

**POISED FOR HARVEST,
BRACED FOR BACKLASH:**

*Birthing New Testament Movements
When Jesus Disrupts the Systems*

By Timothy Miller

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To the Desire of the nations: Your mercy, kindness, and faithfulness never cease to amaze me. Thank you for plucking me from the fire. May you have your desired inheritance throughout the earth.

To my wife: what a gift to sojourn together. Your courage through tough times has moved my heart beyond words.

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Foreword

"**Y**ou're wrong," I told him, "you're simply wrong—the concept of the 'natural realm' just does not exist in the Bible." Thus began my relationship with Tim Miller in the back of a shuttle bus late one night in downtown Kansas City. Since that initial heated discussion, I have been inspired, convicted, encouraged and exhorted by this man with fire shut up in his bones (Jer. 20:9). This book contains that fire within it, and as privileged as I am to write a foreword to it, I am even more privileged to know the man from which the fire proceeds.

To those close to them, the Millers are known as "nomads" for the gospel, true sojourners in this age, seeking neither fame nor fortune, but only the glorification of Jesus. I believe it is because of this abandonment that Tim so adeptly translates complex theory into simple practice.

For years I struggled with applying my ideas about the gospel to real life and missions. Now I realize that it's not about understanding and applying principles; it's about wholehearted consecration and "first-time obedience" to the Holy Spirit that is in and of itself the central application of all theory. Knowledge about God and the truth of the Bible does not come from reading a book, but rather true knowledge only comes in the form of living understanding, which comes from a life wholly given to God.

This is the real key to the spontaneous expansion of the church. All programs, theories, and missiological strategies will ultimately

come up empty without a baseline and relentless focus on radical devotion to Jesus, expressed in simple acts of faith and love toward God and people. When you read this book, it “feels” different than other books because Tim’s life reflects his ultimate endgame—to simply lead people to wholeheartedly follow Jesus.

One of the main reasons the church flounders in stagnation and mediocrity is because it lacks leaders and shepherds who will boldly lead and equip the Body to hear the Holy Spirit and obey. Generally, we perpetually paternalize the Body and instill an unspoken norm of obedience to ourselves. God forgive us! When *everyone* within the church lives their lives in wholehearted abandonment to God, the church will spontaneously expand, and the world will take note.

In *Poised for Harvest, Braced for Backlash*, Tim Miller has given us a gift, born out of the fires of his own life experience, which should drive us to our knees and empower us to follow Jesus whatever the cost. Anchored in a biblical hope in the resurrection and kingdom, passing on that hope in simplicity, and girded with the same self-sacrificing character as our Messiah, Tim has outlined a vision for the church to reach the fullness of her calling and destiny in this age.

John Harrigan
Kansas City, MO

Acknowledgements

The Lord has brought so many incredible saints into my life that it is difficult to know where to begin. I will start by remembering my father, who passed away in 2005. Dad, I'm glad you've got a resurrected body in the works. See you soon. Jesus, give him a nudge for me.

I am also grateful to my mother and sisters for their incredible love and support. The same goes for the amigos. I could not imagine the adventure without you guys. Most deserving of thanks are my wife and children, without whose love, support, prayers, and patience this book would have only been a fleeting thought. I love you all very much.

I am also indebted to the many mentors God has graciously brought across my path over the years. Jerry, my high school pastor—you were like a father to me. I do not know where I would have ended up without you. Special thanks to Nik and Momma Ripken, who taught me so much about the brilliance of the Holy Spirit's leadership in contexts of persecution. You will always have a special place in my heart. I must also mention the faculty members in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. Thank you for allowing me to glean from your many years of labor, sweat, and tears. I also owe a great debt to a couple in Singapore. The eternal impact of their training on church planting movements will only be truly known when Jesus breaks through the sky.

I also want to honor the Johnson family, whose incredible love and hospitality enabled the completion of this work. Thank you so much for your kindness. I must also express my deep appreciation for my friends and comrades at IHOP–KC and at IHOP–Concord. What a joy and privilege to know such humble and hungry saints! John Harrigan—thank you so much for your friendship. I will forever be grateful for the sharpening effect our conversations have had on both mind and heart. Thanks also to my editor, Jennifer Sansom: your input and expertise was invaluable. Many blessings to you and to the many other friends and colleagues throughout the world whose labors of love made this book possible.

Finally, I want to honor the memory of the early twentieth-century missionary Rolland Allen, who was willing to endure scorn in his generation so that future ones could see his dream come true. Father, I ask you to make the heart-cry of this forerunner a reality in our day.

Preface

This book exists because of a passing remark that bit into my mind like a piranha. When God first called my wife and me to leave our home in the United States and serve him overseas, he sent us to a part of the Muslim world that had been ravaged by civil war for many years. In many regions inhabited by the unreached people group (UPG)¹ with which we were working, local government had collapsed altogether and kidnapping Westerners for ransom was commonplace. One day while I was riding in a truck out in the countryside with some other missionaries, a man who had worked with this UPG for many years remarked that if Westerners were to land in most cities situated among this UPG, he guessed that they would only have two weeks before they would be killed, kicked out, or kidnapped. *Two weeks*, I thought to myself. *That is not much time at all. How in the world are we to effectively make disciples in such circumstances?*

From that day forward, this question tugged at me. I constantly found myself asking the Lord, sometimes with tears, "Father, if you were to send us one man, and if we only had two weeks with him, what would we need to pass on to him so that nothing less than a New Testament-caliber movement would result in his area? Is this even possible in our day?" When healings began to happen in our Muslim town, these questions nagged at me even more tenaciously (see Introduction). I began to pore over the New Testament text closely. Was there any biblical precedent that I could look to in

pursuit of answers? I was stunned by what the Holy Spirit began to show me. This book is the fruit of my quest—a journey that truly began when God actually did send that “one man” to us.

Two years before “Muhammad”² showed up at my doorstep, God had given him a dream in which he was told that one day he would meet an American who would show him the path of life. On our end, my wife and I had also received a number of prophetic dreams from the Lord leading up to our move to Muhammad’s town. God had forewarned us that he was going to birth a harvest upon our move, and that as soon as we landed we needed to be on our toes. Most of the stories, testimonies, and illustrations recounted in this book relate either to our time in Muhammad’s area or other places located among his UPG.

Here let me say one brief thing about testimonies. In the following pages I tell many stories. Sometimes when a series of testimonies are gathered into a single written work, it can be easy for distorted perceptions to begin creeping into the mind of readers. Some come away with the impression that life for the people in the stories is nothing but a continual state of adventure and excitement; they forget that usually intervals of time and processing exist between the events. Other readers are tempted to place those involved in the stories on a pedestal. Christian biographies, especially missionary biographies, are notorious for hagiography and over-idealizing those whose lives they recount. While reporting the works of God for the purpose of inspiring faith and courage is clearly biblical (Ac. 14:27), I want to assure readers up front that everyone in the stories I tell—including me—is a normal human being with many weaknesses and failures. I hope these testimonies will serve to encourage and provoke you, rather than intimidate or entertain.

I wrote this book with two groups of people in mind. Firstly, I have in mind people whom God may call and commission specifically for the purpose of catalyzing and laying foundations for New Testament-caliber movements, whether locally or internationally. Secondly, this book is for any follower of Jesus who is simply trying to disciple another believer. I encourage you to read through this

book and extract any principles, insights, and ideas that may be of value to you in your particular situation, and apply them creatively under the Spirit's leadership.

Please note that throughout this work I purposefully use the word "Messiah" instead of "Christ," with the exception of Bible quotations. While I have no problems with and often use the term "Christ" myself, the unconscious tendency of many believers today is to use this word as a surname and not as means of conveying the multilayered Messianic concept of the Bible. For example, in terms of emotional impact and conceptual weight, there is a big difference between "John Smith" and "John the King who will fill the earth with righteousness." My goal in using "Messiah" instead of "Christ" in this work, then, is to simply evoke the richness of the Messianic concept in the minds of readers with each use, as well as to force us to regularly recall the Hebraic roots of the concept.

For those to whom it might prove helpful, in Appendix A I have included a series of discipleship sessions in step-by-step format. These constitute my own practical approach to implementing the paradigms of this book.

ENDNOTES

¹ For more on Unreached People Groups, see the Joshua Project, <<http://www.joshuaproject.net/index.php>>.

² For security purposes, throughout this book I have employed pseudonyms as I have deemed appropriate.

Introduction

My hands trembled on the steering wheel. The hospital was only five minutes away. I kept praying under my breath, asking God to give me the strength, faith, and boldness that I did not have. My wife was interceding for me at home. Going into a hospital located in a “Moravian” community¹—nearly one hundred percent Muslim—to pray in Jesus’ name was no light matter, and through a twist of circumstance could easily put us in harm’s way. But the Holy Spirit had prompted me to go to this hospital and offer to pray for the sick, and I wanted to follow his lead.

I walked into the hospital and met with some of the hospital administrators. I asked if they would allow me to pray for some of the patients. God granted me favor with them, and I was escorted to the men’s ward. Upon entering the room, I saw fifteen to twenty men and boys of all ages suffering from various ailments. Many were bed-ridden and sick with malaria. I went up to each person and asked if I could pray for them in “the way I know how, in the name of Jesus.” Most of them were desperate for any help they could get; each one permitted me to pray. Following Jesus’ instructions to the disciples (Mt. 10:7), I simply told these men that the kingdom of God was at hand. I anointed them with oil, laid hands on them, and began to command the illnesses to leave in Jesus’ name.

After I had prayed for everyone in the room, the men then asked me to explain what I was doing. This was the opportunity I had been

praying for, because just the day before I had finished memorizing a gospel presentation that I had tailored specifically for the Moravian context (see Ch. 4). I asked the men to close the doors to the room and began to share the presentation. For thirty minutes, they seemed to hang onto every word. After finishing, I answered a few questions and went home.

Two days later, my wife and I, along with a few others, went back to the hospital. One of the male nurses took me aside and told me that of those I had prayed for two days earlier, nearly all had been either completely healed or were significantly improved. He and some other nurses grabbed me, my wife, and another believing woman who was visiting us by the arms and literally dragged us to the women's ward so we could pray for the ladies. Three women allowed us to pray for them. In keeping with the culture, my wife and the other woman laid hands on them. We told them that God loved them dearly. Then, we began ordering the sicknesses to leave in the name of Jesus. As we did this, I heard one of the nurses whispering to someone else in the room, "They're *commanding* the illnesses to leave." He was struck by the authority of the name of Jesus.

As we walked out of the hospital, a group of men called me over and told me point-blank, "We want you to tell us about Jesus." Some said this mockingly, but others looked genuinely interested. I immediately noticed that very few of the men in this group had been among those with whom I had shared the gospel two days earlier. This clued me into a very important fact: *people had been gossiping about Jesus*. Finally, the gossip chain used for something righteous! I invited these men to visit my house that night, promising to talk with them about Jesus and clarify some things that are commonly misunderstood about him in the Muslim world. My wife and I returned home and spent the rest of the day in prayer, fasting, and worship in anticipation of the meeting. As soon as we turned the worship music off, I heard a knock on the outside gate. Nine men entered the house, and after tea and small talk, I shared the gospel with them. They had many questions. Some of them agreed to return to watch the *Jesus Film* later that week.

The next morning, we had two sets of visitors. One was the nurse who had led us to the women's ward. He reported that all three of the women we had prayed for had been healed.

The other was a group of three men: one older with a long white beard; one middle-aged man, also with a long beard; and a third younger man, with less facial hair. All three of them were dressed in standard religious attire: long robes and religious caps, usually worn on Fridays. It was clear that they were trying to be perceived as religious, and that the younger men looked up to the oldest man as their mentor. I later learned that the older man was a very well-known sheik in the area.

At first I misinterpreted the nature of this visit. I wondered if these men might be seekers from among the local religious elite (see Jn. 19:39; Ac. 6:7, 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:1). However, when I invited them into my house for tea, it quickly became apparent that they were not there as seekers. Rather, like most of the Pharisees and scribes who visited Jesus, they were there as religious and social gatekeepers whose specific aim was to check us out and put us in our place. At one point as I sat with these men, they tried to intimidate me into saying that Jesus did not die on the cross. Thankfully, they were in a hurry to catch a bus and did not stay long.

Thus began a very enlightening and sobering season for us. For the next several months, we had a steady flow of Muslims showing up at our gate, most of whom wanted to know more about Jesus. Some came openly during the day, while others only ventured our way at night. Many advocated positively for us in the community; others spread lies and rumors about us. From what trusted local friends and informants reported to us, we knew that the rumor mill was working overtime. Like those among whom Jesus ministered, people from all levels of society were trying to figure out what to make of us, and what to do *with* or even *to* us (see Jn. 7:25–44). Many of our friends and contacts in the community expressed great concern for our safety and welfare. They were afraid that Islamic extremists would get wind of what was happening and that we would become easy targets. During this time we even had to distance ourselves from

many of our closest non-believing friends because they were being harassed by religious leaders about their relationship with us, even though they had not accepted the gospel themselves.

By God's protection, we emerged from this season unharmed. After three months, my wife and I left for a scheduled trip out of the country. It turned out that the timing of this trip had been God-ordained. We later learned that just before we left, some in the community had been plotting to harm us. However, our departure prevented them from doing so. In addition to this opportune timing, God also used a rather humorous misunderstanding to protect us. During our time in language learning, we had become friends with a well-respected man in the community. My local nickname turned out to be the same as the real name of this man's oldest son. Therefore, many leaders in the community mistakenly thought that this man had adopted me! This misperception made them reluctant to act hastily on any ill intent they may have had toward us—at least long enough for us to leave on our scheduled trip.

Throughout and leading up to this intense season, my wife and I had cried out continually for God to honor Jesus in our little community by confirming the message of the gospel with his power. We grieved for the thousands of Muslims living around us who had not submitted to the Lordship of Jesus the Messiah and were thus destined for the lake of fire and the second death (Rev. 20:14). We fasted and began conducting prayer meetings several hours every day.

With the hospital healings, God began to answer our prayers. However, when the answer finally started to come, we realized that we were unprepared for the sobering implications. What was the outcome of God moving in power in our little Muslim community? *Social disruption at every level.* Visitors knocking on our door at the most "inconvenient" of times ... worried friends ... disgruntled community gatekeepers and leaders ... the gossip chain working overtime ... radical elements gaining wind of potential new targets. Within days, the entire community was talking about and trying to come to terms with what had happened at the hospital. Through these healings, the

Holy Spirit had directly confronted long-held religious and spiritual strongholds, and a whirlwind was the offspring.

THE BIBLICAL NORM: GOD'S POWER CAUSES SOCIAL DISRUPTION

Though the hospital healings mentioned above certainly did not come anywhere close to the magnitude and power of the signs and wonders performed through Jesus or the apostles, or the "greater works" (Jn. 14:12) that the Body of Messiah will experience in the days ahead, God did use this event to erode any fantasies we might have had concerning what are often called "power encounters." Some believers cling to the notion that if we could perform signs, wonders, and miracles like Jesus and the early church did, then everyone who hears the gospel will automatically submit to Jesus as Lord. According to the Scriptures, however, often the exact opposite is true. Sometimes power demonstrations, conjoined with the controversial message to which they give witness, are the quickest way to get thrown into prison. When Jesus performed a miracle as a sign of the message he was proclaiming, the people usually responded in one of two ways: either they wanted to follow him (Jn. 9:38, 11:45), or they wanted to kill him (Mt. 12:14; Jn. 11:46–53). The diffusion of God's power through him never left room for a neutral response.

This was not only true for Jesus. From beginning to end, the book of Acts also bears witness to this truth. To cite but a few examples, the healing of the lame man at Solomon's porch, together with powerful preaching, got Peter and John locked up in jail (Ac. 4:3). In Acts 5, the miracles of the apostles and the message they taught drew so much attention that the Sadducees became jealous and threw them into prison. They were freed by an angel, only to preach the gospel even more boldly. This got them flogged (Ac. 5:40). Anointed preaching confirmed with signs and wonders got Stephen killed and also ignited a season of great persecution against the church (Ac. 6–8:1). Paul's boldness almost got him arrested in Damascus (Ac. 9:24) and almost killed in Jerusalem (Ac. 9:29). A release of the Spirit's power as a confirmation of their message

got Paul and Barnabas kicked out of Pisidian Antioch (Ac. 13:50) and resulted in Paul getting stoned in Lystra (Ac. 14:19). Paul and Silas were thrown in prison after casting a demon out of a slave girl and were severely flogged while there (Ac. 16:16–21). Powerful preaching led to riots in Thessalonica and Ephesus (Ac. 17, 19).

When we read the New Testament, therefore, we are presented with a catch-22 of sorts. On the one hand, by New Testament standards, a witness without the confirming testimony of God's power has little if any credibility and minimal impact. Therefore, if we want to become true witnesses today in the way we see that term defined biblically, we must continue to ask God both to give us boldness in proclaiming the message and to confirm his word with power:

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to *speak your word with great boldness*. Stretch out your hand to *heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders* through the name of your holy servant Jesus. (Ac. 4:29, emphasis added)

On the other hand, when we preach the gospel and God confirms the message with power, we inescapably open a can of worms: our message catalyzes persecution and opposition. While signs and miracles do not absolutely guarantee a positive response to our message, they do often have the effect of drawing a clear line in the sand. In other words, their presence confronts unbelief in such a direct way that it forces that which is in a person's heart to rise to the surface in an expedited and often perceivable way. If people are hungry for the truth, then miracles tend to draw this hunger out of them in an accelerated manner. Conversely, if their hearts are hard, then miracles quickly expose that hardness. As Paul puts it, "For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life" (2 Cor. 2:15–16). When the fragrance of the Holy Spirit's power is uncloaked and openly demonstrated to even the smallest degree, we either submit to that power or we rebel. The

greater the degree of power released, the more impossible it becomes to sit comfortably with a neutral response. Moreover, in an effort to alleviate the internal disequilibrium caused by God's confrontation of their unbelief, those who respond negatively to God's power often go on to persecute those who respond positively.

Therefore, as the Spirit's power backed up the message of the apostles wherever they went, so both converts and persecution also sprung up quickly and simultaneously wherever the apostles went. The only way they could have avoided the "negative side" of persecution would have been not to operate and preach in the same power that also resulted in the "positive side" of immediate fruit.

Moreover, the New Testament not only paints a picture of the gospel birthing both immediate fruit and immediate persecution, but also portrays God using the latter (what wicked men and demons intend for evil) to bring the former to maturity at the fastest rate possible. Though it may be difficult for some to accept, God still uses persecution today as a means of training his people in righteousness, perseverance, and wholehearted loyalty to him, and as a way of proving to the world that his people are worthy to inherit the glories of the coming kingdom of God (Lk. 20:35; Ja. 1; 1 Pt. 1). He takes what demons and persecutors intend for the worst and turns it into what he intends for the best. In that sense, God actually transforms persecution into one of his discipleship tools and uses it as a gift to the church.

God also uses the Jesus-like responses of his people in the face of persecution—"overcoming evil with good" by "blessing those who persecute you" (Rom. 12:14, 21)—as a means of providing persecutors with more opportunities to repent before they incur eternal punishments in the lake of fire. Viewed from an eternal perspective, persecution is thus a mercy strategy for those who have not yet accepted the gospel. Could it be that God would actually allow me, a loyal disciple, to suffer persecution so that my persecutor can avoid the eternal consequences of the lake of fire? Is that not what Jesus did for all of us? Are we not called to carry the same cross (Mt. 16:24)? Although these ideas may feel foreign to some,

they are clearly biblical and in line with the realities experienced by multitudes of Jesus' disciples outside the West.

In sum, whether talking about the gospel infiltrating places like the Muslim world, or the Holy Spirit breathing new life and power into churches within the boundaries of historical Christendom, one fact is undeniable. The message of the gospel, when confirmed by demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's power, is intrinsically geared to upset existing status quos and create unpredictable circumstances. To deny this is to deny the reality of the biblical testimony.

NEW TESTAMENT POWER REQUIRES NEW TESTAMENT FOUNDATION-BUILDING

The Holy Spirit's power, therefore, is like "new wine" that not only challenges but bursts "old wineskins" (Mt. 9:16–17). When we ask God to confirm the preaching of the gospel with power, whether we like it or not, we are asking him to come and create a complex and glorious mess. We are asking Jesus to disrupt the systems.

On a practical level, when God backs up his word with substantial power, we must be prepared for two things: (1) a rapid harvest of souls and (2) concurrent unpredictability and social disruption, usually in some form of persecution. In other words, we must be both *poised for harvest and braced for backlash*. The primary question with which this book is concerned is: How can we catalyze, strengthen, and establish foundations in the former, so that rapidly expanding movements are birthed and remain perseverant through the difficulties of the latter? When Jesus is disrupting all of the systems around us, how can we lay foundations for movements that are of New Testament quality or even greater?

The answer to this question and the thesis of this book is that New Testament power requires New Testament foundation-building. In other words, the pursuit of a New Testament-caliber witness inherently necessitates the recovery of an apostolic mode of "foundation building" (1 Cor. 3:10). By the adjectival use of the term "apostolic," I simply mean that which is observable in the life

and ministry of the apostles in the New Testament, particularly that of the apostle Paul.

PAUL: A FAILURE BY TODAY'S STANDARDS

By many of today's standards of missionary practice, Paul would be considered a dismal failure. His first missionary journey (46–48 AD) speaks for itself (Ac. 13–14). In two years' time, he and Barnabas traveled and preached the gospel throughout an entire island, in three key provinces, and in at least seven important cities, and made return visits to four of the cities. Even a cursory reading of Acts confronts us with this startling truth: Paul spent only a few weeks or months in most of the places he visited during his recorded missionary journeys. His longest recorded stays on any of his journeys were Corinth, where he only spent one and a half years (Ac. 18:11), and Ephesus, where he only spent three years (Ac. 20:31). Even more startling than the brevity of Paul's stay in many places, moreover, was his willingness to leave groups of new disciples behind after only a handful of weeks with them, despite the persecution that arose simultaneously with his preaching. This is almost inconceivable to most mission paradigms today. In terms of practical discipleship, how was this possible? What did Paul deposit in new disciples during the relatively short time he was with them?

Most mission agencies today, at least in the Western world, divide terms of service for international missionaries into segments of three to four years. It is commonly assumed, moreover, that those sent must wait until their third or fourth term before they can seriously expect their ministries to bear fruit. Many are thus expected to live in the same city or region during their entire "career." Furthermore, it is also often assumed that the direct oversight or presence of an expatriate missionary from the outside is necessary over a period of many years in order for local disciples to progress in maturity. Therefore, even when time-intensive factors like language learning are taken into consideration (Paul did not have to learn another language as an adult), by today's standards we must either christen Paul's missionary journeys a catastrophe, or we must recognize

that we in the current Christian missionary movement must once again open our hearts to a forgotten mode of operation—one that may initially feel unfamiliar to us, but which is nevertheless firmly embedded in biblical precedent.

Because power regularly flowed through Paul's life, ministry, and witness, persecution and social disruption also followed him everywhere he went. Acts and the Pauline epistles make this clear. Paul probably never knew exactly how long God would allow him to be physically present with a group of new disciples. The very nature of his ministry, therefore, necessitated a mode of foundation-building that imparted to new believers something that would result both in their personal transformation and in the further advancement of the gospel, regardless of the disruptions and unpredictable circumstances engendered by the release of power through him. Whether he was physically present with a group of saints or in prison being flogged, or whether he was with a new church three weeks, three months, or three years, he had the utmost confidence that the Holy Spirit himself would take new sheep where they needed to go and increasingly bring them to maturity in his absence:

Now to *him* (not me) who is *able to establish you* by my gospel ... (Rom. 16:25, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

He (not me) *will keep you strong to the end*, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God ... is faithful. (1 Cor. 1:8–9, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

... Being *confident* of this, that *he* (not me) who began a good work in you *will carry it on to completion* until the day of Christ Jesus. (Php. 1:6, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

... Yet I am not ashamed, because *I know whom I have believed* (the faithful One), and am *convinced that he is able to guard* what I have entrusted to him for that day.

(2 Tim. 1:12, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

Because of his great confidence in the Holy Spirit's ability as a disciple-maker, Paul felt confident leaving new churches behind once he had established a foundation (e.g., Rom. 15:20; 1 Cor. 3:10) by means of which they were set on a trajectory for becoming mature in Messiah (as opposed to them actually having attained to maturity). The fact that he stayed with many new churches for such short amounts of time, moreover, means that Paul himself must have believed that the essential components of the foundation he had in mind could be set in place within a short time frame if necessary.

Furthermore, Paul's short time with new churches also indicates that the deciding factor in his departure from a particular city or region was not where a new church fit on some sort of "maturity scale," but rather simply on the Holy Spirit's leadership in his life (e.g. Ac. 16:9–10, 18:8–10, 20:22), or circumstances that forced him out of a local context (e.g. Ac. 14:19–20, 16:35–40, 20:22). In his mind, the viability of the movements launched through his ministry never hinged on his personal presence, but on the incredible leadership of the Holy Spirit.

In short, Paul's general strategy, if we can call it that, was: (1) constantly commune and fellowship with God in prayer and other spiritual disciplines; (2) follow the Spirit's leadership into a region or city; (3) visit a synagogue or some other place conducive to discussing the gospel; (4) proclaim the message of the gospel boldly, trusting God to back up the message with power; (5) gather the new disciples that quickly resulted; (6) lay a solid foundation as quickly as possible, given the particular circumstances; (7) commit the new sheep to the leadership of the Holy Spirit before he got stoned, arrested, killed, or kicked out; and (8) pray his heart out on behalf of the new flock. In some cases, as in Ephesus, circumstances permitted him the luxury of a longer stay. However, the New Testament bears witness that a relatively lengthy visit on his part was not an absolute prerequisite to effective discipleship. This was because the foundations he established presupposed a level of power, a quality

and essence of message, and a set of fundamental assumptions that we need to recover today, the most basic and fundamental of which is complete confidence in the Holy Spirit's ability to lead his sheep well with or without us in the equation.

LETTING PAUL'S EXAMPLE PROVOKE US

This leads to an important question that has been raised numerous times throughout the history of missions: To what extent was Paul's ministry tied to his own unique calling and the historical circumstances of the first century, and to what extent does it provide general principles that are more broadly applicable in any discipleship or church planting situation?

For example, as an apostle, Paul functioned on many different levels. He made disciples, planted churches, testified before kings, and wrote Scripture. It is fair to say that all people in the Body of Messiah are called to make disciples on some level; fewer are called to plant churches in a focused way; fewer yet are called to stand before kings; and none are called to write Scripture.

Moreover, Paul's call included a rigorous level of itineration. In the New Testament, he was constantly on the move, building and strengthening the flocks under his care. In addition, most of his travel occurred within the empire of which he was a citizen, and he never had to learn another language. Today, most in the Body of Messiah are not called to an intense schedule of itineration or to oversee many churches scattered over a broad area. Those who are called to travel as cross-cultural missionaries often must do so by leaving their own "Roman Empire" and relocating to another "empire" or nation. This sometimes means the hard work of learning another language. In contrast, Paul grew up speaking the languages through which he would later minister in service of Messiah.

Paul also had other advantages over us today simply on a circumstantial level. Situated in most cities throughout the Roman Empire were scores of Jewish synagogues, built by Jews in the years following the Babylonian exile. Three groups of people usually attended these synagogues: Jews, Gentile proselytes to Judaism, and

"God-fearers," or Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism but refused to undergo the rite of circumcision. Before Paul even set foot in a new city, he could reasonably expect to find waiting for him a strategic audience whose constituents already had some familiarity with Old Testament concepts and ideas and who possessed a cultivated Messianic expectation. Almost always the first thing he did in most cities he visited was look for one of these synagogues.

Therefore, we must acknowledge that Paul's calling and ministry were in some aspects uniquely tailored for his time and context. The extent to which his particular ministry and calling is applicable to our own situation will thus vary from person to person, depending on our calling.

On the other hand, we must also guard against using differences between our own ministry context and Paul's as an excuse for settling for a quality of life and witness that does not measure up to the biblical yardstick. If some of the particulars of his ministry do not apply to us, other elements certainly are applicable to, and in many cases required of, followers of Messiah in any age, background, and of any calling. Paul tells the entire church of Corinth to "follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). For instance, one way Paul followed the example of Messiah himself (Mk. 1:14–15) was by proclaiming the gospel boldly, and he urged others to do the same (Col. 4:5; Php. 1:14). Likewise, as Paul imitated Messiah's own example of humility and gentleness (Mt. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1), so we are to follow the same example and be humble and gentle ourselves (Eph. 4:2). Surely these aspects of Paul's ministry apply to all of us today as much as they did to the believers of the first century.

Furthermore, the fact that there are differences between some of the unique details of Paul's calling and our own in no way mitigates the more general principle that God's power exerts a disrupting effect on ungodly systems, or the corresponding need to build in ways that take this factor into account.

CONCLUSION

In contexts where persecution is swift and deadly, are we prepared to give new disciples what they need before we are killed, imprisoned, or expelled? In cases where the Holy Spirit begins moving in unusual ways in a particular location, are we prepared to give new or revived disciples something that will result in their transformation and the continued advancement of the gospel once they return home after their short time with us? In instances where large numbers of people suddenly become receptive to the gospel in the wake of major catastrophes, how can we steward a nascent harvest so that it quickly burgeons into a full-blown, rapidly-reproducing, New Testament-caliber movement? If we, like Paul, for whatever reason (persecution, imprisonment, expulsion, death, etc.) are only permitted a short time frame (one day, two weeks, a few months, or, at most, a year or two) with a group of new disciples, what kind of "DNA" would we need to transmit for the resultant "organism" to be of New Testament quality? From the discussion in this introduction, we know that if we cry out for God to confirm his word with power, we must also be prepared to pass on this DNA in the midst of the unpredictable whirlwind birthed by that kind of witness. Paul's example promises us that this is possible.

ENDNOTES

¹ Throughout this book, I will refer to this mostly Islamic UPG as the "Moravians."

1

Fueled by Passion: Birthing Movements that Spontaneously Expand

Ifeel fire! I feel fire!" Muhammad told me excitedly as the power of the Holy Spirit flowed and pulsated throughout his body. The hair on his arms literally stood on end.

About forty-five minutes earlier, Muhammad, a Moravian Muslim, had shown up on my front porch. He was searching for work and wanted to know if I had anything available. Before long, we found ourselves in a spiritual discussion. It quickly became apparent that Muhammad was an extremely thoughtful and intelligent man. He spoke six languages and had a bachelor's degree in biology. It was also clear that at several junctures of his life he had encountered portions of Christian truth. He had read some parts of the Bible, and at various times had also dialogued with other followers of Messiah. I was particularly impressed when he told me how he had been able to discern the falsity of the Jehovah's Witness Bible. However, despite Muhammad's keen mind and evident hunger for truth, it was also obvious that he had never given his allegiance to Messiah. He still had many unresolved questions. He was still a professing Muslim.

As the conversation developed, I told him the story of when Peter and John went to the temple in Acts 3, and what they had said to the crippled beggar before he was healed: "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you" (Ac. 3:6).

"Muhammad," I said, "I don't have money or a job for you, but what I do have—the good news of the kingdom of God—I am

willing to share with you freely. Would you like me to explain the good news to you?"

"Yes," he said without hesitation. We stepped into a side room.

"Muhammad," I said, "today I am here to tell you about the best news in the world!"

Over the next thirty minutes, I presented an overview of the gospel to Muhammad, beginning with the fall of man and ending with the return of Jesus. I then went on to sing a song, written by believers from his people group who had been martyred several years earlier, about the cost of following Jesus. He needed to know up front that this was not a decision to be taken lightly, especially for someone living in an environment in which the question was not *if* persecution would come, but *when and how* it would come. Hunger radiated from Muhammad's face as he listened. Never before had I seen a person so hungry to hear the truth of the gospel.

After finishing the presentation, I told Muhammad that God did not want him to believe the truth of the message simply because he had heard some pretty words. Taking my lead from the example and teaching of the New Testament (1 Cor. 2:1–5; 1 Th. 1:4–5), I told him that God also wanted to demonstrate in power the truth of the good news he had heard. I asked him if I could lay hands on him and pray. He eagerly consented. That was all the Holy Spirit needed. The Lord was waiting for the invitation to show up, and show up he did. The Holy Spirit began to manifest his presence throughout Muhammad's body. Filled with excitement, he said that he felt fire all over him, and that an overwhelming joy and peace was flooding over his soul. I asked him if he was ready to follow Jesus. He said yes, and I told him that we would need a few hours together as soon as possible. He agreed to return later that evening.

When Muhammad returned that night, we went to a back room, where we began the discipleship process. Muhammad made a confession of faith and invited the Holy Spirit to fill his heart. The very first thing I did after his confession was teach him how to hear the Holy Spirit's voice. I gave him a chance to practice as I laid hands on him and began to pray for him. At one point as I was praying, I

opened my eyes and saw him raising his hand into the air. His eyes were closed. The power of God was again flowing throughout his body. Afterward, I asked him what was happening. He told me that as we were praying, he saw a vision of a hand reaching out to him. This hand grabbed Muhammad's hand and lifted it up into the air. He told me that it was not he who had raised his own hand, but that an unseen power had lifted it. At the same time, to his surprise, a voice "that was not my voice" spoke to him. Muhammad felt a little shaken. The voice told him, "The kingdom is open for you. Welcome, you are one of us. I sacrificed my life because of the sins you committed. I now accept you as you accept me." Muhammad got up out of his chair and literally began to jump for joy. I hugged him and jumped with him. He had heard the good news of the kingdom of God proclaimed, and he had experienced the reality and substance of that coming kingdom demonstrated. Now he had a new life. *That* is good news.

However, though Muhammad had a new life, he still did not have a job. For reasons that will become clear later, I told him, "Congratulations, you have now entered the kingdom. I am never going to give you a job." Though Muhammad thought this to be an odd remark at such a momentous time, he agreed. After reading Matthew 6:25–34 to him, I told Muhammad that the Holy Spirit, not me, was now his leader, and that the Holy Spirit would take care of his needs. I laid hands on him again and asked the Holy Spirit to speak to him that night through a dream.

The next day, Muhammad came to me with an incredible testimony. The Lord had answered our prayer and had indeed visited him in a dream. In the dream, Muhammad was instructed to take the bus to the river the following day. When he got to the bus station, Muhammad would meet someone who would pay his fare. When he reached the river, he would see a soldier, who would greet him. Muhammad was to respond to the soldier with a certain message. Then, he would be permitted to cross the river, where he would find a job in a small village. Muhammad woke up the next morning and obeyed the Holy Spirit's instructions. Events unfolded exactly

as the Lord had revealed. Muhammad made more money that week than he had made in months. Merely *a few hours* into his new life in Messiah, Muhammad was operating in the prophetic anointing.

The man who paid Muhammad's bus fare turned out to be his own father, who was making a visit to the area. Muhammad and his father got on the bus together and rode to the river. On their way, a teenage boy and girl sitting behind Muhammad got into an argument. Muhammad said that he felt God's power come upon him. With everyone on the bus listening, he turned around and began to teach the teens about the importance of loving and forgiving each other. Those on the bus sat stunned as they listened to him expound upon the discipleship pattern he had learned from me just the night before. *One day* into his new life with Messiah, Muhammad was functioning as an anointed teacher. His father was so impressed that he interrupted him in mid-sentence to point out to everyone on the bus that Muhammad was his son.

Muhammad told me that when he reached the village, he got into a conversation with some Muslim men. Again, the wisdom and power of God fell upon him. He denoted this to me by making a hand motion from the air above toward his head, as if some unseen power had landed on his head. In his own words, "a wisdom" had come upon him. He told me that toward the beginning of his discussion with these men, they were "in disagreement," but that by the end they were "in agreement." *One day* into his new life in Messiah, Muhammad was operating as an anointed evangelist.

By the time my wife and I left Muhammad's area ten weeks later, Muhammad was no longer alone. According to his testimony, over one hundred new disciples, all former Muslims, were now meeting in a growing number of house churches in several different villages and towns. In the context of community, they were devouring the Scriptures and holding one another accountable under the Holy Spirit's leadership, with no foreign involvement. In this amount of time, these disciples had translated the New Testament into another language; they had helped one another through persecution on a number of occasions; they had sent off an apostolic team into a

neighboring people group; they had appointed their own leaders in the house churches; they had weeded out Judases; they were meeting in house church two times a week, the leaders also having an additional weekly meeting; through the grace and leadership of the Spirit, they were prospering financially (relative to local standards); they were giving sacrificially for the sake of the gospel; they were leading each other through deep healing and deliverance sessions; and the Holy Spirit was pouring out dreams, visions, and other spiritual gifts in abundance. To my knowledge, only three of them knew that foreigners had ever been initially involved. More importantly, all of them *did* know that the Holy Spirit, and not a mere man, was the One leading the charge.

AN EMPIRE SHAKEN IN TEN YEARS

The word of the Lord *spread through the whole region*.
(Ac. 13:49, emphasis added)

This went on for two years, so that *all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia* heard the word of the Lord. (Ac. 19:10, emphasis added)

Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord *may spread rapidly and be honored*, just as it was with you. (2 Th. 3:1, emphasis added)

What Paul saw happen in a period of ten years is staggering. In the words of the early-twentieth-century British missionary Rolland Allen,

In little more than ten years St Paul established the Church in four provinces of the Empire, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Before AD 47 there were no churches in these provinces; in AD 57 St Paul could speak as if his work there was done, and could plan extensive tours into the far west *without anxiety lest the churches which he had founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support*. (emphasis added)¹

How was this possible? The answer is that Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia experienced what Allen termed the “spontaneous expansion of the church.”²

PASSION: THE DISTINGUISHING MARK OF SPONTANEOUS EXPANSION

In 1927, Allen wrote what John Wimber called the most important book he had ever read outside of the Bible²: *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It*, the sequel to his first book, *Missionary Methods: Saint Paul's or Ours?* Allen's central thesis in *Spontaneous Expansion* is that when people truly experience the riches of life in Messiah, *they cannot help* but share the gospel with boldness, enthusiasm, and spontaneity as the Holy Spirit prompts and leads them. In the process of sharing the gospel with others, moreover, those sharing gain more revelation and understanding as to its meaning, content, power, and application. This, in turn, fuels more spontaneous expansion.³ It is a kind of witness born out of an overflow of encounter with the Holy Spirit and fiery passion for Jesus, and which goes beyond simple church growth and multiplication. Spontaneous expansion means the people of God radiating a fire of such heat and intensity that those out in the cold conclude it foolish not to come and warm themselves by it. As Dallas Willard points out, it was this kind of reality that overwhelmed the ancient world:

The life and words that Jesus brought into the world came in the form of information and reality. He and his early associates overwhelmed the ancient world because they brought into it a stream of life at its deepest, along with the best information possible on the most important matters. These were matters with which the human mind had already been seriously struggling for a millennium or more without much success. The early message was, accordingly, not experienced as something its hearers *had* to believe or do because otherwise something bad—something

with not essential connection with real life—would happen to them. The people initially impacted by that message generally concluded that they would be fools to disregard it. That was the basis of their conversion.⁴

The spontaneous expansion of the church springs from the overflow of encounter with the Holy Spirit. This assumes, of course, that new disciples have in the first place been ushered into dynamic encounter with the Holy Spirit, the purpose of whose revelatory work is to intensify passion and love for Jesus. Those passionate for Jesus cannot help but share the gospel. It bubbles forth from them.

EMPOWERING THE UNCONTAINABLE

Central to spontaneous expansion, moreover, is the idea of unpaid local disciples being empowered and equipped to multiply themselves under the leadership of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of their conversion experience. In this way, the gospel can spread rapidly throughout entire regions, as opposed to having only a very limited scope of influence where leadership and gospel proclamation remain restricted to cultural outsiders, professionals, or paid local believers. In Allen's own words:

Many years ago my experience in China taught me that if our object was to establish in that country a church which might spread over the six provinces which then formed the diocese of North China, that object could only be attained if the first Christians who were converted by our labors understood clearly that *they could by themselves, without any further assistance from us, not only convert their neighbors, but establish churches. That meant that the very first groups of converts must be so fully equipped with all spiritual authority that they could multiply themselves without any necessary reference to us: that, though, while we were there, they might regard us as helpful advisors, yet our removal should not*

at all mutilate the completeness of the church, or deprive it of anything necessary for its unlimited expansion. Only in such a way did it seem to me to be possible for churches to grow rapidly and securely over wide areas; for I saw that a single foreign bishop could not establish the church throughout the six provinces, over which he was nominally set, by founding mission stations governed by superintending missionaries, even if he had an unlimited supply of men and money at his command. The restraint of ordination to a few natives specially trained by us, and dependent for their own maintenance and the maintenance of their families upon salaries provided either by us or by the small native Christian community, and the absolute denial of any native episcopate at the beginning, seemed to me to render any wide expansion of the church impossible, and to suggest at the very beginning that there was something essentially foreign about the church which demanded the direction of a foreign governor. (emphasis added)⁵

In Allen's generation, words like these had a razor-sharp impact. In the minds of many who made up his audience, "mission" typically meant someone from Europe, North America, or other Western nations—the presumed seedbed of "Christian civilization"—traveling overseas to convert those living in "uncivilized" non-Western lands. It was commonly assumed that professional missionaries, or paid converts under their direct supervision and financial control, were the only ones competent enough to provide leadership or preach the gospel. Therefore, mission "strategy" centered on establishing bastions of Christian civilization—"mission stations"—amidst otherwise heathen lands and mobilizing as many of "the competent" as possible. This strategy was meant to meet the people's needs as seen through the lens of this paradigm, predicated on the following assumption: if what people need is more of us, then more of us is what we will mobilize and send. Through missionary magazines

and other means, constant appeals were made “back home” for the money and personnel needed to perpetuate, feed, and reproduce the mission stations.⁶

On the bright side, in Allen’s day a growing number of missionaries and mission societies espoused the “three selves” concept initially formulated decades earlier by Rufus Anderson (1796–1880) and Henry Venn (1796–1873)—establishing churches that were “self-financing,” “self-propagating,” and “self-governing”—as the ideal for church planting.⁷ However, most of us know that ideals discussed in boardrooms usually have much greater difficulty trickling their way to the ground, especially when they collide with a vast matrix of bureaucratic entanglements, personal interests, and long-cherished paradigms. Therefore, though most missionaries of Allen’s era had noble intentions, and though many did see fruit in response to their sacrifices and genuine labors of love, ultimately the system in which they found themselves had a debilitating effect on the advance of the gospel. By holding onto the reins of leadership so tightly and with such fierce control, scores of missionaries were actually restricting the movement of the gospel to their own small range of leadership and financial influence. Not surprisingly, one result of this tendency was that nationals sometimes came to perceive mission stations as foreign fiefdoms, and Christianity as a Western religion.

