscientist. She and her husband currently live in Denver, CO. Read more articles at 100movements.com

The Downward Path of Jesus

Moving Beyond Sunday-Centric Church

David Alan Black



Like other authors I've known, I've spent a lot of time thinking up appropriate book titles – what publishers sometimes call “truth titles,” that is, titles that quickly reveal (rather than obscure) the contents of a book. Learn to Read New Testament Greek was a no brainer for me. B & H Academic asked me to write it, and four months later the manuscript was in their hands. After all, I had been teaching Greek this way for many years, so it was a fairly simple thing to sit down at the computer and let my fingers do all the work. The title was intentional: Don't think that you can order a burrito in Athens once you've finished my grammar. The goal is to read New Testament Greek, not speak it. Then there was Why Four Gospels? The Historical Origins of the Gospels. This book grew out of a heartfelt, gut-wrenching reexamination of the facts about the Gospels – and why there are only four (and not three or five) of these accounts in our canon.

In my career as teacher and writer I've only had to struggle with two titles. The first was It's All Greek to Me: Confessions of an Unlikely Academic. I don't like putting the “content” in the sub-title (instead of in the main title where it belongs), but using the age-old saw about Greek being so hard was just too good to pass up. The other book was The Jesus Paradigm, which I had originally called The Downward Path of Jesus. Both titles actually mean the same thing but approach the subject from two different angles: One is less specific (The Jesus Paradigm – “Just what do you mean by ‘paradigm,’ and what in the world is it?”), and the other more specific (The Downward Path of Jesus – “Oh, so you're saying that Jesus' humiliating lifestyle is to be the model for our own lives?”).

Either way, Jesus is central to everything we do as Christians. Theological reflection is always to be guided by the paradigm of His life. In Jesus we see what mankind was intended to be from the beginning. And the church is to be a corporate witness to what a reconciled humanity looks like. To live as an extension of Jesus in the world – this is what the church is all about. The church, then, is simply a counterculture that evokes a completely different vision of the world than the vision given to us by the world itself.

I am finding that more and more evangelicals (especially younger evangelicals) are getting this. They are keenly aware that they live in a post-Constantinian world, a world in which church and state are separate entities. They recognize that the efforts of both the Christian right and the Christian left to lobby moral legislation have

turned out to be colossal failures. As Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson (former leaders of the Moral Majority) wrote in their book *Blinded by Might*, “We think it is time to admit that because we are using the wrong weapons, we are losing the battle.” If we ask, then, what the Jesus paradigm looks like, our answer will include at least a reference to a church that has no agenda other than Christ's agenda. The church clothed with the Jesus paradigm seeks only to be the embodied presence of Christ in a postmodern world. It rejects the political “solutions” to our culture wars offered by both right and left. Above all, post-Constantinian Christians are committed to a missional lifestyle in their own neighborhoods and throughout the world.

I am constantly having to ask myself if I am being true to this paradigm as an educator. True education is more than knowledge. It is knowledge lived out both individually and in community. As never before, I view my calling as one of helping others see how their faith and knowledge need to be expanded beyond the classroom. After all, Jesus was looking for “followers,” not mere “believers.” The only true model of the Christian life is the servant model. Ministry is not a job but relationships. Believers who follow the Jesus paradigm know how to humble themselves and be servants. They seek a biblical-based church, not a CEO model or superstar pastors. For more and more younger evangelicals, team ministry is what matters. Moving beyond a Sunday-centric mentality, they are eager to be the embodied presence of Christ in the world. For them, the church's mission is simple. It is to show the world what it looks like when people live under the reign of God.

It is this “reign of God” (or “Godworld,” as I am now calling it) that motivated me to write *The Jesus Paradigm*, although I wish now that I had used the more explicit title, *The Downward Path of Jesus*. A lost world desperately needs the church to be the church – a countercultural community that is against the world even as it is for the world. For this reason, the true church does not merely teach an upside-down kingdom, it is an upside-down kingdom. Today, I am more committed than ever to reclaiming this paradigm and going back to the politics of Jesus.



DAVID BLACK is an Hawaiian who now lives, with his wife Becky, in southern Virginia. Apart from all his academic qualifications David has led (leads) a remarkable active life. He recently visited Switzerland and climbed the Breithorn, the Oberrothorn, the Klettersteig, and the Matterhorn. See his amazing story at daveblackonline.com



Directed vs Participatory Church

a dialogue...

