



10 SHIFTS TO BIRTH

MULTIPLICATION IN YOUR CHURCH OR PLANT

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INTRODUCTION

SADLY, ONLY ABOUT ONE IN FIVE AUSTRALIANS CONNECT WITH A FAITH COMMUNITY ON A SEMI-REGULAR OR REGULAR BASIS. FLIP THIS AROUND, AND THIS MEANS THAT ABOUT FOUR IN FIVE DON'T. CLEARLY, THERE IS A PROBLEM IN THE WAY WE EITHER LIVE OUT OUR FAITH OR DO CHURCH.

But it doesn't have to be this way! Jesus commissioned us to go and make disciples of all people everywhere. Disciples who would make more disciples and multiply. Unfortunately, this doesn't appear to be happening very well in our Nation.

Why is this the case? Perhaps many churches have shifted the goal posts to attracting attendees instead of making disciples. Perhaps many have even lost track of how to make disciples; the kind of disciples who love like Jesus and go on to make other disciples.

Encouragingly, around Australia, there is a growing hunger amongst leaders of church plants and churches to re-learn or discover the practical steps they can take to see effective Disciple Making become part of their churches' DNA. This will require a shift in focus and practice for many, but it doesn't mean that we have to make radical changes that will dismantle the key elements of how we do church.

Most churches in Australia would have as their main focal point the weekend services where worship, preaching and fellowship are key components. The standard operating system of church frequently revolves around this with the hope that more people will come to the weekend services and be added both to our faith and the church.

Scripture, however, talks about going one important step further than seeing people "added to their number". It casts a vision for disciples being multiplied. In Australia, we haven't been very good at this! It's been said that preaching (and programs) *adds* to the church, but that disciple-making *multiplies*.

Preaching and programs bring many benefits, including providing gathering points that attract attendees, providing opportunities for spiritual breakthrough, vision casting, serving and a sense of belonging. But sadly, preaching and programs are not effective tools for what many believe to be the core business of the church: *making disciples who will obey the commands of Jesus and in turn, make other disciples*.

You can watch a short (4 minute) video [here](#) that explains how this came to be and how an important shift in the way we do church can take place.

Reflecting on this, two questions jump to mind:

Firstly, *should Australian churches ditch preaching and programs in favour of disciple-making?*

No! In most cases, the answer isn't either one or the other, but adding one to the other. Churches can *add* through preaching and programs, AND see *multiplication* happening through disciple making.

Secondly, and here's the big one...

how can a church embark on a journey that leads to disciple-making multiplication?

Throughout this ebook, we will explore 10 practical tips that will help you and your team to position your church to achieve disciple-making multiplication:

01. DEVELOP A VISION THAT IS BEYOND WEEKEND ATTENDANCE

02. GET CLARITY ABOUT WHAT A DISCIPLE LOOKS LIKE

03. DEVELOP A LANGUAGE THAT HELPS DESCRIBE WHERE PEOPLE ARE AT

04. DEVELOP A DISCIPLE-MAKING PATHWAY

05. EXTEND THE DISCIPLE-MAKING PATHWAY INTO BEING A LEADERSHIP PATHWAY

06. ASCERTAIN WHICH DISCIPLE-MAKING PRACTICES YOU WILL USE

07. CLARIFY THE PURPOSE FOR THE RELATIONAL SPACES IN YOUR CHURCH

08. DEVELOP A DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURE

09. PUT IN PLACE A SCORECARD BY WHICH YOU CAN MEASURE SUCCESS

10. INTRODUCE PRACTICES THAT WILL LEAD TO MULTIPLICATION HAPPENING

As we unpack these 10 practical steps in the following chapters, we hope that you will be stimulated to prayerfully consider whether and if so, how these practical tips can be applied in your church.

**TIM O'NEILL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
EXPONENTIAL AUSTRALIA**

DEVELOP A VISION THAT IS BEYOND WEEKEND ATTENDANCE 01

A KINGDOM VISION WILL BE MORE THAN A VISION FOR THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH.

Ralph Moore had a simple Kingdom vision, but the story of how God has used him is spectacular!

In [New to Five](#), Ralph wrote:

"We intentionally avoided any thought of weekend attendance numbers and just focused on disciple making."

In case you have never heard of Ralph, he and his wife Ruby planted around seven churches from the 1970's in the USA, including in Hawaii. At last count, out of these churches, over 2,600 churches have been planted. And they weren't all small churches. Two of the churches Ralph planted grew under his leadership to over 2,000 in size.