This was the context in which Allen proclaimed his message. He realized that no matter how many foreign workers were mobilized and no matter how much money missionaries raised, cities, regions, and nations could never be reached on a large scale solely through the efforts of paid missionaries and/or paid nationals. Like all who dare to question a status quo, Allen made scores of people very unhappy. Many of his contemporaries dismissed him as an agitator. A few, however, considered him a man ahead of his time, someone willing to stand on the bedrock of New Testament truth at great personal cost.⁸ In a sometimes pesky, sometimes iconoclastic manner, he looked the missions system of his day square in the face and challenged its faulty assumptions by appealing to the simplicity of the apostolic way of the first century:

I know not how it may appear to others, but to me this unexhorted, unorganized, spontaneous expansion (observed in the New Testament) has a charm far beyond that of our modern highly organized missions. I delight to think that a Christian traveling on his business, or fleeing from persecution, could preach Christ, and a church spring up as the result of his preaching, without his work being advertised through the streets of Antioch or Alexandria (as it would have been in London or New York in Allen's day) as the heading of an appeal to Christian men to subscribe funds to establish a school, or as the text of an exhortation to the church of his native city to send a mission, without which new converts deprived of guidance must inevitably lapse. I suspect, however, that I am not alone in this strange preference, and that many others read their Bibles and find there with relief a welcome escape from our material appeals for funds, and from our methods of moving heaven and earth to make a proselyte.

But men say that such relief can only be for dreamers, that the age of that simple expansion has gone by, that we must live in our own age, and that in our age such spontaneous expansion is not to be expected; that an elaborate and highly organized society must employ elaborate and highly organized methods, and that it is vain now to sigh for a simplicity which while it existed had many faults and infirmities, and, however attractive, can never be ours. I must, of course, admit that, if that saying is true, if it is really better that paid missionaries should be sent out by an elaborately organized office, and be supported by a department, and directed by a headquarters staff, if it is really true that our elaborate machinery is a great improvement on ancient practice, and that to carry

the knowledge of Christ throughout the world it is in fact far more efficient than the simpler methods of the apostolic age, then indeed I must acknowledge that to sigh after an inefficient simplicity is vain, and worse than vain. But if we, toiling under the burden of our organizations, sigh for that spontaneous freedom of expanding life, it is because we see in it something divine, something in its very nature profoundly efficient, something which we would gladly recover, something which the elaboration of our modern machinery obscures and deadens and kills. (parenthetical comments added)⁹

Allen's conviction was that what new disciples actually need is less of us and more of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit's leadership is unambiguously established in the lives of new disciples and churches, and when we truly entrust them into His care and guidance, there is no limit to where the gospel can go. This is what the Apostle Paul did, and it is why, after only ten years, he could look upon his work in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia as having been completed. Spontaneously expanding movements that did not depend on the initial church planter's direct oversight for survival, but rather on the brilliance of the Holy Spirit's leadership, had been launched from strategic cities in the Roman Empire. The beachheads having been established, Paul could then feel confident moving on to new frontiers, prodded forward by his godly "ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). In his absence, the disciples he left behind themselves reproduced and watered the initial seeds he had originally deposited in them, making other disciples as they went about their everyday lives.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental question that Allen's work and Paul's example provokes us to ask is: How much do we truly trust the Holy Spirit to do what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do? This question must

be the nonnegotiable point of departure for any foundation-building model that dares to affiliate itself with the New Testament example. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach us “all things” and remind us of his words (Jn. 14:26). He would convict the world of “sin, righteousness, and judgment” (Jn. 16:8) and would tell us “what is yet to come” (Jn. 16:13). He would guide us into “all truth” and would glorify Jesus by making known to us the things that are on his heart (Jn. 16:13–15). Through his presence, we would be “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49), see miracles, signs, and wonders (Ac. 4:30), experience dreams and visions, and prophesy (Ac. 2:17). Do we trust that these promises about the Spirit’s work are true in the life of even the newest disciple? When Jesus speaks, he means what he says. As Paul puts it: “Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4).

ENDNOTES

¹ Rolland Allen, *Missionary Methods—St. Paul’s or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1962), 3.

² A friend and colleague once spent a day with Wimber, during which time Wimber shared his opinion of Allen’s book.

³ Rolland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church—and the Causes Which Hinder It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1962), 9–11.

⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1998), xiv.

⁵ Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion*, 1.

⁶ See Jim Reapsome, “Allen, Roland,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, eds. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 54; and Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion*, 76–116.

⁷ Arthur Glasser, “Three-Self Movement (China)”; Jim Reapsome, “Anderson, Rufus”; Wilbert Shenk, “Venn, Henry”; John Mark Terry, “Indigenous Churches,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 960, 60, 999, 483–5 respectively.

⁸ See Charles Henry Long and Anne Rowthorn, "Rolland Allen," in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, eds. Gerald Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner, and James M. Phillips (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 383–9.

⁹ Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion*, 8.

2

Connected through Revelation: Making Strategic Advances by Prophetic Means

It was Thanksgiving weekend, and my wife and I were looking forward to spending the holiday with some of our good friends in a nation outside of our regular ministry context. We knew that some Moravians had migrated to this nation, but because of their small numbers, we did not expect to see any during this visit. The Holy Spirit had other plans in mind, however.

Our friends were part of a dynamic ministry team in this country. On Monday nights the men on this team would get together to pray, "soak" in God's presence, and ask the Holy Spirit where he wanted them to go. They would then jump in the car and launch out into the city, using the words the Holy Spirit had given them as their guide. During our visit, I was able to join the men on their Monday night adventures.

After a time of study, prayer, and worship, we sat down together and waited on the Lord, asking him to show us where he wanted us to go. Two men in the group, independently of one another, received an impression of a local park. Another man saw a picture in his mind's eye of a fountain of water with light beaming out of it. He also saw a picture of a building with a sign on it. The sign was white with red Arabic writing on it. To the right of the sign was a tree. He then saw a bolt of lightning come down from the sky and strike the building.

We all got into some cars and set out, keeping our eyes open

for white signs with red Arabic script next to some trees. As we drove, one person saw the number "22" flash through his mind. We meandered around the city for a couple hours with no success. Now a little past midnight, one man reminded us about the words about the park, which for some reason we had forgotten about. We later realized that God had been the one behind our memory block.

When we arrived at the park, one of the first things we saw was a white sign with red Arabic writing on it. To the right of the sign were trees. Things were getting interesting. However, from where we stood, the entire park appeared completely vacant. We decided to start walking and soon came to some stairs. At the bottom of the stairs was a lighted fountain of water gushing up and down. Things were getting more interesting. As we continued to walk, to our left we noticed a string of numbered doors. One was numbered "22." Soon after passing this room, we came to some different stairs and went up them. As soon as we reached the top, I was astonished at what met my eyes: five to seven Moravian men, casually talking and having tea together in an otherwise completely vacant park at 1:00AM in a city thousands of miles from home.

What an amazing God we serve! On the one night that the team had someone (me) who could share the gospel with Moravians in their own language, the Holy Spirit had sent us to a small group of Moravian immigrants tucked away in an obscure corner of a park in a nation far away from their homeland. They were forgotten by men, but not by God.

We approached the men and joined their discussion, and before long I was sharing the gospel with them while the others prayed. Another man from the team laid hands on these men, and the Holy Spirit manifested his power throughout their bodies, thereby confirming the word being spoken. Later that week, two of the men contacted us and wanted to meet again in a more secure location in order to hear the message again. This time they brought another friend whom they thought would also be interested in hearing what we had to say. We shared the gospel with them again. Again we laid hands on them, and again the Holy Spirit touched them in power.

Through this event, not only had a group of Moravians heard the gospel and experienced the power and love of God for the first time, but the weak human instruments sent to them had also been exhilarated and further intoxicated with love for God in the process.

THE NATURE OF PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In John 5:19, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only *what he sees his Father doing*, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and *shows him all he does*" (emphasis added). This language of "seeing" has its roots in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament (see 1 Sam. 9:9; Jer. 1:11; Amos 7:8). Here Jesus is simply saying that his mode of operation in ministry is prophetic in nature. In the context of intimate friendship and unbroken communion with the Father, Jesus received his day-to-day instructions and ministry assignments from the Father by means of prophetic revelation (Mk. 1:35–39). Jesus said that as his Father had sent him into the world, so was he sending his disciples into the world (Jn. 20:21). This principle extends to the revelatory gifts of the Spirit. As Jesus walked in the prophetic anointing (Lk. 4:24), so too he would pour out the Spirit who would enable the people of God—old, young, male, and female—to "prophesy" (Jn. 14:17, 16:13; Ac. 2:17–18; 1 Cor. 12–14; Eph. 4).

Unfortunately, the biblical concept of prophecy is misunderstood by many believers today. Many fail to realize that there is a spectrum of practices subsumed under the umbrella of "the prophetic" in the Bible, and that an important shift occurred from Old to New Testament. In the Old Testament, authentic prophets typically received a special commission from God through a divine encounter (e.g., 1 Sam. 3; Is. 6; Jer. 1; Ezek. 1–2) and formed a distinct class or office within the nation of Israel (Dt. 18:14–22; 1 Sam. 1:10–11, 19:19–20; 1 Ki. 18:13). Through the Spirit's agency (Nu. 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 19:20; Neh. 9:30), prophets typically received their messages from God in the form of visions, dreams, and riddles

(Nu. 12:6, 8), though God spoke in more direct speech to Moses (Nu. 12:7–8). While the prophetic office did often involve the foretelling of future events (e.g., 1 Sam. 3:11–14; 1 Ki. 13; Is. 11; Jer. 20:4) and giving council on the Lord's behalf (e.g., 1 Sam. 9:9, 22:5), its primary function was to regularly summon the people of God to obey the stipulations of their covenant with God (e.g., Judg. 6:7–9; 1 Ki. 18:37; 2 Ki. 17:13; 2 Chr. 36:15–16; Jer. 35:15; Joel 2:28–29).¹ For good reason, then, God's standards for the prophetic office were quite high. Prophets who used their influence to preach rebellion against the God of Israel, who spoke in the name of other gods, or who prophesied messages that did not come to pass, were false in God's eyes and therefore were to be put to death (Dt. 13:1–5, 18:20–22).

However, the prophet Joel had prophesied that one day God would pour out his Spirit on all God's people—something Moses had desired all along (Nu. 11:29)—and that when this happened, spiritual gifts of a prophetic nature would be made available to the saints on a less specialized basis (Jo. 2:28–29). Peter cited this passage to explain the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:16–21). The day had come, therefore, when God's Spirit would enable all of God's people to prophesy in some sense. However, what did this actually mean in practical terms? Would all of God's people function in the prophetic office as defined in the Old Testament? Would all of them be commissioned by God to foretell future events with accuracy? Would all be called to the same high standards of the Old Testament prophet?

The answer is that New Testament example and teaching demonstrates a post-Pentecost definition of prophecy that, while being linked dynamically to the Old Testament concept, is not exactly the same as that found there. In the New Testament we observe a broadening and diversifying of the prophetic function.²

On the one hand, it appears that in some instances certain individuals may still be called to a prophetic office that more closely approximates the Old Testament standard (Ac. 11:27–28, 13:1, 15:32, 21:10–11; Eph. 4:11), with the exception that prophetic words

delivered by such ministers are never to be touted as Scripture. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, those in the office of post-Pentecost prophet must testify only to the God of Israel and in the name of the God of Israel, who is now made known in Messiah Jesus. Furthermore, they must never use their influence to turn people away from the one true God or to unbiblical doctrines. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, they may be called at times to deliver words related to future events, those that provide counsel of some sort, and others that apply more on a corporate level. However, also like the Old Testament prophets, their primary function is to regularly call the people of God to wholeheartedly obey the stipulations of God's covenant with them (see Ch. 7). It is fair to assume that God's standard for ministers entrusted with this kind of authority more closely approximates the high standards for prophets in the Old Testament.

On the other hand, the New Testament is also clear that following the day of Pentecost, prophetic gifts are no longer confined strictly to a special class of prophets (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:7). All believers have the capacity to hear Jesus' voice through the Spirit on some level (Jn. 10:4–5), and are admonished to eagerly desire spiritual gifts of a prophetic nature for the purpose of encouraging and edifying other members of the Body of Messiah (1 Cor. 14). These "lower-level" prophetic words—which typically come in the form of an inner impression, a picture in the mind's eye or vision, an inward "knowing," a small whisper in our hearts, a dream, etc.—do not carry the same weight as the words delivered by the Old Testament prophets to the nation of Israel. However, they are nevertheless prophetic in nature.

Because the saints "know in part and prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9), moreover, prophecy is portrayed in the New Testament as more of an art than a science. On the one hand, because the Holy Spirit lives in God's people and is genuinely involved in the process of prophesying on some level, and because prophetic words are meant to strengthen us (1 Cor. 14:3) and help us "fight the good fight" (1 Tim. 1:18), we must not treat these lower-level utterances with contempt (1 Th. 5:20). On the other hand, because these Spirit-

induced impressions are being communicated to and through weak human vessels, we must also approach such words with spiritual discernment. We must “test everything” and “hold on to the good,” letting God blow away any chaff that may be mixed in the word (1 Th. 5:21). Most prophetic words involve the three-fold process of trying to accurately receive, interpret, and apply the word with care and sensitivity.³ All words that clearly contradict sound biblical teaching are to be immediately discarded (2 Th. 2:2).

PROPHETIC EVANGELISM

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (Ac. 8:26, emphasis added)

When we recognize the shift and diversification of the prophetic function in the New Testament, normal believers can begin to incorporate the prophetic into other facets of their calling and ministry with confidence and expectation. More and more believers today are finding the prophetic a particularly helpful resource in the area of evangelism.

When my wife and I lived in Kansas City, one Wednesday evening a group of friends and I got together to ask the Holy Spirit where and with whom he wanted us to share the gospel. We pulled out some pen and paper, turned on some worship music, and waited for the Holy Spirit to talk to us. As we sat in silence and listened to the music, in faith we wrote down any pictures, impressions, or names that came to us, no matter how silly they seemed or felt to us. After about seven to ten minutes, we turned the music off and compared notes. One person in the group had seen a picture in his mind’s eye of a Gold’s Gym sign. Someone else had received an impression of the name “Westport,” an area near downtown Kansas City. Another had seen a street sign with “37th street” written on it. Still another had seen a picture of McDonalds. Several in the group had seen a picture of an African-American male. Another had seen a picture of a hamburger.

On the basis of these words, we put together an action plan. Some of us jumped in a van, while others stayed behind to provide intercessory coverage. After driving through a couple of neighborhoods without finding anyone, we decided to head towards Westport, where we knew there was a Gold's Gym. As we drove through Westport, we came to 37th street. Our jaws dropped when we saw a McDonald's on the corner of 37th street. Not sure what to do next, we pulled over, turned off the ignition, and waited on the Holy Spirit again. As we waited, one person saw a picture of a one-way street sign. Someone in the group noticed that there was a one-way street right behind the McDonalds. We started up the van again and began to drive slowly down 37th street toward the one-way street.

As we drove, one of the most amazing things I have ever experienced occurred. An African-American man limping down the street in the opposite direction saw us, turned around in mid-step, and ran toward us. We stopped the van in the middle of the road and rolled down the front passenger side window. My friend began to share about God's love and why we were out driving around. He then asked the man, whose name was Sean, if he wanted to accept Jesus as Lord. Sean instantly said yes. All of this took probably less than three to four minutes. Never in my life had I seen a fish jump into the boat so quickly! It felt surreal while it was happening. After a couple moments of sitting stunned in the middle of the road, we pulled the van into the McDonald's parking lot. Some stayed in the van to intercede, while others stepped out to meet Sean. We soon learned that Sean was homeless and had an injured knee. One person felt an impression that God wanted us to give Sean a hug and tell him that God loved him and had not forgotten about him. When we hugged Sean, he began to weep. We also prayed for his knee. Sean said that when we prayed, the pain was significantly reduced. As we prayed and ministered, one of the guys in the van went to McDonalds and bought Sean a hamburger. The hamburger picture turned out not to be so silly after all!

When we got back to the house and debriefed with our

intercessors, one person in our midst repeatedly exclaimed, "Man, this doesn't even feel like evangelism! This is just doing what we see our Father doing!" That was the point. To most of the nearly two million people in Kansas City, Sean was just another anonymous nobody, forgotten and forsaken by the world. Jesus, however, had not forgotten about this one lost sheep wandering the hills of a concrete jungle.

The two core assumptions of prophetic evangelism are: (1) God greatly desires human beings "to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4) more than we do; and (2) God actually *likes* to talk to us and lead us through his voice (Jn. 10). The Holy Spirit eagerly wants to connect us to those whose hearts are hungry for and receptive to the gospel. As we spend time in his presence and cultivate a listening ear, we can confidently expect him to tell us where those receptive to the gospel are located, what he wants them to hear, and how much he loves and cares for them. This does not mean that our batting average will be perfect. For example, in the months following the encounter my friends and I had with Sean, every week we set aside time to venture out into the city and engage in prophetic evangelism. Sometimes our batting average dropped way down, and sometimes we completely missed the mark. On other occasions we heard from the Spirit with great accuracy. The times we hit the mark by far compensated for the times we missed. My admonishment, then, is simply this: do not give up. Remember that we "know in part and prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9). We are weak people, but God still loves our efforts, even when they are weak. Keep trying. Keep listening. Keep risking. As I once heard it said, "We miss all of the shots we don't take." God loves it when his children step out of their comfort zones and take a risk in an effort to honor him and share the gospel with others.

THE "MAN OF PEACE" CONCEPT

One concept that has become increasingly popular in many mission circles in recent years is that of the "man of peace," which has its bearings in Luke 10:1–7:

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them ... "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a *man of peace* is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. *Stay in that house*, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house." (Luke 10:1–7, emphasis added)

The man of peace concept is often unpacked from several different angles. Some articulate it primarily in sociological terms. Most communities and cultures have a number of "gatekeepers" whose influential positions in society warrant, at least outwardly, a peaceful and hospitable demeanor. Businessmen, elected leaders, and soldiers, for example, often fall into this category. These kinds of people can serve as helpful advocates who allow us to maintain a presence in a new community.

On a theological level, some use the concept to highlight the fact that God has already been at work long before an outsider ever sets foot on the scene. When we enter into a new community for the purpose of sharing the gospel, we should expect to find people whose hearts have already been tenderized to receive the message through the preparatory activity of the Spirit.

From a missiological perspective, typically "the person of peace (1) is receptive to the gospel; (2) possesses a reputation to gain attention for the message among family and community; and (3) effectively refers the bearers of good news to that larger group."⁴ Proponents of the man of peace concept maintain that when missionaries enter a new community, they should keep their eyes open for people who fit this profile. Once identified, these persons of peace can then exercise their influence to open strategic doors for the gospel, as evinced by the following story:

A Southern Baptist missionary in Asia discovered the power of that advice when he entered a potentially

hostile unreached village with a co-worker:

"We prayed, 'God we know you're at work here or we wouldn't be here. We need a man of peace who will take care of us until we can feel our way around this village and know if it's safe or unsafe.'

"I started my stopwatch. We walked into the center of the village where the well was. A person approached me out of nowhere and said, 'Have you eaten?' We said, 'Not yet.' He said, 'Well, come to my home.' His name was Li, and he was the person of peace we wanted. I stopped my watch: three minutes, 21 seconds."

Li fed them, then properly introduced them to the village's hard-faced leader—who might otherwise have ordered the strangers killed with long knives. Li told the village [leader], who was ill, that the newcomers' God "is a great God, and they will pray for you." They prayed; the leader got better. He soon became a man of peace in his own right, opening his heart – and the whole village – to the Gospel.⁵

Discovering persons of peace has played an important role in several church planting movements.⁶

PROPHETIC DISCOVERY OF PERSONS OF PEACE

Perhaps the most critical gospel-advances recorded in the book of Acts occurred when persons of peace were discovered not simply through sociological predictability but through the revelatory activity of the Spirit:

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before

God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." (Ac. 10:4–6).

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the *Spirit said to him*, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." (Ac. 10:19–20, emphasis added)

When my wife and I lived and worked among Moravians, one night my wife received a prophetic dream from the Lord. In the dream, a man in our local community, "Ali," crawled through a window into our bedroom. After he had climbed through the window, I handed our baby girl, whose name is Faith, to Ali. When my wife shared the dream with me the next morning, we interpreted it to mean that God was opening a window for Ali to enter his house through faith, and that he wanted me to share the gospel with Ali. That day I went over to Ali's house. After sharing my wife's dream with him, I proceeded to share the good news with him. He seemed extremely receptive and let me pray for him. The Holy Spirit immediately began to move upon him in power. I asked Jesus to visit him in a dream. The next day, I went to see Ali again, and he told me that had indeed received a dream from God. In the dream, a man in white—whom Ali immediately understood to be Jesus the Messiah—had appeared and spoken to him, admonishing him to take the road that I had set before him. From that day forward, we had favor not only with Ali, but with his entire family. Ali was a house guard—a respectable job in Moravian culture—and as an older man had a measure of influence in his clan and among other house guards in the area. In several respects he matched the profile of a man of peace. I do not know whether Ali eventually accepted the gospel or not. He still had not made a decision by the time we left his town in order to move to Muhammad's area.

On a humorous note, I later found out from my wife that I had

actually gone to visit the wrong "Ali"! Many in our community were named "Ali." When my wife shared the dream with me, she had not mentioned a last name. Thus, as she shared, she had one face in mind and I another. Because of Jesus' visitation to the Ali with whom I had shared the gospel, we concluded that either God had shown up despite my botch-up, or that he had caused my wife not to mention the last name. Whatever the case, the important thing was that a lost sheep and a man of peace had encountered the living Messiah.

FROM PERSONS OF PEACE TO APOSTLES

With the conversion of one man, the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:8), the Roman Empire would never be the same:

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias.
The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." ...The Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is *my chosen instrument to carry my name* before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." (Acts 9:10-12, 15-16, emphasis added)

We see here God using prophetic means to connect Ananias, one of his trusted friends, to a man he had been grooming and equipping specifically for the purpose of impacting the Roman Empire with the gospel. It is not hard to see that Paul was not only a man of peace receptive to the gospel, but also an apostle whom God had sovereignly called, chosen, and raised up at an important turning point in the history of the empire of which he was a citizen.

Here I want to turn our attention to a question linked to an

issue that has provoked much heated discussion in recent years. Is it possible that today God is not only committed to helping us identify persons of peace, but also, in more rare instances, biblically-qualified apostles who have been set apart in preparation for a key turning point in a nation or people group's salvation history? As God shot Paul like an arrow to penetrate the Roman Empire with the gospel (Acts 22:28), is he doing the same today in places like Algeria, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, and Iraq? Is he preparing and grooming "Pauls" for Europe, North America, and the nations of Africa?

In some parts of the church, using the words "apostle" and "today" in the same sentence is awkward, if not anathema. This is understandable as the term "apostle" is often trivialized or overly-used, especially in many charismatic circles. Sadly, a calling and ministry function that once set forth the shared stripes of Jesus as its mark of authenticity (Gal. 6:17) is now sometimes employed as a means of titular boasting and self-exaltation. In the words of Jack Deere,

Today there are those in the church who are claiming to be apostles, but they seem to want no part of apostolic suffering. They not only live lifestyles of lavish ease, but they accept and encourage an incredible deference that is paid to them by ordinary Christians in the body of Christ.⁷

For these reasons, I personally am reluctant to call anyone an "apostle." However, my previous time with Muhammad has forced me to examine this issue more closely.

What kind of picture does the New Testament paint of a genuine apostle, one sent "not from men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal. 1:1)? According to Deere's analysis, the New Testament puts forward three requirements and five common characteristics of genuine apostleship:

Requirements:

- (1) Specific call and commission from the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:1; Rom. 1:1, 5; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1).

- (2) Must have seen the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 9:1–2)
- (3) Grace for effectiveness in church planting (1 Cor. 9:1–2)

Characteristics:

- (4) Suffering (1 Cor. 4:9–13; 2 Cor. 4:7–12, 6:3–10, 11:23–33; Gal. 6:17)
- (5) Special insight into divine mysteries (Eph. 3:1–6; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 11:23–32; 2 Cor. 12:1–4, 7)
- (6) Miracles, signs, and wonders (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8, 2:43, 5:12, 14:3, 15:12; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12)
- (7) A life of integrity (1 Cor. 1:12, 2:17, 4:2, 7:2)
- (8) Authority over demons and diseases, authority to build up and shape the life of the Church, and authority to impart spiritual gifts (Matt. 10:1; Mark 3:15, 6:7; Luke 9:1; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6; 2 Cor. 10:8, 13:10; Eph. 2:20).⁸

So, are there apostles today? Deere—a former cessationist⁹ whose heart God later opened to the miraculous—comments:

I believe that the twelve apostles were unique and formed a closed circle. However, the addition of Paul, Barnabas, James, and possibly others opens the possibility of God giving additional apostles at any time in history. No specific text of Scripture prevents Jesus from appearing to and commissioning others in an apostolic office. In the future, he is going to give two witnesses to the church who will have even greater power than the first century apostles (Rev. 11:3–6), and this will not endanger the authority of the Scripture. If at the end of church history the Lord is going to give two witnesses to the church who will be greater in authority and power than the New Testament apostles, why couldn't he give more apostles to the church before the time of the two witnesses?

I do not know of anyone today whom I would want to call an apostle in the same sense that I would call Paul an apostle. I am not willing, however, to rule out this possibility, because I do not think the Scriptures rule it out.¹⁰

I compared Muhammad's life to Deere's criteria to determine if he might be an apostle:

(1) *Must have been called and commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, and*
(2) *must have seen the Lord Jesus Christ:* Muhammad had been having prophetic dreams regularly since the night he first accepted Jesus at my home. However, on one occasion he recounted an experience that was different in terms of its vividness, power, and impact. Muhammad described an encounter that sounded remarkably similar to what John experienced on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:12–18).

"One night I was in bed asleep. Jesus appeared to me," Muhammad said.

"What did he look like? What happened?" I said.

"I had never imagined such radiance and majesty. He held a glistening sword in his hand. His eyes pierced me and his voice was so powerful. I was terrified! As soon as he started speaking to me, I fell down and thought I was going to die."

"What did he say to you?"

"He told me to stand up," Muhammad said, fear and awe in his voice. "He told me not to be afraid. He asked me why I was worried about my daily bread, and then assured me that he would take care of my needs and those of my family as I share the gospel. He said that he wanted me to labor tirelessly for the gospel and promised that he would use me to bring many from my people into his kingdom. "

"Then what happened?" I asked.

"The trembling I felt turned to joy. I suddenly began to feel a love unlike anything I have ever known wash over me. His kindness was overwhelming. I now understand why you couldn't give me a job when we first met."

"Why is that?"

Muhammad smiled. "You have given me something far more precious than money."

Muhammad went on to explain that as he was experiencing this vision, his wife, "Fatima," startled by what was happening to her husband, touched his body as she lay next to him in bed. When she did, the fire of God started burning her hands. She fled the room in terror. She initially thought something was wrong with Muhammad. When Muhammad explained the encounter to her, she started to weep. What happened next was a miracle almost as significant as the encounter itself: Muhammad began to caress her face and wipe the tears from her cheeks. This was an act of remarkable tenderness for a man in Moravian culture, in which outward displays of toughness were the norm. Fatima told Muhammad that while her faith had been real until that evening, she had initially accepted Jesus largely because of Muhammad. Now that she had experienced God's power and Muhammad's new-found tenderness in such a vivid way, her faith was genuinely her own.

From this commissioning experience onward, my guess is that Muhammad committed no less than six to eight hours per day to laboring for the gospel in some way, whether through direct evangelism, prayer, or through helping the house churches. Many nights, he stayed up praying into the early hours of the morning. As he gave his life fully to the gospel, God continued to supply his needs in miraculous ways. In the nearly three months I was with Muhammad, he led more Muslims to faith in Jesus than most cross-cultural church planters among Muslims see in a lifetime.

(3) *Grace for effectiveness in church planting:* I was constantly impressed by Muhammad's ability to quickly grasp everything I passed on to him. For reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 8, I intentionally made it a rule to stay in the shadows as much as possible. However, I once joined Muhammad in leading to faith a woman who was being monitored by radical Islamists (see opening testimony in Ch. 11). I was amazed at how naturally, clearly, and effectively he was able to explain the gospel to her. It was obvious that he had a high-level teaching gift. On a later occasion, this same woman was beaten with a donkey whip by her overseers. I was moved as Muhammad

told me how he and the other disciples had rallied around her and comforted her through this ordeal. His ability to organize and lead the growing number of Moravian disciples in the midst of such a hostile environment was incredible. Like Paul, Muhammad could communicate the gospel effectively in several languages (he spoke six languages fluently). Also like Paul, he knew the ins-and-outs of the religious system of which he had been a part and knew the inner workings of his culture very well. Muhammad was also a trained musician who used his talents to create worship songs in different languages. All of these factors contributed to what in my estimation amounted to an unusual effectiveness in planting, strengthening, and establishing churches.

Turning to characteristics of apostles, it hardly needs to be stated that Muhammad met (4): *suffering*. Muhammad faced constant threats from religious and community leaders. Many of his family members harassed him. His ultimate test came when he was forced to choose between his life and denying his faith in Jesus (see testimony in Ch. 11).

(5) *Special insight into divine mysteries*: As the writing of Scripture is limited to the first-century apostles, this characteristic may be the least important in terms of evaluating the authenticity of a true modern-day apostle. I do not know if Muhammad had "special insight into divine mysteries." However, I do know that he did exhibit an unusual grace to expound biblical truth insightfully.

(6) *Miracles, signs, and wonders*: As we will see, power encounters became the norm for Muhammad and the other new disciples. On one occasion, the Holy Spirit used Muhammad to raise his own son from the dead (see testimony Ch. 11).

(7) *A life of integrity*: By the standards of Moravian culture, Muhammad's integrity was exceptional in my estimation. The women on our team were particularly impressed by his relatively unusual commitment to his wife and family. Family commitment had become a rare priority among men in his culture. Muhammad was careful about not making promises that he could not keep. Unlike most of my other Moravian friends and acquaintances, he typically made it a point to follow through on his appointments with me. He

frequently put himself at risk for the sake of the other disciples. Of course, like every other follower of Jesus, Muhammad experienced growing pains and moments of spiritual immaturity. However, in my opinion, on the whole he stood out as a man of integrity, especially by the standards of his own culture.

(8) *Authority over demons and diseases, authority to build up and shape the life of the church, and authority to impart spiritual gifts:* See numbers 3 and 6 above. Most of the new disciples looked up to Muhammad as a leader and man of spiritual authority.

On the basis of the criteria delineated by Deere, I have personally come to the conclusion that Muhammad was not only a man of peace, but also a true apostle whom, like Paul, God had been grooming for a particular hour in his people group's history. I leave it to the reader to make his/her own conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Unlike Paul, many of us today cannot visit a city and simply walk into a synagogue whose constituents possess a developed, cultivated, Bible-centered Messianic expectation. However, one factor that compensates for this disadvantage today is the man of peace concept. When God sends us to a new neighborhood, city, or region, one of the ways we can avoid wasting much time and effort in our attempts to see new movements birthed is to center our strategy on finding and connecting with persons of peace. For instance, if we know that we will only be permitted access into a country for three weeks on a business trip, we should ask the Holy Spirit before we land who and where persons of peace can be located so that we can connect with them as soon as we arrive. This enables us to begin the discipleship process shortly after our arrival and therefore maximizes the time we do have for the purpose of training new disciples. As we pray and commune with the Holy Spirit, we can be confident that God will connect us with persons of peace through the revelatory activity of the Holy Spirit. In some cases, he may even connect us to strategic leaders whom he has been preparing for watershed moments in the redemptive history of an unreached people group or nation.

ENDNOTES

¹ Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 165–87.

² For more, see Mike Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic* (Eastborne, England: Kingsway Publications, 1996), 133–52.

³ For more, see Jack Deere, *The Beginner's Guide to the Gift of Prophecy* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2008).

⁴ Eric Bridges, "Biblical 'Man of Peace' Approach is Key to Effective Outreach," <http://www.ethniharvest.org/links/articles/bridges_man_of_peace.htm> (accessed January 2008).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Bangalore, India: Sri Sudhindra Offset Press, 2004), 211–12.

⁷ Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 245.

⁸ Ibid., 243–7.

⁹ Someone who denies that miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are valid for today.

¹⁰ Deere, *Surprised by the Power*, 251–2.

3

Anchored in Truth: Proclaiming the Biblical Gospel

One morning as I paced back and forth in the prayer room at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, the story of the Samaritan woman was on my mind. The Holy Spirit dropped a phrase into my heart: "I'm thirsty." As Jesus had gone to the Samaritan woman and asked her for a drink, now he was thirsty for more lost human beings to give him a drink of their lives. I felt a slight impression that later that day I should go to downtown Kansas City.

That afternoon I drove to 39th street in a weak attempt to obey what I was interpreting as an assignment from the Lord. I went into a medical clinic, but by the time I arrived it was about to close. So I decided to drive some more before heading home. As I drove past Kansas University Hospital, I felt a small nudge to go into the hospital. I parked the car, walked into the hospital, and sat down in the lobby, not sure how long I should wait or why I was there. I felt very awkward. Shortly after I sat down, two young ladies, who were obviously friends, walked up to each other in front of me and began to talk within my hearing. One of the young women told her friend that she was visiting the hospital because her brother had been hit over the head with the butt of a gun in a gang-related fight. Though he had been unconscious, he was now awake but still in great pain. Their mother and her boyfriend were up in the room, and she was getting ready to join them.

When I heard this, I mustered up the courage to interrupt. I told the young woman, "I'm a follower of Jesus. Jesus loved to heal the sick, and he told his followers to pray for the sick. Do you mind if I go up to your brother's room with you to pray for him?"

She seemed accepting. "Yes, follow me."

I had forgotten my driver's license in the car, and therefore should not have been able to get through security. However, because I was with a family member, I was permitted entry.

When we got to the room, the young woman simply told her mom that I was there to pray for her brother. After introductions, I explained the gospel to them. I then laid hands on the brother—who was moaning as he lay on the bed—and began to pray for him in Jesus' name.

After I prayed, I asked him, "How do you feel?"

"It doesn't hurt as much," he said, looking surprised.

His sister spoke up. "I've been having some shoulder pain," she said. "It completely disappeared when you prayed."

I hadn't been aware she had been in pain. I went over to her and quietly spoke a few words about God's love that I felt she needed to hear. Tears began to flow down her face as the Holy Spirit ministered to her.

Now the mother chimed in. She told us that some back pain she had been experiencing (of which I had been unaware) had suddenly disappeared. The boyfriend just sat there trying to take everything in.

I took the opportunity to elaborate on the gospel further and then extended an invitation for them to respond. All four of them gave their lives to Jesus on the spot. Jesus, in turn, took a deep drink.

At the end of the age, Jesus will return to resurrect his people *bodily*—real flesh, blood, bones, heart, lungs, fingers, and toes—from the dead and to establish the kingdom of God on the earth for the purpose of restoring the creation he loves. As a sign and confirmation of that promise, on that day in the hospital Jesus touched real human bodies—a head, a shoulder, and a back—of people who had heard the witness to the bodily resurrection to come.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

What is the gospel? Once God has connected us to unbelievers, persons of peace, or even potential apostles, what is the message that he has commissioned us to communicate to them? Unfortunately, this fundamental question often goes unasked in the Body of Messiah today because of presumed familiarity. Those who have grown up in churches influenced by Western culture are especially prone to overlook this basic question. With so many sermons, worship CDs, and Bibles floating around, *surely* we know what the gospel is—don't we? However, when pressed to give an answer, many (if not most) in the church find themselves scrambling to fit the many fragments of truth and catchphrases they have accumulated over the years into a coherent presentation. The "mishmash" message that often does emerge is often distorted by unbiblical influences from the Hellenistic worldview of the ancient Greeks. Much of what we call "the gospel" today would be hardly recognizable to the biblical authors, all of whom understood and articulated the content of their message within the matrix of a Hebraic or Jewish worldview.

In this chapter I have several purposes. Firstly, I want to briefly highlight some of the unbiblical worldview assumptions of which the gospel message needs to be divested in order for the Body of Messiah to once again walk in and testify to the fullness of "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jd. 3). Many of these toxic assumptions and ideas continue to exert influence on segments of God's people on an unconscious level. Secondly, I will juxtapose the Greek worldview against the biblical Hebraic worldview. Thirdly, I will briefly discuss the continuity of the gospel from Old Testament to New. Fourthly, I will categorize the core content or *kerygma* of the message preached by the apostles in the Book of Acts. Finally, I will briefly expound upon the biblically-defined relationship between the gospel message and signs and wonders.

DETOXIFYING THE MESSAGE

All human societies and cultures operate from a set of unconscious assumptions that together constitute what anthropologists call a

"worldview." Christian anthropologist and missiologist Charles Kraft defines worldview as "the culturally structured assumptions, values, and commitments/allegiances underlying a people's perception of reality and their responses to those perceptions."¹ Included in these deep-level assumptions are ideals about the way life is *supposed* to work, as well explanations for why it does not *actually* work out that way. In other words, one of the functions of worldview is to make sense of the discrepancy we observe and feel between the good we know ought to be in the world and the horrendous mess we actually see there.

Most cultures, moreover, provide their constituents with some type of vision, solution, or plan of "salvation" to recover that lost ideal and restore humanity to wholeness. A simple way of saying it is that most cultures have some kind of worldview categories for *problem*, *solution (salvation)*, and *benefits of the solution*. Whatever one's culture, the human heart remembers a time when things were right, bemoans the fact that they are no longer right, and longs for the day when things might be made right once again. A worldview helps to organize this heart dynamic into a coherent picture that provides people with a way to cope with the difficulties they encounter in their daily existence. We perceive reality through the spectacles of the worldview we inherit from our cultures. Most of our lives are spent looking through our worldview. Rare are the moments that we stop to consciously look *at* our own worldview.

Of all cultural worldviews in human history, the Hellenistic worldview, or the worldview of the ancient Greeks, has exerted the greatest influence on Western societies. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once stated that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."² From classical Greece, Socrates, Plato, and their intellectual successors pushed the "snowball" of a particular line of thinking down the mountain of history that eventually became transformed into an avalanche of unperceived and unquestioned worldview assumptions accepted more broadly on a societal level. When Alexander the Great expanded his empire throughout the

world in the fourth century BC, he brought Hellenistic values, ideas, and culture to the lands he conquered. In the Egyptian city named after him, Alexandria, he built the largest library in the ancient world. Alexandria became the primary intellectual center from which Hellenistic ideas spread and gained acceptance among scholars and leaders throughout the ancient world. Once Hellenistic thinking gained a foothold in Europe, from there it spread to other parts of what is now known as the “Western world” during the eras of colonialism and imperialism.

In the second century, the city of Alexandria began to exert great influence on the Body of Messiah. Two Christian theologians trained in Greek thought and philosophy—Clement (c. 150–211) and Origen (c. 182–251)—founded a school in Alexandria in an attempt to reconcile Christianity with Greek philosophy. The “allegorical approach” to biblical interpretation—whereby the Scriptures were to be mined for “deeper” and hidden “spiritual truths” beyond their straightforward, literal sense—was born here. From this point on, Hellenistic thinking began to seep more and more into Christian theology, influencing theologians such as Augustine, whose writings have shaped the Western theological tradition more than those of any other single individual:

Though the Alexandrian School was challenged in its mission by the Antiochian School, which espoused a common sense, literal interpretation, the “spiritual” interpretation of the Bible became prevalent by the time Constantine took over the Roman Empire (324), which ushered in the age of the synthesis between church and state and sealed the Greek philosophical worldview in the mind of the Western Church by creedal orthodoxy. The Church’s greatest theologians of the Medieval Ages, such as Augustine (354-430), Gregory the Great (540-604) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), were thoroughly Hellenistic in their worldview and Alexandrian in their hermeneutic.³

Through Christian theologians whose thinking was shaped in the mold of Alexandrian theology, the snowball pushed down the hill by Plato ended up landing in church pews. This is true up to the present day, even for the vast majority of Christians who have not gone to seminary, but who have nevertheless been taught week-in and week-out by those who have. Whether we realize it or not, Greek thinking has been set like cement in the church's corporate consciousness since Augustine.⁴

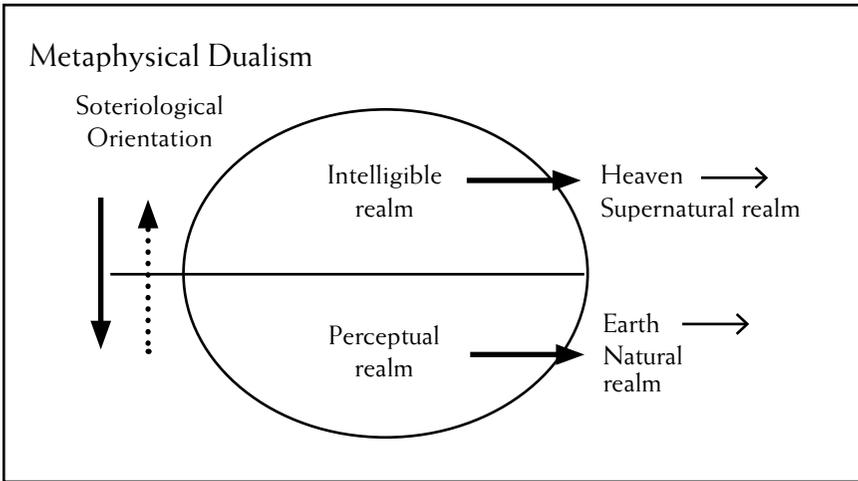
Typically, the worldview of every culture usually consists both of elements that agree with biblical truth (and thus are to be affirmed) and those that do not agree with biblical truth (and thus need to be changed from God's perspective). The problem with the widespread infiltration of Greek thought into the church is that so much of it is simply contrary to the Hebraic worldview of the Bible. This is one of the reasons why so many in the Body of Messiah today do not know how to explain the gospel when put on the spot: it has been often obscured by unbiblical ideas down through the centuries. In order to understand the biblical view of the kingdom of God, then, we must first identify and detoxify ourselves of the negative influence that Greek worldview has exerted on the church for many centuries. To do this, I will briefly compare the Greek worldview and the biblical worldview using the above-mentioned categories of problem, solution, and benefits of solution.

THE GREEK WORLDVIEW: PLATONIC OR METAPHYSICAL DUALISM

According to the Greek worldview, reality (that which exists or is real) is structured on a two-fold basis as a dichotomy between two different "realms":

First set forth by Socrates (c.470–399 BC) and Plato (c.427–347 BC), the Hellenistic worldview is a form of *metaphysical dualism*, which divides existence into two distinct realms. For Plato this dualism included the unchangeable, perfect "intelligible world," which

is unseen, and the corrupt, fallen “perceptual world,” which we see around us. The perceptual world consists of imperfect “copies” of the perfect and ideal intelligible “forms.”



This basic split in reality is still the bedrock upon which the foundation of the Western worldview rests.⁵

According to this worldview, everything I see around me is a corrupt and defiled copy of an “ideal” floating around in an abstract place called the “ideal” or “intelligible” realm. For example, when I draw a circle, in the Greek mind that circle is a corrupt “copy” of an abstract “ideal” circle located in the non-material, “ideal realm.” To use another example, a material apple is simply a corrupt and imperfect copy of the “ideal” apple located in the “ideal realm.”

In the Greek worldview, furthermore, the physical world around us, or the “perceptual realm,” is evil *in itself*, and thus lies at the center of the problem of human existence. The physical, material world of which we are a part is corrupt in and of itself. So for example, when someone commits a sexual crime against another, according to this worldview, the problem is not that someone used their will to indulge their sexual desires in a wicked way. The problem is that the material world itself—including sexual desire—is inherently corrupt and of a

"lesser" and inferior quality than the postulated "ideal realm." In the Greek worldview, the reason why life does not work as it should is because everything physical and material about the world we can perceive with our senses is intrinsically imperfect.