JIM WRIGHT

A friend of my mom who is a very dear, older sister in the Lord: *"How are you doing, Jim?"*

Me: *"Good. I just got back from being in the jail this morning. I was with about fifty men from one of the housing units." (She knows I often "minister" in the jail.)*

Her: *"Oh, did you teach?" (Years ago, I had a very successful traditional teaching ministry in one of the larger churches in the county, and she was always one of my most eager and engaged students.)*

Me: *"No. These days, I mainly let them teach and minister to each other. Sometimes I may say something, but not always and I keep it really short so they can take the lead among themselves.*

So NOT church! "Today various men shared verses, testimonies, songs, teachings and we even had some great, improvised Christian rap by two of the brothers.

"One man shared, with tears of joy, about how the Lord had given him peace over the uncertainty of his upcoming trial, and I asked if he would pray for other men facing the same anxiety. He did a beautiful job as a half dozen men gathering around him in a circle, arms round each other's shoulders, and he imparted to those

struggling with the same issue some of the grace God had given him. He had never done that kind of thing before. I didn't pray for them, but stayed in my seat, because that other brother who was an inmate had the grace needed and I didn't.

"That's how it works. We've gotten away from directed meetings where a worship team 'does' worship for everyone and a pastor 'does' a monologue teaching and everyone passively sits there – other than following along with the music and maybe an 'amen' or two. We just don't see how that matches up with what the New Testament says about being the church: the multi-member Body of Christ where every part contributes.

"Instead, I have learned to sit back so they can learn to express what the Lord is doing in them and it always seems to meet the needs of those present. Sometimes I have something to share, usually along the lines of helping to create a framework for them to come forth. This morning, however, like most of the times I join with them, I said a few words as just one of the guys then sat down as they ministered to each other for an hour and half. Like usual, they also ministered to me."

Her: *Silence, then, "Oh, so you are there to make sure they don't get off track?"*

Me: *"No, they've learned to do a really good job of that themselves. I just go to enjoy their fellowship*

every now and then and be an encouragement to them or maybe add some foundational input."

Her: *Silence, then "Oh. "*

More silence, then, "So they get together every week or so when you go in?"

Me: *"No, actually, they are their own church. They meet as smaller churches every day after their evening meal. I may see them only every week or two, but they do fine on their own and don't much need me. We encourage them to be the church, rather than trying to 'do' church for them or importing church. That way, they learn to minister to each other and grow up in the Lord."*


Her: *A very, very long silence, then finally, "Nice weather we're having, huh Jim?"*

Me: *Sigh. It's just about impossible for people to break out of their traditional concept of "church" and to get their mind – and spirit – around the New Testament idea of participatory fellowship rather than directed meetings.*

Some day, some day. In the meantime, I just continue to sow seeds as the Lord directs ...

JIM WRIGHT is a church sower, public but unassuming, thinker, mentor, teacher, retired attorney, private pilot. Check him out at crossroadjunction.com





Five Points of Bitterness Common in the Missional Church

Dan White Jr

Forging communities on mission has been a refreshing and exhilarating experience. I'm a strategist and futurist by nature, so I have the propensity to convince myself I've sized up all the challenges that will come my way, before they come my way.

There was one issue that I was not prepared to run into so regularly and widely... bitterness.

Over and over again, our team has collided with the thick smog of bitterness that saturates many conversations and any intentional gathering related to Christianity. I've studied up on Post-Christianity but nothing could ready me for the discipleship challenge of very real and raw people being riddled with bitterness and cynicism.

Outside the Tent

For as much theological space and diversity as our community embraces, for as relational as our ethos is, for as organic as our church ecclesiology is, we've found no way around colliding with deeply entrenched bitterness. I had a bit of a fantasy that because we were unlike institutional, hierarchical, consumer-oriented, more conservative expressions of church we would avoid this reality.

But bitterness travels.

Our bitterness goes where we go and it paralyzes our energy for mission and community. Any team pioneering ministry outside of evangelicalism will suddenly find themselves outside the "Big Tent." It's out here in this wide open terrain, that does not appeal to church-shoppers, that you will meet countless people who've seen, experienced or been through Christianity. They carry massive wounds from that experience. For them the church was crueler and colder than expected.

The Prevalent Poison

A missional church must come to terms with the overwhelming number of people that carry a burning-bitterness. In many ways, their inner turmoil towards the church and its extensions are justified. There is no erasing the experiences that they lived through. Many of these angers have been untouched but quite possibly have been stoked by others who are just as turned-off and angry.

I am so thoroughly convinced that bitterness and cynicism is the most prevalent poison in our times. When we are hurt, dashed, and royally let down, a villain is erected. It becomes a sub-conscious controlling figure that clouds our choices, opinions and spiritual trajectory.