Ralph tells the following incredible story of Kingdom impact in the ebook *12 Things They Should Have Told Me (Before I Planted a Church)*

"When we moved to Hawaii, our team was instructed (by the Spirit) to plant and help others plant enough churches in ten years that we would have converted one per cent of the state. At that time, only four per cent of the population called themselves believers. It took 11 years, but it touched off a movement showing 67 per cent calling themselves Christ-followers just 23 years later."

So what did the Kingdom Vision from the early days of his ministry look like?

Ralph wrote in *New to Five*:

"Our 20-year goals include:

- Directly plant 30 churches.*
- Infuse each church plant with church multiplication DNA.*
- Establish a meaningful church multiplication presence in three countries other than our own."*

I think the missional DNA in Ralph's churches was also in Ralph. When he was in college, Ralph read entirely through the Book of Acts five times a week. This undoubtedly shaped Ralph and his ministry.

Ralph and Ruby are an amazing example of disciple-making and church planting multiplication! You can read about their story in [Let Go of the Ring](#).

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What vision beyond attendance do you have?

GET CLARITY ABOUT WHAT A DISCIPLE LOOKS LIKE

02

WHAT DOES A DISCIPLE LOOK LIKE?

What does a disciple really look like? Jesus was pretty explicit about the fact that He expected us to go and make disciples, but what is a disciple? It's something we need to get clarity about.

It's surprising, alarming even, that many Christians aren't clear about what a disciple is. Over recent months, when I have asked Christians what a disciple is, I have heard a range of answers that express some of the things that a disciple does but fall short of explaining what a disciple is, responses like someone who prays, who attends church regularly, who is in a small group, someone we teach about Jesus... the list goes on.

It might be more useful to think of a disciple as being an apprentice rather than someone who attends a range of events or who we teach from the pulpit. An apprentice is someone who learns a trade or a profession from a skilled and experienced worker who will not just teach them, but show them and evaluate how they go when they put into practice what they have been shown.

An effective apprenticeship will involve both head knowledge (learning) and hands-on experience (doing).

Colin Stoodley, in his book *[The Genius in the Kingdom](#)*, describes four distinctive outcomes of effective discipleship:

01. There is a very personal commitment to Jesus – He is Lord and literally Lord of everything, and given this,
02. There is a settled expectation that we know that this means continuous obedience to His way and life without dispute.
03. On top of this, there is a realisation that while we accept that there is a cost to be paid by someone who follows Jesus, this has been diminished by the knowledge of all Jesus has done for us.
04. Finally, there is a deep conviction that we will have a personal share in Jesus' ongoing work in the world, and His love will urge us out into that ongoing work, notwithstanding the cost that has been perceived.

Jeff Vanderstelt in *[180: A Return to Disciple-Making](#)* suggests that a disciple is someone who is committed to:

- be with Jesus
- be like Jesus
- be doing what Jesus is doing.

John Mark Comer uses a similar definition in *[Practising the Way](#)*.

So, coming back to the Great Commission, Jesus' final instruction to His followers in Matthew 28:18-20 is to go and make disciples. Disciples who will not only know His teaching but put it into practice obeying the things Jesus commanded us to do – like being His witnesses, baptising and make more disciples loving as He would.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How would you define what a disciple is, and what are the commands of Jesus that He told us to obey?

DEVELOPING A LANGUAGE THAT HELPS MOVE PEOPLE TO MATURITY

03

It's useful to develop a language that helps identify where a person is at in terms of their spiritual development. A seeker should be at a different place on their journey than a person who has been a Christian for years. And they will probably be at a different place than someone who is in leadership or wanting to plant a church.

As a result, it's useful to be able to develop a language, not to box someone in, but to help understand where they are at and even some important next steps for them.

Jeff Vanderstelt in [*180: A Return to Disciple Making*](#), suggests language around "family" as being useful. Jeff writes:

"One of the ways we've helped churches develop a disciple-making process is by thinking of disciple-making work like a relational journey. We start by helping them clarify their destination: How do they define a mature disciple?

Then we help them map out the journey a person will take to move from a non-believer to a new believer to a mature disciple of Jesus who makes disciples. Some call this journey a "disciple-making pathway."

Disciple-making is really like spiritual parenting. If we use familial language, we can identify five key stages in the disciple-making pathway: 1) spiritually dead; 2) spiritual infant; 3) spiritual child; 4) spiritual young adult; and 5) spiritual parent."

So the starting point is beginning with the end in mind and defining what a mature disciple looks like.

Reviewing the section *What is a Disciple* is a good starting step to take to ensure that you are on the right track. This should be the destination your disciple-making pathway takes people towards.