Because the problem according to this worldview is identified with the physical world, the corresponding solution to the problem, or "salvation," is to *escape* from the corrupt material realm to the so-called perfect, superior intelligible realm. How do we escape? Through death. In the Greek worldview, death is the means by which our soul escapes the corrupt material realm and goes home, floating away to the intelligible or ideal realm. Moreover, because death is the way we achieve salvation—the means by which our "souls" move from the "corrupt" material world into the "perfect" "ideal realm"—death is understood as the friend of human beings. The benefit in this schema of salvation is that the human soul is no longer encumbered by the constraints and corruptions of the material realm.

In the "churchy" language with which this kind of thinking eventually became clothed, we would say that salvation means we "escape" the "toils of this life" to the "bliss" of an abstract, fuzzy spiritual realm called "heaven," where we spend eternity floating on an ethereal cloud playing a harp forever. Death, moreover, is the means by which we achieve salvation. As we will see, while it is true that believers who die are with the Lord in a disembodied state until Jesus returns, the process of the soul's "heavenization" is not the focus of salvation in the biblical worldview. Rather, this kind of thinking more closely reflects the early heresy of Gnosticism. In the words of Tim Warner,

The idea of a heavenly destiny was common in the first century among pagans schooled in Greek philosophy. It entered Christianity gradually, after the deaths of the Apostles, through the incorporation of elements of Gnosticism. The Gnostics taught that matter was evil, and the creation was a mistake, made by a lesser god who sought to imprison mankind in

physical bodies, and demand their worship. Christian Gnosticism held that Jesus came from the supreme God to free mankind from this evil physical realm, in which he had been trapped by the lesser god whom the Jews worshipped. Jesus' mission was to show mankind the way to a higher heavenly reality (not atone for sins). Salvation was attained through levels of 'gnosis' (the Greek word for 'knowledge'). Through the attainment of supernatural knowledge of various mysteries, converts were supposed to advance through stages (helped along the way by certain spirit guides) until one reached the 'pleroma,' the Gnostics' version of 'heaven.' Since the material world was evil, Gnostics denied the resurrection of the body as well. Being freed from the bonds of earth and the material cosmos, so they could soar into the heavens, was the hope of the Gnostics.⁶

When the Greek worldview penetrated the church, the meaning of salvation shifted to the soul's escape to the "ideal" or "intelligible" realm. It was a Platonic concept dressed up in biblical language. Salvation became "going to heaven," escape from a material world that God does not really like anyway, and death became the friend by means of which we get to heaven. Augustine played an influential role in the church's assimilation of this shift:

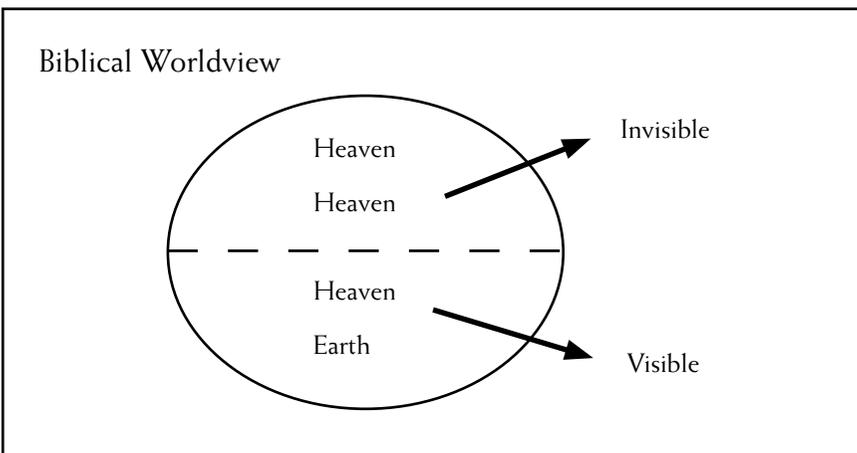
Though generally a follower of Origen's allegorical interpretation (cf. *On Christian Doctrine*, Preface), Augustine toned down the system to make it less objectionable to orthodox Christians (see Phillip Schaff, "Preface to Augustine's *The City of God*," in *The Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, p.5). On many points Augustine seems orthodox, and though giving lip-service to the resurrection of the body (cf. *City of God*, 20.6-14; 22.5-21; *On Christian Doctrine*, 1:19-21), he sees heaven as the ultimate end of salvation

(cf. *City of God*, 11.1; 14.28; 19.10-11; 20.14-27) and thus assumes a *heavenly resurrection* (cf. *City of God*, 13.22-23; 22.3-4). Heaven as the ultimate destiny of the saints is the staple of the amillennial view that grew out of Augustine's allegorical approach to Scripture.⁷

As we will see, this is in contrast to the biblical worldview, for which salvation is not a heavenward movement of the soul that glorifies and immortalizes death, but an earthward movement of restoration that condemns death and glorifies life on a renewed and regenerated earth under the leadership a righteous King.⁸

THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW: ONE HOUSEHOLD WORTH SAVING

In contrast to the Greek worldview, the Bible does not picture reality as split into two different realms, but as a singular house governed by one sovereign Ruler, part of which is visible to the human eye in this age (the earth) and part of which is invisible (the heavens). Unlike the Greek worldview, in which there is little if no interaction between the material realm and the ideal realm, the biblical worldview allows dynamic interaction between the heavens and the earth. Although the heavens are invisible, both are still part of the same house being governed by the same ruler, God himself.



As Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It is like a big living room divided only by a light curtain. Though people on both sides cannot see each other, they can still interact dynamically (chart⁹).

According to the biblical worldview, there is not an impassible highway between heaven and earth. Nor is the earth a corrupt realm that God wants either us or himself to escape from. On the contrary, God's goal in salvation is to repair the earth. He once dwelled here without hindrance and longs to dwell here with human beings in loving fellowship again:

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, *coming down out of heaven* (earthward movement) *from God* (to the earth!), prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "*Now the dwelling of God is with men* (on the earth), and *he will live with them* (on the earth!). They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." (Rev. 21:2–3, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

When human beings rebelled against God in the Garden, the presence of sin in them meant that they could no longer endure God's direct, holy, manifest presence without being obliterated. In his mercy, he temporarily withdrew his immediate presence to the other side of the curtain (the heavens) of his "one house" or "living room," where he could still interact redemptively with human beings without them being destroyed through direct exposure to his holiness. However, when he moved to the other side of the "living room," it was with the promise that he would come back to fix the other side so that he could dwell there with human beings forever.

The biblical view, therefore, is not of a material world corrupt in itself and thus irreparable and worthy of complete abandonment; rather, it is of a broken, sinful creation that God still loves, refuses to abandon, and is deeply committed to fixing once and for all. In the meantime, he still interacts with us dynamically through the other side of the curtain, pleading for us to repent and believe in Jesus

while there is time so that we can still live in the house when he comes to repair it.

From beginning to end, the Bible portrays the God who finds great joy in his creation, the One who fervently loves the work of his hands. Genesis opens with an unambiguous declaration of the goodness of God's creation in his sight:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... God saw all that he had made, and *it was very good* ... Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. (Gn. 1:1, 31, emphasis added)

Proverbs talks of the eternal Word of God as the craftsman who experienced great delight at the Father's side as he spoke the universe into existence:

I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at his side. *I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.* (Pr. 8:27–31, emphasis added)

God's love for and commitment to the created order is deep and real. Far from seeing the physical universe as corrupt beyond repair, as the Greeks did and as many descendents of their worldview still do today, the reality is that God truly enjoys the works of his hands, calls them good, and was so committed to fixing the earth that he sent his very own Son to the cross!

This brings us to the real problem. If the reason why life does not work as it should is not the corruption of the created world itself, as the Greeks asserted, what *is* the problem with existence according to the Bible? The answer is that beginning with Adam and Eve, human

beings have continually risen up in pride and arrogance against God in their hearts, and have chosen to exercise their wills in ways that are hostile and rebellious toward God and detrimental to others. The center of the problem with existence on the earth is not found in the creation, but in the way human beings manipulate and use the earth for our own self-interest, self-indulgence, and perverse ends.

In the Garden, God was enthroned as the King of the heavens and the earth, and his kingdom was perfectly at rest (Gn. 1:1, 31–2:2). Furthermore, he created human beings in his image or likeness (Gn. 1:26–27). What did this mean? The eternal God exists forever; therefore, man, who was made in the image of God, was created to live forever by being permitted continual access to the tree of life (Gn. 2:9, 15–17, 3:22–24). God functions as a righteous King and Ruler governmentally over his creation; man was created to rule the earth righteously in partnership with God (Gn. 2:28). God, as the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three Persons subsisting in one indivisible essence—eternally experiences love, fellowship, and intimacy; man was created to walk with God and experience intimacy with God forever. These were the blessings that God bestowed on human beings as the crown of his creation. His one stipulation was for us to humbly acknowledge his authority and sovereignty by not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As long as we acknowledged God's ultimate leadership over the heavens and earth by obeying this command, all would be well. We would never die, and we would rule and experience intimacy with him forever.

Of course, Adam and Eve ate the fruit, and we have been rebelling against God ever since. The horrible consequence of our sin is death. Unlike the Greeks, who viewed death as the means of salvation by which we escape the corrupt material world, the Bible depicts death and "bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:21) in the created order as a vile enemy to be thwarted and overthrown:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And

the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but *you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (rebellious exercise of will—disobedience), for *when you eat* (violate the command) of it *you will surely die*" (death of the body as consequence of violation). (Gn. 2:15–17, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

For he must reign until he has put all his *enemies under his feet*. The last *enemy* to be *destroyed* is *death*. (1 Cor. 15:25–26, emphasis added)

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? (1 Cor. 15:55)

The idea that death is our friend would have been absolutely unthinkable to the prophets and apostles. While it is true that those who die in Messiah find some kind of temporary respite in the Lord's presence on "the other side of the curtain" (see Php. 1:20–24), and though God's use of death in this age is often mysterious (see Is. 57:1–2), the biblical hope is unambiguously *not* the soul's escape to an abstract cloud in heaven. It is *the resurrection of the body, real human flesh—bones, tissue, and ligaments—up from the dirt*. As Paul says it, our longing and yearning is for our new resurrected bodies that God will give to us at Messiah's return:

Now we know that if *the earthly tent* (human body, subject to decay) we live in is *destroyed* (through death), we have *a building* (resurrected body) from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, *longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling* (our resurrected body), because when we are *clothed* (with our resurrected bodies), we will *not be found naked* (as disembodied spirits). For while we are in this tent, we *groan and are burdened* (longing for death introduced at the Garden to be overturned, cf. Rom. 8:23), because we do not wish to be *unclothed* (i.e., disembodied state of being) but to

be *clothed* with our heavenly dwelling (our resurrected body, not built with human hands), so *that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life* (in the resurrection of the dead at Messiah's appearing). Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, *guaranteeing what is to come* (our own bodily resurrection when Jesus returns, cf. Rom. 8:23; Col. 3:3–4, etc.). (2 Cor. 5:1–5, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those *who fall asleep* (die), or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that *Jesus died and rose again* (as a firstfruits of the resurrection of the righteous, cf. 1 Cor. 15:20) and so we believe that *God will bring with Jesus* those who have fallen asleep in him (resurrect Jesus' followers, cf. Col. 3:3–4). According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have *fallen asleep* (died). For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and *the dead in Christ will rise first* (coming up from the dirt with new bodies). After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (in new bodies). And so we will be with the Lord forever (on the earth, purged of death, in resurrected bodies). Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Th. 4:13–18, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

At the center of the biblical hope, therefore, is the resurrection of the human body. Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day with a resurrected, imperishable, human body (Jn. 20:27). He is coming back to destroy death and purge it from our own bodies forever. The

biblical hope is not the heavenization of the soul, but the bodily "resurrection of the righteous" (Ac. 24:15; Jn. 5:28–29; Rev. 20:6), by which means the saints take their place in the kingdom of God on the earth under Jesus' leadership. Early church fathers like Justin,¹⁰ Irenaus,¹¹ and Tertullian¹²—who predated Augustine by more than two centuries—were adamant, passionate, and unequivocal on this point. On the tragic side, those who do not submit to Jesus will also ultimately receive imperishable resurrected bodies in the "resurrection of the wicked" (Ac. 24:15; Jn. 5:28–29; Rev. 20:11–15), after which they will be thrown into the lake of fire forever in an embodied state (Rev. 20:15). This is what the Bible calls the "second death" (Rev. 2:11, 20:6).

The enemy of death, however, presupposes another problem. Death did not come first, but entered the creation through the door of another enemy: sin. Death was *the penalty* or wages of Adam and Eve's violation of God's statute (Rom. 6:23). To deal with the problem of death via the solution of resurrection, the problem of sin—by which means death entered creation—first had to be solved. The problem of sin, of course, was dealt with through the death, sacrifice, and atonement of the Messiah on the cross, by which we receive the forgiveness of sins, unto inclusion in the resurrection of the righteous and the kingdom of the Messiah. As the Apostle John puts it, Jesus "has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5) unto regaining our position in God's kingdom as kings who rule with Him governmentally, and priests who walk with Him intimately forever (Rev. 1:6). Through restored access to the tree of life (Rev. 2:7, 22:14), our bodies will perpetually self-regenerate in order that we may live forever, just as the God in whose image we are made lives forever. Having returned to the beauty of the Garden of Eden, life will finally be back to normal.

In summary, according to the biblical worldview, the basic *problem* with life on the earth is sin and death, not the corruption of some so-called "perceptual realm." The *solution*, or salvation, is the removal of sin through the blood atonement of the Messiah, unto the *benefit* of being included in the resurrection of the righteous and the kingdom

of God at Jesus' coming. The chart on page 74 summarizes the differences between the Greek and biblical worldviews. Any version of the gospel that does not have the resurrection of the human body, unto inclusion in the kingdom of God on a restored earth under the leadership of a real government led by Jesus the Messiah, is an aberrant distortion of the gospel and must be discarded by the Body of Messiah if we are to realign ourselves wholeheartedly with the biblical worldview.

THE BIBLICAL HOPE: CONTINUITY FROM OLD TO NEW TESTAMENT

Unquestionably, the message that Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, the other apostles, and the early church preached and taught was the good news of the "kingdom of God" (see Mt. 3:2; Mk. 1:15; Ac. 8:12, 28:31, etc). However, in the New Testament we never find an explicit definition of the kingdom of God. Why is this? The answer is that Jesus, the apostles, and all of their Jewish listeners already had a solid grasp what this term meant due to their knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. The New Testament, in other words, presupposes and assumes the same gospel as that of the Old Testament. For example, in Daniel 2, Daniel prophesies about a day when the kingdom of God would crush all other earthly kingdoms:

After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw

	Greek Worldview (<i>Metaphysical or Platonic Dualism</i>)	Biblical Worldview (<i>Unified Metaphysical Structure or Construct</i>)
Construct of Reality	Two houses—"perceptible realm" and abstract "ideal realm"—separated by an impassible interstate, no interaction between the houses. The material realm that we see with our eyes is corrupt, contemptible, and imperfect. The ideal realm, to which the soul goes after death, is perfect and incorrupt.	One singular room or metaphysical construct, with the visible and invisible dynamically interacting. God lives in the house, and will ultimately dwell on a renewed earth with man. God loves his creation and calls it "good." God is determined to fix the creation, rather than to abandon it.
Problem	The imperfection and corruption of the material world itself.	Sinful exercise of the human will (pride and rebellion) for self-indulgence and manipulation of the creation at the expense of others (lawlessness). Death is the tragic consequence of sin.
Solution	Death, unto the immortal soul's "release" into the "ideal" or "intelligible realm." In common church parlance, the soul goes to an abstract abode called heaven, while God destroys the earth. Death is the means of accessing the solution, therefore death is a friend.	The blood atonement of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Sin overturned through Jesus' sacrifice. Death overturned through the resurrection of the dead at Messiah's coming, unto inclusion in Messiah's kingdom on the earth. Death is the enemy, overthrown by Jesus by means of the resurrection of the righteous. Repentance and perseverant faith in Jesus as Lord are the means of accessing the solution.
Benefits of solution	Absence from the corrupt, physical realm. Immortal soul living in the "ideal realm."	Inclusion in a real government called the kingdom of God on a restored earth. Resurrection of the body that lives forever through restored access to the tree of life. Restored position of ruling with God over the earth governmentally. Avoidance of resurrection of the wicked and being cast into the lake of fire in the second death.

the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay (all earthly empires with earthly governments). In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will *set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed*, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. (Dan. 2:39–45, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

When John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and others proclaimed the message of the kingdom of God in the first century, their words would have elicited passages like this one in the minds of their Jewish audience. In the Jewish mind and within the biblical worldview, the phrase “kingdom of God” explicitly referred to God’s appointed Messiah coming at the end of the age to crush all wicked governments and to establish a righteous government—a real government, with a real ruler and real laws—*on the earth*. This government would be based in Israel and Jerusalem and would be the means by which the entire earth would be restored to its original glory.

It is in the context of this message of a coming earthly kingdom, moreover, that the Messianic mission as outlined in the Old Testament was also understood. Beginning in Genesis, the Messiah is identified and promised as God’s divinely-ordained instrument for issuing the fatal blow that would “crush the head” of Satan and purge his wicked influence from the created order forever (Gn. 3:14–15). This Messianic “Seed” would first suffer a minor wound at the hands of the serpent, but as God’s conqueror and champion this Seed would ultimately have the final victory, conquering the evil one and squelching mankind’s rebellion, and reinstating the glory of the Garden—the kingdom of God—on the earth now cursed because of man’s disobedience (Gn. 3:14–15; cf. the military language of Mic. 7:17).¹³ The rest of the Old Testament simply paints the picture

of this Messianic thesis of Genesis 3:15—commonly called the “protoevangelium” or “first gospel”¹⁴—in more detail. Without going into an exhaustive analysis of the Messianic concept in the Hebrew Scriptures,¹⁵ before we ever reach the New Testament we learn that as part of his mission the Messiah would function as:

- The Messianic Seed of Shem, the means through which God would dwell in the tents of Shem (Gn. 9:25–27).¹⁶
- The Messianic Seed of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:16), who would restore the earth through the agency of God’s divinely–appointed nation, Israel (Gn. 12–22). Under Messiah, the righteous descendents of Abraham, fashioned back into the image of God through an age of testing and trial,¹⁷ would inherit the land of Israel forever (Gn. 12:14–18), would be included in the resurrection of the righteous (Gn. 15, cf. Heb. 6),¹⁸ and would lead many nations and peoples in righteousness (Gn. 17; cf. Rom. 4). Under Messiah, the nation of Israel would become a blessing or a servant nation (the root for *barak* in Hebrew means “to kneel”) that would function as the governmental instrument through which God would bless the Gentile nations and fix our broken planet (Genesis 12:1–3; cf. *Servant Songs* of Is. 41ff). Israel would function as the governmental locus of God’s kingdom on the earth from which the law and commands of Messiah would go forth unto the transformation of the nations (see, e.g., Is. 2:2–5, 9, 11).
- The Messianic Seed of David and Son of God, God’s anointed king. He would be the ultimate governmental authority over the nations of the earth, whose governance would “branch out” or extend from Zion to the entire earth (see 1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 2, 89, 110, 132; Is. 2, 4, 11; Jer. 23; Ezek. 17, etc.). As the Lion of Judah, he would receive the governmental scepter of authority that would cause the nations of the earth to submit to God in full obedience (Gn. 49:8–12). The government of God would rest on this king’s shoulders forever (Is. 9:6–7).

- The "star" and "scepter" that God would use to militarily crush and conquer Israel's Gentile enemies in an eschatological, cataclysmic deliverance of Israel (see Nu. 24:17–19; cf. Is. 10–29; Joel 3; Ezek. 38–39; Hab. 1–3; Zech. 12–14, etc.).
- "The Prophet," who would come for the purpose of a mighty deliverance on Israel's behalf. In a way even greater than Moses, this Prophet would have the very words and commands of God in his mouth, and any in Israel who would not heed this Prophet's words would be cut off from Israel (Dt. 18:15–19; cf. Jn. 1:25; Ac. 3:22–23).
- A mediator who would remove God's rod of wrath from the back of humanity (Jo. 9:32–35).
- An intercessor, friend, and advocate to whom God's people could plead and pour out their hearts (Jo. 16:19–21).
- A redeemer who would ultimately stand triumphant on the earth and restore the bodies of the righteous through the resurrection of the dead (Jo. 19:25–27).
- An "interpreter" and ransom-provider. As one superior to the angels, he would bring right perspective and righteous interpretation to the tragedies of suffering in this age, and would provide a ransom that would make the resurrection from the dead possible (Job 33:24–28).
- The Banner who would, upon Israel's repentance, gather the exiles of Israel back to the land, cleanse and purify Israel from her sin, and establish an everlasting covenant with Israel that enables her to legitimately inherit the land forever as a righteous nation (see, Dt. 30; Is. 4, 11, 55, 61; Jer. 31–33, 50; Ezek. 16, 37; Zech. 12–14; Mal. 3–4, etc.).
- A "faithful priest" who would carry out all the desires of God's heart, who would minister before God always, and whose house would be established by God (see 1 Sam. 2:35; Ps. 110).
- The suffering servant of God, vindicated by God after suffering (see Ps. 22; Is. 53).

- God's appointed Judge, the executer of his wrath against the wicked (see Ps. 110; Joel 3; Is. 63).
- The rejected (by men) and tested capstone or cornerstone on which God would build his house (Ps. 118:22–23; Is. 28:16).
- The beloved servant of God on whom the Spirit of God would rest; whose body would never see decay; through whom that same Spirit would be poured out on the descendants of Israel; and through whose word the order of death on the earth would be overturned (see Ps. 16, 68; Joel 2; Is. 42, 44, 49:9,¹⁹ 61, etc.).

Therefore, when John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles came preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, their first-century Jewish hearers would have understood something roughly approximate to the following: through his appointed Messiah, God was getting ready to cleanse Israel of her wickedness and sin; pour out his Holy Spirit on the nation; deliver Jerusalem and Israel from their Gentile enemies and idol-worshipping oppressors through a cataclysmic scenario; resurrect the righteous unto inclusion in his kingdom; judge and purge all wicked inhabitants, governments, and rulers from the face of the earth; and establish the righteous governmental-apparatus—based in Israel with Jerusalem as the capital—by which means he would enforce God's laws throughout the earth and thereby restore the planet to its original glory. In this way, Israel would become the "light of the world" under the Messiah's leadership.

This brings us to an important point: How does the Messianic kingdom that will extend throughout the earth from Israel relate to God's one household of the heavens and the earth (see above)? God's household is his universal kingdom over which he reigns from his throne in the highest heavens (Ps. 11:4; Is. 66:1). The earth, moreover, is a rebellious fiefdom within that universal kingdom. The Messianic kingdom to be established on the earth following Jesus' return, moreover, is God's chosen instrument for overturning the earth's rebellion and restoring the earth in righteousness. In other words, it is his tool for purging evil from the universal kingdom. Both

the universal kingdom and the Messianic kingdom are the "kingdom of God" in an important sense. However, the preaching of Jesus and the apostles focused primarily on the Messianic kingdom to come at the end of the age. The phrase that sprung from their lips with such power in the first century—"the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15)—was simply a prophetic reiteration of what the prophets of old had prophesied (Is. 13:6; Ez. 30:3; Joel 1:15, 3:14; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Jd. 14-15), namely, that in the "day of the Lord" at the end of history, God would usher in a kingdom through which he would overturn evil and rebellion on the earth forever (Dan. 2:44); and that this day was drawing nearer and nearer with each passing breath. The only appropriate response to this truth on our part: sincere repentance (Mt. 4:14; Mk. 1:15), lest we be among those who will be purged from the earth in that day. This message, boldly proclaimed by the saints in some form at least as early as Enoch (Jd. 14-15), has been urgent ever since it was first prophesied to Adam and Eve (Gn. 3:15). It was even more so in the first century in light of the Messiah's first coming and his own proclamation of it. How much more should the urgency of this message burn in our hearts and on our lips today!

Unfortunately, a large number of believers today, because of the influence of the Platonic dualism of the Greek worldview, believe that Jesus came to correct the "silly Jews" and the "silly apostles" for believing that God was going to establish a "physical kingdom" instead of a "spiritual kingdom." The text most commonly cited in this argument is Acts 1:6–8:

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you *at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel* (assuming that the kingdom will be restored to Israel as promised in the OT)?" He said to them: "*It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority* (the times are set by the Father. Not correction of their assumption of the kingdom's restoration to Israel). But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will

be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Often this passage is interpreted to mean, "Oh, the naive apostles did not realize that they were asking the wrong question. They were still clinging on to that 'Old Testament' notion of a literal 'physical kingdom' on the earth, whereas Jesus came and changed the whole program to a 'spiritual kingdom' in heaven." Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth.

First of all, when the disciples asked Jesus this question, they had just spent forty days being instructed and trained in detail concerning the kingdom of God by Jesus himself, now in a resurrected and glorified body (Ac. 1:3)! If they still were plagued by this high a level of misunderstanding after all that time being taught by the resurrected Messiah himself, then we today, two thousand years removed, simply have no chance at grasping the biblical message. The disciples were not stupid; they knew exactly what they were asking Jesus about. Secondly, Jesus does not disagree with or correct the apostles for their question, but actually assumes it is the right one. What he does adjust, however, is their expectation of the *timing* in which the above-mentioned events would occur. *When* would God send Jesus back to complete the rest of the Messianic mission? The answer was: at his second coming (Ac. 1:10–11).

Ultimately, the claim that Jesus was somehow replacing the apostles' hope in a "physical" earthly kingdom with a "spiritual" heavenly kingdom glaringly betrays the dichotomy inherent in the Hellenistic mindset. Unfortunately, many views of the kingdom of God propounded by the church since Augustine—including Augustinianism (kingdom = church),²⁰ post-Enlightenment liberalism (kingdom = moral ethic),²¹ inaugurated eschatology (kingdom = divine reign and already/not yet),²² and dispensationalism (kingdom = dichotomization between God's "heavenly people" and "earthly people")²³—have been tainted by Platonic dualism to varying degrees.²⁴ As stated above, in the biblical worldview, the "spiritual" and "physical"—or more appropriately, the invisible heavens

(presently) and visible earth—are not only deemed *good* in God's sight, but are also dynamically interactive and linked in destiny as part of a singular metaphysical construct: his household. What an amazing destiny for both the heavens and the earth! The primary question with which the disciples were concerned, therefore, was when Jesus was coming back to establish his righteous government for the well-being of the earth and its inhabitants. They wanted their Master back so that the world could be freed from its bondage to decay.

CORE CONTENT OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING

(KERYGMA)

Now we come to the gospel as preached and declared by the apostles in the book of Acts, the content of which is simply incomprehensible when not interpreted within the overall context of the biblical worldview and when not understood in light of the dynamic continuity between the hope of the Old Testament and the hope of the New. Once these things are taken into account, the core content of the gospel as preached by the apostles in the New Testament becomes easily discernable. On a broad level the *kerygma* can be classified into five categories:

1. *Messianic accreditation*: This dimension of the *kerygma* focuses on the unprecedented beauty of Jesus' life and ministry, and how God "built the case" for Jesus' Messiahship by means of the incredible love, goodness, compassion, signs, wonders, and miracles that characterized his ministry. Other factors also served to accredit Jesus as the Messiah, such as John the Baptist's testimony and the firstfruits outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which, according to Old Testament expectation, presupposed the Messiah's coming.
2. *Messianic suffering*: This dimension of the *kerygma* focuses on the death of Jesus the Messiah on the cross as a blood sacrifice of atonement for the forgiveness of sins. As we will see in more depth in Chapter 5, this part of the *kerygma* formed part of the mystery of Messiah, according to which God revealed in

Jesus a dimension of his plan of world redemption that most Jews had not anticipated, but which had nevertheless been prophesied. Before entering into the glory of his kingdom on the earth, the Messiah had to come to Israel *first* as an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins—as the antitype of the Mosaic sacrificial system. The blood of bulls and goats could not wash away our sins. Jesus' blood could. By means of this sacrifice, repentance and the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed to the world in Jesus' name as an offer of mercy before the Messiah's *second* appearing, wherein he would complete the Messianic mission and execute judgment on the wicked.

3. *Messianic vindication*: This dimension of the *kerygma* focuses on Jesus' resurrection and its manifold significance. First, by means of Jesus' resurrection, God vindicated Jesus judicially as righteous in his sight, and installed him as the promised Messianic King from the line of David. Jesus had been innocent and unjustly condemned to death. By dying on "a tree," the cross, Jesus had carried a curse on himself. However, the resurrection demonstrated that it was not his curse but *ours* that he bore. The implication was that all who had condemned him to death had actually been the guilty ones, and were thus in need of repentance. Second, Jesus' resurrection on the third day was a firstfruits guarantee and assurance that God would indeed fulfill his covenant promise and resurrect the righteous at the end of the age. The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, had been sorely mistaken. As we will see in Chapter 5, the Messiah's resurrection ahead of the rest of the righteous saints also was an aspect of the mystery of Messiah that the apostles had been commissioned to share with their Jewish audience. Third, the resurrection of Jesus served as God the Father's final, undeniable, and dramatic accreditation of Jesus as the prophesied Old-Testament Messiah, through whom the earth would be restored and renovated. Death had been the

legal consequence, fruit, and punishment of sin. Jesus had no sin, and therefore death could maintain no legal grip on him. He was therefore the promised Messianic Seed (Gn. 3:15) who would reverse the order of death on the earth.

4. *Messianic judgment and coming kingdom*: This dimension of the *kerygma* focuses on the completion of the Messianic mission at Jesus' second coming. As the author of life, at the end of the age the Messiah will speak the word and resurrect the righteous and bestow eternal rewards on them. As Lord and King, he will establish the Messianic kingdom on the earth, with its headquarters in Jerusalem. As the Father's appointed judge and military champion, the Messiah will also execute God's wrath, trampling on wicked rulers and cleansing the wicked from the earth (Ps. 110). Eventually, the wicked will also be resurrected bodily from the dead and thrown into the lake of fire. All nations and kingdoms of the earth belong to the Lord. He is Lord of all. He is determined to fix the earth that he loves. At Messiah's appearing, the "restoration of all things" (Ac. 3:21) will commence.
5. *Messianic offer of mercy and forgiveness before that Day*: This dimension of the *kerygma* highlights the means by which people access the forgiveness of sins now made available through Jesus' atonement: repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Those with repentant, believing hearts receive the Holy Spirit as a seal, guaranteeing their inclusion in the resurrection of the righteous and the Messianic kingdom at Messiah's second coming. The initiatory rite of water baptism is also performed sacramentally as an outward sign of one's inclusion in Messiah's kingdom through the forgiveness of sins and the deposit of grace thereby received (Rom. 6).

For more details of the *kerygma*, please see the chart in Appendix B, which highlights these core elements in some of Peter and Paul's messages as recorded in the book of Acts.

MIRACLES: SIGNS THAT CONFIRM THE MESSAGE

Before ending this chapter, it is worth mentioning the purpose of signs, wonders, and miracles as taught in the New Testament. In Mark 16, Jesus clearly states the intended function of signs and wonders:

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (proclamation of the message). Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (included in resurrection of righteous and Messianic kingdom), but whoever does not believe will be condemned (purged from the earth and thrown in lake of fire). And these *signs* (by nature pointing to something beyond themselves) will *accompany* those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons (as a sign of when Satan will be driven from the earth by Messiah, cf. Is. 24:21–23; Rev. 20:1–3); they will speak in new tongues (as a sign of unity of the nations around righteousness in Messianic kingdom, i.e., reversal of curse of Babel; cf. Gn. 11; Is. 2:4; Rev. 7); they will pick up snakes with their hands (as a sign of hostility removed from creation in Messianic kingdom; cf. Is. 11:6–9; Ac. 28:5); and when they drink deadly poison (possibly attempted murder of saints through persecution?), it will not hurt them at all (if so, as a sign that the saints will be vindicated and delivered at Messiah's appearing; cf. Mt. 24:30–31; 1 Th. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:4–6); they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well (as a sign of the day when Messiah will permanently fix their bodies in the resurrection; cf. 1 Cor. 15; 1 Th. 4:13–18)." After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God (to administer mercy and forgiveness of sins until the day of the Lord; cf. Ps. 110). Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere (proclamation),

and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it (the signs given to confirm the message). (Mk. 16:15–20, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Here we see that signs, wonders, and miracles, by their very nature and essence, are clearly designed to point beyond themselves to the day when the Messiah comes to establish the kingdom of God on the earth. When truck drivers come to a sign on the interstate that says "Chicago in 22 Miles," they are encouraged by the sign, which tells them that they are on the right path. However, they do not consider themselves to have yet arrived in Chicago. So it is with signs and miracles that accompany the gospel message. They are not ends in and of themselves, but are intended to testify to the day when Messiah Jesus will return to resurrect the righteous, purge sickness and death from his creation once and for all, and establish his kingdom on the earth.

Tongues testify to the day when human beings from all nations will once again unite with common understanding, this time for the purposes of righteousness (Is. 2:4; Rev. 7), as opposed to Babel, where the people used their common language for wickedness (Gn. 11). Healing and raising the dead are intended to point beyond themselves to the day when God will permanently fix our bodies by means of resurrection (1 Th. 4:13–18). Casting out demons testifies to the day when the Messiah will bind and lock Satan in the Abyss, and ultimately throw him into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:1–3, 10). Gifts of prophecy point beyond themselves to the day when "God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares" (Rom. 2:16; cf. 1 Cor. 14:24–25). Jesus' sign of changing the water into wine (Jn. 2:11) functioned to accredit Jesus (Ac. 2:22) as the Messiah who would serve a banquet of "the best meats and the finest of wines" in the Messianic kingdom after the "shroud" of death that "covers all nations" will have been destroyed in the resurrection (Is. 25:6–8). The sign of Lazarus being raised from the dead pointed ahead to "the day of salvation" when the Messiah will speak the word and the saints will receive bodies that will *never* die (Jn. 11:43; Is. 49:8–9; cf. Jn. 5:25; 1 Th. 4:13–18).

Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain was a typological sign that did not fulfill the words of the Hebrew prophets, but made their promises concerning the glory of the Messianic kingdom on the earth "more certain" (2 Pt. 2:16–19). The examples could go on and on.

Signs are intended, moreover, to heighten the persuasiveness of the message in order that unbelievers might take it all the more seriously:

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and *had seen what Jesus did* (when he raised Lazarus from the dead, vv. 43–44), *put their faith in him* (became convinced and persuaded that he was the Messiah). (Jn. 11:45, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Those who had been scattered *preached the word* (proclamation of the message) wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all *paid close attention to what he said* (the signs having added weight and increased persuasiveness to the message). (Ac. 8:4–6, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Now, Lord, consider their threats and *enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness* (proclamation of the message). Stretch out your hand *to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus* (as a testimony to the truth of the message and Jesus' authority as Messiah). (Ac. 4:29–30, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, *who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders* (the purpose of signs and wonders is to confirm the message). (Ac. 14:3, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord (the message first proclaimed by Jesus), was confirmed to us by those who heard him (the apostles). *God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will* (God added to the weight of the testimony through signs, wonders, and miracles). (Heb. 2:3–4, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Truly, the Holy Spirit is more eager than we are for the salvation of the multitudes of lost sheep wandering the face of the earth. He loves to back up the gospel with power.

Within the context of the Body of Messiah, signs are intended to encourage and spur the saints on to wholehearted love, obedience, righteousness, and perseverance until the day to which the sign points finally arrives and they receive their inheritance at their Messiah's appearing:

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles *to obey God* by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit (i.e., signs and wonders functioning to spur saints on to obedience, giving them assurance of the certainty of their hope). (Rom. 15:18–19, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

In other words, spiritual gifts are "distributed according to God's will" (Heb. 2:4) within the Body of Messiah for the purpose of strengthening and edifying the people who make up that Body (1 Cor. 14), unto believers becoming more and more mature, stable in their faith, perseverant, unified, and grounded in the knowledge of the Son of God until the day when their hope is finally realized at Messiah's return (Eph. 4).

That we regain a biblical perspective on signs and wonders today is crucial if we are to walk in the fullness of the New Testament witness. The Body of Messiah today frequently errs in either one

of two directions on this issue. On the one hand, there are parts of the Body who for various reasons—ranging from fear and bad teaching to abuses of the gifts and disappointments—have little to no expectancy, and in some cases even no desire, for God to back up his word with real power. Though some on this side of the spectrum usually possess valuable insights and at times have understandable complaints, quite obviously we cannot go down this road if we want to see the full recovery of a witness of New Testament-quality.

On the other side of the spectrum are those in the Body who actively cultivate faith for signs and wonders and promote growth in the spiritual gifts, but without much consideration of their purpose as biblically defined. Signs and “revival” become ends in themselves, rather than pointers to our eschatological hope as they were for Jesus, the apostles, and the early church. On a practical level, in some cases this often results in disillusionment and condemnation: for example, when we do not get healed but the person next to us does. In other cases, it can result in self-exaltation, an elitist spirit, and the unconscious development of a messianic complex. We start thinking that *we* are the ones called to establish the Messiah’s kingdom.

It is not with condemnation that I state these things. Personally, I have found myself considering all points of the spectrum at different times in my life, and have fallen into all of these traps (and many more) at one time or another. All of us are on a journey, and thankfully Jesus’ ability to keep us on the narrow path is greater than our capacity to wander off from it.

When we realize that the purpose of a sign is not the sign itself, then we are spared from many of these pitfalls. No doubt Lazarus and his family were encouraged when Jesus raised him from the dead. No doubt they felt God’s love for them. But Lazarus still died. The crippled man healed at the gate called Beautiful (Ac. 3) still died. The man born blind, who washed his eyes in the Pool of Siloam and was healed (Jn. 9), still died. *Every single person* who experienced a miracle in the New Testament still died. The signs were never the primary point, but were designed to encourage the saints to live lives of holiness, wholehearted love, and righteousness before God, who

would reward them in the resurrection of the righteous with bodies that would *never* die or experience disease, sickness, or infirmity again. Through the miracles, God is saying to the lost, "Take this message very seriously, because I don't want you in a lake of fire forever," and to the saved, "Don't give up, stay faithful, because I love you so much that I will not abandon you to the grave."

At the end of the day, I could raise hundreds of people from the dead, but unless they are still alive when Jesus returns (1 Th. 4:17), they will still die. Only one man has the power to give out resurrected, imperishable bodies, and I am not him. Only one man has the power, authority, discernment, and competence to establish the kingdom of God, and I am not him. God has appointed *one man* as his appointed Messiah. His name is Jesus. We will not establish that Messiah's kingdom; he will establish his own kingdom at his coming.

This is not a statement about "God doing it all" without our partnership. God certainly does require us to play our part in the game. However, it just means that our part in the partnership before Jesus returns is not the establishment of the kingdom. Our focus in this age is to pray fervently, wait patiently, persevere in righteousness, pursue wholehearted obedience, and testify to the coming government that will literally supplant all other human governments. While it is true that Jesus does delegate some measure of authority to his people in this age (Mk. 3:15, 6:7; Lk. 9:1, 10:14), this authority is ambassadorial in nature; it is thus given for the purpose of offering mercy on Jesus' behalf and calling people to repentance (Lk. 24:46–48; Ac. 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20; Php. 3:20; 2 Pt. 3:9). The Bible is clear, moreover, that God's dominion and kingdom will be established on the earth by the Messiah only at the end of the age and through divinely-empowered military means (Ps. 110; Is. 63:1–6; Zech. 14; Rev. 11:15, 12:10, 19:11–21). Likewise, as Adam was only commissioned to rule the earth while in a sinless state (Gn. 1:28), so only after we have been raised from the dead at Messiah's appearing will we be completely free of our sinful inclination to manipulate power to the detriment of others. Therefore, only then will we again be entrusted with any kind of

dominionistic authority as literal kings and queens (Ps. 149; Dan. 7; Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:3).

Until then, our corporate life together now as the church is defined by the cross (see Ch. 5) and by staying faithful to Jesus through persecutions until the time Jesus vindicates us (Dan. 7:21–22, 25–27). Moreover, our mandate to care for the poor, widows, orphans, and loving one another self-sacrificially (Mt. 23:23; Lk. 11:42; Jam. 1:27, etc.) is to function as a corporate sign pointing to the coming kingdom in which there will be *no more* poor people, widows, orphans, or self-indulgence at the expense of others. As the world looks upon the sign of this community presently made up of strangers and pilgrims, who, like Abraham, have not yet received their inheritance (Ac. 7:5; Heb. 11:9, 13, 39–40; 1 Pt. 1:1, 17, 2:11), God's desire is that as many people as possible will be provoked to repentance lest they be excluded eternally from the coming kingdom. As we testify to that day through both word and deed, God will confirm the truth of the gospel with signs and wonders in honor of his Son.

CONCLUSION

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth as part of one single household over which he is ruler. He is Lord, King, and Possessor of all creation, and he deeply loves all the works of his hands. Since Adam and Eve, human beings from all nations have defiled God's good creation through sin and rebellion against him. Through sin, death entered the world. God hates sin and death, and is zealously committed to purging them from the earth and restoring the creation he loves to its original glory. His chosen instrument for accomplishing this task is the Messianic Seed first promised to Adam and Eve. In the first century, God sent Jesus the first time and accredited him as the Old Testament Messiah through a life full of compassion, love, mercy, signs, miracles, and wonders. In his mercy, this Messiah took our curse upon him and went to the cross, where he died as a sacrifice of atonement for the forgiveness of sins. God vindicated his chosen Messiah on the third day by resurrecting him

from the dead as a firstfruits of the resurrection of the righteous. At the end of the age, this Messiah is coming back a second time to resurrect the righteous, cleanse the earth of all wickedness, and establish the kingdom of God on the earth. Those who repent of their sin and rebellion and acknowledge Jesus' lordship by faith receive the forgiveness of sins unto inclusion in that kingdom and in the resurrection of the righteous. Those who persist in their pride and rebellion will be purged from the earth in judgment, and eventually included in the resurrection of the wicked and thrown into the lake of fire forever. In this way, God's household of the heavens and the earth will be restored. Once again we will walk with God in a Garden in the cool of the day. The dwelling of God will be with man forever.

ENDNOTES

¹ Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 52.

² Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1929); corrected edition, ed. David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (Free Press, 1979).

³ John Harrigan, "Five-fold Development of the Western Worldview" (lecture notes from course *Biblical Theology of Mission*, Apostolic Missions School, International House of Prayer University, Fall 2008).

⁴ For more on this I recommend starting with David Pawson, "De-Greecing the Church," *He Burns for Me* <http://www.heburnsforme.com/David_Pawson.html>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Tim Warner, "Origins of the Heavenly Destiny Concept: Greek Mysticism and Gnosticism," *The Pristine Faith Restoration Society* <<http://www.pfrs.org/pd/06.html>> (accessed December 2008).

⁷ Harrigan, "Five-fold Development."

⁸ It is beyond the scope of this book to exhaustively explore many

of the intellectual intricacies of these issues, concerning which a number of excellent and more thorough resources are already in existence. At the end of the day, the gospel is very simple and easy to understand. However, for readers interested in a more in-depth and detailed understanding about the history, intellectual streams, and influences behind various distortions of the gospel, as well as a thorough examination of the gospel as outlined from Genesis to Revelation, I would like to highly recommend an excellent class taught in the School of Missions at the International House of Prayer University, entitled *Biblical Theology of Mission*.