Bitterness slowly burns a consuming mark on our outlook of the future. Emotional disappointment, if unaddressed, renders us perpetually frustrated and disillusioned even if the scenery changes.

5 Common Points of Bitterness

Here are some tangible and personal points of bitterness we've discovered in the city we love. In no way am I trying to stereo-type or demonize. In some ways, this is an over simplistic presentation. I find it a privilege to be in the presence of people who are genuinely sceptical. Still, these are real-life touch points that our missional church has encountered up close and personal.

1. Bitterness Towards Leadership

A Christian leader really let them down, dashed their hopes, made promises they never followed through on, used power for personal gain, treated them like a number, or gave them bad counsel. Their experience with Christian leadership colors their whole feeling towards authority.

Missional Challenge: For as gracious, hospitable, trusting and peaceable that your current leadership might be, often times you will still be viewed through that sceptical lens created by bitterness. Their radar is on high alert looking for signs that you are not who you say you are. Often they are expecting the other shoe to drop, feeling spiritual abuse is just around the corner. (For a different approach to leadership itself, check out "Submissional Leadership: Trade Dangerous Hierarchies for Discipling Teams.")

2. Bitterness Towards Christian Parents

Parents gave them a faith of obedience that gave little space for exploration, mystery and independence. Their parents went to church regularly and even had leadership roles but were judgmental, unloving and selfish.

Missional Challenge: There are sores around this paternal relationship making it hard for them to cozy up to church, because in some way it symbolizes the faith of their parents.

3. Bitterness Towards Structure

Institutional Christianity may have tried to push them through an assembly line to produce a cookie-cutter Christian man or woman. Church seemed forced with subtle manipulation. If they had doubts, there was no room for them. If they had questions, there were glares directed at them. The black and white presentations of the church did not fit with the complications of everyday life. The Christian music, events, sermons and Christian lingo seemed like a sheltered sub-culture.

Missional Challenge: These realities make people skittish about any type of intentionality; meeting on a regular

basis, regular teaching, regular stewardship, rhythmic community or purposeful mission. It is hard for them not to establish a posture of overreaction to protect themselves against previous oppressive modes of church.

4. Bitterness Towards Stifling Theology

The Theory of Evolution was called heresy, women were relegated to children's ministry, God was a detached Almighty who controlled everything including suffering, the Bible was a rule book, God was first feared then followed, a personal relationship with God didn't seem all that personal. There are embedded visceral emotions connected to this brand of theology that they perceived alienated them.

Missional Challenge: This is not a god they want to be associated with at all. Recovering a better image of God is hard because of their ingrained response to the God of their youth. They are a bit embarrassed to be aligned with God even though they are drawn to him.

5. Bitterness Towards Community

Christian friends let them down, they got offended, and then found no reconciliation. Their expectations were never met and they were perpetually disappointed with a lack of intimacy. It seemed like few ever reciprocated when they reached out for connection.

Missional Challenge: Being connected with Christians seems to be more trouble than it's worth. Their first position is one of distrust that keeps them cautiously distant. Unknowingly their thoughts on community are filtered through idealism and expectations no one can meet. (These resources can help with building healthier communities.)

A Space for Recovery within the Missional Church

Time does not often heal these issues. In many cases, time builds deeper tracks for bitterness to ride on.

Missional Communities need to become incubators of grace, patience and carefulness for the sake of long term healing. Eventually, you will need to address bitterness within discipleship.

You cannot dance around this issue for too long because it eventually will sabotage partnering with God and each other.

Underlying cynicism often creates a spirituality that is afraid of connecting to actual people doing actual mission. Bitterness legitimizes keeping a distance from loyalty, giving us space to stay critical.

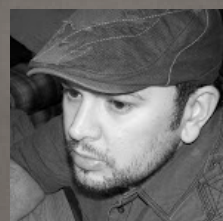
Underlying cynicism often creates a spirituality that is afraid of connecting to actual people...

To the degree that we are unable to admit we are bitter is the degree that we are impaired in our clarity of vision. When unearthing this, we might find we don't want to let go of something that we feel justified to hold onto. In many ways, bitterness can get all intertwined in how we've identified ourselves being "against certain things and certain people".

We desperately need to help each other pick through the clutter of past worship, bible-studies, sermons, relationships, and spiritual experiences to find something of value. We need to gently and patiently coach each other to forgive, to let go of grudges and discontinue our railing against the villain in our emotional memory.

This work cannot be avoided or we will fragment and choose an autonomous spirituality that doesn't root in actual flesh-and-bone community. It becomes very difficult to submit to Jesus if we cannot make peace with the past. It becomes very difficult to work peaceably for His Kingdom if we are constantly bated by the present Christian buffoonery that assails overhead.