Next, bearing this destination in mind, we can look at which stages of the journey people are at. It's then useful to identify next steps to help create momentum to see them progress on the journey to being a mature disciple.

Next steps for the key stages could be:

- **Spiritually dead** – next step is to be born again
- **Spiritual infant** – next step is to establish them in the faith
- **Spiritual child** – next step is to teach them to love and obey
- **Spiritual young adult** – next step is to see them become a ministry apprenticeship
- **Spiritual adult / parent** – next step is to form new spiritual families

Developing and using a language that helps to describe where people are at on their journey becoming a mature disciple will help bring clarity, and identify next steps on the journey. It will also help bring greater intentionality and effectiveness to the disciple-making process.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How would you describe what a mature disciple looks like? What language do you use to describe where a person is on their spiritual journey?

DEVELOP A DISCIPLE- MAKING PATHWAY

04

AN EFFECTIVE DISCIPLE-MAKING PATHWAY IS KEY TO SEEING PEOPLE MATURE AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS. AND IT NEEDN'T BE COMPLEX.

The church in 'Western' countries has not done a good job in making disciples, with only an estimated 2% of people attending the average church being what could be regarded as a disciple.

Jesus instructed us to make disciples by teaching them to obey His teachings, not just imparting knowledge or gathering them to an event. It's pretty common in Australian churches to think that if we teach well enough, then we will make disciples. But that rarely happens. *There is more to disciple-making than great teaching.*

The American Society for Training and Development Handbook of Measuring and Evaluating Training contains some fascinating research findings. They found that when a person makes a decision to create a goal, that goal will only be achieved one in ten times. *But when relational accountability is in place, the goal will be accomplished 95% of the time!*

Information by itself doesn't lead to incarnation!

A disciple-making pathway will take people further along the journey to becoming mature disciples. We talked about this in the section *How to Develop a Language That Helps to Move People to Become Mature Disciples.*

Here are four aspects that a disciple-making pathway will typically have:

- Connect **Relationally** – to apprentice the person being discipled
- Ascertain how the various **Relational Spaces** (ie weekend services, small groups, individual mentoring, etc) will help
- Determine which **Practices / Tools** will be used in which Relational Spaces
- Paint a picture of the **Destination** (ie what a mature disciple looks like) and provide a map to get there so that there is clarity about the journey.

An effective disciple-making pathway will tend to be organic and fit the culture of the church.

One of the traps to avoid is making the disciple-making pathway too complex. Simplicity mixed with intentionality is key. Too many steps will likely get too cumbersome.

Another trap is expecting people to follow a linear pathway where they do A followed by B and then move on to C, and so on. It's more likely that a less regimented and more organic approach will work better.

One further trap is when the pathway consists of events or processes in addition to the normal way of doing church. The pathway should be at the core of how church happens rather than being bolted on as additional events or activities. This may mean that some existing events or activities need to be modified or even dropped.

The aim of an effective disciple-making pathway will be to see people growing to be mature disciples as they are shaped by the different components of the pathway, and for this to happen as a natural part of being part of the church.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What do you think a disciple-making pathway should look like?

EXTENDING A DISCIPLE- MAKING PATHWAY TO BECOME A LEADERSHIP PATHWAY

05

WE NEED MORE LEADERS AND CHURCH PLANTERS.

That was the clear message that we received from the Survey of Denominational Leaders that Exponential Australia conducted in 2024.

When asked, *“What are the biggest obstacles you face in relation to planting more churches?”* nearly all the leaders responded that they didn’t have the leaders to plant more churches. They responded that this was by far the biggest issue stopping more churches from being planted.

But finding new leaders to plant churches isn’t the only problem. Many denominations and networks in Australia are facing a crisis in not having enough leaders to replace aging and retiring leaders, much less to plant new churches.

So what’s the solution? We need to take disciple-making pathways beyond just making disciples and have the next stages focus on making leaders. Leaders who truly are disciples will become multipliers!

TWO WAYS OF DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP PATHWAY INCLUDE:

01. developing a leadership pathway within the church, and
02. developing denominational or network pathways

Both approaches have advantages. More than that, they can be complementary. Whichever approach is developed, it will work best when they are underpinned by a disciple-making pathway.

Intentionality rather than *complexity* is key to designing a leadership pathway within a church.

Ralph Moore, who has seen literally thousands of church planters raised from the churches in the network that sprang from churches he has planted, writes:

“For us, the multiplication pipeline begins with friendship evangelism, or making disciples of non-believers.

After someone accepts Christ, we draw him or her into a MiniChurch (our midweek home groups).