⁹ Harrigan, "Five-fold Development."

¹⁰ "Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish. But that you may know that I do not say this before you alone, I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very same things which I admit to you. For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines (delivered) by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this (truth), and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven ... But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, (as) the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare." (Justin, Dialogue with Trypho, LXXX, as quoted in Tim Warner, "Origins of the Heavenly Destiny Concept: Greek Mysticism and Gnosticism," *The Pristine Faith Restoration Society*, <<http://www.pfrs.org/pd/06.html>> (accessed December 2008).

¹¹ "For as it is God truly who raises up man, so also does man truly rise from the dead, and not allegorically, as I have shown repeatedly. And as he rises actually, so also shall he be actually disciplined beforehand for incorruption, and shall go forwards and flourish

in the times of the kingdom, in order that he may be capable of receiving the glory of the Father. Then, when all things are made new, he shall truly dwell in the city of God. For it is said, "He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And the Lord says, Write all this; for these words are faithful and true. And He said to me, They are done." And this is the truth of the matter." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. V. ch. XXXV, as quoted in Warner, "Origins of the Heavenly Destiny Concept.")

¹² "These are 'the doctrines' of men and 'of demons' produced for itching ears of the spirit of this world's wisdom ... Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy. From this source came the Aeons, and I know not what infinite forms, and the trinity of man in the system of Valentinus, who was of Plato's school. From the same source came Marcion's better god, with all his tranquility; he came of the Stoics. Then, again, the opinion that the soul dies is held by the Epicureans; while the denial of the restoration of the body is taken from the aggregate school of all the philosophers; also, when matter is made equal to God, then you have the teaching of Zeno; and when any doctrine is alleged touching a god of fire, then Heraclitus comes in. The same subject-matter is discussed over and over again by the heretics and the philosophers; the same arguments are involved ... Unhappy Aristotle! who invented for these men dialectics, the art of building up and pulling down; an art so evasive in its propositions, so far-fetched in its conjectures, so harsh, in its arguments, so productive of contentions—embarrassing even to itself, retracting everything, and really treating of nothing! ... What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from 'the porch of Solomon,' who had himself taught that 'the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.' Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we

ought to believe besides." (Tertullian, "Pagan Philosophy the Parent of Heresies," *Prescription Against Heretics*, Chapter 7; <http://www.tertullian.org/anf/anf03/anf03-24.htm#P3208_1148660>)

¹³ See Walter Kaiser's exegesis of this passage. Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 36–42; also, compare Gn. 3:14–15 with the language of Micah 7:17; also see Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, its Ministry and Services as They Were at The Time of Jesus Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2003), 123.

¹⁴ Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 37.

¹⁵ For a more thorough analysis, I recommend Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*.

¹⁶ Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 42–46.

¹⁷ Throughout the Scriptures, it is stressed that while Israel owns the land by God's sovereign choice, her right to *live in* or *possess* her allotted inheritance is contingent upon her righteousness (see, e.g. Dt. 30, Jer. 31–33, Ezek. 36, etc.). The idea is implicit in the context of God's call to Abraham to leave behind the land of the idol-forging Babylonians (Gn. 11–12). Unlike the Babylonians, who fashioned false images out of stone with their hands and sought to "make a name for themselves" (Gn. 11:3–4), God would use his hands to fashion or make (cf. Is. 29:23–24, 51:1–2) Abraham's righteous descendants into a great nation blessed of God, remade in his image, and whose "name" or governmental character would be established by God (Gn. 12:1–2).

¹⁸ The author of Hebrews interprets Gn. 15 as an anchor for our hope *in the resurrection*. In Genesis 15:6, Abraham is declared righteous. God then promises the land to Abraham *himself*, not just to his descendants through historical succession (v. 7). Abraham then has a crisis of faith: "How can I know that *I* will gain possession of this land (i.e., if I am dead!)" (v. 8)? God assures Abraham that Abraham himself will inherit the land by confirming his covenantal promise by fire (v. 12–17.). Therefore, the fire serves as God's unilateral guarantee that those with the faith of Abraham will, like him, be righteous in God's sight, and thereby included in the resurrection of the righteous unto

inheriting the actual land of Israel and the New Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 6:13ff; Heb. 11:10).

¹⁹ Compare the phraseology of Is. 49:9 with Jesus' words to Lazarus in John 11:43; cf. also John 5:25–26.

²⁰ In Augustine's view, the "heavenly" kingdom (i.e., the Greek "spiritual realm," cloaked in biblical parlance) finds metaphysical substantiation and manifestation in the church, and therefore the church (not the Messiah at the end of the age, as the Bible teaches), establishes the dominion of God on the earth now, ultimately to no avail since God eventually scraps and annihilates the earth in the end anyway (thus reflecting the Greek assumption of the material world's inherent corruption)! The practical effect of this view is that it tends to breed arrogance and a messianic complex in the people of God. If we are not careful, we begin to think that we are the ones called to establish the kingdom. This is in contrast to the New Testament, which emphatically teaches that God has appointed *one man*, Jesus the Messiah, to establish the kingdom at the end of the age (Ac. 17:31). The "dominionism" prevalent in much of the church today is rooted in the Augustinian view. (For more, see Augustine, *City of God*, available online at <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.toc.html>>.)

²¹ After the Enlightenment, many liberal theologians—scorning a high view of Scripture and orthodox doctrine, and selective in their use of the biblical text—propagated a view of the kingdom as simply a personal religious experience whereby God rules over the human soul through the ethical and moral teachings of Jesus (as typified by Harnack; see Adolf von Harnack *What Is Christianity?* [1901], trans. T. B. Saunders [Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1987]). While it is true that from the Father's right hand Jesus is presently washing and circumcising the hearts of his people through his word and the Spirit (Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:3; Eph. 5:26; Php. 3:3; Col. 2:11; Tit. 3:5), biblically this process always has its motivational impetus in eschatology (see Ch. 5). Any attempt to sever ethics from eschatology or a conviction of the truth of the actual content of the gospel—as the liberal tradition does—is thoroughly unbiblical, devoid of real

transformational power, and humanistic in nature. Furthermore, the moral ethic view as conceived in the liberal tradition still assumes heavenization, and not a restored theocratic kingdom on the earth, as the end of salvation.

²² Perhaps the most popular view of the kingdom in evangelical academic circles today is the "already/not yet" or "divine rule" eschatological schema, the most well-known proponent of which is George Eldon Ladd (see G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revised ed., D. A. Hagner ed. [William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993]). While this view has strength in that its anchor is embedded in an eschatological framework, and in that it acknowledges that we are situated in the last days (Heb. 1:2); it ultimately errs by articulating the two-fold execution of the Messianic mission in terms of the gradual "manifestation" of the kingdom, instead of in terms of the mystery of Messiah, as Jesus and the apostles did (see Ch. 5). By confusing the signs of the kingdom (postulated as the "already" or the "inauguration" of the kingdom) with the eschatological kingdom (postulated as the "not yet" or "consummation" of the kingdom) to which those signs point (for more on this point, see the end of this chapter), it is thought that the kingdom of God progressively advances on the earth through the agency of the church until Jesus comes to consummate the kingdom at the end of the age. At the end of the day, therefore, the already/not yet view is in essence little more than a two-tiered version of the Augustinian view (see endnote 20), with the exception that Ladd leaves room for the earthly rule of Jesus on the earth in the millennium. Ultimately, this view has the practical effect of keeping the saints from "setting their hope *fully* on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Pt. 1:13, emphasis added). If we are able to put our hope in a kingdom established now (even if only to a limited degree), how can we set our hope *fully* on the grace to be given us then?

²³ See Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Moody, 1965). The strength of classical dispensationalism is its insistence on a non-allegorical and more literal hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Israel means Israel; Jerusalem

means Jerusalem; and so forth. The main problems with dispensational pre-millennialism are: (1) the biblically unsubstantiated way it alters God's mode of interaction with human beings in different epochs of time; and (2) its postulate that God has two peoples destined for two separate kingdoms. Israel is God's "earthly" people, destined to inherit the kingdom of God on the earth, while the church is God's "heavenly" people destined to inherit the "spiritual" kingdom of heaven. Many people turn to the dispensational paradigm as a means of refuting replacement theology, whereby it is claimed—usually by Reformed theologians—that God no longer has a place for ethnic Israel in his plan, and has replaced ethnic Israel with the New Testament church composed primarily of Gentiles. While the errors of replacement theology absolutely do need to be confronted—the Scriptures are clear that God still has important plans for ethnic Israel—dispensational theology, in my opinion, is not the most helpful ally unto this end. This is because (1) the dispensational view simply cannot be substantiated by a close and consistent reading of Scripture; and (2) it still exudes residues of the Hellenistic worldview in its postulation of a "heavenly kingdom" and an "earthly kingdom." Reformed theologians wrongly frame the conversation in terms of the church *or* ethnic Israel. Dispensationalists, reacting to this faulty framework, retort by claiming that we must talk about both the church *and* ethnic Israel. As we will see in Chapter 5, the New Testament position is that the church or assembly of Messiah is the fruit of the believing remnant of ethnic Messianic Israel. As such, both Messianic Jews and Messianic Gentiles together share in one covenant—still authentically Israel's—and in that covenant form a single multinational Bride. This Bride, together with those Jews who will repent and turn to Jesus at the end of the age (Rom. 11:25-26), will inherit the one and only kingdom of God on the earth at Messiah's return.

²⁴ For more on this subject, see John Harrigan, "Governmental Introduction to the Kingdom of God" (lecture notes from course *Biblical Theology of Mission*, Apostolic Missions School, International House of Prayer University, Fall 2008).

4

Armed with Clarity: Communicating the Message Clearly

You can take the boy out of Babylon, but you can't take Babylon out of the boy," our little group began to sing to the sound of thumping djimbés. "Babylon" symbolized everything our listeners from this American sub-culture, the "Rainbow people," were trying to escape: a modern Western civilization fragmented by violence and consumerism, held captive by materialistic worldviews, torn asunder by greed and poverty, and obsessive in its lust for power.

In the late 1960s, the Rainbow people began coordinating annual gatherings in remote parts of U.S. national forests in an effort to create transient expressions of a utopian society resistant to the influences of "Babylon." However, over the years, many Rainbows began to realize that the problems of "Babylon" did not simply go away by hiding out in the woods for a few weeks. No, the problem of Babylon was not primarily geographical in nature. Relocation did not solve the dilemma of their souls. People brought their wounds, hurts, greed, and lust with them to the woods. Drugs and sex could only dull the pain for so long. Out of the womb of this disillusionment was born the adage: "You can take the boy out of Babylon, but you can't take Babylon out the boy." Underneath the humor with which this phrase was quoted is a heart cry for freedom and deliverance.

Rainbows love poetry, and they love to sing. During their annual gatherings, which sometimes attract up to twenty thousand people, the sound of drum circles can be heard for miles around. Within a

radius of several miles are myriads of little "camps," tucked away in the middle of nowhere. Each camp chooses its own name and is known by its distinct characteristics and services. For example, during the 2007 Gathering, one camp called "Pop Corner" was known for making different kinds of popcorn throughout all hours of the night. "Tea Time" focused solely on serving different kinds of tea to visitors. "Rainbow Zion" was a camp made up of Jewish Rainbows. "Jesus Kitchen" was a Christian camp that served food and ran a foot-washing station. The "Hare Krishna" camp made candy. The "Lovin' Ovens" camp made bread. The "Fairie Camp" was made up of homosexuals. Scattered throughout the forest and connected by dirt paths, this web of camps created the ambiance of a little city within the forest. The Christian camp of which I was a part during the 2007 Gathering was called "Goshen." Our prayer as a camp was that God would manifest his glory in our midst and make a distinction between himself and the false gods around us, as he did with the Israelites in the land of Goshen during the Exodus (Ex. 9:26).

On this particular night, Goshen Camp had been invited to Pop Corner to perform a drum circle. Someone from Pop Corner had apparently liked the "vibes" he had felt while at Goshen Camp and invited us to his camp for a performance. Before leaving for the gathering, our team had prepared a gospel presentation that employed Rainbow terminology and culture as a bridge for communicating the gospel. (For those unfamiliar with Rainbow culture, I have included endnotes that provide definitions of words and concepts in this presentation.¹)

The presentation also drew on a worship model our team had in common. Many of us at the Goshen Camp were connected to the International House of Prayer in Kansas City (IHOP-KC). Since 1999, IHOP-KC has been engaged in 24/7 prayer using the "harp and bowl" model of worship and prayer. In the harp and bowl model, musicians create an atmosphere of worship (the "harp" [Rev. 5:8]) and an intercessor prays a passage of Scripture from the Bible (prayers rising from the "bowl" of incense [Rev. 5:8]). Then the singers take

phrases from the person's prayer and develop them through song and music (the "harp" again). This is called "antiphonal" or back-and-forth singing and is similar to the kind of worship King David installed in the tabernacle in Jerusalem (1 Chr. 6:31–32, 15:16). By the time we went to the Rainbow Gathering, we had participated in this kind of worship to the extent that it had become second nature to us. Even though most of us were not professional musicians, we were used to taking phrases and themes and singing them back and forth to one another. We decided to use the harp and bowl model to sing the gospel presentation we had developed for Rainbows.

Our team was comprised of about six to eight people, and we had several hand drums with us. A lead singer sang the storyline, and the rest of our group joined in as the singer repeated choruses that united our listeners. These choruses wove through our narrative and emphasized important points, such as "He (God) is longing for the Garden" (i.e., for the kingdom of God to be established on the earth) and "I can't escape Babylon, because Babylon is in me!" (i.e., we can't escape sin because it is in us.) Both male and female voices penetrated the air as we drummed and sang:

Chorus: "You can take the boy out of Babylon,² but you can't take Babylon out of the boy."

Rainbow Warriors of Living Light, those of you who have gathered *on the land*³ this day to *council*⁴ and recite *heart-songs*⁵—it is with great urgency that we stand before you now. We ask you to open your eyes and *focalize*⁶ your hearts with me. Let us *focus, focus, focus*,⁷ for we are sent here as *runners*⁸ of God Most High, the Creator of heaven and earth. He is the Eternal One who created all things: the clouds, the sun, the moon, the trees, the animals, and every human being. He has a message for you, and we have been sent here as the *focalizers*⁹ of his message.

Long, long ago, God created the heavens and earth, and he called his creation good. Everything in heaven

and on earth was in perfectly *harmonized*¹⁰; everything worked together in perfect unity. The earth was filled with life, goodness, and every kind of living creature. There was a Garden more beautiful than anything we could possibly imagine. And in that Garden, the first human beings, Adam and Eve, walked in perfect harmony with their God and with his creation. We can't imagine the depth of love between God and human beings that existed in the Garden. God told Adam and Eve that the only thing necessary to maintain perfect harmony in the Garden was for them to obey one command: do not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they were to eat this fruit, they would surely die.

Then, one day, an evil angel named Satan came to *scam*¹¹ Adam and Eve. He told them that they could not trust God and that they should eat the fruit. He tried to pollute them with his disease. Adam and Eve *consented*¹² with Satan, and they ate the fruit. Evil and death entered the human race. Over the years, wickedness increased more and more. The earth became full of violence and wickedness. We became prideful and arrogant, and we consented to rebel against our loving Creator. We were no longer harmonized with our Creator.

Chorus: "Oh, the Garden! The Garden! We're longing for the Garden!"

The same continues to the present. We have gone from Paradise to *the dumpster*.¹³ This same wicked angel, Satan, continues to *harassle*¹⁴ the human race, trying to get us to consent with him. And we don't have to look far to see that we have in fact consented with Satan. Everywhere we look, we see the earth filled with violence, murder, exploitation, scamming,

sexual immorality, and evil of every kind: Iraq, 9-11, Columbine, Virginia Tech. We spend our lives aimlessly *blissing out*¹⁵ and *dogging it*¹⁶ from city to city, *sniffting*¹⁷ from woman to woman and from joint to joint, always trying to find satisfaction in our lives, but never finding it. The entire human race is in a state of *major road burn*¹⁸: we are exhausted, lonely, and our hearts long to return to the Garden, where we walked in harmony with God. The Rainbow Family gathers from year to year to escape from Babylon. However, if we are honest with ourselves, we begin to see that we can't really escape from Babylon, because Babylon is so much more than bad government, *green energy*,¹⁹ forest rangers, Iraq, and Vietnam. Babylon is in you! Babylon is in me! We have consensued with Satan, and we have reaped the consequences on the earth! God have *mercy* on us! Have mercy! Have mercy! Our problem is too deep for us to solve on our own!

Chorus: "God, have mercy! God, have mercy! God, have mercy!"

However, praise God, there is still hope! Though we made God angry by our sin and wickedness, and though our lives looked and smelled like *road kill*²⁰ to God, he still loves us and desires to be harmonized and at peace with us. He knew that the solution to the *Babylon heart* isn't just a strike, a boycott, or a seven-day campout in the woods. He knew that we did not have the power and strength in and of ourselves to come up with our own solution. Our hearts have become too wicked. Therefore, out of his great love and mercy, he focalized his own solution: he sent the merciful One from heaven to the earth.

Whom did he send? The prophet Ezekiel once saw a heavenly vision in which he saw a figure that shone

brightly with the power of God. Ezekiel says, "Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him." The apostle John, also a prophet, saw a heavenly vision of this same rainbow situated above the throne of God. The rainbow is a sign of God's mercy, and his face radiates with mercy. God knew that we needed mercy, so he took this One from heaven, the one whose face radiates endless *vibes*²¹ of mercy and compassion, and sent him to the earth. His name is Jesus.

When Jesus walked the earth, his life overflowed with mercy. His *vision*²² and message was the good news of the kingdom of God. He did many miracles. He healed the sick, the blind, the lame, every kind of sick person. He raised people from the dead. He cast out demons. He was a walking *CALM center*.²³ Everywhere he went, supernatural vibes of mercy, healing, compassion, and holiness went out. When people touched him, they touched heaven. He loved and had mercy on the ones that society had rejected: the drunks, the prostitutes. Everywhere he went, a *Kiddy Village*²⁴ gathered around him, because the children saw the love, purity, and mercy that flowed from him.

Choruses: "The rainbow of mercy over Jesus," "There is a rainbow over him," "He is full of mercy," etc.

However, though Jesus was the only person who has ever lived who was completely sinless—the only one who did not deserve the punishment that the rest of us deserved—because of his love for us, he decided to *facilitate*²⁵ peace once and for all between God and human beings. He decided to take on the punishment that we deserved. Though he never sinned, he allowed himself to be nailed to the cross

by violent men and women. When he was on the cross, this heartsong came from his lips: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"*

*Chorus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"*

After he died, he was buried. However, because he was innocent in God's sight, three days later God raised him from the dead. Jesus harmonized us with God, because he gave his own blood in our place. He took the sin and disharmony on himself, and God destroyed it.

Chorus: "He's alive! He's alive! He's alive!"

Now, we have the opportunity to turn away from our sin and Satan, and to consense with Jesus and be united with God once again. Everyone who turns to Jesus, and walks with him, and loves him, and trusts him, *all* of them—man or woman, black or white, rich or poor, children or adults, forest rangers, *tramps*,²⁶ *road dogs*,²⁷ *gypsies*,²⁸ *yuppies*²⁹—all can enter the kingdom of God. When they repent and confess Jesus as Lord, they receive the forgiveness of sins, and God also delivers us from the darkness, Satan, disease, death, and evil. At the same time, in order to convey us into his kingdom of light, and because it is impossible for us to purify ourselves, Jesus anoints us with something called the Holy Spirit of God, who cleans our hearts and continues to live in us forever. The Spirit is always with us and is in us, and he helps us to live lives that are love-filled, joyful, and powerful, and to resist Satan, evil thoughts, and other wicked things. He also gives us the power we need to love God and other people from our hearts, even our enemies. At the end of history, Jesus will return to the earth to raise us from the dead and judge all nations.

He will establish his rule and cleanse the earth of all wickedness. Those who believe in him and accept him get to walk the *main trail*³⁰ of his kingdom. For those who reject Jesus, it will not be *happy trails*.³¹ He will judge them and send them to the lake of fire. The end of human history is almost upon us. When it comes, it will be too late. So, if you truly want peace, if you truly want the earth to be restored, then give your lives to Jesus and pray for his return.

Chorus: "He's longing for the garden," "He's longing for the garden," "He's longing for you. . ."

As we sang, there were a number of times in which the Spirit's presence could be felt very strongly, especially when we started singing about the cross and resurrection. There were a wide range of responses. Some people were struck with conviction and had a hard time looking us in the eye. Others joined right in and began singing with us. As one man sang along, he suddenly realized that he was speaking in tongues. After the presentation, this man kept exclaiming, "I've never heard it like this before! I've never heard it like this before!" Like many Rainbows, this young man had gone to church when he was a child, but had grown disinterested as he grew older. He kept talking about how this was the first time he had ever experienced the emotion of God behind the message of the gospel. When we finished singing, we had conversations with many people in the camp. Several began to weep as we prophesied over them, and two or three gave their lives to Jesus.

In the last chapter, we focused on gaining greater clarity on the core content, or the *what*, of the gospel. Here we now turn our attention to the question of *how* to communicate the message effectively in different cultural settings.

PAUL'S MESSAGE AT THE AREOPAGUS IN ATHENS

One advantage that Paul, Peter, and the other apostles had when they communicated the gospel to a Jewish crowd was that their

listeners already had a pre-existent Messianic expectation that had been cultivated for many centuries. Not surprisingly, then, when Paul delivered his message in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch—where Jews, proselytes, and God-fearing Gentiles made up his primary audience—he began by simply making reference to some well-understood Old Testament passages, and then worked up to Jesus from there (Acts 13:16–41).

However, when Paul preached the gospel to Gentile pagans, he had to employ a different strategy. The majority of Gentiles in the Roman Empire were out-and-out idol-worshippers, completely ignorant of the Messianic hope of the Jews. How could the apostle to the Gentiles communicate the gospel effectively to those with so little familiarity with the biblical worldview? This required creativity on his part, as it does for those called to communicate the gospel cross-culturally today.

One of Paul's most helpful sermons from a missiological perspective is the one he delivered at the Areopagus in Athens (Ac. 17). The circumstances surrounding this message indicate that Paul's audience was probably comprised almost exclusively of Gentiles (Ac. 17:18–21). The opening lines of this sermon immediately draw our attention to Paul's astuteness as a cultural observer. Though Paul clearly considered the pagan philosophies espoused by groups like the Stoics and Epicureans as hollow and deceptive in nature (Col. 3:8), this passage reveals that he also made intentional efforts to identify points of truth already existent in the culture of Athens, however minute, for the purpose sharing the gospel. One good principle of communication is that the intended meaning of a message is best transferred to the minds of those receiving it when something already known to the audience can be used for communicating something unfamiliar. That is what Paul did in this message.

Despite the nauseating effect the vile idolatry of Athens had on him, in his humility Paul started off the message using what might have been the only redeemable altar inscription in the entire city: "To an unknown God." That Paul had purposefully been looking for points of contact and bridges despite his hatred of Athenian

idol worship is evidenced by the fact that he had “looked carefully at” (NIV), “observed” (ESV), or “was examining” (NASB, v. 23) their objects of devotion enough to actually “find” (v. 23) and tuck the inscription away in his mind for later. The citizens of Athens certainly did not know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That much was true. Therefore, Paul seized this inscription as a launching pad for telling the Athenians about the one true God who created the heavens and the earth:

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and *looked carefully at your objects of worship* (actively looking for bridges of communication), I even *found* an altar with *this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD* (communicational bridge and point of contact). Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you (moving from known to unknown). The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else (communication of biblical truth).” (Ac. 17:22–25, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Here we see Paul intentionally moving his listeners from the known to the unknown. What the Athenians worshipped “as something unknown,” Paul was now ready to make known. The One true God created the heavens and the earth, and he is Lord of it all. He is not like the worthless idols being worshipped in Athens. Paul used the inscription as a helpful communicational bridge. However, the “sting” of his message was certainly not watered down by that fact. It is hard to imagine that the Athenians did not feel the impact of these jibes against their detestable images.

The next phase of his message also indicates that Paul had done

his homework. As grounds for his assertion that the Creator God is "not far from each one of us" and that human beings are made in the image of God, Paul cited a line of poetry from "Phaenomena"—"for we are his offspring" (Ac. 17:28)—a poem on astronomy written centuries before by the Stoic poet Aratus.³² Born at Soli in Cilicia in the fourth century BC, Aratus had been a student of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. Cilicia was the same region in which Paul later grew up (Ac. 21:39). It is not unreasonable to surmise that by Paul's lifetime Aratus had become a local legend in the region of Cilicia, and that some lines of his poetry had become a common part of the local Cilician culture. However Paul came to possess knowledge of this phrase, in his mind it did not contradict biblical truth, and could thus be employed as a cultural bridge for the communication of the gospel:

God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. "For in him we live and move and have our being." *As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring"* (quoting Stoic poet Aratus). Therefore *since we are God's offspring* (i.e., made in the image of God as the work of his hands), we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill (futility of idols). In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (message not watered-down). For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed (message not watered down). He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead. (Ac. 17:26–31, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Here again we see that even though Paul consciously uses a cultural bridge for communicating biblical truth, in no way does he compromise or water down the message so as to avoid any potential sting it might have on the conscience of his hearers.

It is worth mentioning that while many have celebrated Paul's message as an example of good communication, others have made the case that Paul himself actually looked upon his time at the Areopagus unenthusiastically. In 1 Corinthians 2:1–5, Paul tells us:

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power (emphasis added).

Paul wrote this to the believers in Corinth, the city he went to just after he had preached his now-famous sermon in Athens. Why was it that he had to *resolve* to "know nothing ... except Jesus Christ and him crucified"? Could it be that he was grappling with the fact that though he had preached a seemingly eloquent sermon in Athens, only a small handful of converts had resulted (Acts 17:34)? Possibly so. All of us should be very wary of our propensity to trust in our own abilities and strength when proclaiming the message. God loves to show himself strong in the context of our weakness (2 Cor. 12:8–9).

This point, however, in no way nullifies the importance of communicating the gospel in ways that people can understand within the context of their own cultural framework. As Paul asserts quite straightforwardly in another place, only the messenger benefits when a message is comprehensible only to the messenger (1 Cor. 14)! In the words of Bill Johnson, the lesson is that "we shouldn't do any of these things at the expense of making room for God to show up and say 'Amen' to His own word through the signs and wonders that follow."³³ All in all, Paul's message here in Acts 17 is a source of great encouragement for those called to proclaim the gospel in cross-cultural settings.

RECEPTOR-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION

According to Charles Kraft, "the purpose of communication is to bring a receptor to understand a message presented by a communicator in a way that substantially corresponds with the intent of the communicator ... The communicator, to communicate the message effectively, must be 'receptor-oriented.'"³⁴ *Receptor-oriented* communication means that communicators evaluate the success of their communication attempt not primarily in terms of what a message means in their own minds, but in terms of how their hearers or "receptors" perceive it. It asks the question: Is my message being communicated *in such a way* that the meaning stimulated in the minds of my listeners sufficiently corresponds to the meaning I desire to convey? In other words, is my message being heard *the way I want it to be heard*? For example, if I go up to a Muslim on the street today and say, "Praise God! I am a Christian. Do you know Jesus?" more than likely he would think, "Oh, God! Another alcoholic!" ("Christian" being equivalent to Western culture in his mind). He would probably respond, "I don't know Jesus, but he might be down at the bar. Walk two blocks and take a left." Or if I go up to a group of unbelievers in Los Angeles and say, "You need to be justified and sanctified by the blood," they would likely be clueless about what I am trying to say. However, if I say, "Man, we are *totally* messed up, and we desperately need someone who has the goods to set us free," this is much more likely to translate. In the case of the young man from Pop Corner, the way we communicated the message allowed him to not only hear information, but opened his heart to experience the emotions of God through song.

The truth is that if we do not think carefully about the *way* we communicate a message, what seems obvious and plain to us is often not plain to our hearers, especially those who have no paradigm for biblical language and concepts. Whenever we share the gospel, our goal should therefore always be to present it in such a way that the listener's conscience is forced to wrestle with the actual gospel, and not by something understood as good news only in the communicator's mind. The following excerpt was given to me by a

friend who shares the gospel regularly with African-America youth involved in the hip-hop culture of the inner city. It is a good example of receptor-oriented communication:

Tupac Shakur is respected among most all African Americans in the "hip-hop" culture...even many Christians...he was the rapper who introduced "thug life" or being a "thug"...he confessed some sort of belief in God...even wore a cross....but lived a life of crime...immorality...drug use...and blatant sin.

Tupac used to say..."Only God can judge me"... He used this to show that he could do whatever he wanted and no one could say anything different. Basically...if I am threatened that you are going to try to correct my behavior or lifestyle...I'd say "Only God can judge me..."

You say...Tupac was right..."Only God can judge you"...here's how He's going to judge you...ever heard the Ten Commandments...? Ever broken even one...?

Tupac used to say..."I wonder if heaven got a ghetto." This was written out of frustration about African-Americans growing up in ghettos around violence, crime, and poverty... It was also part of his theology about God..."if God is going to place all of us in the ghettos...I wonder if He'll have us in ghettos in heaven...why live for God if He's just gonna put me in a ghetto in heaven?"

There will be no ghettos in heaven...let me tell you about the return of Jesus Christ...and the truth about eternity...

Puff Daddy wrote a song called..."Can't Nobody Hold Me Down"...similar to Tupac's "Only God Can Judge Me"... Puff wrote this song to prove that

he was a self-made man and he called all the shots. No one would tell him how to live his life...no one would be his master.

None of us want to be held down by anything...by oppression...or by a person...especially when we've never had a male role model...we don't want another male telling us how to live...rebellion is justified by "can't nobody hold me down."

Check this out..."The Bible says that he who sins is a slave to sin." If we are a slave to sin...sin is our master...sin is holding us down...if we don't want to be held down by anyone...we have to be mastered only by God who is not a person on earth. So the truth is...if Puff Daddy wasn't following Jesus...and living for righteousness...he actually was being held down...by his sin. Let's not be held down by anyone...let's turn away from sin and be mastered only by God.³⁵

We must be very careful about the forms—terms, symbols, and concepts—we choose to employ when communicating our message: "The cultural forms (symbols) that are employed by C (communicator) to convey M (the message), then, will have to be chosen carefully on the basis of C's best understanding of what their impact on R (the listener, receptor) will be."³⁶ As we saw with Paul's message at the Areopagus, this is not the same as watering down the sting of the message or removing the offense of the cross. In fact, just the opposite is true. A message actually gets diluted when its packaging keeps the intended meaning from getting through to the hearer. Receptor-oriented communication strives to communicate all aspects of the biblical gospel—including both the kindness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22)—as effectively as possible. We need to couch the message in such a way that the *gospel* is actually heard, because only the gospel message has the capacity to impact the human heart in any kind of life-changing way.

STRATEGIC USE OF PROVERBS AND REDEMPTIVE ANALOGIES

Most cultures outside of the West use proverbs or some other kind of pithy sayings as anchor points for their day-to-day living. Typically, proverbs cut straight to the heart of a culture's worldview and are usually accepted as unquestionable truth. The closest American equivalent might be lines and sayings from well-known movies, popular figures, or books. So long as their meanings do not contradict biblical truth, proverbs can serve as very valuable bridges for communicating the gospel. One practical suggestion for putting together a gospel presentation is to begin by researching and sifting through local proverbs. Books, interviews, or casual conversation are all good potential sources for acquiring proverbs. As you are compiling your list, consciously try to identify those that touch on the problem of the human condition, redemptive themes, and other biblical truths. In the case of our presentation at the Rainbow Gathering, through casual conversation with a former Rainbow on our team, we learned of a quasi-proverbial saying that was well-known among the Rainbows. "You can take the boy out of Babylon, but you can't take Babylon out of the boy." This saying provided a perfect bridge for talking about the problem of sin in the human heart.

In addition to proverbs, I also want to strongly recommend the use of what have come to be known as "redemptive analogies," local customs or concepts that serve as bridges for communicating what Jesus did on the cross. Movies, children's books, conversations with friends, and anthropological resources are good places to start digging. Don Richardson's book *Peace Child* is a worthwhile read on this topic.³⁷ Richardson relates his discovery of a custom among the Sawi people that served as a natural bridge for communicating the gospel. The various Sawi tribes of former Dutch New Guinea were constantly fighting and killing one another. Deception was of such high value in the culture that the people actually applauded Judas for his betrayal of Jesus! As Richardson and his family prepared to leave the area because of escalating fighting, some of the Sawi tribes, not wanting them to leave, came together to make peace. Central to

the process of peace-making in Sawi culture was the custom of the "peace child," in which a man from one village voluntarily gives his son away to be raised by his hated foe in an opposing village. As long as the peace child lived, peace between the two villages was assured. Unlike other killings, murdering a peace child was considered taboo. The Richardsons were able to use this analogy to explain how God sacrificially sent his own Son Jesus to his enemies on the earth as a "peace child." Jesus lives forever; therefore, those who have received him as God's peace child have peace with God forever. Many of the Sawi accepted Jesus as Lord when they heard the gospel presented on these culturally understandable terms.

In our own ministry context among the Islamic Moravians, we learned of a custom, the "blood compensation payment," that provided an excellent redemptive analogy. Pre-Islamic in origin but nevertheless still widely observed by Moravians, this custom functioned to help warring clans resolve murder disputes. The basic concept is that when a man from one clan kills someone from another clan, the two clans are left with a tense situation. The members of the murderer's clan must come together, contribute some money to a common pool, and use that money to pay the blood compensation payment to the victimized family. Failure to pay the blood payment spawns a whirlwind of inter-clan violence and revenge killings, and the cycle is perpetuated until compensation is finally paid according to the mutually-agreed upon terms. When the two clans do finally reconcile, the representative elders of the respective clans come together, lay their hands on a lamb of the highest value (a female that has not given birth yet), slaughter the lamb, and declare: "I bind myself to the lamb." At this point, the dispute is considered resolved and peace between the two clans is restored. This redemptive analogy became the cornerstone of our presentation of the gospel to Moravians.

OUR PRESENTATION TO MORAVIANS

The above considerations are what guided our attempt to develop a presentation that communicates the gospel to Moravians

in a receptor-oriented, contextually meaningful way. I include the presentation here in the hope that it will stimulate people to develop tools that allow them to proclaim the gospel with more confidence in their own ministry contexts. With the exception of a few slight alterations, what follows is the translation of the message I proclaimed in the hospital (see opening testimony in Introduction) and shared with Muhammad (see opening testimony in Ch. 1).

By way of introduction, the presentation integrates a variety of communicative and cultural forms, both pre- and post-Islamic, including drama (through hand motions), traditional proverbs, a *hadith* (the non-Qu'ranic, yet authoritative and commonly-known sayings of Muhammad), and a redemptive analogy. It is also teacher-based in that at key points in the narrative, it tries to pre-empt traditional Islamic objections to the upcoming point—the need for the cross or the Holy Spirit, for example—by first explaining and clarifying the reason why the impending point is necessary.

The progression of the presentation, moreover, follows the basic worldview outline of problem, solution, and benefits of solution, and incorporates the five dimensions of the *kerygma*, as presented in Chapter 3. It uses just over 1300 words, fewer than Stephen used in his sermon in Acts 7, but more than are found in most of the other apostolic sermons.

Furthermore, the presentation assumes a distinction between Christianity as a religious system of external precepts, outward forms, and legalistic regulations, and the abundant, inwardly transformative life of grace and power made available to us by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes at the end of the presentation, I would ask listeners if they saw how the message they were hearing differed from what they typically understood as "religion." Almost without exception they said, "Yes." They had apparently heard enough "does-and-don'ts" sermons and had had enough exposure to *sharia* law to know the emptiness of, and despair created by, systems that set high standards but leave people powerless to reach them. The gospel, in contrast, not only brings joy and peace, but also gives us power to live righteously as the Spirit of God himself empowers us to live

holy lives of love from the inside out (Rom. 8:4).

It may be worth mentioning that before we ever met Muhammad, we had shared this presentation with many Moravians, whose nods and affirmations confirmed that something was connecting in their understanding. Understanding, of course, does not ensure acceptance. Our goal, after all, was not to remove or water down the sting of the cross, but to communicate the cross more effectively. Not surprisingly, some responded positively, wanting to know more; others did not. I had also tested the presentation with some of the few Moravian believers we knew. They too said that it communicated well. From their response, I think it may have even emboldened them to be more creative in the use of communicational bridges from their own culture when sharing the gospel. By the time we met Muhammad, our confidence in the presentation's communicability and "receptor-orientedness" was high.

As with the Rainbow presentation above, because most readers are probably not familiar with the cultural cues on which the following presentation hinges, I have included endnotes with information that will help the reader follow the flow of the message. Unfortunately, a written text leaves no room for hand motions. I encourage you to use your imagination. For instance, when talking about Jesus' mercy in healing, I would make motions as if I were laying hands on people. When I presented it in the hospital, I actually laid hands on real sick people. When talking about our "sinful blood," I would point to the veins on the wrist of my left forearm (the left hand, used for the toilet, being perceived as culturally unclean). In contrast, when talking about Jesus' "sinless blood," I would point to the veins on the wrist and bottom side of my right forearm (the right hand, used for eating, being perceived as culturally clean). When we got to the cross, I would stretch out my arms to both sides, making a cross shape. When we got to the resurrection, I would make the shape of a tomb with one hand, and then use the other hand while make a blowing, wind-like sound to indicate the power of the Holy Spirit raising Jesus from the dead. My goal was to *re-present* Jesus visibly through my own person, both verbally and non-verbally.

Today I am here with you to tell you about the best news in the world. As you know, the Moravian people say, "An indebted person is a sick person."³⁸ From the beginning, the time of Adam, until today, the hearts of human beings have been greatly troubled and seriously sickened by a very heavy debt. This burden that exists in all of our hearts gained its place in us through our sins and our troubled consciences. As we³⁹ see every day from the world around us and from our own hearts, we and the rest of humanity have all sinned and rebelled against God. We've all become shamed.⁴⁰ It is apparent to us that Satan dwells in our blood and in our veins.⁴¹ According to Moravian culture, when a person from one clan kills someone from another clan, the murderer infuriates the victimized clan because of his crime.⁴² Either he is going to pay a blood-payment, or a fighting will erupt between the two clans. As the Moravians say, "Bring the blood payment, don't bring an oath."⁴³ This shows us that a blood payment is necessary for someone to acquire the forgiveness of sins.⁴⁴ Likewise, all of us have made God angry by our evil hearts. All of us intensely long to find forgiveness of sins, a new and pure life, a clean conscience, and to be freed from Satan. However, that being so, we are all deeply distressed, because we don't know where to find such things on our own. We are all like that person passing through a very long and dry desert, but who can't find the water he needs to keep on living.⁴⁵

But praise God, there exists a great hope! The Moravians also say, "One is starving for good news."⁴⁶ Although we have made God angry, he still loves us, and he knew that we were starving for news about how one finds forgiveness of sins and a new life, and the way our dry souls are cleansed and restored.

Therefore, out of his great love and mercy, God sent the one called Jesus the Messiah to the earth to tell us the incredible news about the kingdom of God. Because Jesus came from God, his blood was not like our unclean blood, but was holy and pure. When Jesus came to us, he was full of mercy. He did many miracles, and he healed all who came to him. He raised the dead. He cast demons out of those who had demons. All this to say: he walked with God in a sinless and perfect life. The love that presided in and flowed from him ... it was greater than any other kind of love that can be found in the world! Truly, holy love poured from his eyes. Nevertheless, all that being the case, his disciples and the other people he walked among still did not fully understand the extent to which (i.e., still needed final confirmation in resurrection) his blood was sinless and pure. Therefore, although Jesus lived a sinless life, for our sake God allowed him, *as a blood compensation payment*, to be nailed and killed on a wooden cross. When he died, he was buried. But, praise God, because Jesus was innocent and had pure blood, two days after his death, on the third day, God gave him life and raised him from the dead. This is because, as the Injiil⁴⁷ teaches, death can only maintain its grip on those who have unclean/sinful blood. Therefore, in this manner God demonstrated to the world (vindication) that Jesus' blood was pure and sinless, one hundred percent. Then, after Jesus' resurrection, he showed himself to more than five hundred of his disciples. They were thoroughly amazed and overjoyed, because many thought he was still dead. Then Jesus told them this good news concerning the kingdom of God:

Our good God has accepted in our place the blood compensation that Jesus paid for us on the

cross—that is to say, God's anger, which we had aroused, was appeased by Jesus' blood payment. The blood payment of Jesus is like the lamb,⁴⁸ because Jesus is the Lamb of God. That blood payment also freed us from the chains and fetters of Satan. Moreover, God exalted and made Jesus Ruler of the universe. Therefore, *everyone* who comes to Jesus, and walks with him, and loves him, and trusts his blood payment, *all* of them—man or woman, black or white, rich or poor, Moravian or American, children or adults, religious experts or the ones terrible at religion, Christian⁴⁹ or Muslim; *regardless* of a person's religion, or family, or status, or homeland—they *all* can enter the kingdom of God.

This means that they receive the new life they are looking for, as well as numerous blessings from heaven. When we enter his kingdom, we receive the forgiveness of sins, and God also delivers us from the darkness, Satan, disease, death, and evil. To convey us into his kingdom of light and because it is impossible for us to purify ourselves, Jesus anoints us with something called the Holy Spirit of God, who cleans our hearts and continues to live in us forever. The Spirit is always with us and is in us. He helps us to live lives that are love-filled, joyful, and powerful, and to move away from Satan, evil thoughts, and other wicked things. He also gives us the power we need to love God and other people from our hearts, even our enemies. Further still, as you have all seen here today (assuming confirming signs of power), he also bestows on us his power to heal, that we may heal other desperate people in the name of the King Jesus the Messiah—like the blind, the lame, the sick, those who have demons, and even the dead (as signs of the coming kingdom). At the end of history, Jesus

will return to the earth to raise us bodily from the dead and judge all nations. He has promised that all who have trusted his blood payment and in whom the Spirit abides will be included in the resurrection of the righteous and will be with him forever in his kingdom. Those who reject him will also be resurrected bodily and will be cast into the place they deserve because of their rebellion against God: the lake of fire.

In conclusion, this good news about the kingdom of God is like the proverb that says, "A man who gives you poison, give him butter." Although all of us gave God poison, He gave us butter when He sent Jesus to us.⁵⁰ We were all His enemies, but He forgave us. This good news is also like the proverb, "Peace is like sweet milk."⁵¹ Because of Jesus, we now have peace with God, and that peace—*boy*, is it sweet.

Unfortunately, today there are many people who mistakenly think that Jesus came to bring another religion. But, as you can now see, he did not come for that reason. He came to open to us the door for inclusion in the kingdom of God. However, though the door is flung wide open, God is not going to force us to enter. Therefore, it is our choice. But if a person is starving and burning for a new, pure life, he can walk through the door very easily. If he repents of his sins, confesses from his mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believes from his heart that God raised him from the dead, he will be saved. He will receive the Holy Spirit as an assurance of his inclusion in Jesus' kingdom. However, if he makes this decision to enter the kingdom, he must know well that there is also a difficult side to this decision. Satan doesn't want anyone to accept Jesus or receive the blessings of God. Therefore, he tries very hard to stir up in

persecution against those who have decided to follow Jesus. However, that being so, the Spirit of God helps us to endure the sufferings that will come against us as we wait for Jesus' return. I will now sing you a song that shows both sides, the cost and the blessings.⁵² (Parenthetical comments added)

To those for whose work parts of this particular presentation might prove helpful, you have full permission to use whatever you like and to adapt it to your own context as you see fit.