Cleaning the slate is imperative to the missional church.



Dan White Jr. is the leader of a developing network of communities in the urban neighborhoods of Syracuse, NY. Together their communities are

multiplying into diverse neighborhoods learning to serve, listen and extend the all-consuming love of Jesus. You can learn more about Dan on his blog danwhitejr.blogspot.com.au

The hurdle of UNMET EXPECTATIONS

Krista Cue

Sometimes the path you thought you would be on is not where you find yourself. And you're thinking, "Hey! What's going on?" "This wasn't the plan".

For me this was Nursing. I had a nice plan to work for a couple of years and then retire to a better life. But now I find myself in my 15th year and having just submitted my 10th job application.

Unmet expectations can be frustrating and lead to what feels like a chronic wrestling in your spirit. The Hebrew word KAMAR depicts this position of allowing desire to rise and in the same breath letting it go. It's can be a hard road but again we have a choice: we can put life on hold while we wait to get to our "correct" path or we can be used where we are and see God glorified in our current situation.

Steven Curtis Chapman - Whatever

*I made a list wrote down from A to Z
All the ways I thought that you could best use me
Told all my strengths and my abilities
I formed a plan it seemed to make good sense
I laid it out for you so sure you'd be convinced
I made my case presented my defense
But then I read the letter that you sent me
It said that all you really want from me is just
Whatever whatever you say
Whatever I will obey
Whatever Lord have your way
'Cause you are my God whatever
So strike a match set fire to the list
Of all my good intentions all my preconceived ideas
I want to do your will no matter what it is
Give me faith to follow where you lead me
Oh Lord give me the courage and the strength to do*

This is not to say that we shouldn't have passions and skills and I believe that these things play a big part in finding our purpose in life. I believe God gives us passions and giftings for a reason. He wires us each differently to be used in unique ways that complement each other for the advancement of the Kingdom. The problem is often we can get tunnel vision when it comes to how these gifting and passions should be used.

When I found myself with unmet expectations on a path that I would not have chosen for myself, I did write down my lists and then burned them several times in a desperate attempt at surrender. But these attempts, in our own strength and will power, never last. It wasn't until I learned to let go of the striving that I finally came to peace with the swaying. It was like a boat anchored at sea, yet I no longer felt nauseated by the conflict beneath my feet. I love how Stasi Eldridge describes the Hebrew word KAMAR. She says:

It's like saying, "I will not bury my heart's desires. I will awaken to them, acknowledge them and entrust them into the hands of the ONE who knows what is and plans for what is BEST FOR ME!"

It was in this time that I came to know the full truth of the lyrics;

*What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand*

So I began again to write down my list:

- A Nurturer who loves to nourish body, mind and soul
- A Mercy gift with deep feelings
- An Encourager who loves to speak truth into broken lives
- A Passionate Learner ever hungry for a deeper revelation.

...but this time I sought the Father's take on why he gave me these passions and how he could use them to make this perceived desert flourish.

Again everything boils down to identity. I can't know what I am before first knowing who I am. And as I learn who I am in Him, my perspective clears and zoomed out I realise my desert is actually a sandpit surrounded by the lush gardens of His goodness. It can still feel hot and sandy but in the waiting, if we let him, He will take the opportunity to use our passions and giftings for His glory and not a moment is wasted!

Like probably most pastors kids, I grew up wishing I had a testimony. If only I had been saved out of some kind of reckless lifestyle I would have a great testimony to share of God's faithfulness and grace. But I have learned that life will throw enough curveballs your way without you having to go look for them. I don't believe that God is the author of any of our troubles but I also know that He is not at all surprised by them and He's not afraid of them. He is the best Father, the best friend, the best counsellor and the best comforter. And He longs to be those things to us and display his power in our lives when we face hard times.

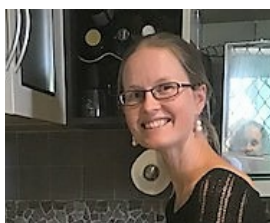
A couple of weeks ago, Josh talked about how we hear from God. One of the ways God most speaks to me is through song lyrics. On one of these occasions I had just found out, after years of trying to get out of shift work, I had once again been unsuccessful for a new job. They couldn't give me a reason; I was meritorious like every time before. I sat there on the couch reading the letter feeling completely at the end of myself, feeling a failure, trapped, unable to get myself off this unwanted path. I sat there broken, sobbing before God not able to pray or even ask why anymore. Finally I recovered, sitting numb, in a cloud of black, when I heard the distant sound of a subwoofer coming up the street. We lived near the end of the street with a give way sign and as I sat there staring into space all I heard was... Dush, dush, dush, then right outside my window the simple words "Don't you worry don't you worry child, see heaven's got a plan for you". Then the car turned the corner and the subwoofer faded into the distance. I had never heard that song before... and there I was just instantly changed and I