If they respond well, we draw them into the leadership circle of the MiniChurch. At that point, they get invited to specialised discipleship groups that are only open to MiniChurch leaders. These meetings are our closest approximation to seminary.

If a person starts three successful MiniChurches, we see them as a potential staff member or church planter. I hope you see that our pathway is very clear and organic.”

Excerpt from [*New to Five*](#) by Ralph Moore.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What would a Leadership Pathway in your church look like?

HELPFUL DISCIPLE-
MAKING TOOLS

06

THERE ARE MANY SIMPLE DISCIPLE-MAKING PRACTICES OR TOOLS THAT CAN BE USED AND THAT CAN HELP SHAPE CULTURE AND INCREASE DISCIPLE-MAKING EFFECTIVENESS IN YOUR CHURCH.

One of the best-known tools is [Alpha](#), which many have used with great effect to connect with and bring to faith those who don't know Jesus. But there are many other tools as well.

As you develop a disciple-making pathway, a critical step is to ascertain which disciple-making tools or practices you will use. The good news is that doing this effectively isn't hard or complex. It just takes intentionality and equipping so that we become good at using the tools.

I once heard that the difference between an amateur and a professional is that an amateur practises until they get it right, while a professional practises until they no longer get it wrong. Effective equipping should see us practising until what we're doing becomes second nature.

The following are practices or tools, some of which you might find useful to include in your disciple-making pathway.

BLESS	Dave and Jon Ferguson have provided a range of resources around the BLESS principles, which they describe as “everyday ways to love your neighbour”, and that can be used in relationship evangelism. Using <i>BLESS</i> involves Beginning with prayer, Listening, Eating with them, Serving them, and Sharing with them.
PRAYER CALENDAR	Another great practice is the Prayer Calendar that David and Paul Watson write about in Contagious Disciple Making . Using the Prayer Calendar, you write the name of an unchurched person next to a day of the month on a calendar. When that day comes around every month, you text that person saying, “ <i>I was just about to pray for you and wondered if there is any particular need I can pray for?</i> ” After they text back with the need, text them a simple prayer asking Jesus to meet that particular need. We have seen prayers such as this answered, and frequently the person will say, “ <i>Do you have time for catching up for a coffee?</i> ”
THE THREE CIRCLES	The Three Circles is an effective way of sharing the gospel. A short video illustrating the Three Circles may be found here .
15 SECOND TESTIMONY	How to structure and share a 15-second testimony can be viewed here . Whilst I don't believe that it's necessary to shorten the testimony to just 15 seconds, the structure is very helpful in preparing a person to share their testimony effectively.
411 DISCIPLE-MAKING	411 Disciple Making is a simple tool that can be used to equip disciples to make disciples. 411 Disciple Making incorporates The Three Circles and 15 Second Testimony. A video illustrating 411 Disciple Making may be viewed here .

HELPFUL DISCIPLE- MAKING TOOLS

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LIFE JOURNALLING	One I have used for over 20 years is the daily practice of Life Journaling, SOAPing on scripture. Life Journaling involves selecting a Scripture to reflect and journal on, writing out an Observation of what it is saying to you, than how you will Apply this to your life, and finally committing it in Prayer. It helps me to not only come to know scripture but to determine what the Holy Spirit is saying to me through it and what I need to apply. A further step I have taken is to regularly journal with a number of people, and we share what we have journaled. <i>In this way, we are discipling one another.</i>
DISCOVERY BIBLE STORY	Discovery Bible Story is a great tool for making disciples in small groups, also described in Contagious Disciple Making, What Jesus Started by Steve Addison and T4T by Steve Smith and Ying Kai. With Discovery Bible Story, the focus is on the group leader being a facilitator rather than a teacher. Typically, the group will look at a passage or story in the Bible and then have discussion around questions like: “What did you like about the passage / story?” “What did you observe the key characters doing?” “What did you observe Jesus / the Holy Spirit / God doing?” “What did you learn from the passage / story that you will seek to apply?”
THREE THIRDS GROUP FORMAT	This is another excellent small group tool where the time in the group is divided into three parts: 1. Looking Back, which involves pastoral care, pastoral prayer, and worship as well as accountability to “how did you go?” about the agreed application from the previous meeting. 2. Looking Up, which involves vision casting and the Discovery Bible Study 3. Looking Forward, which involves goal setting and prayer. Contagious Disciple Making, What Jesus Started by Steve Addison and T4T by Steve Smith and Ying Kai explain the Three Thirds Group Format further.
APEST	The APEST resources developed by Alan Hirsch and others have been used by many churches to mobilise disciples in line with their Ephesians 4:11 gifting.
DEVELOPING A LANGUAGE TO HELP CLASSIFY DISCIPLESHIP PROGRESS	It’s useful to develop a language that helps identify where a person is at in terms of their spiritual development. A seeker should be at a different place on their journey than a person who has been a Christian for years. And they will probably be at a different place than someone who is in leadership or wanting to plant a church. As a result it’s useful to be able to develop a language, not to box someone in, but to help understand where they are at and even some important next steps for them. Jeff Vanderstelt, in 180: A Return to Disciple Making, suggests language around “family” as being useful. More information about this can also be found in the Developing a Language That Helps Move People To Maturity section.