CONCLUSION

The eternal destiny of millions of human beings throughout the earth hinges on a repentant and believing heart response to the good news of Jesus the Messiah. As those entrusted with the mandate to proclaim this message, it behooves us as the Body of Messiah to follow Paul's example and make every effort to communicate this precious gift in the most effective ways possible. Unto this end, we can use proverbs, redemptive analogies, and other kinds of cultural bridges, which are some of the valuable resources that God has put at our disposal. We can trust Jesus to meet us dynamically in the process of searching out creative ways to make our presentation of the gospel more receptor-oriented.

ENDNOTES

¹The following definitions can be found in the glossary of "People of the Rainbow; A Nomadic Utopia," by Michael I. Niman, University of Tennessee Press, 1997, or online at <http://www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/info/glossary.html>.

² "The world outside of the Gathering. 'Mainstream' or 'mainline' society; the 'straight' world (from the Book of Revelations, via Rastafari)."

³ "At the site of the Gathering."

⁴ "To meet as a group with the aim of reaching consensus on a given topic."

⁵ "Personal feelings, emotions, observations and visions as articulated at Gatherings."

⁶ "To organize a project."

⁷ "Pay attention to, or respect, the speaker or council procedures."

⁸ "Someone who delivers messages, supplies or food between two points at a Gathering."

⁹ "A volunteer responsible to serve as a conduit for Rainbow Family information to both Family members away from the Gatherings and to the public."

¹⁰ "To enter into peaceful harmony with people or the environment."

¹¹ "A plan, sometimes dishonest, for getting something for less than its value."

¹² "To agree by consensus."

¹³ Dumpster (v): "The act of retrieving food or other goods from a garbage dumpster."

¹⁴ "Harassment and hassles of Rainbows by government agencies and the police."

¹⁵ "Sitting around or wandering around, enjoying the Gathering, in a carefree state."

¹⁶ "Living the life of a Road Dog."

¹⁷ "Looking to meet someone, primarily for sex. Most sniffers are men looking for women."

¹⁸ "A state of mind one slips into after being 'on the road' too long, e.g., exhausted and wanting to settle down for a spell."

¹⁹ "Money."

²⁰ "A dead animal found on the road; dead animals in general."

²¹ "A non-verbal signal or feeling. Also can be used to describe a mood."

²² "A picture of how things should, could or will be."

²³ "The Rainbow Healing unit. Formally M.A.S.H. Transformed

into C.A.L.M. as it grew from a first aid station to a comprehensive medical unit."

²⁴ "A camp for parents, children and expectant parents. Provides childcare, special activities and special meals for children."

²⁵ "To take responsibility for making sure a given task is accomplished."

²⁶ "Hobo or Road Dog, who hops trains."

²⁷ "Someone who calls the Road home. C.f. Hobo, 'Dog.'"

²⁸ "A Rainbow who lives on the road, constantly traveling."

²⁹ "Someone with a job."

³⁰ "The central, most heavily traveled trail at a Gathering."

³¹ "A common goodbye to people leaving the Gathering. From the signature sign-off song of the Roy Rogers/Dale Evans television 'Western' of the 1950's."

³² W. A. Elwell and P.W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 100.

³³ Bill Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind: Access to a Life of Miracles* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2005), 48.

³⁴ Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 147–8.

³⁵ S. Cates, document submitted to author by email, summer 2008.

³⁶ Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 149.

³⁷ Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005).

³⁸ Moravian proverb.

³⁹ As with many languages, in Moravian there is an inclusive "we" and exclusive "we." Throughout the presentation, we use the inclusive in order to stress our common human predicament, to avoid an "us"-versus-"them" dichotomy, and to stress the truth that the gospel is available to all, irrespective of race or culture.

⁴⁰ In his book *Honor and Shame*, Rolland Muller discusses both the

shame-based and guilt-based responses to the Fall. Like most cultures in the 10-40 window, Moravian culture is primarily a shame-based culture. Muller, Roland (pseudonym). *Tools for Muslim Evangelism*. Belleville, ON: Essence Publishers, 2000.

⁴¹ This is a brief allusion to a hadith from al-Bukhari: "...The Prophet (peace be upon him) said (to them), "Satan reaches everywhere in the human body as blood reaches in it (everywhere in one's body)." From the CD collated by Dudley Woodberry, *The World of Islam: Resources for Understanding*. For this hadith, see the section called "Survey of Islam," section 5, Islam: the Dogma, Satan.

⁴² This bridge is based on Moravian custom of dealing with murder between members from different clans. This custom has roots in pre-Islamic Moravian culture, differs in significant ways from what is often espoused as orthodox Islamic blood compensation practices, and persists to the present day in various forms in different places. It has several names. One simply means blood compensation, indicating its function. Another simply means "blood," indicating the occasion for the payment, i.e., murder or the spilling of blood. The third denotes the actual price that one family must typically pay to another when a male is killed. The basic concept is that when one man from one clan kills someone from another clan, either the members of the murderer's family pays the blood compensation payment, or a cycle of revenge killings is set in motion.

⁴³ Moravian proverb.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hebrews 9:22.

⁴⁵ This is a metaphor that most Moravians, many of whom are of a nomadic background and are accustomed to difficult climates, can easily relate to.

⁴⁶ This proverb is difficult to translate. Literally it means something like "news is the hottest hunger." The meaning is that someone is just dying to get the news. Moravians often say this if they want to bypass the traditional greetings and get straight to the point because they are so anxious to hear the news (e.g., if someone has died).

⁴⁷ New Testament.

⁴⁸ This is a reference to a saying and custom that Moravians often use to declare forgiveness. A female lamb that has not given birth yet (considered precious and of great value) is often slaughtered as a declaration of forgiveness. This custom is a statement that declares that the forgiveness symbolized by the slaughtering of the lamb far outweighs the many benefits that the lamb would have brought the family if it had remained alive.

⁴⁹ Culturally understood. In the minds of most Moravians, "Christian" equals "Western."

⁵⁰ Moravian proverb.

⁵¹ Moravian proverb.

⁵² At this point, I would go on to sing a song written years earlier by some Moravian believers, all of whom had been martyred for their faith (see Ch. 11). The song talks about never denying Jesus, our Savior, the one who has given us an eternal promise, no matter what kind of persecutions or troubles befall us. This song communicates in very stark terms that the road of the cross is not an easy decision, though it is a worthwhile decision. From the very start, new believers must have no illusions about what they are getting into.

5

Galvanized for Perseverance: Establishing the Saints through the Mystery of Messiah

We had been home from overseas for two and a half months, and we were in Kansas City, MO, praying about what God wanted us to do next. Our financial-support base was in shambles: one of our original supporting churches no longer existed, and in one week we would receive our final support check from our former mission organization. We had just moved to a new city. We owned no furniture and had no capital investments. I had to look for a job.

For a week, I browsed the internet and searched newspapers. Each time I did so, I had difficulty concentrating. Feelings of frustration, restlessness, and a lack of peace came over me. In my own history with God, this kind of experience usually amounted to a big red light—"Stop!" At first I just tried to ignore these signals and stubbornly kept looking for a job. However, with the passing of each day it became harder and harder to ignore the growing chasm between my mind and my heart. The former told me, "It is your responsibility to put food on the table and take care of your family. Step up! Be a man!" The latter replied, "Just stop. Don't force it. Trust in the Lord."

I was torn. In my heart of hearts, I knew that for a season he wanted me to join full-time staff at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. This would mean support-raising. However, it would take a long time to build up our support base again. "Father," I kept asking him, "if you are really asking me to hold off on a job for now and join IHOP—

KC's staff ... well ... well ... what are we going to do?!"

This was the state of my heart when I walked into the IHOP–KC prayer room one Thursday morning. I felt depressed. On a scale of one to ten, it felt as if my faith level was at negative five. I tried to comfort myself with the fact that we were scheduled to receive our final check through electronic deposit later that day. "At least the bills will get paid this month," I thought. It was hard to concentrate when I sat down to pray. My heart felt like a raging storm.

Suddenly but unobtrusively, the Holy Spirit began to speak to my heart. I recognized his voice immediately.

"Trust me," he whispered gently. "I will send you and your family food through the ravens, as I did for Elijah, and manna from the heaven, as I did for the Israelites."

As he spoke to me, he emphasized that this was a time of training. Like the Israelites in the desert, before we could enter our inheritance, we first had to learn trust in his power alone for our daily bread (Dt. 8). Would we "lose" our lives by trying to preserve them through our own effort, or would we "save" them by letting him take us through a death process called the cross (Mt. 16:25)? In the words of Psalm 139, God had hemmed us in, behind and before, and now he was laying his hand upon us as a loving Father. Would we trust him for the ravens? Would we trust him for the manna?

I went home and told my wife what the Spirit had said. We wept much of the day as we faced a barrage of fears and doubts. Never before had we embarked on such a risky financial journey, one that to the world would no doubt seem absurd and even irresponsible. It was painful and felt like death. However, the God who had sent his own Son to the cross was now calling us to carry our own cross in the context of this practical financial decision.

Later that evening, I drove back to the prayer room to check our online bank account and see whether our final check had come in. As I drove, I dialogued with the Lord about my wife and daughter. The thought of them not being provided for tormented me.

I walked into the prayer room at about 6:30PM. The worship team on the platform was singing spontaneous songs about carrying

the cross. I opened my laptop and logged into my bank account. As I looked at the screen, my heart froze. The check had indeed been deposited. However, something seemed wrong. The amount was too low. I looked at the transactions page and saw that someone had waited until just now to cash a large check we had written several months earlier. I stared numbly at the computer screen. "God, *what* have I done wrong?!" I was at the breaking point.

At that exact moment, the woman leading worship broke out into a prophetic song. I felt the Spirit of God strike my heart like an arrow as she began to sing, "There is someone in the room making a major decision right now." Immediately, I knew the word was for me. I began to sob and shake. The people around me must have thought I was crazy. I wrote down the message word-for-word as the song began to crescendo and as passion increased in the singer's voice:

"I can see the way your heart is bleeding. You are making decisions now that feel like death, that look like death. You are making decisions now to be crucified. I can hear the cry of your heart. I can feel the bleeding within. I know that your love is real. It's not in vain, and you are not alone. I will take care of them. Do you trust me? I will take care of them. I know that you are worried that these decisions will affect more than just you. I will take care of them! Do you trust me?" And though your hand is dripping with the fragrance of myrrh, and though your heart is ripping in two, he says, "Into my hands—give it to me, I will take it and make it new. Do you trust me? Do you trust me? Because I know what I want, and I want you. Do you trust me? Are you ready to take a leap of faith? I will not leave you alone. Do you trust me?"

Through this prophetic word, God was reminding our family of Jesus' call for his people to carry their cross as he had carried his

(Mt. 16:24). A theological truth that God had revealed in Jesus was now functioning as a practical discipleship impetus for us. The doctrinal point: God had sent his Messiah the first time to die on a cross as a sacrifice of atonement before being rewarded with bodily resurrection. The practical question inextricably linked to this truth: Would we choose to obey God's voice despite our fears and lack of understanding, or would we pursue the more familiar and usually acceptable course which God in this instance had removed as an option? According to the New Testament, at stake was the measure of our reward in the resurrection of the righteous and in the age to come (Mt. 16:24–27; 1 Cor. 3:10–15, 15:35–44; Php. 3:10–11; Heb. 11:35). The framework for this experience, moreover, was this doctrine-practice nexus on which our lives had been built.

For the next three years, God took our family on a journey of discipleship more glorious and more difficult than anything we had ever experienced. It would take another book to recount the testimonies from this season. Sometimes a bag of groceries would miraculously show up at our doorstep—just in time. Sometimes a person would walk up to us and say, "God told me to begin giving you financial support each month." Sometimes a twenty-dollar bill would find its way to our kitchen counter just when we needed to put gas in the car. On other occasions, God taught us to be happy and content with the bare essentials: bread, eggs, and milk. At other times, he would drop an unexpected and large financial gift in our laps, and we would go celebrate at our favorite restaurants. He always knew when and how much pressure to apply to maximize our love for him in the moment. Whenever my wife and I reflect on the incisive work that God did in our hearts during this time, our eyes fill with tears and our hearts swell with joy. Like never before, we learned in this season that while the path of the cross sometimes may feel almost unbearably painful, it truly is the only path that leads to freedom and life.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE MYSTERY: THE LINCHPIN OF NEW TESTAMENT DISCIPLESHIP

Once unbelievers have heard the core points of the biblical gospel communicated clearly and have responded by sincerely repenting of their sins and acknowledging Jesus as the resurrected Messiah (Ac. 2:38; Rom. 10:9), that means they have received the forgiveness of sins. They have been "rescued from the dominion of darkness" and by faith are now included in "the kingdom of the Son he (God the Father) loves" (Col. 1:13, parenthetical comment added). Now what? How would Paul and the other apostles have proceeded with the process of discipleship from this point forward? This is the question to which we now shift our attention.

When many people in the Body of Messiah hear the phrase "the gospel," their minds immediately turn to the evangelization of unbelievers. While it is absolutely true that gospel proclamation forms the backbone of the ministry of evangelism, in the New Testament the gospel was more than an introductory message for unbelievers. Rather, Paul states that the gospel as now understood "according to the mystery" of Messiah is God's prescribed means of establishing the saints in maturity and motivating them to obey him (Rom. 16:25–27). It thus functioned as *the continuing reference point* of all subsequent discipleship. If our mode of foundation-building is to approximate what we see in the New Testament, therefore, it must also have the gospel according to the mystery of Messiah as the linchpin of the discipleship process.

In the New Testament, the term "mystery" does not have the same meaning that it does for many people today: some kind of hidden or esoteric knowledge accessible exclusively to those in a secret society, and the attainment of which amounts to salvation. In the early centuries after Jesus, twisted versions of the gospel presented on these elitist terms was condemned as the heresy of Gnosticism.

A biblical mystery, by contrast, is a truth that God formerly revealed to the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament concerning his plan of redemption, but the precise meaning and unfolding of

which he necessarily hid from them to safeguard the plan until the time for its historical fulfillment arrived (1 Cor. 2:6–8). However, what God hid from the understanding of the prophets as they pored over their own writings (Eph. 3:5), he has now made known through Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. In Paul's words, a biblical mystery is a truth formerly hidden but now disclosed to the world by the command of God:

Now to him who is able to establish you by *my gospel* and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, *according to the revelation of the mystery* (Gk. *mysterion*) *hidden* (from the very servants through whom it was prophesied, cf. Eph. 3:5) for long ages past, but *now revealed* and made known through the prophetic writings (Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament) by the command of the eternal God. (Rom. 16:25–26, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Indeed, Paul virtually equates his "gospel" and the "mystery" of which he saw himself a steward (1 Cor. 4:1) with "Jesus Christ's preaching" or "Jesus Christ's proclamation" (Rom. 16:25).¹ In his mind, stewarding "the mystery" meant making the Messiah's own teaching known openly to the entire Body of Messiah with clarity and insight (Eph. 3:1–5), and it was equivalent to "presenting the word of God in its fullness" (Col. 1:25–26). This was because the "apostles' teaching" (Ac. 2:42) consisted primarily of making known the various facets of this mystery—the unexpected elements of the Messianic mission—against the backdrop of what the Jews in Jerusalem already expected about the Messiah and his mission. In what follows, I will briefly summarize seven facets of the mystery of Messiah as understood within their historical context. I will also show how these core points of doctrine, when adequately understood, are not just lofty theology but together form an inherently-motivational discipleship apparatus. As such, God has designed them as the bedrock of a New Testament-caliber foundation. In Ch. 6, we will shift our focus to how to practically pass on the core points of the apostles' teaching

strategically and reproducibly so that they can take firm root in a movement.

FACET 1: THE SCANDALOUS MEANS OF NEW COVENANT ESTABLISHMENT

Perhaps the most startling facet of the mystery of Messiah, especially for first-century Jews, was the scandalous and utterly humiliating means by which the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8) was established: through the blood of a *crucified* Messiah. In faithfulness to his covenant promises, the God of Israel had resurrected and thereby judicially vindicated a crucified, condemned man as his appointed King and Messiah.

The fact that not just any man but *Jesus of Nazareth* had been raised from the dead carried the weightiest of implications on two fronts. First, it meant that Jesus had actually been innocent. That meant that most people in Israel were guilty in God's sight; they were blinded by delusion, because they were living by a standard of "righteousness" that—even though they had been entrusted with the Mosaic Law—was contrary to God's standard; and, without repentance, they were destined for God's wrath on the day of the Lord. Secondly, Jesus' resurrection meant that the God of Israel was like Jesus. The fact that God vindicated and declared this crucified man righteous through resurrection meant that Jesus' life, character, teaching, and willingness to sacrifice his own life for the well-being of his undeserving persecutors defined God's own character, standards, and definition of love and righteousness. It is hard for us to imagine what an orthodox Pharisee like Paul actually felt when the resurrected Messiah appeared to him on the road to Damascus and revealed his identity as Jesus of Nazareth, the man condemned as a heretic and blasphemer and put to death by one of the most shameful methods of the day (Ac. 9). To feel the impact of this truth, we must consider that before the crucifixion, the idea that the Messiah might suffer on some level may have not been entirely outside the Messianic framework of many first-century Jews. For example, some schools of rabbinical thought did interpret passages

like Isaiah 53 Messianically:

As already stated, such early works as the *Targum Jonathan* and the *Jerusalem Targum* frankly adopt the Messianic interpretation of these prophecies. The later Rabbis also admit that this had been the common view of the Jewish fathers; but, on account of 'the sages of the Nazarenes, who apply it to that man whom they hanged in Jerusalem towards the close of the second Temple, and who, according to their opinion, was the Son of the Most Blessed, and had taken human nature in the womb of the Virgin,' they reject that interpretation, and refer the prediction of suffering either to some individual, or mostly to Israel as a nation. But so difficult is it to weaken the language in which the Messiah's vicarious sufferings are described—not less than twelve times in Isa. 52:13 to 53—that some of their commentators have been forced to admit it, sometimes almost unconsciously.²

So scandalous to the Jewish mind was the idea of the Messiah bearing a cross that—once Isaiah 52:13–53 had been applied to Jesus' crucifixion—the rabbis were willing to simply turn a blind eye to their own interpretative traditions.

In contrast, Jesus taught his disciples that this revelation of a crucified Messiah (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–2:8)—not just a cornerstone, but a *tested* and *rejected* cornerstone (Ps. 118:22; Is. 28:16)—would form the foundation on which he would build an assembly of saints who would walk in holiness, and who would overcome the grave (Hades) through their inclusion in the resurrection of the righteous and the Messianic kingdom (Mt. 16:13–28). These saints, moreover, would be rewarded with positions of authority in the Messianic kingdom for the purpose of binding, judging, and purging wicked kings and demons from the heavens and the earth (Mt. 16:19; cf. Is. 24:21–23; Ps. 149; 1 Cor. 6:2–3). In the New Testament, the mystery of Messiah crucified forms the foundation of apostolic teaching, doctrine, and

ministry. Because Messiah, the precious cornerstone, attained to the resurrection of the righteous through suffering, so his disciples too must enter into their inheritance of resurrection at Messiah's coming through tests and trials of various kinds:

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that *one* (the Messiah) *died* (on the cross) for all, and *therefore all* (disciples in that Messiah) *died* (with their Messiah, in following his example cf. Mt. 16:24–25). And he died for all (for the forgiveness of those who repent and believe), that those who live (as disciples of Messiah) should no longer live for themselves (in agreement with Satan, cf. Mt. 16:3) but for him who died for them (according to the mystery of the cross now revealed) and was raised again (as a firstfruits sign of the reward of resurrection given those who persevere as their master persevered, cf. 1 Cor. 15, Heb. 2). So from now on (i.e., in light of the truth that God vindicated a crucified Messiah) we regard no one from a worldly point of view (i.e., according to world value systems and standards contrary to the humility of the cross). Though we (the Jewish people) once regarded Christ in this way (as our champion, but not as one who suffers and willingly undergoes humiliation for the well-being of others), we do so no longer (in light of the cross, our entire way of seeing life has shifted). (2 Cor. 5:14–16, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the

righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and *the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death* (cf. Mt. 16:24), and so, somehow, to *attain to* (increased measure and reward) *the resurrection from the dead* (reward received at Messiah's appearing, cf. Mt. 16:27). (Php. 3:7–11, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

In bringing many sons to *glory* (resurrection from the dead in glorified bodies), it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the *author of their salvation* (Messiah) *perfect through suffering* (resurrection after persevering through sufferings). Both the one (Messiah) who makes men holy and those who are made holy (those in Messiah also set apart through refinements unto their own inheritance in the resurrection of the righteous) are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers (because they said yes to the cross, like their Messiah, cf. Mt. 16:24–25). (Heb. 2:10–11, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus* (the resurrected Lord at the Father's right hand, cf. Col. 3:1–4), the *author and perfecter* (cf. Job 33:24–28, Messiah as the one who rightly interprets suffering) of our faith (in the resurrection), who for *the joy* (of the resurrection, cf. Ps. 16:11) set before him *endured the cross, scorning its shame* (vindicated through resurrection), and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, *so that you will not grow weary and lose heart* (consider the reward that also

awaits you in the resurrection if you stay the course of the cross as Jesus did). (Heb. 12:1–3, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Therefore, the truth of Messiah crucified and the revelation of God contained therein must form the backbone of a discipleship foundation if it is to bear the mark of New Testament authenticity. Why should Jews and Gentiles serve one another self-sacrificially? *The cross* (Eph. 2). Why should wives and husbands, children and parents, masters and slaves love one another? *The cross* (Eph. 5). Why should disciples of Messiah forgive one another, walk in unity, and rid ourselves of anger, lust, pride, and the other works of darkness? *The cross* (see 1 Cor. 1–2; Eph. 4:17–5:1). Indeed, the mystery of Messiah crucified provided a powerful rationale and motivation for holiness: through the Holy Spirit, the saints are to yield always to the grace of God and crucify “the flesh” to the greatest degree possible, and stay faithful to Messiah through suffering and persecutions; in order that they, like the saints of old (Heb. 11:35), might “attain to” (Php. 3:11) the greatest reward possible in the resurrection of the righteous and the Messianic kingdom (Rom. 2:7). Those who reject the truth and live wickedly will not inherit the kingdom of God (Rom. 2:8; Eph. 5:5). Therefore, the saints are to persevere in righteousness and holiness to the end.

FACET 2: THE MESSIANIC MISSION EXECUTED THROUGH TWO COMINGS

Closely related to the first facet is the concept that the Messianic mission was to be executed through *two comings*, instead of just one, as most Jews expected.³ Luke 24 highlights this aspect of the mystery well. Before entering into the glory of his kingdom on the earth through military conquest, the Messiah had to first come as an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins in fulfillment of the Scriptures:

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe *all* (i.e., not just Scriptures about

Messiah the conqueror, but also other Messianic functions) that the prophets have spoken (concerning the Messianic mission)! Did not the Christ *have to suffer these things* (as atonement for the forgiveness of sins) *and then* (subsequent to the atoning sacrifice) enter his glory (the glory of the Messianic kingdom)?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in *all the Scriptures* (including Ps. 22, Is. 53, etc., not just the parts most Jews wanted to hear) concerning himself. (Lk. 24:25–27, cf. Ac. 3:26; emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

By dividing the Messianic mission into two historical phases—the first visit for atonement and mercy, the second for judgment—God was revealing to the world the true depth of his mercy, patience, and love for sinners (2 Pt. 3:9). Jesus had first come as God's own Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), not yet as God's designated military conqueror (Is. 63; Rev. 19). The chronological gap between the spring feasts, in which the Passover lamb was sacrificed, and the fall feasts, which celebrated the day when God would judge the world and Israel would rule the nations under Messiah (Zech. 14), turned out to be a prophetic picture of how the Messianic mission would be administrated in two phases separated by a gap in time. In the interim, the disciples were to go throughout the earth with an offer of amnesty—repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 24:47)—before the day when Messiah comes back the second time, this time in judgment.

In practical terms, this dimension of the mystery of Messiah has profound implications for the nature of the apostolic ministry as portrayed in the New Testament. As the Messiah had come the first time in mercy as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins before he would return a second time in judgment, so the ministry of those he sent out was to reflect this same pattern. Paul states that in this age he had been entrusted with a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18) the purpose of which was to establish new disciples in maturity through

the mystery of the cross (Col. 1:25–26), so that they would be made worthy in God's sight to receive the fullness of their reward in the age to come and in the resurrection of the righteous at Messiah's appearing (Lk. 20:35; 2 Th. 1:5; see also admonitions of Eph. 4:1; Php. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Th. 2:12, etc.). Only at the Messiah's second coming would the saints join him in his work of judgment (Ps. 149; Lk. 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2).

FACET 3: THE TWO-FOLD ADMINISTRATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Another facet of the mystery of Messiah pertains to the way God has chosen to administrate his covenant promise to resurrect the righteous from the dead. Most first-century Jews were expecting the resurrection of the dead to occur solely at the end of the age. They were not prepared for the idea that any single human being, let alone the Messiah himself, would experience the resurrection of the righteous at a time in history ahead of resurrection of the saints at the end of the age.⁴

This truth was embedded in the yearly feasts instituted by the Mosaic Law. God designed the feasts, as part of the Law, to testify to the Messiah (Mt. 5:17; Jn. 5:46; Gal. 3:24). According to the Jewish calendar, the first day (sundown to sundown according to Jewish reckoning) of the spring feasts was 14 Nisan, or the day of Passover (Lev. 23:5). The second day was 15 Nisan, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6) and also a festive Sabbath (as opposed to the regular weekly Sabbath, Lev. 23:7, 11). 16 Nisan was the third day of the spring feasts and the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on which the firstfruits of the barley harvest was waved before the Lord to consecrate and dedicate the harvest, and as a sign and assurance that God would be faithful to bring in the rest of the harvest (Lev. 23:9–14). "For it is a universal principle in the Old Testament, that 'the first' always stands for the whole—the firstfruits for the whole harvest, the firstborn and the firstlings for all the rest; and that 'if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy.'"⁵

Jesus was crucified on the first day, 14 Nisan, and he died at the

ninth hour (about 3:00PM, Mk. 15:34), the very hour that the Jews were sacrificing their Passover lambs in the Temple.⁶ That year, 14 Nisan fell on a Friday (Mk. 15:42), and Jesus was buried that same day before the 15 Nisan began at twilight. His body was in the tomb on 15 Nisan, a "special Sabbath" (Jn. 19:31), because that particular year the weekly Sabbath and festive Sabbath (Lev. 23:7) converged. The third day, 16 Nisan, began at twilight, and Jesus rose from the dead on the morning of 16 Nisan, about the same time that the priests would have been waving the barley sheaf before the Lord in the Temple.

Though year after year the Jewish people had joyously participated in the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, most of them had never thought of connecting the waving of the firstfruits (Lev. 23:9–14) with the Messiah's own bodily resurrection. However, the mystery tucked away in these events was openly made known in Jesus' resurrection. The resurrection of the Messiah was God's "firstfruits" guarantee that he would reap the fullness of the resurrection harvest at the end of the age (1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Th. 4:13–14). In other words, Jesus' resurrected body was a sheaf that God waved before the world as a sign and assurance that he would in fact prove true to his word and resurrect the righteous at the end of the age in fulfillment of his covenant promises (Mt. 13:36–43). This already/not yet mystery of the resurrection of the righteous was intended to galvanize the saints to self-sacrifice and perseverance through suffering, that they too would share in the same reward of resurrected life at Jesus' second coming (Mt. 16:24–27; Php. 3:7–11; 2 Cor. 4:8–11; Heb. 2:10–11, 12:1–3).

FACET 4: THE TWO-FOLD ADMINISTRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Another aspect of the Messianic mystery is the two-fold administration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Believing Jews had long known that God was going to pour out his Holy Spirit on the nation of Israel as the key to her renewal and restoration (Is. 32:15, 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2). They knew that God would pour

out his Spirit (Ps. 68:18; Is. 44:1–5) through the Messiah, on whom the Spirit would rest (Is. 11, 42, 61, etc.); that the Spirit was key to human beings receiving a circumcised heart (Ezek. 36:27); and that as the Spirit's breath had first given life to man at the beginning (Gn. 1:7), so too the Spirit would function as the means by which the human body would be regenerated in the resurrection. However, as with the resurrection of the righteous, they did not expect the Spirit to be poured out in two phases.

The spring feasts were completed in the Feast of Pentecost or Feast of Weeks, which began fifty days after 16 Nisan and the firstfruits offering (Lev. 23:15). At the Feast of Weeks, Jews celebrated the full ingathering of the barley and wheat harvest, as well as the receiving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, the anniversary of which fell during this feast.⁷ This is a prophetic picture of what happened on the day of Pentecost when Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on his followers (Ac. 2; 2 Cor. 3:3). However, this outpouring did not result in the bodily resurrection of the saints, but in the Spirit being put in them as a seal and firstfruits deposit that guaranteed their future bodily resurrection at Messiah's second coming (Rom. 8:11, 23; Eph. 1:13–14, 4:40). The second installment will come when Messiah returns to resurrect and glorify the saints through the agency and power of the same Holy Spirit. In the meantime, the Spirit would empower God's people to testify to that day when Messiah would complete their redemption through bodily resurrection (Lk. 24:29; Ac. 1:8). He would also be the one through whose agency the Law would move from tablets of stone to human hearts (Rom. 3:29, 2 Cor. 3; cf. Jer. 31:33). In the New Testament, "grace" is often used as a shorthand word for the enabling power made available to the saints through the firstfruits deposit of the Spirit. In terms of personal transformation, the ultimate purpose of this grace is to forge righteous lives that over time are made worthy of inclusion in the resurrection of the righteous (Lk. 20:35). As we will see more in Chapters 6 and 7, this aspect of the mystery functions practically to keep the saints from becoming discouraged in their pursuit of wholehearted obedience to God's commands.

FACET 5: TWO PHASES OF NEW COVENANT ADMINISTRATION TO ISRAEL

Most Jews expected that the new or “everlasting covenant” prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures would be administered to the nation of Israel through one event. However, in Jesus God revealed his plan to administer the New Covenant to the Jewish people in two parts or phases over time: first, to a small believing remnant, and then at a later time in history to the entire nation just preceding and following Messiah’s return.

According to the Hebrew Scriptures, at the end of the age the Messiah would enter into a new, binding, and everlasting covenant with Israel, whereby God’s law would be written on her heart and mind, and by which her sins would be forgiven (Is. 54:10, 61:8; Jer. 31:31–34, 50:4–5). This covenant would be a covenant of peace (Is. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25) and atonement (Ezek. 16:60–62) through which God would betroth himself (Hos. 2:16–20) and be bound (Ezek. 20:37) to Israel forever. As part of this everlasting covenant, moreover, the Messiah would resurrect the righteous through the word of his mouth (see, e.g. Is. 49:8–9; cf. Jn. 5:25, 11:43). In context to this New Covenant, moreover, the Messiah would pour out the Holy Spirit, wash Israel of her sin, impurity, and idolatry, and enable her to obey God forever (Ps. 68:18; Is. 44:1–5, 59:21; Ezek. 39:26–29; Joel 2). The Spirit resting on the Messiah would thus rest on Israel forever (Is. 59:21). Through this covenant, the entire nation of Israel (Is. 60:21)—now constituted solely of a purified, surviving remnant in a righteous state before God (Is. 4:2–6)—would be enabled to legitimately inherit the land of Israel forever under the Messiah (Dt. 29–30).

Paul tells us, however, that until Messiah’s return Israel has experienced a “hardening in part” and that that the nation’s full salvation will be realized only when “the full number” (NIV) or “fullness” (NKJV) “of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom. 11:25). Israel’s national salvation therefore awaits a great harvest from among the Gentile nations. However, not just any kind of harvest will do. Paul also says that “salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy” (Rom. 11:11, NKJV). In other words, God’s plan is to take

the New Covenant blessings that rightfully belong to the Jewish people and offer them to the Gentiles. Then, he will use those believing Gentiles as a goad to make the Jewish people desirous of what the Gentiles have received and to open their eyes to the truth of Jesus' Messiahship. Why is this significant? Because Paul tells us that "life from the dead" (Rom. 11:15), or the resurrection of the righteous, occurs at the Messiah's second coming (1 Th. 4:16–17). The Messiah's coming presupposes the repentance of "all Israel" (Rom. 10:26). The repentance of Israel presupposes a large Gentile harvest throughout the nations that walks in a quality of witness and sacrificial love sufficient to provoke Israel to repentance (Rom. 11:11, 15). Ultimately, the earth's redemption is tied to Israel's salvation.

When adequately understood, this dimension of the Messianic mystery is a kind of litmus test for the Body of Messiah's quality of life. It constantly forces us to ask ourselves: Has our corporate life together become so filled with the self-sacrificial love of the crucified Messiah that the people of Israel, historically the most hardened to Jesus, are compelled to seriously reconsider their stance towards him?

FACET 6: GENTILE INCLUSION IN ISRAEL'S COVENANT UNTO THE FORMATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL BRIDE

The timing, means, and purpose of Gentile inclusion in God's Messianic covenant with Israel reveals staggering truths about his love and mercy. To the Jewish mind of the first century, however, the truths we are about to discuss were almost as offensive as the cross itself.

In Second Temple Judaism, Gentiles who wanted to join themselves to Israel's covenant typically had to undergo a series of initiation rites, including physical circumcision, proselyte water baptism, and a sacrifice indicating allegiance to the Mosaic Law:

Again, it was prescribed that such Gentiles as became 'proselytes of righteousness,' or 'proselytes of the Covenant' (*Gerey batstsedeq* or *Gerey habberith*), were to be admitted to full participation in the privileges

of Israel by the threefold rites of circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice—the immersion being, as it were, the acknowledgment and symbolic removal of moral defilement, corresponding to that of Levitical uncleanness.⁸

What a shock it was, then, when God poured out the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household before any of the males had undergone circumcision and become Jewish proselytes! Trumping Peter's possible reluctance to lay hands on an "unclean" Gentile, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on these Gentiles directly without the laying on of hands (Ac. 10:44; cf. Ac. 8:17). Peter and his Jewish companions were astonished (Ac. 10:45). The Spirit was God's seal and guarantee of inclusion in the resurrection of the righteous (Eph. 1:13–14). By pouring out the Holy Spirit on Gentile believers, God was making an unequivocal statement: his full acceptance of them—and thus their inclusion in the New Covenant that Jesus had made with the believing remnant in Israel—was based simply on their repentance and faith in Jesus as the Messiah (Ac. 11:18; 15:8). Through this event, repentance and faith in Jesus were established as the only requisite means of Gentile inclusion in God's covenantal promises to Israel.

Consequently, Gentile disciples were "no longer aliens and foreigners" (Eph. 2:19) "excluded from citizenship in Israel" and the hope of "the covenants of the promise" (Eph. 2:12); now, with believing Jews, they were also "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:19–20). Through the gospel of Jesus the Messiah, "the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:6). Believing Gentiles had been fully grafted into Israel's covenantal promises (Rom. 11) by faith in Jesus as Lord. They were thus destined, as part of one Body along with believing Jews, to inherit the resurrection of the righteous and the Messianic kingdom. The assurance of their inclusion in these promises was the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13–14), whom God had poured out on them upon their repentance and faith, not because

of physical circumcision (Gal. 3:1–5). This facet of the mystery of Messiah revealed that believing Gentiles, as beneficiaries of the “nourishing sap” of God’s covenants with Israel (Rom. 11:17), would now be included among those whose bodies would be changed in the “twinkling of an eye” at the final trumpet in fulfillment of those covenants (1 Cor. 15:51–52).

While the unexpected way God was unfolding his plan in itself must have been startling to the apostles and the early church, even more breathtaking was what this mystery revealed to the world about God: the Father is extremely zealous to give his Son a multinational Bride as a “pure virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2). This Bride, moreover, is the object of Jesus’ most fervent affections, the one on whom his eyes are continually riveted, the one he loves and attentively cares for (Eph. 5:28–32). As a man is “one with” his wife, Paul asserts, so the multiethnic Bride that the Father is calling forth from the nations is actually “one with” or “united with” the Messiah through the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, Paul also informs us as to *why* God is administrating his plan among the Gentiles in such an unexpected way. The reason God has shifted so much of his attention to the Gentiles is that he has a serious bone of contention with Satan and the fallen host of demonic powers. He has a point to make, and he is going to make it through the church. Ever since God first called Abraham and his descendants out from the idolatry of Babylon for the purpose of forming a righteous nation that would bear his name (Gn. 12–22), Satan has persistently tried to resist God’s plan by inciting the Gentile nations of the earth to oppress Israel. Egypt (Ex. 1:8–22), Assyria (Is. 36–37), Babylon (Dan. 3), Persia (Est. 3), the Hellenists (Dan. 11), Rome, Nazi Germany and numerous others have all had their hands on Israel’s throat at different times. Though God sometimes used these empires to discipline his people, in their demonically-empowered violence and pride they always overstepped their boundaries (Zech. 1:15). Now, however, God was turning the tables on Satan and the demonic powers. Through the gospel of this crucified and risen Messiah, the God of Israel was doing the unthinkable. He was

calling forth a believing Gentile remnant out from among all the nations to join themselves to the believing Jewish remnant, thereby forming one "multi-colored" and ethnically-variegated Body out of many nations—the assembly or church of Messiah. The basis of this Body's unity is the cross (Eph. 2:14–18), by which means God has completely destroyed all grounds for human pride and boasting on the part of both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 11). Through the work of the cross, God will skillfully craft this Body into a unified company of humble, self-sacrificial saints, the work of his hands (Eph. 2:10). He will take this multinational Bride and put her on display as the exclamation point of his case to the demonic principalities and powers of the air: the way of humility, voluntary obedience, and love, God's way, is always triumphant in the end.

His intent was that now, through the church (the Messianic assembly of Israel now composed of both Jew and Gentile in Messiah, cf. vv. 2:11–3:6), the manifold (Gk: *polypoikilos*: "multicolored," "much-variegated,"⁹ "marked with a great variety of colours,"¹⁰ i.e., multi-national, multi-ethnic) wisdom of God (God's unfaltering ability and insight to accomplish his eternal plan, cf. v. 11; and skill at crafting the Bride as his righteous workmanship, cf. Eph. 2:10) should be made known (i.e., God has something he wants to make known through this multicolored assembly) to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Satan and demonic principalities who have used Gentile powers to assail Israel throughout her history in an attempt to thwart God's plan), according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (when he removed the enmity between Jew and Gentile through the cross, thereby turning Satan's plans against him, cf. Eph. 2). (Eph. 3:10–11, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Throughout most of Israel's history, the unbelieving majority in

Israel had put unrighteous pressure on the righteous minority (persecution). Now the saints of God would begin to outnumber the unbelieving majority in Israel, but in a way that no one had expected: these saints would be made up predominantly of Messianic Gentiles who had formerly been hostile to Jews, but were now themselves "fellow citizens" (Eph. 2:19) of the "commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12, NKJV), and whose lives had been transformed by the God of Israel through the power of a crucified Messiah. Through the agency of this multinational Bride, God will shift the scales and begin to apply *righteous* pressure on unbelieving Jews until finally "all Israel is saved" at the end of the age (Rom. 11:26). In other words, he will use this multicolored work of art to provoke Israel to jealousy for her Messiah (Rom. 11:11), unto the Messiah's return, the resurrection of the righteous, the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom, and the purging of Satan from the earth (Rev. 20:1–3). Through the mystery of Messiah, God will shut the mouth of the Accuser once and for all.

Once again, adequate understanding of this dimension of the mystery of Messiah is designed to function as a motivational impetus for holy living. God is strategically carrying out his plan among both Jew and Gentile for the purpose of maximizing humility, self-sacrifice, and eternal rewards on the part of both. That truth inherently implies that both Jewish and Gentile believers must become a humble and self-sacrificial people for that plan to be accomplished.

FACET 7: THE GOVERNMENTAL CONVERGENCE OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH UNDER THE HEADSHIP OF MESSIAH

The governmental convergence of the heavens and the earth under the headship of the Messiah forms another facet of the Messianic mystery. In Paul's words:

And he made known to us the mystery of his will (God's plan, formerly hidden but now disclosed to the saints in Messiah Jesus) according to his good

pleasure, which he purposed (Gk. *protithemi*: to purpose, set forth, i.e., "set forth to be looked at" or "expose to public view"¹¹ or "displayed publicly"¹²) in Christ (i.e., God's plan was put on public display for the world to behold in Messiah), that in the fullness of the times (cf. Gal. 4:4) of God's household administration (Gk. *oikonomia*) *all things in the heavens and on the earth* would be *brought together* (governmental convergence) *under the headship* (Gk. *anakephalaiomai*) *of Messiah* (i.e., all governmental authority in the heavens and the earth has been given to the Messiah, cf. Mt. 28:18). (Ephesians 1:9–10, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)¹³

The revelatory implications of this dimension of the Messianic mystery would have staggered the Jewish mind of the first century on at least three fronts: (1) what it disclosed about the ontological nature of the Messiah: that he was not only a man, as most Jews expected, but that he was also fully God; (2) what it disclosed about the governmental character of God: that he is indescribably humble and forever governs solely for the well-being of his creation; and (3) what it disclosed about God's continued mercy and patience: that the Messiah's first governmental assignment as Lord over the heavens and the earth was not to purge the former of wicked demons and the latter of wicked men—as he will later do (Is. 24:21–23, 63:1–6; Rev. 12, 19–20)—but to administer the blessings of the New Covenant to a growing number of repentant sinners as an intercessor at the Father's right hand.

To a varying degree, a number of verses in the Old Testament either imply (Gn. 3:15, 4:1,¹⁴ 9:27,¹⁵ 18, 32:29–30; Jsh. 1:14; Jdg. 13:21–22; Dan. 7:14; Mic. 5:2), or in a few places explicitly state (Ps. 45:6–7; Is. 7:14, 9:6; Jer. 23:6), the divinity of the promised Messianic Seed. However, the proclivity of Pharisaic Judaism—the predominant school of Jewish thought in the first-century, which subsequently developed into Talmudic Judaism—was to sidestep the logical implications of these types of texts.¹⁶ By the first century,

there were a few legitimate streams of Jewish thought that allowed some conceptual room for Messianic divinity,¹⁷ but groups like these typically were in the minority. The majority of Jews in Israel knew that the God of Israel would fully back up the Messiah's governmental authority on the earth (Ps. 110). They also had many well-developed and sophisticated categories for describing God's dynamic, imminent, and intimate interaction with his creation, such as the Shekinah glory, Wisdom, and the Word of the Lord.¹⁸ However, most in Israel were not looking for a Messiah who was fully God and fully man, or, as the Council of Chalcedon (451AD) would later put it, "the same perfect in Godhead, and the same perfect in manhood."¹⁹ That the Messiah might be something more than a mere man, however highly exalted, was not only something most Jews—for whom even mentioning the name of God was forbidden—would not have been prepared to accept readily. At several junctures in his ministry, Jesus nearly got stoned for blasphemy because of the way he stretched the existent Messianic categories of his hearers to the limits on this issue (Jn. 5:18, 8:58–59, 10:31–33).