thought, "Oh Father, will there ever be a day when you don't respond to me in love? When you don't look down on your child with a heart bursting with compassion and surround me with your arms of comfort and that flood of peace that drives out all my fear in an instant? And of course the answer is no. He will never stop, he will never rest. I love the lyrics by Steffany Gretzinger - *"and oh as you run, what hindered love will only become part of the story"*. And I have found that to be so true. I'm only 36 years old and I've never taken drugs, never been drunk but oh what a testimony I have been given in those years as I've allowed him to take my mistakes and that which was meant for evil and to use it for good. Unfolding into a story of reckless love and at times incomprehensible faithfulness from a good good Father.

1. So now let's draw it back and look at how you can find your life purpose?
2. Use your God-given passions and talents.
3. Whatever you do, do it with a kingdom mentality. Matt 6 says seek first the kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. In other words, invest those passions towards the Kingdom. I'm not talking about heaven but rather the Kingdom of God advancing powerfully on the Earth today. Don't just meet a need out of duty or with guilt because there's a need to be met (which just leads to burn out) but do it with a fire in your belly with a vision that looks further than the here and now.
4. And whatever you do, let love be evident in your actions. Love others as He has loved you - John 13

Do these things and you won't have to worry about getting the GPS coordinates because you will find yourself in the middle of God's vast, wide purpose for you.

KRISTA CUE *lives in the Brisbane hills with her husband Ben*



MELBOURNE REGIONAL GATHERING April 29/30

The Oikos Melbourne regional training weekend on Saturday and Sunday was attended by over 40 people. Some travelled from other states besides Victoria – WA, QLD and SA -including 4 people I hadn't met previously.

Stuart Gramenz was the key-note presenter and focused on "Listening to God" with a number of "activation" sessions which were challenging. We are trusting that people will continue to listen to God's promptings in reaching and discipling new believers. One leader told me he is really applying this in his life and ministry and it is making a big difference.

Many kingdom stories were shared which challenged and inspired others. One man from Perth returned and according to an email is really excited about doing simple church. There were also new relationships and connections made. I believe that we have all been refocused on the centrality of prayer and the need for God to work supernaturally to see his Kingdom extended. We believe that this time together will serve as a catalyst for further growth.



STUART GRAMENZ IN SYDNEY SEPT 23/24

Stuart will also be the guest presenter at a Northern Sydney Regional Gathering hosted by Michael and Sally Butler.

Contact them on
0404834402 justbutlers@gmail.com

SHUT THE TEMPLE ⟨CHURCH⟩ DOORS!

Erroll Mulder

As a very young pastor in rural Eastern Cape (South Africa), I served on a missions board with a much older, very eccentric, autocratic and paternalistic ‘missionary superintendent’ who had the habit of visiting rural wood-and-iron church buildings and padlocking the doors if he felt the little congregation wasn’t up to scratch. Eish!

However, the God of Israel, through his servant Malachi (contemporary of Nehemiah, +- 450 BC), almost did that to the Jerusalem temple! “How I wish one of you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! ‘I am not pleased with you,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies” (Mal. 1:10, NLT). The reason for his displeasure? His people were naively unaware of their cheap, routine worship offered to their eternal Lover, Father and Master (1:1, 6ff). They hypocritically ‘sacrificed’ defiled, crippled and diseased animals when he deserved only the best (1:6ff, 14). They pleaded injured innocence, ‘How have we ever shown contempt for your name?... how have we defiled the sacrifices?’ (1:6). They complained it was ‘too hard’ to serve God (1:13). They had forgotten God’s immense stature, even among pagan nations: “‘For I am a great king, says the LORD of Heaven’s armies,’ and my name is feared among the nations!” (1:14).

Never mind their marriage to idolaters, unfaithfulness to their spouses, sorcery, cheating of employees, oppression of widows and orphans and injustice toward foreigners (2:11ff, 3:5ff).

In a panel discussion on Paradise & Evil, N.T. Wright pointed out the amazement of President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair at the 9/11 ‘evil,’ as if this was their first encounter with ‘evil’ in the

world! (the panel was not minimising the pain of 9/11) Thereafter they were correcting ‘evil’ all over the world by bombing it! The fact is we live in a world that is irrational and has gone completely

mad – Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that in the 1970’s already.