HELPFUL DISCIPLE- MAKING TOOLS

— CONTINUED

FURTHER RESOURCES

When it comes down to it, there are many tools or practices that can be used in making disciples and equipping them to make more disciples. Some websites that may be useful in providing disciple-making resources include:

[#NOPLACELEFT](#) [T4T \(Training for Trainers\)](#) [Contagious Disciple Making](#) [Movements \(Steve Addison\)](#)

The acid test of a disciple-making tool or practice will be whether it is useful in helping us (and others!) do what Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:18-20:

THEN JESUS CAME TO THEM AND SAID, “ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME. THEREFORE, GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTISING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND TEACHING THEM TO OBEY EVERYTHING I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. AND SURELY I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO THE VERY END OF THE AGE.”

(MATTHEW 28:19,20 NIV)

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What are some of the Disciple Making Practices that you are familiar with?

CLARIFY THE PURPOSE OF THE RELATIONAL SPACES IN YOUR CHURCH

07

WHAT OUTCOMES DO YOU WANT FOR YOUR WEEKEND SERVICE? OR FOR SMALL GROUPS? OR FOR ANY OTHER GATHERING POINTS IN YOUR CHURCH? AND HOW WILL THEY CONTRIBUTE TO MAKING DISCIPLES? OR PERHAPS THEY WON'T.

Frequently, churches have *relational spaces* without thinking through their ultimate purpose and how they will contribute to the outcomes leaders want to achieve. All too often, there isn't a clear link with disciple-making. But there can be.

Take, for example, a typical weekend service. How does this contribute to disciple-making? How could it be used? What practices might be introduced that would see its effectiveness increased? As an example, some churches finish with discussion questions to help assimilate the teaching, highlight application and provide a safe environment for people to practice having spiritual conversations.

Getting good attendance is great, but how does that contribute to making disciples? One thing that we know for certain is that attendance does not equal making disciples unless there is intentionality that takes place to either make disciples or to move people to another space where genuine *disciple-making* does take place.

Another example is small groups. As an example, I frequently use Discovery Bible Story as a way of facilitating discussion, learning and application.

Each Relational Space should have a *purpose* that is predetermined and practices that are intentionally applied to help achieve those purposes and to see disciple-making advanced.

Steve Addison, in [*What Jesus Started*](#), adapted the "Four Fields" approach to:

- See the need that will be responded to;
- Determine how we will connect with people with that need i.e. what space will we use?

- Ascertain how we will share our story or God's story with the people we connect with;
- Ascertain how we will train (disciple) them to be authentic followers of Jesus as well as effective fishers of people;
- Gather them into Christian community;
- Multiply by sending them to connect with others and repeat the process.

Rich Robinson in his book [*All Change: Unlocking Kingdom Potential in a World We Weren't Prepared For*](#) uses the term "platforms" to describe what we have called "relational spaces" and alludes to the intentionality that we need to have when he says that "*Jesus movements cultivate paradigms, platforms, principles, and practices that embrace the challenge of pursuing generational growth and adapt to different circumstances and cultures.*"

Intentionality is key. Instead of allowing relational spaces to just happen in the way they have always happened – because they have always happened that way – we need to be intentional about how our relational spaces contribute to the making of disciples (who will make disciples).

The Alan Hirsch and Rich Robinson workshop *Creating a Movement Culture* helps us to workshop the intentionality we need to have. Jeff Vanderstelt writes about some different relational spaces in his free ebook [*180: A return to Disciple Making*](#).

When looking at the relational spaces in a church, it's important to ask how they can be used to help make disciples and what *practices or tools* can be used in these spaces. As mentioned above, intentionality is key!

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

List the key Relational Spaces in your church, how can they contribute towards disciple-making multiplication, which disciple-making practices can be introduced in each space.