Whatever questions or doubts may have remained in the minds of Jesus' followers on these matters, however, were decisively put to rest following the Messiah's resurrection. First, by raising Jesus from the dead, the Father had vindicated Jesus as righteous, thereby certifying that all of Jesus' previous controversial claims about himself had been completely truthful. Second, as a preface to the Great Commission, the now resurrected and vindicated Messiah made one of his boldest assertions yet: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt. 28:18). When God first created Adam and Eve, he specifically gave them delegated authority and dominion over the earth (Gn. 1:26; Ps. 8:6–8; 115:16). Though God deputized human beings with authority over the footstool of his kingdom, the earth (Is. 66:1), he never gave them delegated authority over the heavens, where his throne is located (Is. 66:1; Ps. 11:4, 103:19).²⁰ The people of Israel already knew that the Messianic Seed would receive governmental authority over the earth. That he would also possess governmental authority over *the heavens*, however, was a revelation

that was bound to explode their Messianic categories because of its logical implications. If God is the possessor of authority over the heavens, and if the Messiah is the possessor of authority over the heavens, as the resurrected and vindicated Jesus revealed, then the Messiah is God. If man is the delegated authority over the earth, and if the Messiah is the delegated authority over the earth, then the Messiah is man. Jesus is God; Jesus is man. Through the revelation of the governmental convergence of the heavens and the earth under the headship of Messiah, God dropped the paradox of the incarnation, in all of its glory and splendor, like a grenade into the minds and hearts of the earliest disciples. As the Apostle John put it, perhaps shaking his head in wonder when his pen first hit the parchment: "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn. 1:14).

This aspect of the mystery of Messiah clarifies why some of the New Testament's loftiest statements concerning the dual nature of Jesus are seamlessly interwoven with statements concerning the Messiah's governmental lordship over all things in both the heavens and the earth (Col. 1:15–20; Heb. 1:1–4). The unveiling of this facet before the apostles' eyes meant that Jesus' followers would not only revere him as Israel's awaited Messiah, but also forever worship and adore him as the very eternal Word of God through whom the universe had been made and in whom it continues to be sustained in love.

This revelation was revolutionary not only because of what it affirmed about the Messiah's ontological nature, but also because of what it communicated about God's governmental character. So committed was God to the redemption of his creation that he was willing to leave the glories of his throne, step into a frail human frame, and allow himself to be unjustly executed. The depth of God's humility, patience, love, and mercy depicted in this act was, is, and forever will be utterly breathtaking and mind-bending (Php. 2:5–11).

Finally, this facet, like so many of the others, highlights the unfathomable depth of God's love and mercy for sinners. As the

Lord of both the heavens and the earth, Messiah's first governmental assignment was not to destroy the wicked of the earth in judgment, as most Jews expected, but to patiently pray, intercede, and administer the benefits of the New Covenant as High Priest at the Father's right hand (Ac. 2:33; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1). One of the Messianic Psalms most quoted or alluded to in the New Testament is Psalm 110. On the day of Pentecost, Peter included Psalm 110:1—"The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'"—as part of his message (Ac. 2:33–35). He informed his hearers that Jesus was the Messiah who, as God's appointed agent of judgment, would eventually execute the judgments of this Psalm (vv. 2–7). No wonder his hearers were cut to the heart (Ac. 2:37): they had killed the very one who was going to carry out Psalm 110, and they were on the wrong side of the fence! However, Peter gave his hearers hope by disclosing a truth of Psalm 110 not fully understood until the historical event of Jesus' resurrection and ascension: Messiah must first sit at the Father's right hand (Ps. 110:1) *until* the Father empowers and releases him to "judge the nations" and "heap up the dead" (Ps. 110:6). The very fact that this Psalm portrayed the Messiah sitting at the Father's right hand in the heavenly throne room before taking control of the earth, together with the time word "until," implied a time delay and separation of some sort (see facet 2 above). Most Jews in Israel had missed this, and now Peter was making it known to them in light of Jesus' death and resurrection. This time gap was good news for his audience. It meant that though Jesus was in fact the Messiah appointed to carry out Psalm 110, the Messiah's first governmental assignment as Lord of the heavens and the earth was not to execute God's wrath on the earth, but to administer forgiveness to the repentant as a High Priest serving in the courts of the heavenly Temple (cf. Heb. 2–10).

Again, in terms of practical discipleship this revelation of God in Messiah is inherently motivational. As God humbled himself to become a man, so we too are summoned to follow God's own example in our attitudes and relationships (Php. 2). As the Messiah exercised his position of governmental authority to serve others self-

sacrificially, so we are called to love and serve others in the same way (Jn. 13). As Jesus is an intercessor at the Father's right hand, so we are to "pray continually" (1 Th. 5:17) and "on all occasions" (Eph. 6:18) that God's offer of mercy in the gospel would "spread rapidly and be honored" (2 Th. 3:1). As we give ourselves to becoming like Jesus in these ways, the measure of our reward in the age to come increases.

DISCIPLESHIP MECHANICS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE MYSTERY

Paul encouraged and admonished the churches within his scope of influence, even in his absence, by simply reminding them of the core body of teaching they had initially received from him (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:1; 2 Th. 2:5; Php. 3:1). This is because God has strategically designed the gospel according to the mystery of Messiah to stimulate the saints toward perseverance in righteousness and holiness. As the mystery is inherently motivational in nature, the saints must understand it to persevere in their faith until Jesus returns to claim the reward of his suffering. It is God's revealed path to godliness (1 Tim. 3:16) and his safeguard against deceptive ideas (Col. 2:2–4). Knit together conceptually by the triad of faith, love, and hope (see Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 13:13; 2 Cor. 8:7; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 1:15, 3:17, 6:23; Col. 1:4–5, 23; 1 Th. 1:3, 3:6, 5:8; 2 Th. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:5, 14; 2 Tim. 1:13; Tit. 1:2), it is programmed by God to produce a rich harvest of righteousness, obedience, and maturity in the church:

I do not want you to be unaware, *brothers* (Paul writing to believers in Rome), that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) *in order that I might have a harvest among you* (not referring to harvest among unbelievers, but a harvest of righteousness and obedience within the Body, cf. Rom. 1:5), just as I have had among the other Gentiles. (Rom. 1:13, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

As the following chart (pp. 154–155) demonstrates, the discipleship

mechanics of the gospel according to the mystery rotate on right doctrine (orthodoxy) that stimulates holy emotions (orthopathos), which in turn motivates righteous behavior (orthopraxis).

CONCLUSION

In the book of Revelation, we learn that God's primary agenda for this age before Jesus returns is for the mystery of God to be completed and put on display for the world to see (Rev. 10:7). Angels long for the day when the Bride will be complete, mature, and ready to be presented to the Messiah by God the Father (Rev. 10:6). As the gospel according to the mystery of Messiah provides the fuel for wholehearted obedience and perseverance in the faith, it is crucial that we impart a basic understanding of it to new disciples if the foundation of a movement is to approximate what we see in the New Testament.

Discipleship Mechanics of the Gospel According to the Mystery of Messiah			
	Doctrine (Orthodoxy)	Correspondent Emotional Response and Motivation (Orthopathos)	Correspondent Behavioral Response (Orthopraxis)
FAITH Acknowledgment and conviction of Jesus as:	The Lord with authority over the heavens and the earth, the God-man in whom all things are governmentally convergent	Awe, wonder, amazement	Worship and adore the Messiah as God, the eternal Word of God made flesh
	God's appointed Judge who will reward the righteous and punish the wicked	Holy fear, trembling, and trepidation	Wholehearted love for and obedience to the Messiah through constant agreement with and submission to the grace made available through the deposit of the Spirit. Persistence in the pursuit of righteousness (Rom. 2:7). Putting off the old: through constant and vigilant agreement with the Spirit of grace, we mortify sins and lusts that corrupt personally and socially (pride, rage, greed, lust, immorality, etc.) (Eph. 4:22; Col. 2:11, 3:5, 9; Gal. 6:16-21)
	God's appointed sacrifice of atonement on the cross	Affection, love, deep thankfulness, weeping	Putting on the new: through constant and vigilant agreement with the Spirit of grace, we clothe ourselves with Messiah and walk in the fruits of the Spirit of grace (love, joy, peace, humility, sexual purity, etc.) (Eph. 4:23-24, Col. 3:10, 12-14)
LOVE Following Jesus' example as:	The Priest who loves, worships, and obeys the Father with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength no matter the personal cost (mystery of the cross)	Passion, love, exhilaration, hunger, desire, joy	Abiding in Messiah, the vine (Jn. 15). Intimacy and constant communion with the Father. Grace for righteousness and fruitfulness accessed through abiding in Messiah through constant prayer (1 Th. 5:17)
	Servant King, the humble one who took the towel and washed the feet of his people. God's righteousness defined as self-sacrifice for the well-being of others	Thankfulness and joy for how Jesus has served us	Love and serve others as Jesus has loved and served us (Jn. 13:34-35) Through constant and vigilant agreement with the Spirit of grace, wholehearted obedience of the new command of the New Covenant in all of our relationships (Eph. 5, Col. 3; 1 Pt. 3)

<p>HOPE</p> <p>Patiently waiting for Messiah Jesus to come back a second time to:</p>	<p>Complete the messianic mission, whereby wickedness will be purged from the earth, and whereby the glory of God will fill the earth</p>	<p>Sobriety, urgency</p>	<p>Proclaim the gospel boldly to all; summon people to repentance and faith</p> <p>Heartfelt intercession for the lost, especially those in our sphere of influence</p>
	<p>Complete our redemption through the bodily resurrection of the righteous in Messiah, following the fullness of the Gentiles and the salvation of "all Israel" (completion of remnant of believing ethnic Jews)</p>	<p>Longing, yearning</p>	<p>Lifestyle of prayer, fasting, and watchfulness</p> <p>Passionate prayer for Israel's salvation</p> <p>Bold witness to the Gentile nations</p> <p>Bold witness to the Jewish people</p> <p>Sacrificial living for the sake of undeserving Jews in their time of difficulty at the end of the age, to put the cross on display</p>
	<p>Deliver us from our persecutors and oppressors, both human and demonic</p>	<p>Longing, yearning</p>	<p>Perseverance in the meantime through trials, sufferings, and persecutions</p> <p>Put on the armor of God</p> <p>Resist the devil; bless and pray for human persecutors</p>
	<p>Establish the kingdom of God and install the saints governmentally</p>	<p>Longing and burden for Messianic justice</p>	<p>Cry out night and day for speedy justice to be inaugurated at Messiah's appearing (Lk. 18:1-8)</p> <p>Heartfelt intercession for the Bride's preparation through difficulties and persecutions</p>
	<p>Distribute eternal rewards to the saints</p>	<p>Excitement, eager anticipation</p>	<p>Persevere in the faith unto the inheritance of those rewards (Rev. 2-3)</p>
<p>Fruit of Discipleship:</p> <p>The Bride made ready for Messiah</p>	<p>Fruit in the present age: fulfillment of our God-designed purpose for existence. Satisfaction of the human heart in intimacy with God. The lost are saved. The Bride is sanctified, purified, and made ready for Messiah's return. Progressive enhancement and enlargement of the reward reserved for us in the resurrection of the righteous and the messianic kingdom.</p> <p>Fruit in the age to come: saints will be resurrected from the dead and live forever in resurrected bodies, with renewed access to the tree of life. Saints openly rewarded for their obedience and agreement with the grace of God in the present age. Saints installed in governmental positions according to their measure of obedience in this age.</p>		

ENDNOTES

¹For the exegetical argument that "Jesus Christ's preaching" is the best translation of this phrase in Rom. 16:25, see Tim Warner, "Paul and the Mystery," *The Pristine Faith Restoration Society* <<http://www.pfrs.org/pd/09.html>> (accessed Dec. 2008).

²Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2003), 125.

³Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Volume 2: Theological Objections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 232–35.

⁴"No first-century Jew prior to Easter expected the resurrection to be anything other than a large-scale event happening to all God's people, or perhaps to the entire human race, as part of the sudden event in which God's kingdom would finally come on earth as in heaven. There is no suggestion that one person would rise from the dead in advance of all the rest." N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), 45.

⁵Edersheim, *The Temple*, 291.

⁶Ibid., 222.

⁷Ibid., 260.

⁸Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 1:273.

⁹H. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), (658).

¹⁰J. Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996), G4182.

¹¹Ibid., G4388.

¹²R.L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries, Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998, 1981), H8674.

¹³Eph. 1:9–10 as translated by John Harrigan, "New Testament Discontinuity of Messianic Expectation" (lecture notes from course

Biblical Theology of Mission, Apostolic Missions School, International House of Prayer University, Fall 2008).

¹⁴ See Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 37–42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42–46.

¹⁶ Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections, Volume 2*, 210–31, 304–9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ For more on Paul's articulation of Jesus' divinity and the Holy Spirit within the context of the categories of Jewish monotheism, see N.T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co./Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Publications, 1997), 63–75; see also Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections*, 14–38.

¹⁹ J.N.D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), 339.

²⁰ Harrigan, "New Testament Discontinuity."

6

Entrusted to the Pattern: Passing on the Apostolic Lens Reproducibly

About ten months before we moved to Muhammad's area, we were in Singapore for a month of training and were staying at the YMCA. During this season, many of the questions driving the thesis of this book began taking shape in my mind and tugging at my heart. I regularly met with another man for prayer in the evenings. As we met nightly on the roof of the YMCA under the stars, I would ask God: "Father, are full-blown New Testament-caliber movements really possible again in our day? Is it really possible to see your Spirit move so quickly, so deeply, so incisively, in such short time frames as we see in the New Testament?"

One overcast night, with these questions at a fever pitch in my heart, we looked out over the city and began to intercede for it. As the evening moved on, we started feeling light drizzles of rain landing on our heads, at which point we considered retiring for the evening. However, something inside told me that we needed to tarry in prayer a little longer. We continued for about another hour.

It was now about 10:30PM and the rain had ceased. No one else was on the roof. Most of the lights had been turned off. All of the main facilities were closed. Suddenly, we heard light footsteps. A woman who appeared to be in her early twenties appeared seemingly out of nowhere. I thought to myself, "What in the world is this young woman doing all the way up here at this time of night?"

Perhaps she was wondering the same thing about us. She walked

around the roof curiously and made her way over toward us. We introduced ourselves, and the three of us soon found ourselves engrossed in conversation. "Tori" was from Taiwan and was simply passing through Singapore on her way to Malaysia for a short vacation. Mandarin was her native language. She also spoke English and Japanese fluently. Tori struck us as a brilliant young woman. Her gentle spirit and sweet disposition impressed us immediately. However, when looking into her eyes, we could also discern a deep sadness and confusion. We asked Tori about her spiritual history.

"My own family is Buddhist, but I have a few Christian friends back in Taiwan. My conversations with them at different times have made me want to learn more about this Jesus." She sighed. "I'm different than my friends. I feel sad and lonely all the time, and nothing helps."

"Tori," I said, "I used to be lonely too, but when I accepted Jesus as Lord, I was filled with his Spirit and I wasn't sad any more. Do you want to hear more about this?"

"Yes," she said.

We went on to share the gospel with Tori, together with a brief version of our own testimonies. We asked Tori if she wanted to yield her life to Jesus, and she immediately said "Yes." She made a profession of faith at about 11:30PM.

Immediately upon her confession, I ran down to my room and woke up my wife, who joined us on the top of the building. I also sent my friend down the street to pick up a copy of the Bible translated in Mandarin. For about two hours, we used the MAWL training model (see below) to pass on *Universal Disciple*, a simple, memorable, easily reproducible visual pattern that encapsulates the core elements of apostolic teaching in light of the mystery of Messiah. As Tori redrew the pattern in front of us, we cheered her on, gave her high fives, and helped her iron out the kinks. By the end of the two hours, she was able to reproduce the pattern beautifully from beginning to end without our help.

After Tori had learned *Universal Disciple*, we wrote down some key

Bible verses for her, which she committed to memorize the following day. We also gave her the Mandarin Bible as a gift and stressed the indispensability of abiding in God's Word regularly. We talked about sharing her testimony with others. My wife, my friend, and I all modeled brief versions of our own testimonies for her and gave her a chance to practice hers. She did wonderfully. Next, we wrote out a list of some of her unbelieving friends, relatives, and acquaintances, laid our hands on the paper, and began to intercede for them. My wife and I prayed for the first name, again modeling the way. Tori prayed for the rest. She made a commitment to share her testimony with the people on the list upon her return to Taiwan. We also emphasized to Tori the importance of not walking alone. Upon her return to Taiwan, she would need to find some other believers with whom she could worship and grow. She understood and agreed. She knew of some churches in Taiwan. She also gave us permission to give her email to some colleagues in Taiwan. Finally, we laid hands on Tori and committed her to the Holy Spirit.

It was now about 2:30AM. Our eyelids were heavy, but our spirits were alive. There was only one thing left to do: let the waters of baptism wash over this new child of God. Fortunately, on the top of the YMCA was a large swimming pool. My wife ran down the stairs and grabbed some extra clothes for Tori.

While in the water, we asked Tori four questions commonly asked of new disciples in some parts of the underground church in China:

"Tori, have you decided to follow Jesus?"

"Yes."

"Do you know your sins are forgiven?"

"Yes."

"Will you follow Jesus and never turn back?"

"Yes."

Finally, "Tori, when they come into your house to drag you away, throw you in prison and threaten to kill you, will you still follow Jesus?"

"Yes."

Then down into the water she went, dead to sin, and up she came again, alive in Messiah. We all hugged and congratulated Tori on this momentous time in her life. On the way down the YMCA elevator, the shivering young woman from Taiwan said, "Now I know that I am a Christian." Baptism had sealed her decision. There was now no turning back in her mind.

The next day, Tori left for Malaysia. We never saw her again. However, I am confident that if she obeyed the simple truths she had received from us with all her heart, the Holy Spirit would strengthen her soul in righteousness throughout the days, months, and years ahead.

UNIVERSAL DISCIPLE: "EVERYWHERE IN EVERY CHURCH"

Now that we have briefly examined the core facets of the gospel according to the mystery of Messiah and how they are designed by God to function as an inherently motivational discipleship mechanism, the question to which we turn is: How can we format the apostles' teaching so that it can be readily transmitted by the least educated of people and reproduced as part of a rapidly expanding movement? In his pamphlet entitled *Universal Disciple: How to Receive, Retain, and Replicate God's Pattern for Living*, missiologist Thom Wolfe offers a very important insight on this matter:

Almost a century ago, Roland Allen stirred the 20th century by reminding us of the "spontaneous expansion" of the early community of the Way. Now, in the 21st century, with all the open doors to the good news, we must reevaluate just *how* the apostles were able to go into an area, preach the good news, gather converts, nurture them, and move on in such a way that they could later write back and with such confidence "remind" them of a core teaching that seemed to be so pervasive and so commonly understood by all (see 1 Th. 3:3–4; 2 Th. 2:5).

Even more perplexing is the fact that Paul and the church planting team were often only in a city a few weeks, a few months, or at most, a few years. How did they do it? How could they create such radiant persons and such responsible and reproductive leaders?...

Question. How did Paul establish leadership—so *quickly*, so *solidly*, so *reproducibly*—that became the basis for the Christian Church?

Answer. He had a *pattern*, a *standard*—a standard that could be *received personally*, that could be *remembered easily*, and that could be *reproduced strategically*....

Colossians and Ephesians give the pattern in the clearest and most complete form. This is probably because Paul is writing forward, addressing principles, not backward, addressing problems. All Paul's epistles are basically arranged as belief and behavior, instruction and ethics, doctrine then duties, Christ's fullness then our following. But you can clearly see this belief/behavior structure, for example, in Romans (1–11/12–16), Colossians (1–2/3–4), and Ephesians (1–3/4–6). It can also be discerned in 1 Peter, James, and Hebrews—a model used by all the apostolic leadership teams throughout the first generation church. (Emphasis added)¹

This pattern—dubbed “universal disciple” by Wolfe because the apostles deemed it universally applicable to the Body of Messiah (1 Cor. 4:17)—organized the core elements of apostolic teaching into a succinct, easily memorable, easily reproducible format. On the doctrinal side, the pattern functioned as a simple hermeneutical grid for accurately interpreting the Old Testament Scriptures and the Old Testament gospel in light of the mystery of Messiah. On the behavioral side, it did not overload new disciples with mountains of new information, but didactically imparted a simple yet transformative standard for living. Wholehearted obedience to

this pattern, moreover, is God's ordained means to set the saints "free from sin" and forge them into "slaves to righteousness":

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed *the form* (Gk. *tupos*—"pattern," "model," "example"²; ESV "standard") of *teaching to which you were entrusted*. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (Rom. 6:17–18)

...He (Timothy) will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what *I teach everywhere in every church* (universal applicability of the teaching). (1 Cor. 4:17, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to *the pattern* (Gk. *tupos*) we gave you. (Php. 3:17, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

What you heard from me, keep as the *pattern* (Gk. *bupotuposis*—super-type or super-pattern, implying universal applicability) of *sound teaching*, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 1:13, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Notice that Paul entrusted the church in Rome to the apostolic pattern, not the other way around. Why? Because he knew that if new disciples reoriented their lives around it, the pattern would function as a means of grace through which the Holy Spirit would effectually transform them into the image of Jesus.

The *Universal Disciple* pattern is strategic in that it can be drawn on napkins, sketched in the dirt with a stick, penned on the palm of one's hand, or drawn on the sidewalk with chalk. One does not need a large bank account, formal education, or a theology degree to learn it or pass it on. Illiterate peasants, children, nursing mothers, and beggars can retain and teach it as easily as bankers, lawyers, and doctors. Those in prison cells can trace it out for new disciples on

the wall or in the mud with their fingers. At different times I have passed the pattern on to (former) Buddhists and Muslims, Westerners and non-Westerners, men and women, the literate and illiterate. In Kansas City, I once passed parts of it on to Sean, the homeless man mentioned in Chapter 2. On another occasion I passed it on to a new five-year-old disciple at a picnic table outside a horse barn. In Wolfe's words, the effectiveness of the pattern lies in the fact that it can be "*received personally, remembered easily, and reproduced strategically,*" irrespective of education level, budget, age, or circumstance. This enables it to spread quickly to every level and strata of society as a movement expands. Wicked governments and regimes simply cannot squelch, control, or burn the knowledge-base of a movement when it is transferred in this kind of format. Usually, I try to pass the pattern on to new disciples on the same day of their conversion experience. I do not allow them to leave my presence until they are able to reproduce the pattern in front of me without my assistance.

To professionally trained Bible scholars, *Universal Disciple* may not seem overly impressive. However, by New Testament standards, someone who knows one command of Jesus and obeys it wholeheartedly is more successful than someone who has the entire Bible memorized in Hebrew and Greek but does not obey what it teaches (Ezek. 33:30–32; Lk. 11:28). Jesus said that those who obey God's word are his true brothers and sisters (Lk. 8:21).

THE PATTERN FOR LITERATE-BASED CULTURES

Below is the *Universal Disciple* pattern as I would present it to new disciples in a literate-based culture, or a culture that passes down knowledge primarily through writing. For the most part, the following version of the pattern follows the general flow of Wolfe's presentation.³ However, in a number of places I have made adjustments that, in my estimation, more adequately mirror the fullness of apostolic teaching as outlined in Chapter 5.

- I. The Cornerstone and Foundation of God's House: Jesus, the *crucified* Messiah, is Lord and the firstfruits of the resurrection of

the righteous. He is God's appointed authority over the heavens and the earth, and is the God-man worthy to be feared, loved, worshipped, and adored.

- A. Precept: Jesus is fashioning his people into saints worthy of the resurrection of the righteous and inclusion in his kingdom. When you repented and confessed Jesus as Lord, you became a child of God. Therefore, you are now a new creature, called to be holy as God is holy, set apart from the wicked ways of the world as God's own possession. Before Jesus received his reward of resurrection, he died on a cross in full obedience to the Father for the forgiveness of our sins. The example of the crucified Messiah is now the foundation upon which everything in our life is built.
- B. Sketch:

Jesus, the *crucified* Messiah, is Lord

- C. Reinforcement of new identity: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:
1. Q: "What are you?"
 2. A: "A child of God, a new creature, called to be holy as God is holy."
- D. Behavioral response: This is how we build our lives on this foundation daily (the following to be accompanied by hand gestures to increase memorability):
1. Abiding in God's Word every day (gesture: put hands together like reading a book)
 2. Offering up sacrifices of prayer and praise (gesture: raise hands in the air)
 3. Being in fellowship with God's people (gesture: a hand clasp)
 4. Sharing the good news boldly with others (gesture: a

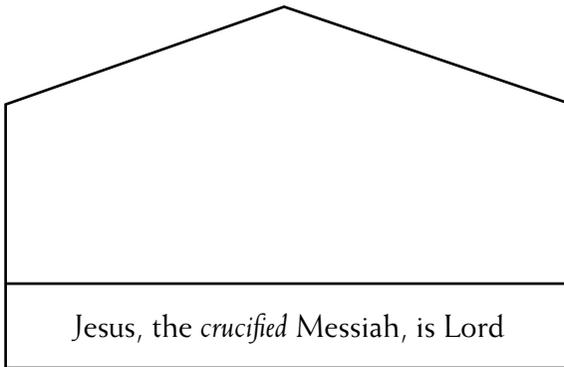
movement of the hand from the mouth, symbolizing words going from the mouth)

5. Looking to Jesus as your example of perseverance in the face of suffering (gesture: lift up the arms in the form of a cross)

II. God's Temple/House

A. Precept: When you submitted your life to Jesus, God put his Spirit into you as a deposit, guaranteeing your resurrection if you hold firmly to the faith until Jesus' return. You are now a part of God's house, his temple. Together with all of the saints, you are being built into a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Jesus is Lord over this house.

B. Sketch:



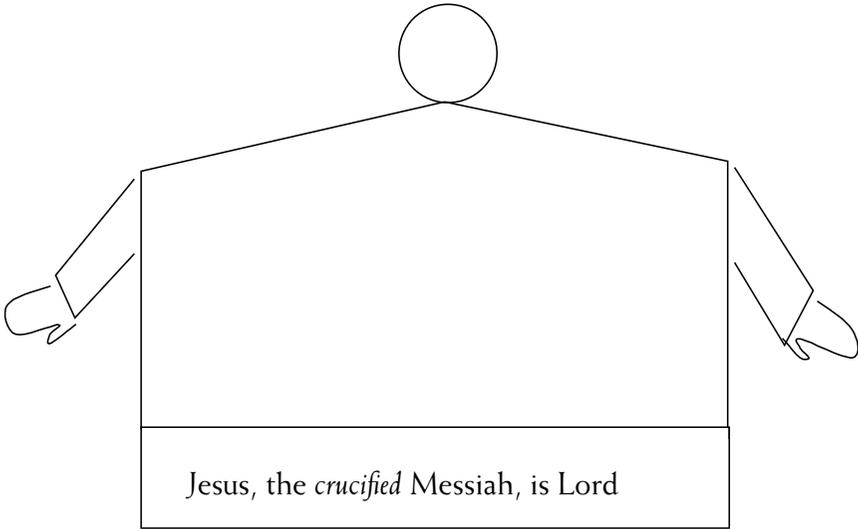
C. Reinforcement of corporate identity: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:

1. Q: "What are you part of?"
2. A: "God's House, in which his Spirit dwells."

III. The Body of Messiah

A. Precept: Moreover, you are also part of the Body of Messiah, the head of which is Jesus the Messiah. Jesus has full governmental authority over his Body. Just as the members of our body obey our heads, so you are now to wholeheartedly obey Jesus in everything.

B. Sketch:



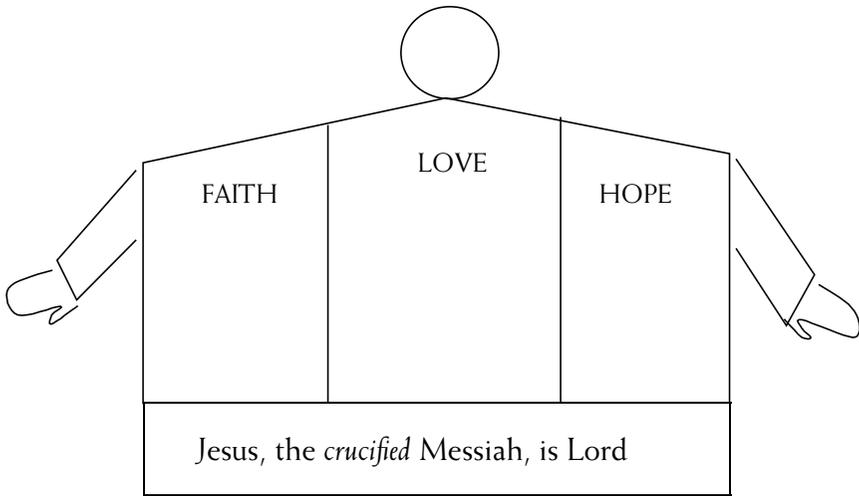
C. Reinforcement of corporate identity—have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:

1. Q: "What are you part of?"
2. A: "Messiah's Body, of which he is the head and authority."

IV. Three pillars: faith, love, and hope

A. This Temple has three pillars that make it stand firm and strong to the end: faith, love, and hope

B. Sketch:



C. Reinforcement of pillars: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:

1. Q: "How many pillars are there in this house?"
2. A: "Three: faith, love, and hope"

V. Faith

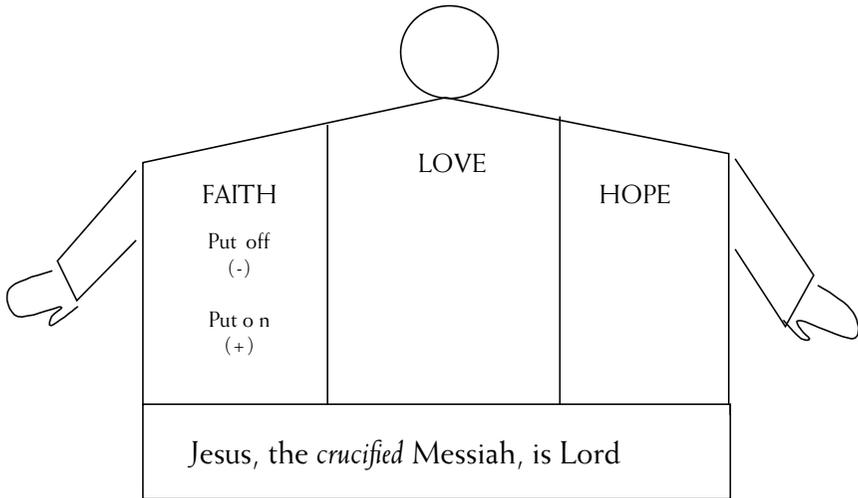
A. Precept: Though you do not see Jesus now, by faith you believe that he is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and the Judge who will come again to resurrect and reward the righteous, punish the wicked, and establish the kingdom of God. Through faith and trust in his atoning sacrifice, you have received the forgiveness of sins and a firstfruits deposit of the Holy Spirit. Through this deposit, God enables us to resist sin and persevere in righteousness until Jesus returns. This enabling power is called grace.

B. Behavioral response: Therefore, through the power of this grace, every day you:

1. *Put off and mortify* your former nature: lust, pride, jealousy, meanness, selfishness, greed, anger, deceit, slander, gossip, and all other such things. These are not appropriate for a holy child of God.

2. *Put on and clothe yourselves* with your new nature: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, kindness, self-control, mercy, humility, and all other such things. These are appropriate for a holy child of God.
3. *Persevere*: When you stumble in your pursuit of holiness, do not give up. God loves to show mercy to the repentant and contrite heart. Confess and repent of your sin, receive God's forgiveness, and keep fighting not in your own strength, but by the grace of the Spirit. God is faithful. Constantly ask the Holy Spirit for help in prayer, and He will give you the grace you need to mature in righteousness over time.

C. Sketch:



- D. Reinforcement of faith pillar: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:
 1. Q: "What will Jesus do when he returns?"
 2. A: "Resurrect and reward the righteous, punish the wicked, and establish his kingdom."
 3. Q: "What then do you need to do?"
 4. A: "Live righteously. Every day, put off the old, and put on the new by God's grace."

VI. Love

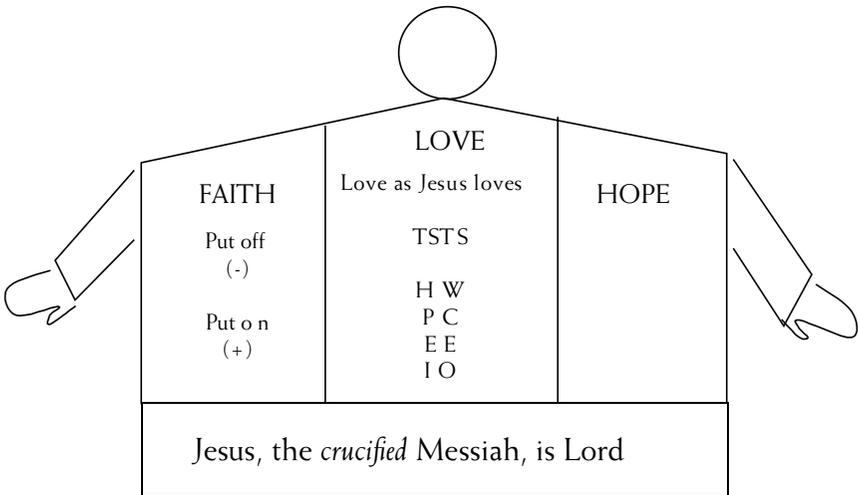
- A. Precept: When Jesus put the deposit of the Spirit into you, he poured out his love into your heart. The fruit of the Spirit is love. The Spirit empowers us to love God and others as Jesus loves God and others. Jesus is a priest who loves and obeys his Father with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength. He is also a servant ruler, who continually and humbly lays down his life for the well-being of his people. He is also merciful and patient. When he died on the cross, he forgave and blessed his enemies and persecutors.
- B. Behavioral response: Therefore, with this new power to love in your heart through the Holy Spirit, you are commanded to:
 1. Wholeheartedly obey the first commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength." Do this through:
 - i. *Thanking*: continually offer thanks to God the Father for all he has done for you in Jesus
 - ii. *Singing*: continually sing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord
 - iii. *Teaching*: let the Word of God dwell in you richly as you admonish one another in love
 - iv. *Submitting*: continually submit to Jesus' leadership in humility. Voluntarily submit to one another in love.
 2. Love others self-sacrificially as Jesus loves you self-sacrificially:
 - i. *Husbands*, don't treat your wives harshly, but love and humbly serve them as Christ loves and serves his Body. *Wives*, love, serve, and humbly submit to your husbands, as the Body of Messiah joyfully serves and submits to its head, Jesus.
 - ii. *Fathers*, don't provoke your children to anger, but serve them and raise them up in the discipline and

counsel of the Lord. *Children*, humbly obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

iii. *Employers (masters)*, serve your employees. Do not cheat them, but treat them fairly and give them what they deserve. *Employees (slaves)*, obey your employers, and do your work well and honestly. Everything you do, do it as to the Lord, not men.

iv. *Insiders (those within the Body)*, continue to serve and lay down your lives for one another. In regard to outsiders (those outside the Body), pray for them. Walk in wisdom toward them and make the most of every opportunity. Let your speech be seasoned with salt, that you will know how to answer everyone. When they persecute and oppress you, forgive them, as Jesus has forgiven us.

C. Sketch:



D. Reinforcement of love pillar: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:

1. Q: "What has God put into us by the Spirit?"

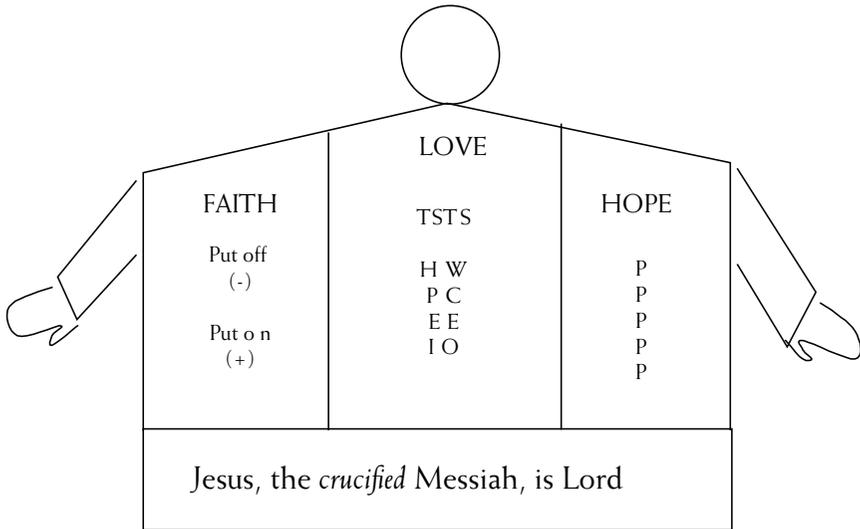
2. A: "The love of Messiah."
3. Q: "What then do you need to do?"
4. A: "Love God and others as Jesus does."

VII. Hope

- A. Precept: Your hope is in Jesus' return. He is coming soon. The hour is urgent. When Jesus returns, he will complete our redemption by giving us resurrected bodies. His Spirit in you is a deposit guaranteeing your bodily redemption at his return. When Jesus returns, he will deliver us from our persecutors and oppressors, both human and demonic. He will reward the saints. He will establish the kingdom of God and install the saints in positions of authority in his kingdom. He will purge wickedness from the earth and fill it with the glory of God. He will return after the completion of the Gentile harvest and the salvation of the Jewish people. Until that day, we are in a fierce battle against demonic powers trying to resist God's purposes. You do not wrestle against flesh and blood.
- B. Behavioral response: The hour is urgent. As we wait for your hope to be realized, we must fervently:
 1. *Pray, fast, and watch*: we must cry out to God night and day in prayer. We must pour out our heart to God in fervent intercession, asking for the lost, for the Gentile harvest, for Israel's salvation, and for the maturity and perseverance of the Bride as we face tests and difficulties.
 2. *Proclaim*: we must proclaim the gospel boldly to all, summoning people to repentance and faith for the forgiveness of sins. We must boldly proclaim the gospel to both Jew and Gentile.
 3. *Persevere, resist, and fight*: we must put on the armor of God and vigilantly resist the temptations of the devil through prayer. We must put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet of readiness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.

4. *Pardon*: We must bless, forgive, and pray for our human persecutors
5. *Provoke*: We must provoke Israel to jealousy for her Messiah through self-sacrifice on behalf of the undeserving, as Jesus sacrificed his life for us when we were undeserving. The Bride is God's chosen instrument for provoking Israel to jealousy at the end of the age.

C. Sketch:



- D. Reinforcement of hope pillar: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:
1. Q: "What will Jesus do when he returns?"
 2. A: "Complete our redemption, deliver us from our enemies, reward the righteous, and establish the kingdom of God."
 3. Q: "What do you need to do until then?"
 4. A: "Pray, proclaim, persevere, pardon, provoke."

VIII. Summary

- A. Precept: Jesus is going to return for a pure, spotless Bride. This is the desire of his heart. He is not coming back for a

compromising prostitute, but for a pure virgin. This pattern is God's blueprint for transforming us into the image of Messiah, into a Bride made ready.

- B. Behavioral response: Wholeheartedly obey the pattern until Messiah's return.

ADAPTING THE PATTERN FOR ORAL-BASED CULTURES

In many if not most unreached people groups today, people who can neither read nor write make up the majority of the population. This situation is by no means new. In the first century, the majority of the people in the churches birthed and influenced by the apostles could not read or write. This in no way implied, however, that they were stupid or incapable of grasping the core tenets of the apostles' teaching. The same holds true for non-literate people today. In my own experience, non-literate children, beggars, and mothers are some of the most creative and resourceful people I have ever encountered. One of this book's assumptions is that formal education is not a prerequisite to effective discipleship, and that the most uneducated person is intelligent enough to receive, understand, and reproduce the apostolic pattern effectively. God is about making saints, not scholars.

Having said this, if someone from a literate-based culture is sent by God to birth a new work in a society made up mostly of people who cannot read or write, it behooves the former to find creative ways to make the apostles' teaching accessible to the latter. This means that in non-literate cultures *Universal Disciple* must be formatted so as to become reproducible among all segments of a people group's population. On a strategic level, this is necessary to ensure that the expansion of a movement does not become restricted to the educated elite.

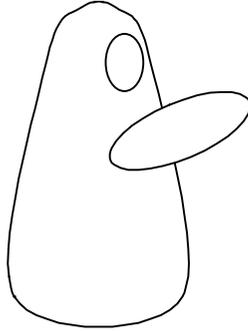
When God sent Muhammad to us, the same night of his conversion experience we passed on *Universal Disciple* to him (see opening testimony in Ch. 1). After two or three hours, he was able to reproduce the pattern in front of me. The next day, he used the pattern as a springboard for teaching Muslims on a bus about the importance of loving one another. When I first passed *Universal*

Disciple on to him, I intentionally gave him a version of the pattern that I had specifically formatted for non-literate Moravians, who constitute the vast majority of the Moravian population. I knew that even though Muhammad himself was well-educated and could read quite well, the majority of the Moravians who would eventually come to faith by means of a movement initially birthed through his influence would *not* be able to read or write.

Getting *Universal Disciple* in the right format, therefore, is vital for making the apostles' teaching reproducible for predominantly illiterate societies. How do we do this practically? Though most non-literates do not know how to write, most of them do know how to doodle and sketch simple stick figures. However, it is difficult to sketch the concept of "faith" in the abstract. Most people need a concrete image or picture in their minds in order draw simple sketches. When we formatted *Universal Disciple* for illiterate Moravians, we employed a number of easily memorable, easily sketchable metaphors that were familiar to most Moravians to help explain the key concepts. For example, when we came to the "faith" pillar, we used an analogy common to the everyday experience of Moravian mothers:

The Spirit now lives in you. As a young child receives nourishment and strength by daily nursing at his mother's breast, so now all of you receive the power you need to live a new life. The Spirit's grace is like the milk by which one lives. Faith in Jesus is like the breast. And prayer is the means by which one regularly takes in the source of nourishment and power.

After using this familiar and concrete metaphor to explain the concept, we then sketched a simple picture of a Moravian mother nursing an infant (with the mother dressed in familiar local attire) to represent the concepts associated with the faith pillar:



This picture could now function as a memory trigger for illiterate Moravians as they taught and passed on the pattern to other Moravians.

In Appendix C, I have included the version of *Universal Disciple* that we designed for illiterate Moravians in its entirety, with a few adjustments that we made subsequent to our ministry among that UPG.

THE BIBLE IN REPRODUCIBLE FORMAT

One of the key components of the *Universal Discipleship* pattern is “abiding in God’s Word every day.” This assumes, of course, that those receiving the pattern have access to at least portions of the Bible. One of the most important principles of birthing indigenous movements is that outsiders should do their best to refrain from introducing anything into a movement—including resources and church models—that cannot be reproduced locally by the indigenous believers after they leave.⁴ Accordingly, it is essential that indigenous churches not only have access to the Bible, but that they also possess it in a format that they can reproduce on their own following the departure of the outside catalyst.