Even the clergy (I loath the term) were in trouble – their job was to ‘bring life and peace,’ but they had left God’s paths, watered down his instructions and caused many to stumble into sin (2:9). Pause: is our situation in the Church today any different? How many pulpits around the globe would dare carry a prophetic message like Malachi’s? Most of our modern ‘prophets’ declare ‘all is well’ with the Church and her future is ‘fantastic.’

**At the outset
of God’s
quarrel with
his people, he
reminds them
of his eternal,
magnificent,
tender love
for them**

IT STARTS WITH HIS LOVE

At the outset of God’s quarrel with his people, he reminds them of his eternal, magnificent, tender love for them: “‘I have always loved you,’ says the LORD” (1:1), demonstrating this in the call of Jacob, whom God loved though he was so crooked he couldn’t hide behind a cork screw (1:2ff). Later he reiterates his long-suffering love, “‘I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. Ever since the day of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies” (3:6ff).

The NT confirms that our relationship with God always starts with his great love for us rather than the other way round: “This is real love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins” (1 Jn. 4:10). Super-eloquent Brennan Manning, American Catholic priest-turned-gospel preacher, struggles to express that love, resorting to terms like ‘the furious longing of God,’ ‘the relentless tenderness of Jesus,’ ‘a life-shattering gift,’ etc. At the same time the Messiah is no namby-pamby pushover, no sentimental slushy Saviour: see what he did in the temple and to the temple when it fell into religiosity – he upset it and destroyed it (Jn. 2:12-22). He became the temple, and we in him (1 Cor. 3:10-17; 1 Pet. 2:4-10; etc).

Once more I’m attempting to expose what I have called the temple syndrome or temple talisman. For centuries we have equated ‘church’ (ekklesia) to

MPLE

'temple.' It was really accelerated by Emperor Constantine in the 300's AD, when he professionalised the clergy and 'temple-ised' the body, the clergy ruling and the body spectating. That way worship quickly reduces to tradition, ritual and religiosity. People simply go through the motions. This past week there was a facebook advert for a local mega-church, flavour of the season plus revolving doors. Someone posted, 'Hi! I didn't know you also (some friend) worship at XYZ Church? But then we attend morning services only.' With respect, how on earth do you 'fellowship' in such a scenario? (Acts 2:42ff). Ultimately, it is not a matter of 'temple' or place, whether Jerusalem, Mt. Gerizim, or Church XYZ: "The time is coming – indeed it's here now, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth... for God is Spirit" (Jesus to the Samaritan woman, Jn. 4).

THE CHURCHIANITY CORRECTIVE

Malachi gives the corrective for churchianity. "Look! I am sending my messenger... the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple... But who will be able to endure it when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal... he will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD" (3:1ff). Just four hundred years later that prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist and the Messiah Jesus.

In short, the answer for a sick Church at all times is Jesus, simply Jesus! He's still knocking on church doors, most of whom

have gradually locked him out: "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends..." (first addressed to the luke-warm Laodicean assembly in Asia Minor, +- 90 AD). What about your assembly and mine? Is Jesus truly its glorious, functional Head?

NOT JUST TRYING HARDER

The immediate danger is that we default to the false gospel of 'trying harder.' I myself have often done so. The antidote for that deadly venom is becoming deeply persuaded of God's outrageous love for his Church and for us as individual believers. True 'repentance' (lit. 'change of mind,' re-calibration) flows from 'a furious love affair' between God and ourselves (G.K. Chesterton). It's not a case of becoming 'nice' men and women, following some moral code. It's living in and out of that 'furnace of love' which is Jesus. Manning suggests that in Pentecost the Church is filled with 'new creations,' 'a community of prophets and professional lovers' (maybe not so professional).

Malachi ends his prophecy with hope! For a returning and obedient people, the prophet spells out many blessings: They will be called 'blessed' by the nations (4:11-12).

They enjoy amazing fellowship with God and among themselves. "Then those who

**in short,
the
answer
for a
sick
church
at all
times is
Jesus,
simply
Jesus!**

feared the LORD spoke with each other, and the LORD listened to what they said. In his presence a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name" (4:16). Brothers and sisters, once you've tasted the sweet wine of such koinonia, you're wrecked for good! They are treasured by our heavenly Father. "They will be my people... On the day when I act in judgment, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares his obedient child" (3:17).

They will be distinctive, their being and behaviour matching their profession. "Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who don't" (4:18).

They will know exuberant healing, freedom, joy and victory! (4:2ff)

Young and old will re-unite. God will "turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers" (4:6).