HOW TO DEVELOP A DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURE 08

WE CAN TEACH, INTRODUCE PRACTICES AND IMPLORE THE PEOPLE IN OUR CHURCH TO BECOME DISCIPLE MAKERS, BUT UNLESS WE SHAPE THE CULTURE OF THE CHURCH TO BE A DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURE, IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

Without a disciple-making culture, we will see inertia rather than momentum, a culture that prioritises coming over sending, spiritual consumerism rather than spiritual activism and listening to messages rather than doing what Jesus commands us to do.

Some ministries like [Building a Discipling Culture](#) have been doing great work in trying to help churches around Australia develop and shape their culture to be a disciple-making culture. But two things you should know about shaping culture. First, it's one of the toughest jobs a leader has to do, and secondly, it takes time.

The following are four critical components and six of the obstacles leaders face when trying to implement a disciple-making culture:

COMPONENTS

PRACTICES

to embed the culture. We highlighted a range of practices (or tools) in the section *Helpful Disciple Making Tools*.

LANGUAGE

to help create culture (words or sayings that are repeated and become known i.e. "there is no plan B", "who are you discipling?").

ARTEFACTS

something you can touch/feel/see to remind people of the culture. [CAP Australia](#) had the practice of ringing the bell in their office whenever a client came to faith. Some churches have baptism photos displayed as a constant reminder.

NARRATIVE

stories and testimonies that multiply and spread the culture.

OBSTACLES

- The fear of losing people (particularly in small churches), along with their tithes and service.
- A difficulty in changing culture when people have grown up in an attractional or traditional culture.
- Pride when churches believe that they are doing discipleship, but the facts tell a different story.
- When people don't want to make disciples because they don't want to put in the effort and would rather move on if they're expected to work.
- Theology that expects the Holy Spirit to do what Jesus has commanded, and the Spirit empowers us to do.
- Indifference and hard-heartedness to the plight of people who are not yet Christians.

Doug Paul from [Catapult](#) describes how you need to have a plan for how you will develop a disciple-making culture in your church. He defines "culture" as "whatever is normal for a group of people".

These are just four components that can be put in place in any church. But remember that cultural change will take time, but without the culture being conducive to disciple making, the church won't become a disciple-making church.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What steps can you take to put in place a disciple-making culture in your church?

RE-DEFINING WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

09

The two big items that most churches have as their primary KPI's are, you guessed it, *attendance* and *income*, people and dollars. I'm not saying that these aren't important. They are important in managing your church and should likely be part of its dashboard reporting, but they don't tell the story about how successful the church is at achieving its kingdom vision.

I recently saw an online advertisement not just offering but promising to double the attendance of your congregation in 90 days. It highlighted how the old (and it said wrong) way to grow your congregation started with the hard work of preparing a great sermon, but the new (and right) way centred around social media advertising and automated follow-up systems.

Now I don't have anything against using social media and follow-up systems, but the advertisement didn't sit well with me. It focused solely on growing attendance, which it saw as the major goal, with no mention of what Jesus said were the most important things.

Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, recently stated in [an interview with Carey Nieuwhof](#) that for churches, growth is a bad goal and that in fact growth is a residual outcome of building a great flywheel. In the interview, he also said that "If you get into the idea that growth is the point, you've missed the point."

So what should we be measuring to indicate whether or not our churches are "being successful"?

In recent times, I have heard quite a few people discussing what a true measure of success might look like. As leaders search for different measures, one of the great opportunities that we have is that we can re-define what success looks like and develop scorecards that reflect this.

Scoreboards will not only help measure progress but also help keep us focused on making the main thing, just that; the main thing.

Larry Walkemeyer, in his book [The River Church – Unleashing a Culture of Multiplication In Your Church](#) writes:

"Scoreboards are those internal metrics we use to measure what 'winning' looks like. The predominant church scoreboard tallies points for larger attendance, increased notoriety, bigger budgets, professed conversions, and more buildings. But what if our scorecards don't match God's?"

Larry suggests the following four questions to stimulate thinking around a scorecard for your church:

- How many are in Disciple-Making Relationships in Your Church?
- How many are on mission with Christ based on their Ephesians 2:10 uniqueness?
- How many had a Gospel Conversation this week?
- How many are contributing in some way towards planting the next church?

No scorecard is going to be perfect, and different churches and their leaders will come up with different scorecards that emphasise different measures. Perhaps the following questions may help you to contextualise and design a scorecard that works for your church?

How are we going at:

- making disciples that are representative of the Great Commission?
- loving others as Jesus commanded us in the New Commandment?
- seeing the demographic composition of our church reflect that of the community in which we are based?
- empowering people irrespective of age, ethnicity or gender?
- raising and multiplying leaders and people ministering to others?
- making a measurable difference in the broader community?