After I had passed *Universal Disciple* on to Muhammad, it was now my responsibility to give him the Scriptures so that he could follow through on the principle of abiding in God’s Word every day. As with *Universal Disciple*, I not only had Muhammad in mind, but also the large numbers of non-literate Moravians. In terms of Scripture, any movement among Moravians would necessitate two things:

firstly, the Scriptures would have to be in an auricular format, and secondly, that format would need to be easily reproducible within the context of Moravian culture. Thankfully, by the time we moved to Muhammad's area, Genesis, Exodus, the Psalms, and the entire New Testament had already been recorded on cassette tape in the Moravian language. After I had passed *Universal Disciple* on to Muhammad, I gave him a written copy of the entire Bible for his own personal use and two sets of the available cassettes for use in the context of house churches. Most Moravians did not have access to relatively advanced forms of technology—CD players, DVDs, MP3 players, etc.—at the time. But most of them did have access to simple cassette players that had dubbing capabilities. Cassette tapes met both requirements. They were both auricular and easily reproducible. Through dubbing, the Bible could be easily bequeathed from mother church to daughter church as part of a movement's reproductive cycle.

Once I had given Muhammad the initial set of Bible cassettes, the onus and responsibility for making the Word of God available to other new disciples immediately shifted from my shoulders to his. The Moravian disciples were now responsible for making sure that new churches from among their own people had access to the Scriptures. The house churches could use their tithes and offerings to purchase blank cassette tapes for dubbing the Scriptures for newly emerging house churches. In theory, new churches would have access to the Scriptures as soon as they were birthed. As the churches multiplied, by default the Scriptures would also multiply.

While Muhammad did sometimes read his copy of the Bible to new disciples in the context of house church, it was the cassette tapes that undoubtedly served as the banqueting table for the emerging fellowships. The house churches usually gathered twice per week. Muhammad told me that at each gathering, the new Moravian disciples would often spend long hours devouring the cassette tapes, continually rewinding again and again in order to review key points.

THE APOSTOLIC LENS ASSUMED BY NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

Some might wonder at this point: Why should we bother giving new disciples something like *Universal Disciple*? Why not just give them the Bible and tell them to read it? While it is absolutely true that the New Testament epistles constitute the core teaching of the apostles in an important sense, in another sense it might be slightly more accurate to describe the epistles as follow-up teachings that typically *presuppose* some measure of previous apostolic teaching of which we have no written record (see Rom. 15:15; 1 Cor. 15:1; 1 Th. 4:1; 2 Th. 2:5; Php. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:14; Tit. 3:1; 2 Pt. 1:12, 3:1). These previous teachings, which had probably been delivered orally, formed the hermeneutical lens through which the subsequent reminder-teachings delivered via the epistles were to be interpreted.

In my opinion, when both *Universal Disciple* and the Scriptures are hitched together at the inception of a movement and then from that point reproduced *in tandem* from disciple to disciple and church to church, the movement is set on a course to mature in its understanding and grasp of the Scriptures at more accelerated rate than it would without the pattern. Some might argue that doing this amounts to little more than biasing the DNA of a movement toward a particular interpretation. This is only a problem, however, if the interpretive bias is not based on truth. Today, many people who engage in inductive Bible studies in the West unconsciously interpret the Bible through the lens and bias of the Hellenistic worldview described in Chapter 3. This bias is for the most part false and often results in distorted understanding of the biblical message and hope. In contrast, *Universal Disciple*, when divested of defiling Hellenistic influences, is not only based on, but derived from, the apostolic teaching of the New Testament. It is therefore a true and completely trustworthy interpretive lens.

CONCLUSION

Many of us are familiar with the common adage "Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day; teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime." One of the reasons Paul and his companions were able to lay strong foundations in short time frames is that they not only threw fish at new disciples, but gave them a simple pattern that taught them *how* to fish. This pattern was universal in its applicability and inherently motivational in nature. It could be retained easily and reproduced strategically. Once it had been imparted, new churches could study the Scriptures responsibly on their own with or without Paul in the room. At the end of the day, imparting the apostolic framework is more vital to a movement's buoyancy than the constant spoon-feeding of information by an "expert" from the outside.

ENDNOTES

¹ Thomas A. Wolf, "Universal Disciple: How to Receive, Retain, and Replicate God's Pattern for Living" (unpublished pamphlet, received by author in 2003), 3,5.

² R.L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries, Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998, 1981), H8674.

³ For Wolf's original version, see Thomas A. Wolf, "The Universal Disciple," <http://www.geocities.com/g_westlake/UnivDiscTW.html>.

⁴ Glenn Schwartz, "Dependency," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 3rd edition, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 593; David Garrison, "Church Planting Movements" (small booklet) (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, 1999), 30, 35, 50.

7

Buttressed by Values: Turning New Movements Loose with Confidence

I remember quite well the day that Muhammad came to me with a pained look on his face. "We have got to get this good news out," he said passionately.

Muhammad's visit to me was about three or four weeks after his conversion. The number of new disciples had increased quickly as new disciples won others to the faith and set up house churches. The growth presented some new challenges for the nascent fellowships.

By this point, a small but significant number of people from a minority sub-culture had joined some of the house churches. Though most of the disciples from this sub-group knew the mainstream Moravian dialect and enjoyed worshipping with the other believers in that language, they also wanted to worship the Lord in their own mother tongue. One night shortly after this group had expressed their desire to the house church leaders, the Lord visited Muhammad in a dream. Muhammad knew this minority group's language quite well and he was also a skilled guitarist. In the dream, the Lord admonished Muhammad to write and record on cassette tape some worship songs in the minority language. The Lord even gave him some of the lyrics. Muhammad did not waste any time. In a matter of days, he had recorded a number of songs on cassette tapes for his new brothers and sisters in Messiah. Now these new saints, too, could express their love for the Savior in the language that moved their hearts more than any other.

Shortly thereafter, the Lord spoke to two of the new disciples from this sub-group in a dream. In the dream, he told them that he was sending them to back to their home city, one of the few places where this people group formed a majority of the population. He promised that while there, they would see "something good." When they shared the dream with the other believers and leaders in their house church, the church concluded that the Holy Spirit was sending them to share the gospel in this strategic city, and that this "something good" meant a harvest of souls in that city.

The disciples prayed and thought through this matter over the next few days. On another night, the Lord spoke to them in yet another dream and stressed the absolute importance that the believers in this new city have access to the Scriptures. This ushered the house churches into a crisis of sorts. Most of the residents of the town to which these men were being sent could not read; they spoke a language other than Moravian; and there was no Bible in this language. The men were scheduled to leave in about a week, but in light of the Lord's command, the idea of sending them out without the Word of God was now unthinkable. Therefore, Muhammad and some of the other leaders got together and stayed up almost all night every night for the next week, translating and recording the New Testament on cassette tape—with musical accompaniment. By the time the two men were sent out, *almost the entire New Testament* had been translated and recorded on cassette tape in this sub-group's language. When the two men were sent off, they left armed with the Word of God.

It was during the week of this intense "translation project" that Muhammad came to me and expressed the need to get the word out. Never before had I seen such a look of pained urgency on a man's face. I could hear it in his voice; I could discern it in his prayers; I could see it in his countenance. As I listened to him, not only was I moved by the way Muhammad's faith was blossoming so quickly, but I was also overwhelmed with joy at the sheer greatness of God. That a group of believers, however young in their faith, would inconvenience themselves to such an extent and with such urgency for the sake

of others convinced me even further of the sheer brilliance of the Holy Spirit's leadership. They had gotten the point. The Holy Spirit himself had driven it home. *The time is short. The return of the Lord is near. We must pray hard. We must get the message out. The lives and eternal destinies of our friends, relatives, mothers, and fathers are at stake.*

REINFORCING THE FOUNDATION

When engineers build a bridge, one of their most important tasks is to make sure that the bridge is buttressed and strengthened by the proper supports. The bridge must be strong enough to hold up under trains, multi-ton vehicles, and many cars on a daily basis, often over treacherous terrain. When we drive our vehicles onto a bridge, seldom do we stop to think how much faith and trust we are actually putting in an architect whom we have never met.

Most of the people who came to faith through the movements birthed through Paul's ministry probably never met Paul face-to-face. Nevertheless, they had still been influenced by him. Every day, they crossed over the "bridge" that he had established in the lives of the first group of disciples he had trained. When Paul left an area, he could turn a movement loose, because he knew that the foundation he had imparted to the first group was strong. His confidence was that in his absence the Holy Spirit himself would lead new "vehicles" over the bridges he had built.

In Ch. 6, we mentioned that one of the reasons Paul was able to lay strong foundations quickly was his pattern-based mode of building. This pattern formed the core framework for the bridges he built. However, this framework was also supported by and welded to a set of core values that helped keep new movements on the right track over time. In other words, they functioned as beams to strategically reinforce the bridge, which those who would later be funneled into a rapidly-expanding movement would have to cross. It is to these values that we now shift our attention in this chapter.

OBEDIENCE: THE VALUE THAT UNLOCKS *UNIVERSAL DISCIPLE*

However strategic *Universal Disciple* may be for foundation building, the New Testament is also clear that the information transferred in the pattern ultimately remains impotent if it is not accompanied by wholehearted obedience:

Blessed rather are those who *hear the word of God and obey it*. (Lk. 11:28, emphasis added)

If you love me, you will *obey what I command*. (John 14:15, emphasis added)

Through him and for his name's sake we received grace and apostleship *to call people* from among all the Gentiles *to the obedience* that comes from faith. (Rom. 1:5, emphasis added)

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you *wholeheartedly obeyed* the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. (Rom. 6:17, emphasis added)

... Who have been *chosen ... for obedience* to Jesus Christ ... (1 Pet. 1:2, emphasis added)

Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; *obey it...* (Rev. 3:3, emphasis added)

Obedience is the key that unlocks the door of *Universal Disciple* so that disciples may go on to actually progress in maturity. It is thus the value that unlocks transformation. Therefore, at the beginning of a new movement, the initial catalyst must emphasize over and over that obedience, not the mere retention of Bible information, is the primary measuring rod of successful discipleship.

RESPECT FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURE: THE VALUE THAT KEEPS MOVEMENTS DOCTRINALLY SOUND

When the Holy Spirit is poured out on a group of new disciples, they will begin to experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12–14). Respect for Bible's authority and integrity is the value that will keep disciples and churches on sure orthodox footing as the gifts begin to proliferate in a movement.¹ From the inception of a movement, not only must disciples have access to the Bible, but it must also be stressed to them early on that the Scriptures are fully authoritative and an absolutely trustworthy compass for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). They are to *always* function as the objective standard by which all subjective spiritual experiences are to be evaluated, measured, and tested:

... The *Scripture cannot be broken* (they are fully trustworthy and incontrovertible) ... (Jn. 10:35, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

For everything that was written in the past was *written to teach* us, so that through *endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures* we might have hope. (Rom. 15:4, emphasis added)

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. *Test everything. Hold on to the good.* (1 Th. 5:19–21, emphasis added)

All Scripture is God-breathed (inspired by God and therefore authoritative) and is useful for *teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*, so that the man of God may be *thoroughly equipped* for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

If a movement does not operate and flow in the gifts, it will soon become lifeless and powerless. If it is not anchored in the Word, it is much more vulnerable to false shepherds and unorthodox ideas.

If, however, the gifts and the Word function together side-by-side as dual pistons within a movement's engine, then the movement is much more likely to stay on the narrow path doctrinally as it advances beyond the influence of its initial catalyst.

HUNGER FOR THE WORD: THE VALUE THAT UNLOCKS REVELATION AND UNDERSTANDING

If obedience is the value that unlocks the transformation of behavior, and if respect for the Bible's authority is the value that keeps a movement doctrinally on track, then hunger for God and his Word is the value that opens the floodgate of revelation and understanding:

"Consider *carefully* what you hear," he continued. "With the *measure* (of care, focus, hunger, attentiveness) you use (apply to the Word, v. 14), it will be *measured* to you (amount of revelation and understanding of the Word you will receive in return)—and even more." (Mk. 4:24, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

They *devoted* themselves to *the apostles' teaching*... (Ac. 2:42a, emphasis added)

Now the Bereans were of more *noble character* than the Thessalonians, for they *received the message with great eagerness* and *examined the Scriptures every day* to see if what Paul said was true. (Ac. 17:11, emphasis added)

Let the *word of Christ dwell in you richly* as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. (Col. 3:16, emphasis added)

As Mike Bickle, the director of the IHOP Missions Base in Kansas City, states, God gives us understanding of the Bible on the basis of spiritual hunger, not on the basis of a superior intellect:

[He speaks in parables] because he wants to make truth hard, and he wants to make truth simple ... because he wants to base the reception of truth on hunger, not on superior intellect ... When God had the Bible written, you know who he had in mind? He had in mind the vast majority of human beings in history, which are in third world countries and illiterate. God did not have in mind mostly the top seminaries in America. God had mostly in mind illiterate peasants all through human history. He says, "I'm going to make my truth so easy that an illiterate person up in a mountain village in a third world country can understand exactly what I'm saying if they have spiritual hunger. And I'm going to present my truth in such a way where the most brilliant intellect – if they don't have spiritual hunger – cannot make any sense of my simple word that the peasants of the earth understand."²

In the initial stages of a movement, not only must we give new disciples the Bible, but we must also instill into them the *value* of cultivating a deep hunger for the Word of God. If this value is in place, we can be confident that they will continue to mine the riches of the Scriptures in our absence. If they are regularly feasting on the Word, moreover, we can trust the Spirit's anointing to enhance their understanding and comprehension of the Scriptures over time (1 Jn. 2:27).

CONSTANT COVENANT-BASED PRAYER: THE VALUE THAT ACCESSES GRACE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Particularly since the Protestant Reformation, many streams in the Body of Messiah have been rightly concerned about avoiding works-based righteousness. The idea that God somehow owes human beings anything, that human beings in any sense deserve the gift of salvation, or that human beings possess any inherent righteousness of their own is clearly unbiblical and heretical. Human beings have absolutely nothing to boast about before God (Jer. 9:23–24; Rom.

4:2; Gal. 6:14). We stand justified or judicially acquitted in God's sight through faith in Messiah's blood alone (Rom. 3:25). All of our attempts to obtain righteousness apart from our Creator are like filthy rags in God's sight (Is. 64:6).

Having said this, many people in the Body of Messiah today have twisted and distorted this truth to mean that God does not require his people to *actually* do the things he commands us to do. They articulate the doctrine of grace in such a way that a life of holiness seems optional for followers of Jesus. Any talk of "rewards" or any kind of intentional effort, focus, and discipline on our part to actually obey God amounts to "striving" and "trying to earn salvation." It is posited that since we are "saved by grace," how we actually behave and live does not really matter to God.³

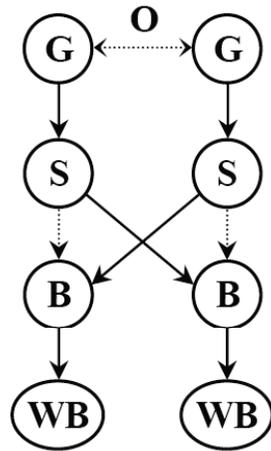
The New Testament condemns this kind of teaching in the strongest of terms. In Jude's words, those who teach such things are "godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord" (Jd. 4). The reality is that God takes both our inward life and outward behavior very seriously. Paul tells us that the wicked, the sexually immoral, the impure, the greedy, and the idolatrous will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Eph. 5:5). While all of us fall into these categories before we submit to Jesus (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 2:3), upon our inclusion in Messiah we are expected by God to forsake and flee from these wicked ways (Eph. 5:3–13)—not by our own power and strength, but through the enabling grace and power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). Moreover, while we certainly do not earn or deserve salvation, the New Testament unabashedly teaches that, like most good parents, God uses rewards to motivate his people. At the end of the age, Jesus will lavishly reward the righteous for their obedience, self-sacrifice, perseverance, deeds, and labors (Mt. 5:12, 46, 6:4, 6, 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:24; Heb. 10:35, 11:6, 26; 2 Jn. 8; Rev. 2–3, 11:18, 22:12). The New Testament also teaches in many places that God requires us to intentionally "strive," "make effort," and "show diligence" in our pursuit of a life of holiness, righteousness, and blamelessness (Lk. 13:24; Jn. 5:44; Rom. 14:19,

15:30; 1 Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:3; Php. 1:27; Heb. 4:11, 6:11, 12:14; 2 Pt. 1:5, 3:14).

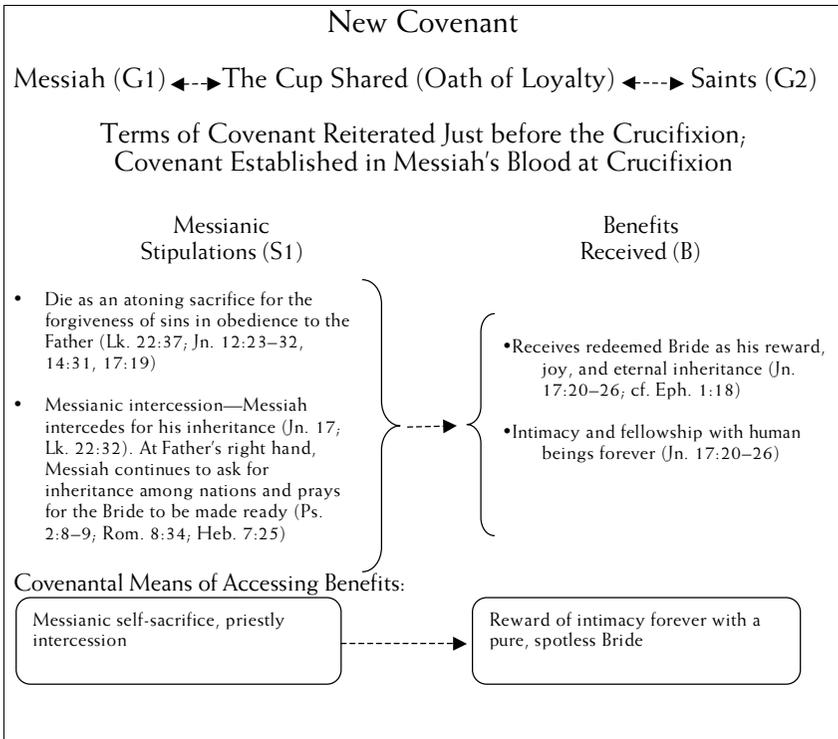
The New Testament emphasizes that we should strive to live lives of obedience—yet it also states that we cannot gain anything from God by our works. How are we to reconcile these two streams of teaching? Better yet, how were they united in the minds of the apostles? The answer has its locus in the biblical concept of covenant.

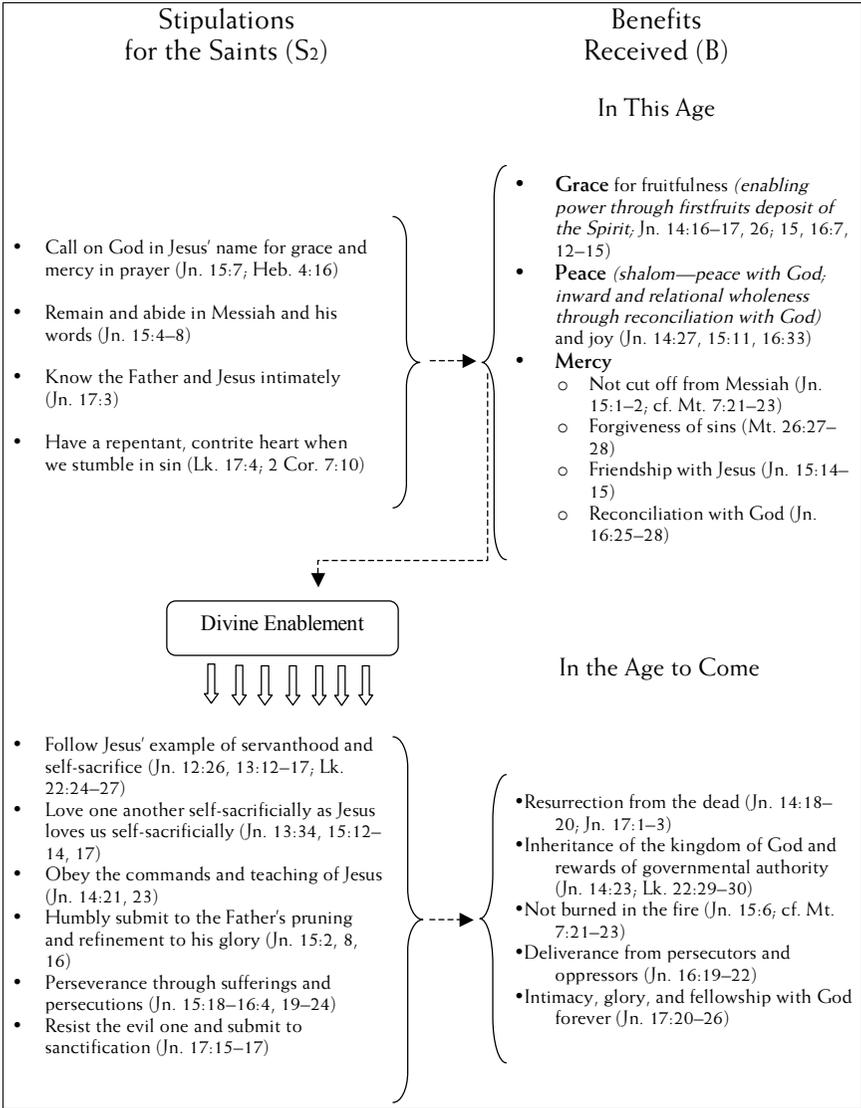
In my opinion, the reason so many in the Body of Messiah today feel spiritually defeated and powerless in the face of sin is because we have an inadequate understanding of both the concept of covenant and the practical mechanics of covenant. Few realize that when Jesus established the New Covenant in his blood (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:15), he instituted a *governmental* agreement between two parties:

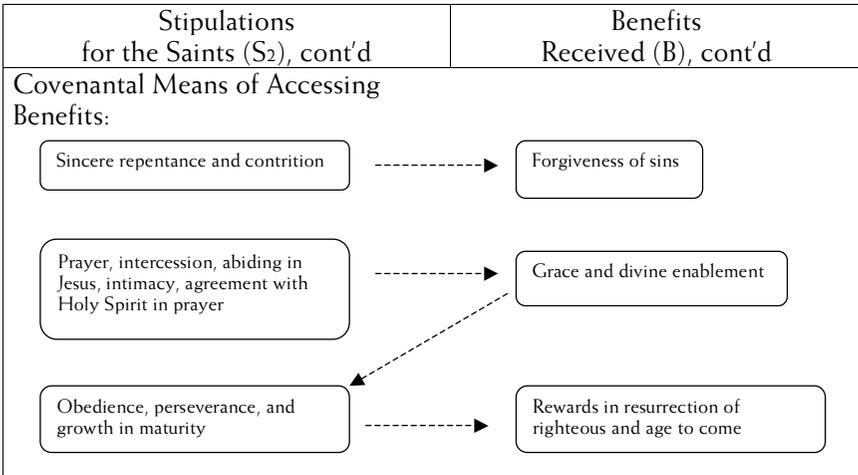
Covenants were not arbitrary "promises" made by God with biblical characters. They must be interpreted as the biblical characters themselves would have understood them—*governmentally*. Even the English word "covenant" assumes a governmental context. Covenants are thus "governmental agreements," which can take place in any arena of life in which government functions: political (e.g. city, state, nation, etc.), professional (education, business, military, etc), and private (civic, religious, recreational, family, etc). All covenants incorporate the same basic elements: two governments (G) take an oath of loyalty (O) and agree on some set of stipulations (S). If the stipulations are met, then benefits (B) are given, which ultimately lead to well-being (WB).⁴



In the New Covenant, the two parties in governmental agreement are Messiah Jesus (G) and Jesus' disciples, or the saints (G). At the Last Supper, both parties took an oath of loyalty (O) to one another when they drank the cup (Mt. 26:27–29). This oath is renewed each time we remember Jesus' death through our participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:24–26). While the entire New Testament is an exposition of the New Covenant, Jesus summarized the stipulations, terms, provisions, and benefits of the New Covenant (S) in the upper room and in the Olivet Discourse just before he went to the cross and established and sealed the covenant with his blood:







By definition, a covenant assumes the active participation of more than one party. In covenants made between human governments, both parties must strive to meet the stipulations of the covenant if the covenant is to fulfill its reason for existence: the exchange of benefits unto the mutual well-being of both parties. In covenants between God and human beings, the same dynamic of intentional effort hold true, with one important exception: God, as a party to the covenant, actively participates in but has no difficulty fulfilling his side of the agreement. As the One whose eternal nature, character, and integrity never changes, God is always faithful to his promise and word (2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:17–18). He always follows through on his side of the agreement. In contrast, the human beings with whom God is in covenant typically have a very difficult time meeting their side of the agreement because of their sin and weakness (Rom. 3:23). Apart from the Spirit, our nature rebels against the ways and purposes of God (Rom. 8:5–8). This presents a dilemma since God does not lower the standards of behavior to which he calls his people in the covenant.

The answer to this tension lies in the benefits of the covenant itself. As seen in the above chart, the New Covenant contains provisions of mercy, forgiveness, peace, and grace to live righteously. These provisions and benefits, however, are only accessed when we

actively meet the stipulations of our side of the agreement. The covenantal benefit of the forgiveness of sins, for example, is available to us by virtue of our inclusion in the covenant, but is only accessed when we fulfill the stipulation of repenting of our sins. If we do our part and repent with sincerity, God administers the forgiveness our sins as he promises in the covenant. The covenantal benefit of grace and power for righteous living, moreover, is also available to us by virtue of our inclusion in the covenant. However, like forgiveness this provision is only accessed through regular fellowship with Jesus, worship, abiding in his Word, constant prayer, and fasting (Mt. 6:16; Mk. 9:29; Ac. 13:2–3, 14:23). As the author of Hebrews puts it:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses (the Priest with whom we are in covenant is not harsh, but compassionate), but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin (our High Priest knows how to fully resist sin in the face of temptation). Let us then *approach* (active engagement through constant prayer) *the throne of grace* (grace to resist sin is available through Jesus at the Father's right hand) with confidence (confidence in the provisions of the covenant), so that we *may receive mercy* (benefit of mercy accessed through approaching) and *find grace* (benefit of grace accessed through approaching) to *help us in our time of need* (to resist sin in the face of temptation). (Heb. 4:15–16, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Within a covenantal framework, intentional effort on our part is not antithetical to salvation freely received by faith. As I have heard Mike Bickle and others put it, "We cannot do God's part; God will not do our part." God requires us to actively "make every effort ("strive," ESV) to enter through the narrow door" (Lk. 13:24). Repentance and faith have always (Heb. 4:2) been the means of *inclusion* in the covenant (salvation freely received through no merit

of our own). Persistent and continued calling on “the name of the LORD”—the redemptive name of God as the One who is faithful to administer the benefits of the covenant—in prayer has always been the prescribed means of *accessing* the benefits of the covenant (e.g. Gn. 4:25, 7–8, 13:4, 21:33, 26:25; Joel 2). The entire book of Psalms, in fact, is a prayer and worship manual built around calling on the One whose name ensures his faithfulness to administer the blessings and provisions of the covenant. When we are faithful to do our part, God meets us at that point and gives us power to do what we cannot do on our own. As Richard Foster puts it, “By undertaking Disciplines of the spiritual life that we *can* do, we receive from God the ability to do things that under our own steam we simply *cannot* do, such as loving our enemies.”⁵

Cultivating a tender, repentant, and responsive heart through a lifestyle of constant prayer, worship, fasting, and abiding in Jesus, the vine (Jn. 15:5), is simply not an option for his followers. In fact, persistent and willful refusal to pursue the benefits of the covenant unto our growth in humility, obedience, and fruitfulness over time carries the most serious of consequences. For some, refusing to obey the stipulations of the covenant will not result in the loss of salvation, but will entail a substantial decrease of the eternal rewards they would have otherwise received when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 3:12–15). Those whose negligence degenerates over time into deliberate, out-and-out rebellion against the deposit of the Spirit are not only at risk of losing their rewards, but are in danger of being cut off from the covenant altogether and thrown into the lake of fire (Mt. 3:10–12, 7:19, 18:8–9; Jn. 15:2, 5–6; Rom. 11:21–22; Heb. 6:4–8, 10:26–27).

At the same time, we must also take care not to let spiritual disciplines⁶ like prayer, fasting, and study devolve into an unbearable religious yoke that causes us to think we somehow deserve or are entitled to God’s favor (Mt. 23:4; Lk. 18:9–14; Ac. 15:10). This is when we are in danger of legalism, works-righteousness, false confidence, and prideful boasting (Rom. 9:32; Php. 3:1–6). It can be easy to slip into a Pharisaical mindset when we engage in spiritual

disciplines outside of a covenantal framework, the purpose of which is to usher us into greater fellowship with God through calling on the redemptive name of the Lord. Abiding in the vine in communion, relationship, and intimacy with God is the means of accessing the covenantal benefit of grace for obedience. When the spiritual disciplines are employed to escort us unto this end, they are vital. When they are morphed into a pretense for comparing ourselves with others, or twisted into a crushing burden by which people feel they can never do enough to please God, they become a stumbling block. Knowing when and how to engage disciplines like fasting, then, is less about a formal regimen (though intentionality and focus is required) than it is about regularly listening to and obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit in the context of relationship. Our boast is in the cross of Messiah alone (Gal. 6:14). God's goal for us is maximum engagement with Jesus through the covenant established on the cross. The Spirit knows how to strategically take us to that place from season to season.

God is zealously committed to human beings functioning the way human beings were created to function. He simply loves us too much to let us persist in a lifestyle that, whether we realize it or not, is detrimental to our own well-being and that of others.

The way to stay on the narrow path as defined by Jesus lies in the nature and mechanics of covenant. When we are grieved and broken over the depth of our sin, we must look to the cross and cry out, "Oh, God, in the name of Jesus the Messiah, I appeal to the covenant in the Messiah's blood to help me do what I cannot do on my own! The faithfulness of your name is my only hope. I renounce my sinful nature. I hate wickedness and I love righteousness. I cling to the covenant, for my confidence is in you. Reveal the life of Jesus in me through the Spirit. I trust in your ability to preserve me in righteousness and holiness more than in my tendency to stumble and the devil's ability to lure me into deception." I cannot begin to tell you how precious covenant-based prayer has been to me during the times that God has been kind enough to let me see how truly depraved I am apart from him. In those moments, there is only

one place to turn: the wings of his covenant faithfulness. When we approach the throne of grace boldly in our time of need on the basis of the covenant, our Messiah is faithful to impart to us the light, love, and grace necessary to love and obey him as he desires to be loved and obeyed.

Therefore, when a new movement is being birthed, it is essential that the earliest round of disciples have the value of constant covenant-based prayer drilled into them over and over. This will ensure that as the movement expands, it will have built-in safeguards against powerlessness, false doctrines of grace, and Pharisaical self-righteousness.

HOLINESS: THE VALUE THAT CURTAILS HERESY

Some church leaders and denominations teach that rapidly-expanding movements are inherently prone to dangerous heresy because they are led by laypeople and are grassroots-oriented. The assumption behind this fear is that formal theological education is the solution to heresy. This assumption, however, simply is not true and is easily refutable.

First, the truth is that throughout history, academic institutions and seminaries have been some of the most sinister manufacturers of heresy. For example, arguably the most sinister heresy the church has ever faced—Arianism, which almost won a majority in the church in the fourth century—was primarily spread by the academic elites. The same is true of many seminaries today, in which countless professors abuse the Scriptures and use their influence to foster unbelief in young, impressionable hearts. Of course, this is not to say that every seminary professor is promoting heresy. The point is that those who propose more formal education as the solution to heresy have actually misdiagnosed the problem. The cause of heresy is not a lack of education, but rather *the corruption and perverseness of the human heart*. A heart of sin left unattended, whether it belongs to a scholar or a peasant, is prone to distortion and deception.

If the cause of heresy is a corrupt heart, therefore, the antidote to heresy is not to immediately send new leaders of a movement off

to seminary (and thereby secure the movement's death by robbing it of its leaders). Rather, the solution is to instill into new disciples and leaders a high value for *holiness and purity* as part of their initial DNA. A value for holiness and purity, knit together with the other values of this chapter, is a movement's true safeguard against heresy. When we rightly diagnose the problem, we can administer the right solution to the problem on the front end of a movement before it explodes beyond our direct influence.

Second, an excessive fear of heresy is often tied to a lack of trust in the Spirit's leadership, as well as a failure to adhere to the Golden Rule. Do we trust the Holy Spirit's ability to use the Scriptures to guide others into truth the same way we trust that he guides each of us into truth (John 16:13–15)? If people are submitting to the Word as their authority, hungering for the Word, clinging to the covenant in prayer, pursuing holiness, and holding one another accountable in community, can we not trust the Spirit's ability to instruct and correct his people? The truth is that however old we are in the faith, we still constantly need God to uproot the distorted perceptions we have of him, ourselves, and others. This kind of transformation happens over time as the Spirit takes us through the Word and as we walk out life in community with other believers. We must be careful not to confuse our maturation process with the spread of major heresy. There is a big difference between accepting over time that God is a tender Father and not a tyrant (a paradigm shift that for many requires time, both emotionally and intellectually, because of abusive backgrounds) and denying that Jesus died on the cross (a major false teaching promulgated by Muslims, many secularists, and a number of cults).

Finally, we must come to terms with the fact that in this age, no matter what we do or how long we stay with a flock, some of the sheep may still get eaten by wolves. Consider Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders:

Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that

I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. *I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning you night and day with tears.* (Ac. 20:25–31, emphasis added)

As stated in the introduction, Paul's three years in Ephesus constituted his longest stay in any one city during his three missionary journeys. This meant that he invested more direct time, leadership, training, energy, and emotion into the church in Ephesus than he did in any other flock. He warned the Ephesian leaders again and again that Satan would try to send wolves into the flock in an effort to destroy it. His job had been to faithfully build the foundation God had commanded him to build. However, even Paul had to come to terms with the fact that at the end of the day, only the Holy Spirit could protect the flock from deception in his absence. The Holy Spirit himself had chosen local overseers toward that end (Ac. 20:28).

A small percentage of people in a new movement may stray from the original vision. However, Jesus clearly warned that the wheat and the tares will grow up together until the end of the age (Mt. 13:36–43). If some adherents stray from the narrow path, does that mean that the rest of the movement is automatically invalidated? Of course not. Those who are overly concerned about tares emerging among the wheat in a rapidly-expanding grassroots movement need not even look that far to see the phenomenon. The wheat and the tares are already growing alongside each other in non-moving, traditional churches and denominations! Again, the solution to the tares is not to kill movements that have the potential to bring millions to Jesus effectively and rapidly. Rather, it is to do our best to sow the kind of wheat on the front end—holiness, purity, a love

for prayer, hunger and respect for the Word, etc.—that God himself wants to continue watering and replicating as the movement grows. As the movement moves beyond our direct influence, we can trust the Holy Spirit to discipline harmful elements within the church (e.g. Ac. 5:1–11), and to appoint local overseers to help protect the flock from wolves (Ac. 20:28).

URGENCY: THE VALUE THAT FUELS EXPANSION

In the opening testimony of this chapter, we saw how the Holy Spirit used a strong sense of urgency to fuel the rapid expansion of the Moravian church. Muhammad received this value as part of his initial DNA, and then passed it on to the people he led to Jesus. One of the ways I tried to model this value for Muhammad was through passionate intercession for the lost. It did not take long for Muhammad to catch on. As Muhammad passed on a sense of urgency to others, the Holy Spirit fanned this value into a hotter flame in the lives of the new disciples. That this value be instilled in the early stages of a nascent movement is of the utmost importance.

In the evangelical world, we often hear leaders appeal to a number of themes to foster a sense of urgency for evangelism—for example, the glory of God in the nations, obedience to the Great Commission, compassion for the lost, and saving people from eternal punishment. All of these themes are very dear to Jesus' heart and should motivate us in prayer. In this section, my purpose is in no way to devalue these themes, but to simply situate them within the proper New Testament framework, as they would have been understood by the first-century church. As this book is about birthing New Testament movements, we must now turn to a topic that was a source of great unity, power, and motivation in the church for the first two centuries following Messiah's resurrection,⁷ but which today has unfortunately become a topic of great confusion for many in the Body of Messiah: eschatology, or the study of the last days.

Formerly, my impression of people who studied the end times was similar to my impression of Star Wars fans who stand in long lines for movies dressed like Yoda or C-3PO: they were amusing

to watch and listen to, but were not to be taken very seriously. I had seen just enough poor-quality end-times films to be turned off by the whole discussion. I was satisfied in my belief that "Jesus will come back whenever he comes back." Until then, I was going to be pragmatic and focus on the Great Commission. However, the more I studied the Scriptures, the more I began to realize that eschatology not only forms one Bible study topic to be discussed among others, but constitutes the interpretive framework presupposed by the *entire* New Testament. This was because the New Testament, as we saw in Ch. 3, assumes the gospel of the Old Testament, which is eschatological in orientation from beginning to end.

Even a cursory reading of the epistles reveals that the New Testament church not only believed that Jesus was going to return in their lifetime, but lived with that strong conviction. John assures readers of his first epistle that "... the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining" (1 Jn. 1:8), and that readers of the book of Revelation should take its message to heart "because the time is near" (Rev. 1:3). James warned his readers "to be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near" (Ja. 5:9). Paul told the Romans to love one another because "the night is nearly over; the day is almost here" (Rom. 13:12). The author of Hebrews tells readers to "encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). Paul's belief that he was living in the generation of the Lord's return is expressed perhaps most clearly in 1 Corinthians 7:

What I mean, brothers, is that *the time is short*. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of this world, as if not engrossed in them. *For the world in its present form is passing away* (living with sobriety in light of the urgency of the hour). (1 Cor. 7:29, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

This conviction that Jesus would return in their generation dramatically affected the lifestyle of the early church: the way they lived, loved, worked, and prayed (1 Cor. 7:29; Rom. 13:8–14; Luke 21:36). It also engendered the poignant sense of urgency that fueled the rapid expansion of the church in the first century.

However, while a sense of urgency in light of Jesus' impending return pervaded the early church, they also understood this urgency within a historical and revelatory framework that kept the church from slipping into idleness, carelessness, or mindless panic. This viewpoint comes out most clearly in Paul's letters to the saints in Thessalonica, many of whom were so convinced of Jesus' imminent return that they were quitting their jobs. After all, why go to the trouble of keeping a job if the Lord is probably coming back within weeks or months? Paul corrected the Thessalonians and commanded them to avoid idleness and to keep working (2 Th. 3:6–15). Paul was not disagreeing with their conviction that Messiah would return in their generation. As seen above, Paul held to the same conviction. Rather, the Thessalonians had forgotten something that Paul had formerly taught them (2 Th. 2:5): the Messiah would not return until certain observable and knowable "signs" had first taken place:

Concerning the *coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him* (the second coming and the resurrection of the righteous), we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day *will not come until* (these events must happen before Jesus returns) *the rebellion* (cf. Dan. 8:12) *occurs and the man of lawlessness* (the anti-Messiah) *is revealed*, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God ... And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom

the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Th. 2:1–4, 8–10, emphasis and parenthetical comments added).

Paul is saying that Jesus will not come until the rebellion occurs and the “man of lawlessness” sets himself up in God’s temple and declares himself to be God. The Thessalonians would have understood this to mean the literal temple in Jerusalem, which was in existence at the time Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians. No doubt this event is what Jesus is referring to when he mentioned “the abomination that causes desolation,” spoken of through the prophet Daniel” (Mt. 24:15; cf. Dan. 9:27). Here Paul is making a simple and straightforward point. He is not trying to trick anyone or write a scholarly dissertation. Jesus is coming back soon. That is a given; the question is, when? He is coming back only after certain historical events occur that were first prophesied by Daniel (Dan. 8:9–12, 9:27): the “rebellion” or “falling away” (NKJV) or “apostasy” (NASB); and the rise of a wicked leader, called the man of lawlessness (the anti-Messiah, cf. Rev. 13), who will enthrone himself in the Jerusalem temple and demand worship. Those events have not yet happened. Therefore, the Messiah’s return is still ahead. In other parts of Scripture, we learn that the Messiah will return exactly three and a half years after the abomination of desolation occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed (Dan. 7:25; 9:27; Rev. 11:2, 12:6, 14, 13:5).

In this passage, Paul is simply reiterating Jesus’ own teaching (Mt. 24) that God would use historical signs to clearly communicate the nearness of Messiah’s return to those who, like the Thessalonians, were attentively watching and waiting for it (1 Th. 5:4). To unbelievers or sleepy believers not attentive to the signs, however, the day of the Lord would come suddenly, like “a thief in the night”

(1 Th. 5:2).⁸ Since these signs had not yet occurred, Paul could tell the Thessalonians with absolute certainty that the return of Jesus was yet ahead. However, this in no way reduced his sense of urgency; rather, he was moved to pray and labor more fervently for the Bride's sanctification and preparation through difficulties and persecutions, especially those the Scriptures warned would come upon her at the end of the age (Mt. 24:15–22; Dan. 7:25, 9:27; Rev. 13, 19:6–8).

Thus, the basic apostolic framework for urgency in the New Testament can be summarized as: *the Messiah's return is near, but the unfulfilled signs mean it is also knowably not yet here*. This framework fostered an authentic and compelling sense of urgency, but with sane parameters. On the one hand, because Jesus' disciples assumed the day of the Lord was near, they were to watch attentively, pray fervently, live obediently, and share the gospel boldly. That way, when the promised signs did actually begin to unfold, the saints would be ready and prepared. On the other hand, they were not to live in a mindless panic or to quit their jobs on a whim, because these observable time indicators had not yet happened. They were to be sober and urgent, but at the same time not be paralyzed by a constant state of guessing. This framework created the optimum context for the Bride's preparation without her becoming schizophrenic in the process. The apostolic perspective was not that Jesus' return would take place "any moment," as many in the Body of Messiah believe today.⁹

Note that these signs highlighted by Paul presuppose the existence of a literal Jewish temple in the literal city of Jerusalem. This, in turn, presupposes Jews in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel. These historical conditions had to be in place for the signs Paul mentioned to occur. Because they *were* in place in Paul's day, he and the other first-century believers—unlike many subsequent generations of believers—were able to maintain the conviction that they were in fact living in the last days. However, in 70 AD Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Roman armies. When the temple was destroyed, the conditions necessary for the signs to unfold were no longer in place. But the situation is very different today.

The formation of the state of Israel in 1948 and Israel's recovery of Jerusalem in 1967 means that the prerequisite conditions for the signs Jesus and Paul mentioned are almost once again in place. All that remains is for the Jewish temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Will the temple be rebuilt? This is a controversial question, especially in light of the tense political climate of the Middle East today. However, if we hold to the inerrancy, infallibility, and integrity of the Scriptures, then the answer to this question must be yes, because Paul's argument in 2 Thessalonians 2 presupposes the existence of a literal temple in Jerusalem.

Considering the conditions in Israel, the apostolic framework for urgency is more relevant to the Body of Messiah than ever. Evangelistic urgency must once again be seamlessly interwoven with eschatology in a unified paradigm of mission, as it was in the early church. The last days form the period of history that demands the greatest sense of urgency the church has ever expressed. The last days are now upon us. Therefore, the time period now upon us demands the greatest sense of urgency the church has ever expressed. Like the New Testament church, we can be confident that Messiah's return is near. However, also like the early church, we can say that we know that Messiah *will not* return tomorrow, because the signs have not happened. The abomination of desolation must first take place. Until then, we must get prepared for the difficulties that are soon to come upon the earth. Eschatological urgency must be a key value if a movement is to be truly New Testament-caliber.