Some of this stuff may seem just too radical for some of my readers. I plead for an open mind. Just a few days ago South Africa laid to rest one of her great Apartheid struggle heroes, Ahmed Kathrada. He once said, 'The hardest thing in the world is to open a closed mind.' May we not be found wanting.

Errollmulder.wordpress.com

SEVEN GENERATIONS

A Filipino disciple making story

KATE BROWN



Over 8 years ago I got excited about generational disciple making.

After reading inspiring stories of The Heavenly Man, the story of Brother Yun and the Chinese underground house church, I was passionate about watching and looking to see where God was at work in my network and was hungering to see fruitfulness in multiplying disciples!

I love the focus of Ying Kai, one of the key leaders of one of the fastest growing disciple making movements of modern times. He said we need to be Trainers of Trainers. He said train every one. If

they're already a Christian then train them to be a multiplying disciple maker, if they are not yet a believer then share the gospel and train them. Using very simple tools that are easily reproducible, new disciples are trained to immediately be obedient and share what they know with their OIKOS. An OIKOS is your extended family, friends and network.

My father married a beautiful lady. As I got to know her extended family in southern Philippines, they became part of my OIKOS. With the words of Ying Kai in my mind, I began to connect with a young pastoral couple were close family friends, pastoring a small growing church. After sharing a vision of

multiplying movements, we fanned the flame. God gave the wife a dream one night and showed them leaving their lovely church building and planting churches in homes around the island. They courageously obeyed that call and through personal sacrifice left paid ministry to start planting simple churches. Phil & I continued to mentor this couple regularly on Skype, and through visits. I also work as a

project manager for an aid organisation in the Philippines, so they continued to be a part of my work network. This couple were very faithful and diligent in their vision – and today have seen 42 church groups started.

The photo pictured (above) shows the amazing impact of 7 generations of disciple making. Kate (and Phil Brown not pictured) trained Maricar & her husband (Lloyd, not pictured). Maricar then trained Nelward & Maricel (a husband and wife team) who came along to join the couples group. They allowed them to join for a time, but then encouraged them to go back to their own town and plant churches. They then went and shared the vision with Lilia & her friend. These 4 meet as a small group every morning at 4am praying for God to touch their neighbours and for the kingdom of God to be expanded – they have each planted a number of churches. They go out in twos, on fishing trips to catch people for God. In the past couple of weeks they baptised 6 people. Laila then shared the gospel with Gina (pictured in blue t-shirt), who was baptised and, passionate about her faith, shared the gospel with Neneng (black t-shirt) and baptised her. Neneng is now sharing the gospel with one of her friends and is



planning to baptise her. 7 generations faithfully multiplying and seeing churches planted. When generational disciple making reaches fourth generation and beyond, over a number of streams, movements take place. A movement is a 'rapid' (out of control) growth in reaching and discipling new people.

During my recent visit in June 2017, I visited one of the new church plants – it had only met about 4 times - around 30 people gathered in the small home. Neighbours peered through the windows and doors. The man of the house shared how just a few weeks ago he was beaten over the head by bandits and is fearful of the blood clot still in his head. They sang, prayed and cried. Different participants shared testimonies, and one friend shared how she had been kidnapped at age 7 and trafficked to Malaysia – and her incredible journey home after many years. Through tears she shared about the impact of becoming a follower of Jesus, and how he had healed her broken heart. The group sang, read scripture,

collected an offering for medicines and prayed for each other.

The kingdom of God has grown through relational networks. It's been exciting following the principles in the book of Acts – working through my oikos, sometimes called our 'Relational Streams'. Paul & Silas in prison shared the gospel with the jailer & then he invited them to share with their household and they were baptised. It was his extended family. The apostle Paul also followed up relational streams in his church planting.

While we sow the seed of the gospel at every opportunity, it's not about us just working harder but rather looking and seeing where God is at work. Jesus in John 5:19 said "I only do what I see the Father doing" Missio Dei is the Latin word for God of Mission – God is already



on his mission, we join Him in His mission – just as Jesus did. Rather than us doing the mission for God, we partner with Him.

KATE BROWN with husband Phil head up the Oikos Australia team. They live in Eagle Point, Victoria. Kate travels a lot to the Philippines working with International Children's Care



NEW REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

Two new couples have recently joined Oikos Australia as state representatives, happy to be contacted to help with any simplechurch/missional support.



KEN AND BERYL SEELEY - SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Ken and Beryl arrived in South Australia in 1974 with their two daughters as 'ten pound poms' from the UK. Over the following years they journeyed through a number of

churches but began to realise that 'church in the home' was much closer to what they read about in the book of Acts.