I'm sure that there are many other questions that could be asked, but grappling with these questions might be a good starting place.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What should the scorecard for your church look like?

FOUR SIMPLE MULTIPLICATION PRACTICES FOR ANY CHURCH

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“MULTIPLYING WILL NOT HAPPEN ON ITS OWN. IF WE AREN’T CHOOSING TO MAKE IT HAPPEN, IT’S PROBABLY NOT HAPPENING”.

(J. D. Greear in the Forward to *Hero Maker, Five Essential Practices for Leaders to Multiply Leaders* by Dave Ferguson and Warren Bird)

I’VE COME TO BELIEVE THAT A TRUE KINGDOM VISION FOR A CHURCH WILL INVOLVE MULTIPLICATION RATHER THAN ONLY ADDITION.

Multiplication is an extraordinarily powerful concept. To illustrate this point, if you were offered one million dollars today or one dollar today with the amount you are given doubling every day for the next year, which would you choose? You’ve probably guessed that the better answer is the second option, but the figures will likely astound you.

One dollar today doubling every day for a year would give you \$2,251 trillion, and it would make even the richest people in the world seem like paupers in comparison with your wealth, which would be about 10,000 times more than theirs!

That’s an illustration of the power of multiplication!

So would you reach more people with one church that you put all your focus into growing, or many churches where your focus was on multiplying?

Larry Walkemeyer, in his book [*The River Church: Unleashing a Culture of Multiplication in Your Church*](#), explains how God shifted his vision for the church he led from collecting water (people) to grow like a lake, into being a river church that would release many to start new churches. And that’s what happened with Larry and his wife, Deb, seeing nearly two new churches a year planted from his church over 20 years.

Across the church in Australia, multiplication is a missing key; a missing biblical key.

MULTIPLICATION IS GOD’S IDEA!

Scripturally, we can’t help but see that multiplication is God’s idea and it’s part of His plan.

God told Noah and his family to “*Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth, ... be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.*” (Genesis 9:1&7)

God had given Adam and Eve a similar command in Genesis 1:28.

The Lord told Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. That couldn’t happen by addition alone. Multiplication would be required.

FOUR SIMPLE MULTIPLICATION PRACTICES FOR ANY CHURCH

— CONTINUED

“And when Abram believed what the Lord had said, God credited it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:5,6). Get that? It was Abram’s belief in a result that could only be achieved through multiplication that saw God credit Abram with righteousness!

Then, in Acts, we see that a key to the spread of the early church was that the word of God was spread through multiplication (Acts 12:24)!

In Australia, some churches have multiplied and are multiplying, but why isn’t it happening more broadly?

As W. Edwards Deming famously said, *“Every system is perfectly designed to get the results that it does.”* And in Australia, that is what is happening with the way we currently do church, being perfectly suited to provide the outcomes that it is producing.

SOME OBSTACLES TO BE OVERCOME

Larry Walkemeyer, in his book *The River Church, Unleashing a Culture of Multiplication in Your Church*, writes that to move from addition to multiplication, there are certain obstacles to be overcome. They include fears that leaders must die to, fears like the fear of failure, conflict, discomfort, rejection, loss of control, financial hardship and of change.

He also writes of tensions that may exist in the church, tensions like:

- Facility Acquisition (Expansion, Remodel, Relocation) vs. Facility Sacrifice
- Financial Security vs. Financial Sacrifice
- Attractional vs. Activational
- Filling Our Church vs. Starting a New Church
- Staffing Mother vs. Staffing Plants
- Leadership Retention vs. Leadership Release
- Tension Relational Stability vs. Relational Transience
- Systems Optimised vs. Systems Distributed
- Mother’s Maturity vs. Baby’s Birth
- Senior Leader Coasting vs. Senior Leader Climbing
- Proximity Protection vs. Proximity Evangelism
- Missional Focus vs. Multiplication Focus
- Missions Focus vs. Multiplication Focus
- New Campus (Multi-site) vs. New Plant (Multiplication)

FOUR SIMPLE MULTIPLICATION PRACTICES FOR ANY CHURCH

— CONTINUED

4 SIMPLE MULTIPLICATION PRACTICES

Switching to having a multiplication focus can seem daunting, or perhaps impossible. Thankfully, it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, Bishop Ric Thorpe, when speaking at the Exponential Australia April 2023 Regional Events, suggested four simple multiplication practices that can get multiplication happening in your church.

The first two of these are:

- 01.** Ask the person you are discipling, *"Who are you discipling?"*
- 02.** Ask your leaders, *"Who is your apprentice?"*

The idea is that every person should be discipled, and they should be discipling another person along the lines of 2 Timothy 2:2. Likewise, every leader, whether it be the senior leader, a ministry leader or a small group leader, should be apprenticing another person to lead. Apprenticing is another word for discipling. Leaders apprenticing other potential leaders will solve any leadership pipeline crisis your church may be having.

Ric suggests two more multiplication practices:

- 03.** *Train church plant teams*, not just church planters.
- 04.** When a new church is planted, *plant pregnant* with a vision for the next plant and with the next planter already on your team.

If you train just a church planter, the church planter then has to train the team, or more likely, it doesn't happen. Train the team, they are to journey with so they can move forward together!

And to plant pregnant, have an apprentice leader in the church plant so that the apprentice can help the leader, be trained by the leader, and in time, move on to plant another church.

Whatever multiplication practices you decide on, your Scorecard should keep track of how these practices are being adopted.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What Multiplication Practices can you implement and how will you do this?

IMPLEMENTING THE 10 SHIFTS

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT: 10 SHIFTS THAT WILL BIRTH DISCIPLE-MAKING MULTIPLICATION IN YOUR CHURCH.

None of the shifts are unachievable for most churches or plants. It takes *intentionality, accountability, sustainability, experimentation* and *celebration* as you work through the shifts. Let's briefly discuss those five words:

01. Intentionality – Instead of waiting for things to happen, be intentional in planning it out, scheduling in time frames, and prayerfully making it happen! One tool to help you do this is to form a Disciple Making Cohort with your key leaders, where together you work through one shift every month over ten months, contextualising each shift to your local situation. A format that you can use for the cohorts can be found in the Appendix.

02. Accountability – We tend to do what we are held accountable for doing. Getting a small cohort together to work through the principles, along with setting smart goals that clearly specify who will do what and by when, and then regularly reviewing progress, will be key.

03. Sustainability – As they say, Rome wasn't built in a day. Implementing these shifts will involve the long game being played out over a number of years as your church is repositioned.

04. Experimentation – You will have early adopters and later adopters in any church, along with a bunch in the middle. The late adopters will want working models, like what they have done in the past. The early adopters and innovators will delight in experimenting and doing new things.

05. Celebration – Tell the stories of success. There's nothing like testimonials to show what can be done, how it can be done, and the results that can come!

The shifts that occur may appear small at first, but think about how significant it would be if a plane flying to another city were just a few degrees off the original line. The difference (and consequences) could be massive! Undue hurry will likely kill long-term sustainability.

There will be some practices or changes where it is wiser to introduce them to the early adopters (and the young) before they are introduced to the rest of the church. Let's say you wanted to introduce Discovery Bible Story to the church. You could introduce it first to the early adopters, give them time to experiment, then, when there are success stories, tell those stories to the church and slowly introduce Discovery Bible Story to those who were willing to give it a go.

Multiplication is God's idea after all. In Genesis 1:22, God said, *"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."*

The first church in Acts exploded through addition as *"...the Lord was adding to their number every day those who were being saved."* (Acts 2:47)

But then a dynamic shift occurred as *"...the word of God spread and multiplied."* (Acts 12:24)

It's time for the church in Australia to move towards disciple-making multiplication, being added to the current practices, which are so often focused on addition.

May you be blessed as you seek to see disciple-making multiplication become a reality in your church, irrespective of whether the church is small or large.

Tim O'Neill
Executive Director,
Exponential Australia



APPENDIX

DISCIPLE-MAKING COHORTS FOR LEADERS

Regular cohorts are a great way to explore the shifts that your church needs to make and how your church can make them. They also provide accountability to work through them, co-operation and communication as you work through the shifts with others and together plan implementation.

The cohorts may aim to meet monthly for one hour at a time. You would likely be involved in the cohort's key leaders, who you would want to buy into making the Disciple Making Shifts, key thinkers who will be able to contribute ideas and key influencers who will help influence the people in the church to get on board with the Shifts.

A suggested format for each meeting is as follows:

- **Opening Prayer** and welcome.
- **Look Back**
Discuss and Review Progress from last meeting re implementing the Shift that was discussed. In week 1, discuss the introduction and the need for embarking on this journey.
- **Look Up**
Discuss the Shift scheduled for this meeting. What outcome would please Jesus?
- **Look Forward**
Discuss the Question that corresponds to the Shift discussed, as well as ideas for how the Shift may be implemented in your church. Decide:
 - next steps to be taken,
 - who will be responsible?
 - who needs to be communicated with, and
 - the time frame for this to be done by.
- **Closing Prayer**
Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and success in seeing churches grow in the way in which they are making disciples and multiplying.