In early 2014 they retired after selling their small business. They set off on a wonderful four month holiday in the UK & Europe. Without the distractions of a business they were able to spend lots of time experiencing the presence of God and hearing from Him and finally made the decision not to return to 'four walls church' on their return home.

Since then they have continued on a journey of finding out just what it means to do home/simple church and this led them to discover Oikos. They attended the National gathering in Queensland in September 2016 and were very encouraged as they met and chatted with many others who are on a similar journey to ours. They feel that Oikos plays an important role in connecting,

encouraging and resourcing people across the country as they discover ways to grow simple churches – missional communities, making disciples of Jesus who make disciples!



GEORGE AND RIA FUNK - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

George tells his story like this. "I never grew up with any bible teaching and so started life after school on the wrong foot. At age 30 one of my clients invited me to a home group and bible study. I needed God and direction and so gave my life to Lord,

sold my business and went to study the Bible for 3 years. In 1993, when apartheid was being done away with, I could see wonderful opportunities to work among the black people in South Africa. I gave up my full time job and started a work called Gospel Chariot Missions, now in 19 African countries.

I now live in Perth Australia with my wonderful, supportive wife, Ria, and am excited about disciple making and the simple church concept of making disciples. I only have one hobby and that is doing ironman triathlons twice a year. To put it plainly, it's God, my family and exercise. Haha. I have recently started a cycling group called Soul Riders where we reach out through cycling and have a monthly prayer ride, inviting non-Christians and just connecting to disconnected people. And now we are one of the the Western Australian ears for simple church movements. Exciting."

Follow us on Facebook



Keep up to date with great articles, events and comments. And also checkout our new website

www.oikos.org.au

for video and teaching resources

Re-Discovering the Organic Power of the Word

Roger Thoman www.simplechurchjournal.com

Organic, as in 'organic church' means that there is something inherently alive about God's church. And the genesis of that life is in the seed itself, the word of God.

When we lose sight of the organic, living nature of the church we can also lose sight of the power of the seed. In our institutional frameworks, we have spent so much time developing the professionalism of the farmer that we fail to realize that the DNA and power is still the seed itself and that the seed, the word, is incredibly dynamic.

Here are three simple examples of this.

A friend of mine, recently hanging out with a family member, said "Can I tell you a story?" "Sure," came the reply. My friend then recounted a simple story from the Bible and asked a couple of questions. A conversation ensued which ended in the family member saying, "This is really interesting. I would like to discuss this more." Previously this person had insisted that he was not interested in spiritual things, but the power of the Word was prompting something in him.

In another instance, a friend of mine had several opportunities to discuss with a co-worker his enthusiasm for God's word and how it had changed his life. Without saying much about it, this person went home and spent the next year reading through the Bible with his wife. He was not going to a church and he was not listening to TV teaching. But, sometime later he caught up with my friend and told him how his life had been changed! So much so, that he recently invited an acquaintance of his to begin doing the same thing. Two generations of spiritual transformation based solely on the power of the seed—the word of God.



Finally, we see movements throughout Africa, in our own work there, based primarily on the Discovery method of Bible Study. This means that even non-believers are given the opportunity to discover who God is simply by reading, or hearing Bible stories, that present the major truths of Scripture without commentary or external teaching. They discover together who God is by reading, listening, and asking one another questions about what they are gleaning about God, about humankind, and what it means to follow and obey the Word they read.

It is the seed that fell upon the good soil that brought forth thirty, sixty, and one hundred fold. If we do not have confidence in that seed, then we may invent all kinds of ways to try to bring forth fruit or manufacture life that is unnecessary at best and perhaps harmful at worst. Furthermore, there is something incredibly freeing and easy about trusting in the power of God's seed.

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. Mark 4:26-28

At the very core of being the organic/living church that we really are is the trust that the seed itself *does* bring forth spiritual life dynamically and beautifully.

***GET MULTIPLE COPIES OF THE "HOW TO" EDITION FREE!** (Just help us with postage) Drop us an email or go to our website (below) and place an order online. Order as many as you like - the postage rates are all there.

Why not become a regular subscriber at the same time?

SUBSCRIBE TO OIKOS MAGAZINE

If you've been encouraged by the Magazine then help us GET IT OUT! Introduce the rest of your friends to it by passing it around. They can subscribe by going to the OIKOS website

www.oikos.org.au

OIKOS Australia Magazine,
25 Oak Street
Bentleigh VIC 3204
07 49394117
magazine@oikos.org.au