FREELY GIVING: THE VALUE THAT PERPETUATES DISCIPLESHIP

How do we ensure that as a movement unfolds, those coming to faith are receiving the DNA initially instilled in the movement? The answer lies in a value and command that Jesus gave his disciples: freely giving away to others all that we have freely received:

...Freely you have received, *freely give*. (Mt. 10:8)

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of

hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Ac. 20:35, emphasis added)

When this value is drilled into new disciples from the beginning of their conversion experience, it functions to ensure the continuation of informational transfer—such as *Universal Disciple*—from person to person and church to church as the movement unfolds. This value will also motivate sacrificial giving for the advancement of the gospel. Therefore, whenever we meet with new disciples, we must stress to them that once they leave our presence, it is now their responsibility before God to pass on what they have freely received from us to other disciples.

CONCLUSION

Paul was driven by a burden to make saints, not scholars. He had promised to present the church to Messiah as a pure virgin (2 Cor. 11:2), and he was determined to do everything in his power to lay simple yet solid foundations toward this end:

We proclaim him (Messiah), admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, *so that we may present everyone perfect (ESV "mature") in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.* (Col. 1:28–29, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

One of the secrets to the durable foundations he established was that he not only imparted a blueprint for sanctification, but also gave believers the keys: a set of values that were necessary to unlock that blueprint. The key of obedience unlocks the doors of personal transformation. The key of respect for the authority of Scripture keeps us anchored in biblical truth. The key of hungering for the Word of God flings open the doors of truth, revelation, and understanding. The key of covenant-based prayer positions us in our weakness to receive God's grace. The key of holiness secures us against deceptions and false doctrines. The key of eschatological

urgency fuels the expansion and maturation of the church. The key of freely giving perpetuates discipleship as a movement unfolds. When both the blueprint and the values that unlock it are firmly set into the wet cement of a new foundation, new disciples and churches are now positioned to grow in maturity under the Spirit's leadership in the absence of a movement's initial catalyst (Php. 2:12).

ENDNOTES

¹ For more, see David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Bangalore, India: Sri Sudhindra Offset Press, 2004), 182–3.

² Mike Bickle, *Encountering Jesus Series #8* (Kansas City, MO: International House of Prayer). MP3s are available for free at <<http://www.ihop.org/Group/Group.aspx?ID=1000036187>> under "Teaching Series and Popular Sermons."

³ For more on this, I highly recommend Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991).

⁴ John Harrigan, "The Adamic Covenant and the Messianic Hope" (lecture notes from course *Biblical Theology of Mission*, Apostolic Missions School, International House of Prayer University, Fall 2008).

⁵ Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 88.

⁶ For more on both the biblical basis and practical mechanics of the spiritual disciplines, see Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998). See also Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, and *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1998).

⁷ "Classical/historical premillennialism was the only view of eschatology for at least the first 200 years of the church. This is primarily an argument from omission, since there are simply no other

eschatologies spoken of by the earliest church fathers. However, many are clearly premillennial—e.g. Papias, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Methodius, Commodianus, and Lactantius (see Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001]). Justin Martyr went so far as to suggest that anyone with a different viewpoint was heretical, 'Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, godless, and foolish ... For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines delivered by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this truth, and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians ... But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.'" *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 80; archived at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/JUSTIN_MARTYR/Dialogue_with_Trypho/Chapter_LXXX, as quoted in John Harrigan, "Five-fold Development of the Western Worldview" (lecture notes from course *Biblical Theology of Mission*, Apostolic Missions School, International House of Prayer University, Fall 2008).

⁸ David Pawson, *When Jesus Returns* (London, UK: Hodder Stoughton, 1995), 18–27.

⁹ For the history of the pre-tribulation rapture teaching, together with a convincing and biblically-sound refutation of this idea, see Pawson, *When Jesus Returns*, 183–197; see also David Pawson, "The Rapture," message on MP3, available at <<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=528>>. Ultimately, the fruit of this false teaching is to leave followers of Jesus unprepared to face the persecutions the church will face at the end of the age (Dan. 7).

8

Christened with Faith: Bolstering Confidence in the Holy Spirit's Leadership

One of the thorniest issues missionaries face and debate is water baptism. Theologically, is it sacrament, sign, or symbol? Why do we baptize?

Functionally, do we splash, sprinkle, dunk, or pour?

Exegetically, what does the New Testament teach, and what is the example of the New Testament church? In which cases is that example descriptive or prescriptive?

Historically, what did the early church practice?

Anthropologically, how is baptism perceived by different cultures? How do the lost perceive baptism? During our time in Muhammad's region, I asked one Muslim about his perception of baptism, and in all seriousness he claimed that it was an event during which Christians try to drown someone and use a hot brand to create burns on that person's body. Ouch. Of course, the meaning of baptism in his mind did not correspond to the biblical meaning. However, the implications of such misperceptions affect us as we try to advance the gospel.

Missiologically, who should baptize? Should a "professional" foreign missionary or local disciples baptize new believers? This question can have ethical implications. For example, baptism in the Muslim world can get complicated when performed at the hands of Westerners or other outsiders because of the unnecessary attention the outsider's presence brings to the event. In many cases, it has

created ambiguity as to whether someone is being persecuted because of their faith in Jesus, or because a Westerner insisted on being overly involved.¹ We have all seen pictures of the American missionary, wearing a tie, holding his hand in the air with hundreds of local believers standing around him. This may garner more supporters for the missionary back home, but in several parts of the world, this kind of publicity not only reinforces the wrong impression that Christianity is a “Western religion,” but sometimes ends up getting people killed unnecessarily. Recent studies in persecution reveal that often new disciples coming out of Islam get hammered not because of their loyalty to Jesus, but because a Westerner insists on being in a place of up-front leadership.²

Another missiological question: When should baptism take place? Should we baptize immediately after someone’s conversion experience, as the church usually did in the book of Acts? One element evident in several church planting movements, or CPMs, is that immediate baptism “seals the deal” in a new believer’s mind and thus ignites a bold witness in the face of persecution. This is one characteristic of a number of movements in China. In other places, such as the Muslim world, non-believers identify baptism as the point at which their friends or family members have officially left the house of Islam. Therefore, baptism is almost always a catalyst for severe persecution—individual believers have been killed before church or community could ever emerge. In such contexts, should we delay baptism until a critical mass develops that ensures the church will survive persecution? Is this wisdom or compromise?

Questions like these are complex, especially when someone else’s life is on the line. When we worked with Moravians, many people just within our own sending agency had a plethora of strong opinions on the subject, which we debated through email. The truth is, when I met Muhammad, I was not sure what to do. My initial plan was to baptize him myself privately, and then to encourage him to baptize other new disciples, who in turn could baptize others. However, I did not do this because our agency’s unofficial policy for that region at the time was to delay baptism.

The differing viewpoints on baptism, all of which possessed insight at some level, created a great deal of tension in me. It is one thing to talk about these things on paper and in boardrooms. Now I had a real human being looking me in the face. God used this tension to drive me to prayer. I cried out for the Holy Spirit to compensate for any weaknesses that my limited understanding might contribute to Muhammad's foundation.

God answered my prayers in a remarkable way. Two or three weeks after Muhammad gave his life to Jesus, he told me about a dream in which the Holy Spirit had communicated to him the significance of water baptism. Muhammad said that in the dream, the Lord told him that the decisions of the new disciples were not complete (in what exact sense, I am not sure) until they performed this act. The Lord then told him why baptism was important, as well as where and how he wanted the new sheep to be baptized. Each day, two disciples were to walk down to the local river, where they were to baptize one another without making a big scene.

I was astounded and overjoyed as Muhammad shared this testimony with me. Unfortunately, Muhammad had not yet encouraged the Moravian disciples to embark on this process because he was still waiting on me! When he shared this dream with me, I told him that if the Holy Spirit had spoken to him, he *had* to obey. I told him that the most important thing was for him to *always* follow the Holy Spirit's lead, no matter what. The Spirit was his primary leader, not me. I encouraged him to meet with some of the other leaders, read through the book of Acts, and come to their own conclusion. The next day, he met with the house church leaders, and in one sitting they read through the first twenty-six chapters of Acts. They concluded that it was indeed time to start baptizing one another, and shortly thereafter began sending disciples to the river two by two.

I want to stress here that *we are not to use Muhammad's dream to establish doctrine on baptism in any way*. Doctrine is built on Scripture alone. In fact, I do not even know the exact mode of baptism Muhammad and the others used, or the details of the reasons God gave him for its

importance. All I know is that they went to the river to get baptized in obedience to the Spirit's leading. That was satisfying enough for me.

The Holy Spirit has a great sense of humor. While colleagues and I were caught up in a centuries-old squabble through email, the Holy Spirit was on the move, taking care of Jesus' sheep. Once again, the Lord showed me that the Spirit's leadership is much superior to my finite understanding or textbook answers. He not only got me out of a complex quandary, but also (and more importantly) gave Muhammad and the other Moravian disciples the guidance they needed to operate strategically in a volatile situation. Through the Holy Spirit's incredible leadership, the wisdom of several of the viewpoints on baptism had converged. Because my white American face had not been involved in the process of baptism at any point, and because the disciples went to the river in small numbers, the baptism event did not attract unnecessary attention. Thus, the new believers could go about their business quietly. Furthermore, because of the Spirit's leadership, baptism became a part of the young community's practice early enough to keep a baptism-less faith from being reproduced as the number of new disciples increased beyond the direct influence of Muhammad and the earliest round of disciples.

REGAINING CONFIDENCE IN THE COMPETENCY OF THE SPIRIT'S LEADERSHIP

Both Jesus and Paul were extremely confident in the Holy Spirit's resumé as leader, teacher, counselor, disciple-maker, sustainer, and revealer of truth:

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you (John 14:26).

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7, emphasis added)

But when he, *the Spirit of truth*, comes, *he will guide you into all truth*. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears (the Spirit will deliver the Master Rabbi's instructions), and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. (John 16:13–14, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God ... is faithful. (1 Cor. 1:8–9, emphasis added)

Now *to him who is able to establish you* by my gospel ... (Rom. 16:25, emphasis added)

... Being *confident* of this, that *he* who began a good work in *you* will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Php. 1:6, emphasis added)

... Yet I am not ashamed, because *I know whom I have believed*, and am convinced that *he is able to guard* what I have entrusted to him for that day. (2 Tim. 1:12, emphasis added)

Whether we say it or not, many of us in the Body of Messiah today sometimes act as if we have been short-changed by Jesus' ascension. Far from thinking that he was somehow cheating the disciples by returning to the Father, however, Jesus told his students that his impending departure was actually *beneficial* to them. Why? One reason was that, as the incarnate Messiah, his real human body by definition implied spatial limitations; in his earthly ministry Jesus could only meet with a handful of disciples at a time. Through the Spirit, however, the resurrected Rabbi's teaching ministry would be instantly and exponentially multiplied among disciples through all generations and across every culture.

In many of our discipleship strategies today, we give lip service to the Spirit's leadership, but then end up teaching people to have confidence in our own résumé, program, education, or ministry. In

doing this, we effectively usurp the Holy Spirit's place in the lives of new believers. As Allen puts it,

The fatal mistake has been made of teaching the converts to rely upon the wrong source of strength. Instead of seeking it in the working of the Holy Spirit in themselves, they seek it in the missionary. They put him in the place of Christ, they depend on him. In allowing them, or encouraging them, to do this, the missionary not only checks the spiritual growth of his converts and teaches them to rely upon a wrong source of strength; he actually robs them of the strength which they naturally possess and would naturally use. The more independent spirits amongst them can find no opportunity for exercising their gifts. All authority is concentrated in the hands of the missionary.³

A controlling attitude and domineering spirit is one of the most deadly poisons to the spontaneous expansion of the church, and on our part betrays a lack of confidence in the Spirit's ability to lead and guide. One bedrock truth of New Testament-caliber movements is that the Holy Spirit serves as the primary agent of discipleship and personal transformation, *not* the missionary, evangelist, pastor, or church planter. As God's partners in mission, we do play a role in discipleship, of course. However, our primary role is to do everything we can to ensure that new disciples get vitally connected to the Master Rabbi himself through the Holy Spirit. If this connection is established, then whether we get kicked out, killed, imprisoned, stoned, or sent elsewhere, the disciples left behind will continue to receive the same quality of leadership and instruction they had been receiving from Jesus all along. Unlike God's human ambassadors, the Holy Spirit can never be locked up, killed, or imprisoned. In our absence he will always be right there to see a new flock through its trials. Therefore, *the Spirit himself* is the solution to the disruption he causes when he backs up the gospel with power.

LEARNING TO HEAR THE SPIRIT'S VOICE

When he has brought out all his own, *he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice . . . My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* (Jn. 10:4–5, 27)

The way Jesus leads the people of God is through his voice.⁴ Therefore, one of our primary roles as the Holy Spirit's co-laborers in the discipleship process is to impart both an expectancy and a simple framework for responsibly hearing Jesus' voice through the Holy Spirit. If brand-new disciples learn to hear the Spirit's voice effectively for themselves within the parameters of a biblical framework, then that same Spirit will continue to guide them just as effectively in our absence as he does while we are physically present with them. In light of this, whenever I begin to train new disciples, the very first thing I do—usually within minutes of their conversion experience—is to walk them through the following process:

- 1) First, I simply give them practical examples of the many different ways God speaks to his people: dreams, visions, sermons, the "still small voice," circumstances, the created order, other people, etc. I then give them some specific examples from my own experience.
- 2) Next, I point out to them that while hearing God's voice in these kinds of ways are important, the primary way God speaks to us is through the Bible. The Bible is our supreme, infallible authority. Every subjective experience must be tested and measured by the Scriptures. I then have them repeat the following simple principle until they can repeat it on their own without my help:

The Bible is our authority. Anything we hear that contradicts the teaching of Scripture, we throw away. Anything we hear that is expressly taught by Scripture,

we can keep and examine further. E.g., if we hear a voice telling us "God does not love you," we know that it is not God, because the Bible is clear that God does love us.

- 3) Next, I give them a chance to practice hearing the Holy Spirit's voice. I tell them to close their eyes and wait for the Holy Spirit to speak. As they wait, I lay hands on them and ask God to release grace for them to begin hearing the Holy Spirit's voice. I know that the Holy Spirit has been waiting a long time for this moment. He always shows up. After a few minutes of waiting, I then ask them what they heard from God. I never cease to be astonished by the responses I receive.
- 4) After they have heard the Spirit's voice, I go on to plant seeds of confidence in the competency of the Spirit's leadership. My goal is to instill expectancy and a high vision of the Spirit's leadership in their hearts. I assure them that God will take care of their every need; that he will provide for them financially; that he will strengthen them through persecution; and that he will continue speaking to and guiding them through every leg of the journey until Jesus returns.
- 5) Finally, I drill into them the truth that while Jesus does appoint human leaders in his Body for specific tasks, Jesus himself, and not me or any other man, is their primary leader. He alone is the one before whom they will stand accountable on the day of Messiah's appearing (Rom. 14:4, 12). I am very emphatic about this point.

As stated in the opening testimony of Ch. 1, when I first led Muhammad through this process, he experienced a vision of a hand reaching out to him. He also heard a voice tell him, "The kingdom is open for you. Welcome, you are one of us. I sacrificed my life because of the sins you committed. I now accept you as you accept me." As a new disciple, fresh out of Islam and less than an hour old in his faith, Muhammad had no concept of trying to work up an encounter. These were words straight from the throne of God. Muhammad initially felt startled when he heard "words that were not my words."

Then he began to dance with joy. Through the Spirit, Jesus was assuring his newly found sheep of his inclusion in the kingdom of light. Muhammad would never be abandoned or forsaken.

I cannot think of a single time that the Holy Spirit has not shown up when I have led people through this process. In North Africa, when I led a new Chinese disciple through it, he saw a powerful vision of Jesus on the cross as he heard Jesus' voice welcome him home. In a park in downtown Kansas City, one day the Lord healed a Hispanic man's hand as some friends and I worshiped together. He and two of his friends accepted the gospel, and the first thing we did right there in the park was teach them how to hear the Spirit's voice. Two of them saw visions of Jesus, and all of them said that they felt the Spirit's power and love come upon them. On another occasion, one new disciple, after being led through this process, recounted a vision of Jesus walking down a stairway with angels flying everywhere. When Jesus got to him, he gave this man a hug and said, "I love you." I could recount many similar stories. The point is: Jesus has been waiting a long time for new sheep to enter his sheepfold, and he has a lot to say to them. We can always have confidence that with or without us, through the Spirit he will guide them directly in ways that the most sinister governments cannot control or snuff out.

PRE-EMPTING SPIRITUAL DEPENDENCE

Once we have planted the seeds of confidence in the Spirit's leadership as part of new disciples' initial DNA, we must continually cultivate those seeds for as long as the Lord permits us to be with these disciples. They must be reminded over and over that the Holy Spirit, not us, is their primary leader, counselor, and teacher. If they become overly dependent on us spiritually, then their growth and development will stagnate substantially in our absence. This obviously does not mean that we should never admonish, encourage, coach, or even correct new disciples. However, what is often true of biological parent/child relationships also often holds true for discipleship relationships. Usually some of the brightest and most confident children are those whose parents do not give quick

answers so that their children can learn to solve problems on their own. A child will take ownership of a solution much more readily if it is not imposed from the outside. However challenging it may be at times—especially for those of us who have grown up in cultures that highly esteem degrees, titles, and professionalism—sometimes the best thing we can do for new disciples is to refrain from quickly spouting off our own thoughts when they have questions.

For example, on countless occasions Muhammad came to me and asked my opinion on certain matters. Though in some instances I gave him advice and input as I deemed appropriate, eight out of ten times I simply reminded him of what he already knew: the Holy Spirit would guide him and the other new disciples in truth as they searched the Scriptures together for the answers. During my ten weeks with Muhammad, I called his attention to the competency of the Spirit's leadership on what seemed like almost a daily basis. He would call me on the phone with a question; I would tell him to go sit and wait on the Spirit. He had a theological question; I would tell him to go find the answer in the Bible. During this tender foundation-building time in both his life and that of the emerging local churches, it was more important for me err in this direction than it was for me to be perceived as an expert or some kind of religious guru. On some occasions I did give Muhammad further instruction on some matters, which he in turn would relay to the house church leaders. However, even in these instances I usually concluded our times together with an admonishment for him to go and listen to the Holy Spirit in prayer. Redirecting Muhammad to the Holy Spirit bore fruit: day after day Muhammad came to me with stories of how the Lord had dropped "wisdoms" into his mind. As the opening baptism testimony of this chapter illustrates, the Spirit's solutions were always wiser and more creative than any advice I could ever have given him as a cultural outsider.

PRE-EMPTYING FINANCIAL DEPENDENCE AND A COMPROMISED WITNESS

Therefore I tell you, *do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* (Mt. 6:25, 33, emphasis added)

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, *having all that you need*, you will abound in every good work. (2 Cor. 9:8, emphasis added)

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Php. 4:19, emphasis added)

The need for a bold vision of the Spirit's leadership is underscored in a particularly vivid way when considered in light of one thing: finances—the thorn in the flesh of so many cross-cultural church planters. Of the nightmares traditionally faced in missions, problems related to money and financial dependence have been some of the worst.⁵

For example, in the Muslim world it is not uncommon to hear stories of Muslims posing as interested seekers, or sometimes even making professions of faith, in order to acquire some kind of perk from a rich Westerner: money, jobs, a visa, etc. Not surprisingly, in many of these cases people leave their new "religion" and revert to Islam when the foreigner leaves, or when the perk runs out or is removed.

Another common phenomenon in the Muslim world is when a Muslim Background Believer's (MBB) faith is sincere, but his/her witness is paralyzed, because of financial attachments to an outsider. The scenario usually goes something like this: though not wealthy by the standards of their own culture, missionaries are rich by third-world standards. Therefore, as soon as they set foot on the ground in a poorer nation, they are often bombarded with requests

for jobs. The missionary complies with several requests, and over time the employees observe the love of God in the life of their new employer and sincerely decide to give their lives to Jesus. However, now there is a problem. Because the disciples have a pre-existing financial attachment to a foreigner, their family and friends assume that the financial benefit was the true reason for their decision to follow Jesus. This accusation is used to avoid the crisis of thought that would otherwise be caused by the possibility that some people might actually choose to leave Islam because they have found a better option. At the end of the day, the credibility of new disciples' faith becomes seriously undermined before they even have a chance to share the gospel with friends and family. The gospel rarely spreads beyond the first person in this scenario. This is one way Satan has been able to effectively shoot down movements before they ever get off the ground.

Issues like these shaped my approach to Muhammad when he first showed up on my doorstep. Before I even began sharing the gospel with him, I told him the story of Peter and John healing the lame man at the temple (Acts 3). I told him that like Peter and John, I did not have money or a job for him, but that what I did have—the message of the kingdom of God—I was ready to give away freely. When Muhammad came over and made his profession of faith later that same evening, after passing on *Universal Disciple* I immediately reiterated that I was not going to give him a job. This struck him as an odd statement in light of such a momentous occasion, but he agreed. I began to emphasize to him that the *Holy Spirit* was his primary leader, and that Jesus would take care of every one of his financial needs. We then boldly asked God to speak to Muhammad that night through a dream. As the opening testimony of Ch. 1 relates, God answered this prayer in a way that far surpassed anything I had anticipated.

A day or two after his incredible visionary encounter with Jesus (see Ch. 2), Muhammad told me: "I can now see why you did not give me a job. You have given me something infinitely more valuable." On another occasion, as we drove past a mosque, he remarked off-handedly, "They are practicing false religion." There was no doubt in

his mind that what he had experienced in Jesus was superior not only to his former way of life in Islam, but also to any perk I could have given him financially. Furthermore, the Lord always made good on his promise of provision, often guiding Muhammad through dreams, visions, and words of knowledge.

Why did I take this approach? In my mind, teaching Muhammad in unequivocal terms to trust in Jesus, not me, as his source of financial provision was necessary on at least two missiological fronts. Firstly, it was necessary to preclude (as much as possible) potential confusion about the authenticity of Muhammad's faith and decision—in me, in his friends and family members, or even in Muhammad himself. It was crucial that from the beginning our relationship would be defined on the basis of going deeper in the gospel together, rather than on what he could get out of me monetarily. If financial ties to a foreigner were not a part of the equation in the first place, new Moravian believers would be able to share the gospel with full integrity, credibility, and boldness.

Secondly, it was necessary to preempt financial dependence. If new disciples come to trust in human beings as their source of provision instead of the Holy Spirit, their foundation may not be able to sustain them through the difficulties of persecution once the human source is removed. In the Muslim world, sometimes MBBs lose their jobs because of their faith. In other instances, they are offered financial incentives to return to the fold of Islam. These kinds of tests are likely to come upon most MBBs in some form or another. The crucial question is: Will their experience of God's provision *up to the point of such financial tests* have been powerful enough to sustain them when those tests come?

Of course, this does not mean that the Holy Spirit may never lead us to help our brothers and sisters financially. That is obviously not biblical. The truth is that knowing how to play the game when the pressure is on is usually more of an art than a science. Many day-to-day decisions simply have to be made on the spot as we listen to the Holy Spirit, irrespective of what the textbooks say. For example, on one occasion when Muhammad's wife was kidnapped (see Ch. 11),

I contributed some money toward her ransom. In my mind, this was a case in which the biblical injunction to show love and compassion through finance superseded good church-planting principles, and I felt compelled by the Spirit to give as a matter of loving my neighbor as myself (Mt. 22:39). If my wife were kidnapped, I too would look for help wherever I could find it! Yet even on this occasion, God still graciously enabled Muhammad's family and mine to avoid the formation of an overall financial dependence. This was partly because the total contribution of the other Moravians surpassed my portion. In addition, Muhammad was the only one who knew about my outside contribution, because I stayed in the shadows.

THE ROLE OF SHADOW MENTORING IN CROSS-CULTURAL SITUATIONS

This brings us to a very important point. Many church planting models have the church planter in the middle of everything throughout the entire planting process. The church planter gathers disciples, appoints some elders, and after a few years finally hands over the reins of leadership in order to go plant another church. While this kind of process may be appropriate in some contexts, it has often been found wanting—especially in cross-cultural situations—because of the way it tends to foster both spiritual and economic dependence (see previous section). For example, though most American missionaries' income is low by the standards of their own culture, when they land in poorer nations, they automatically become part of the upper class. Scores of Western church planters can recount the nightmares they have faced when they become the main leader of an otherwise national church. They quickly become perceived as a cash cow to which the others look in place of the Holy Spirit. This kind of scenario is one of the best ways to kill a church planting movement right off the bat.

In my opinion, the best solution to this problem is what several CPM theorists have called "shadow-pastoring" or what Allen calls "helpful advising."⁶ David Garrison notes:

Missionaries who have been involved in Church Planting Movements point to the importance of keeping a low personal profile as they seek to initiate and nurture the movement. A key concern is to minimize foreignness and encourage local ownership. Rather than waiting for new believers to prove themselves worthy of leadership, missionaries begin by drawing new believers into leadership roles through participative Bible studies and mentoring pastors from behind the scenes.⁷

Curtis Sargeant, a CPM theorist and practitioner says,

Many church-planting approaches rely on the church planter's assuming leadership in the new church at the beginning. This is not a good idea unless the church planter plans to remain with the church. It is far better for the church planter to mentor some of the new converts from the beginning to serve as leaders. Once there are baptized believers in an area, they should be the ones providing the up-front leadership. The church planter models up to that point and then begins to assist through shadow-pastoring.

Shadow-pastoring involves meeting with the new leaders in order to prepare them to lead when the entire church meets together. The shadow pastor can go over a Bible study with them, pray, teach them a new song or help them write one, model participative leadership patterns, and so on. When the church meets as a whole, the shadow pastor may not attend at all or take a very low profile in the meeting. Very early on, the shadow pastor will encourage the fledgling congregation to begin working toward planting a new church themselves. The shadow pastor watches this process in a fashion similar to that of a parent who watches his child fall

down when learning to ride a bicycle. The child will make mistakes. Guaranteed. When he plants another church, the church planter will need to move on to begin work in another area or return to his home church. He can already physically move on after the assisting stage, but he will need to maintain regular contact throughout the watching stage.

How a church planter treats new converts is an important determinant in the quality and nature of leadership which arises from among them. Rarely will people far exceed what is expected of them. Treating people as partners leads to the development of independent coworkers; treating them as observers leads to the formation of dependent followers who continue asking for guidance.

In regard to church-planting patterns, external human control over the new converts and churches is inversely proportional to the potential growth and rate of growth in terms of both maturity and size. If a church planter or agency or denomination or other entity seeks to exercise authority to a great extent, then the new church and its members will tend to be dependent and not take responsibility for their own growth or for reaching others. Every time you are tempted to micro-manage, remember this principle.⁸

One core principle of shadow-mentoring is that local leaders do not need to know everything an outsider knows informationally to provide effective leadership on some level. Like ducklings following a mother duck one by one, a leader simply needs to be one step ahead of the next duckling.⁹ For example, if John is only two days old in his faith but has received *Universal Disciple*, he is one step ahead of Jake, who is one day old in his faith and has not yet received *Universal Disciple*. Though both are relatively young in their faith compared to others, Jake still has something valuable to learn and receive from John.

A shadow-mentoring approach is also helpful in that it utilizes an important insight from anthropology: change tends to happen most effectively when cultural outsiders function as “advocates of change” and when cultural insiders function as “implementers of change.”¹⁰ Others differentiate between these roles with the terms “catalysts”—those who use their influence to instigate change without being directly involved in its implementation—and “champions”—those who take hold of an idea, rally others to it, and put it into effect.¹¹ When a cultural outsider voluntarily maintains a low profile through shadow-mentoring and change advocacy, indigenous leaders are pushed to the fore of a movement. This creates an optimum context for the gospel to advance more rapidly throughout existing relational networks through the activity of indigenous implementers and champions of change.

When I met with Muhammad, I was almost dogmatic about staying in the shadows. Both Muhammad and I were aware of how easily my white American face could introduce problems into a local movement because of the financial perceptions it brought with it. Therefore, we always met out of the public eye in an attempt to draw as little attention to our relationship as possible. After our meetings, Muhammad himself would then pass on and champion anything he had received from me to the other Moravians. This forced him to begin growing as a leader from the get-go. Though it was impossible for our relationship to go entirely unnoticed, Muhammad told me that very few of the other Moravian disciples knew much about my involvement in what was happening. In their eyes, Muhammad was the leader spearheading the charge, which was how things needed to be if the movement was to be truly indigenous. As far as I know, only Muhammad, his wife Fatima, and another woman, “Iman” (see Ch. 11), had any idea that I had ever been involved in the process. Besides these three, I had no idea who the other Moravian disciples in the area were or where the house churches were meeting. That was the way I liked and wanted it. If I did not know who most of the Moravian disciples were, I could not get them killed unnecessarily. On another level, from what I could discern

from Muhammad's testimonies, this shadow-mentoring approach helped us to circumvent the Christianity-perceived-as-a-foreign-religion issue (see Ch. 1) altogether.

CONCLUSION

If we let ourselves take the Holy Spirit's place in the lives of new disciples, consciously or not, and then leave, it is far more likely that they will fall away from the faith when testing comes. However, they cannot fall apart financially or spiritually when we leave if they are never financially or spiritually dependant on us in the first place. Furthermore, people living in contexts of severe persecution need a high vision of the Spirit's leadership to navigate through and spread the gospel within the maze of complexities and dangers in their environment. If we do not give them a high-caliber vision in this matter, we are robbing them of some of their key weapons and tools as they labor to take ground for the gospel. From the outset, new disciples must have a radical confidence in the One who will never leave them or forsake them. This confidence, moreover, must be transferred from believer to believer as a movement unfolds. Only then will we see full-blown, New Testament caliber movements flourishing in the parts of the world most resistant to the gospel.

ENDNOTES

¹ Mohit Gupta, *Servants in the Crucible: Findings from a Global Study on Persecution and the Implications for Sending Agencies and Sending Churches* (Unpublished Manuscript, 2005).

² Ibid.

³ Rolland Allen, *Missionary Methods—St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1962), 81.

⁴ For more on this subject see Dallas Willard, *In Search of Guidance: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993); and Jack Deere, *Surprised by the*

Voice of God: How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).

⁵ For more on this subject, see Glenn Schwartz, "Dependency," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 3rd edition, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 592–4; and Rolland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church—and the Causes which Hinder it* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1962).

⁶ Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion*, 1.

⁷ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (small booklet), 40.

⁸ Curtis Sargeant, "Insights from a CPM Practitioner," <<http://www.english.ffax2.com/Resources/RS-Portal/Starfish-Churchplanting.doc>> (accessed Jan. 2009).

⁹ Curtis Sargeant, "Church Planting Movements" (lecture given at the Missionary Learning Center, International Mission Board in Richmond, VA, Summer 2003).

¹⁰ Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 398–413.

¹¹ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2006).

9

Catalyzed for Harvest: Instilling Boldness and Vision for the Great Commission

As soon as Muhammad submitted to Jesus as Lord, he immediately began sharing the gospel boldly with family members and others in his sphere of influence. Because Muhammad had encountered the gospel through a combination of proclamation and power demonstration, he understood this as the normal mode of Christian witness. Of course, this was simply confirmed to him as he read and listened to the New Testament on his own after his conversion. Unlike so many Western believers, he did not have to be deprogrammed of bad theology—that which divests the gospel of power—before getting a vision for the fullness of New Testament faith and practice. From Muhammad onward, every Muslim Moravian who heard the gospel had hands laid on them and were prayed for in Jesus' name. Muhammad told me that, without exception, the Holy Spirit showed up and confirmed the message with power. One of my favorite testimonies is when Muhammad met with an argumentative Muslim man one day and shared the gospel with him. This man kept arguing and throwing out the standard Islamic objections to Jesus until Muhammad laid hands on him. Immediately, the Spirit began to manifest his presence inside and upon the man's body. With an altered countenance, the man said, "OK, maybe you're half right after all."

After a few weeks, the number of Moravian disciples had multiplied significantly. Disciples were making disciples who were making disciples. In this way, the gospel had spread to several

neighboring villages. According to another of Muhammad's testimonies, one day a man from one Moravian village, "Ali," was visiting his relatives in another village where two house churches had emerged. The disciples in these churches shared the gospel with him. They laid their hands on Ali, and the Holy Spirit came upon him with great power. Ali gave his life to Jesus on the spot. In fact, Ali's experiential encounter of the Holy Spirit was so powerful that he immediately went back to his home village to share the good news. As soon as Ali arrived, he went to the center of the village and began to cry out loudly, "You have been teaching me lies all of my life! This good news of the kingdom is going everywhere, and no one will be able to stop it!" The villagers gathered around Ali and stoned him, but he lived. Because Ali had been a respected man in the village, and because he had demonstrated such boldness and fearlessness even in the face of stoning, a number of people in the village became receptive to the gospel. Shortly after the stoning, a church with a handful of disciples was birthed in this village.

A BOLD WITNESS IS A NORMAL WITNESS

According to the New Testament, the people of God are expected to share the gospel boldly with others:

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word *with great boldness*. (Ac. 4:29, emphasis added)

So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, *speaking boldly* in the name of the Lord. (Ac. 9:28, emphasis added)

So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, *speaking boldly for the Lord*, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. (Ac. 14:3, emphasis added)

Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ac. 28:31, emphasis added)

Pray also for me, that *whenever I open my mouth*, words may be given me so that I will *fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel*, for which I am an ambassador in chains. *Pray that I may declare it fearlessly*, as I should. (Eph. 6:19–20, emphasis added)

Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been *encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly*. (Php. 1:14, emphasis added)

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; *make the most of every opportunity*. (Col. 4:5, emphasis added)

We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but *with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition*. (1 Th. 2:2, emphasis added)

...*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have*.... (1 Pt. 3:15b, emphasis added)

Of course, this does not mean that everyone in the Body of Messiah is called to be a full-time evangelist or is endowed with evangelistic gifts (Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5), or that boldness by definition means being culturally insensitive and disrespectful (Ac. 19:37; 1 Pt. 3:15). Nor does it mean that God may never design seasons for us that are less evangelistic in focus than others. God strategically leads us through different seasons of life. However, at the end of the day, every follower of Jesus is called to share the gospel boldly with others on some level as they go about their daily lives. Jesus did not just have people like Billy Graham in mind when he gave the Great Commission. Therefore, if a movement is to be classified as New Testament-caliber, from its inception a bold witness must be part of its DNA. Once the movement is birthed, this vision for a bold witness will catalyze further expansion even in the face of opposition as it is passed on from disciple to disciple.

In Muhammad's case, from the night of his conversion onward I

stressed the importance of a bold witness. After passing on *Universal Disciple* to him, I took him back to the part of the pattern called "sharing the good news boldly." I told him that while sometimes we must use wisdom and tact in the way we share, we must not be afraid of any man or demon as we share the gospel. Of course, I knew that, as he read and listened to the New Testament more and more, the truth of what I was telling him would simply be reinforced in his mind and heart.

At that point, I went on to give him some practical tools to help him get started. Firstly, I gave him a copy of the gospel presentation (see Ch. 4) I had put together in his language and which I had shared with him earlier that day. As a cultural insider, he would be able to take the presentation farther than I ever could as a cultural outsider. Secondly, I gave him a version of the CAMEL¹ method translated in his language. This is a tool that uses the Qur'an as a bridge to provoke Muslims to take the Jesus of the New Testament seriously. Thirdly, as I had done with Tori, we practiced sharing our testimonies in a clear and concise way.² Fourthly and most importantly, I stressed to him that the most valuable weapon he had in sharing his faith was the power of the Holy Spirit. Every time he or other new disciples shared the gospel, they were to intentionally make room for God to demonstrate his power. My prayer was that this DNA would be transferred from disciple to disciple. Only then would Muhammad and any subsequent Moravian disciples have any serious chance of not only surviving but flourishing in the face of Islam. Whenever I lead people to Jesus, I try to lead them through this kind of process.

BAPTISM AS A SEAL OF BOLDNESS

For disciples in many parts of the world, water baptism represents the point of no return. Once they go down into the water and die with Messiah, their decision to follow Jesus becomes officially permanent in their minds. Consequently, it is not surprising that in a number of movements water baptism functions not only as an inclusionary rite, but also as a means of sealing a bold witness in the minds and hearts

of new disciples. I was challenged when I first heard about a series of questions that some segments of the underground church in China have integrated into their baptismal ritual. While new initiates are in the water, they are asked the following four questions:

- 1) Have you decided to follow Jesus?
- 2) Do you know your sins are forgiven?
- 3) Will you follow Jesus and never turn back?
- 4) When they come into your house to drag you away, throw you in prison and threaten to kill you, will you still follow Jesus?³

By provoking new disciples to count the cost of their decision on the front end, questions like these, followed immediately by the seal of baptism, can serve to ensure the birth of a “radical” version of Christianity—or normal Christianity, by New Testament standards—whose adherents stay faithful to Jesus even in the face of persecution.

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF THE *OIKOS*

One of the reasons the gospel spread so rapidly in the movements launched through Paul’s ministry is that it traveled along the lines of pre-existing relationships. In the New Testament, a household (Gk. “*oikos*”) included one’s family members, servants, friends, co-workers, and other common relationships. In Acts, we see the following pattern a number of times: when a credible member of a household or *oikos* accepts the gospel, many others within that person’s sphere of influence soon follow suit:

The following day he (Peter) arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and *had called together his relatives and close friends* ... While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message ... So he ordered that they be baptized (the household baptized together) in the name of Jesus Christ. (Ac. 10:24, 44, 48, emphasis

and parenthetical comments added)

He (Peter) will bring you (Cornelius) a message through which *you and all your household (oikos)* will be saved. (Ac. 11:14, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

The Lord opened her (Lydia's) heart to respond to Paul's message. When *she and the members of her household (oikos) were baptized*, she invited us to her home. (Ac. 16:15, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and *you will be saved—you and your household (oikos)*." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to *him and to all the others in his house*. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and *all his family were baptized*. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—*he and his whole family*. (Ac. 16:29–34, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and *his entire household (oikos) believed in the Lord ...* (Ac. 18:8, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

When the gospel penetrates an *oikos*, it is able to tap into these pre-existing webs of relationships and trust. A movement can quickly become explosive as each person is faithful to share the gospel with the people in his/her web. One person witnesses to the twenty people in his/her network; eight of them get saved. Those eight, in turn, share with the twenty people in their *oikos*. Within weeks and months a small number of disciples can quickly turn into hundreds and even thousands. In recent years, I have heard a number of leaders envision

the emergence of a “nameless and faceless generation”—anonymous believers who will walk in the power of God without the notoriety of a big ministry. This stands in contrast to large revival meetings, in which famous evangelists gather crowds of people who are not relationally connected to each other. *Oikos*-based movements, on the other hand, are in a sense inherently “nameless and faceless” because they hinge on each new disciple sharing the gospel within their relatively small network of relationships rather than to a large audience. Ultimately, this kind of movement will touch more people at faster rates than a stadium evangelist or revivalist ever could. *Oikos* evangelism is a characteristic prevalent in some of the most explosive church planting movements occurring today.⁴

On a practical level, here is how I try to help new disciples start thinking in terms of sharing the gospel with people in their *oikos*. After giving them some of the evangelism tools described above, I again take them back to the part of *Universal Disciple* called “sharing the good news boldly.” I have them write down the names of five to ten unbelieving friends, family members, or co-workers. I then talk about Jesus’ love and zeal for the lost, and how each minute people we love are dying without Jesus and are condemned to an eternal destiny in a lake of fire. We must therefore urgently pray for and share the gospel with the lost. At this point, we intercede together for the people on the list. I usually pray for the first two or three names on the list in an attempt to model fervent intercession for the lost to them. Then I have them pray for the rest of the people on the list. As they pray, I trust the Holy Spirit to continue to fan the flames of urgency, fervency, and compassion in their hearts.

SEEING OURSELVES AS PART OF THE BIG PICTURE: IMPARTING A VISION FOR THE GREAT COMMISSION

From the little boy pretending to be a fireman, to the newly-enlisted soldier fighting for his country, most human beings long to see themselves as part of an epic story in which their life makes sense and has purpose. The narrative that shapes our existence, moreover, functions as a pipeline through which one of the inescapable longings

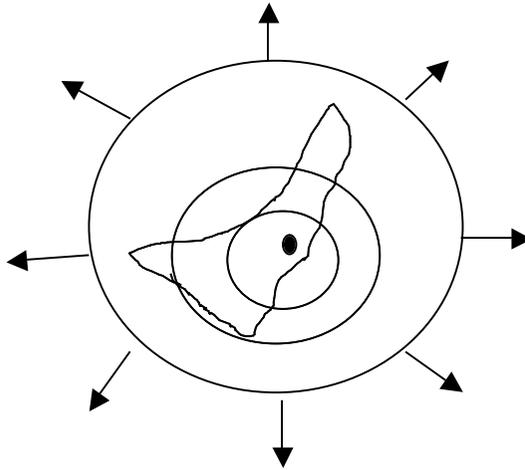
that God planted in the human heart—the yearning to make a lasting, deep, and meaningful impact⁵—is channeled and expressed. Historically, this desire has been one of the most powerful forces for change on the earth, sometimes for better and sometimes for worse. It is why some people are willing to follow Mother Theresa to the slums, and why others are willing to fly planes into buildings.

When God sent Ananias to Paul, he used Ananias to help Paul see his place in the unfolding drama of redemptive history (Ac. 9:10–19, 22:14–16). With the right framework in place, Paul's inescapable desire and zeal to make lasting impact—formerly expressed in a misguided way (Ac. 8:1–3, 9:1–2; Gal. 1:13)—could be redirected into serving the gospel. Paul was now part of the only storyline that actually does possess lasting significance: the drama of Messiah Jesus. As Paul traveled from city to city, he could in turn help others see their place in the drama. The outcome was an empire shaken by the gospel. One of the most powerful things we can do to see the gospel advance throughout cities, regions, and nations, therefore, is to simply help new disciples see their own stories as the continuation of the storyline of Acts.

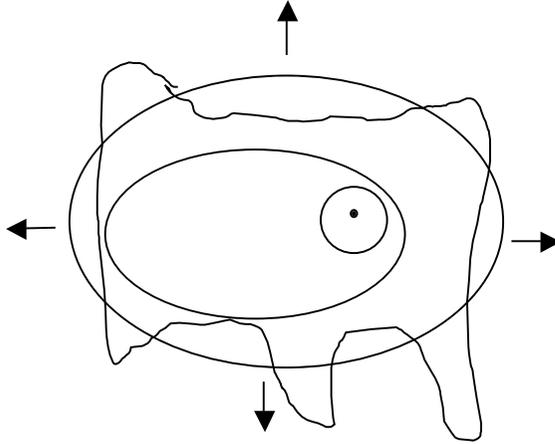
While there are conceivably many different ways to do this, I have found the following approach very effective in teaching new disciples:

- 1) First, I simply read the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20 to them. Jesus said it; therefore we obey it. Then we read through Acts 1:8 together: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." I then draw an easily reproducible sketch of the nation of Israel. I draw a small point, indicating Jerusalem; then I drew concentric circles to encompass Judea, Samaria, and the "ends of the earth." I explain how Jesus wants us to start making disciples right where we live, and then to move outward as the Holy Spirit leads. As you can see from the following sketches, one does not have to be a professional artist to

draw these, but actually just the opposite. For the sake of reproducibility, these sketches need to be simple enough that anyone can draw them:

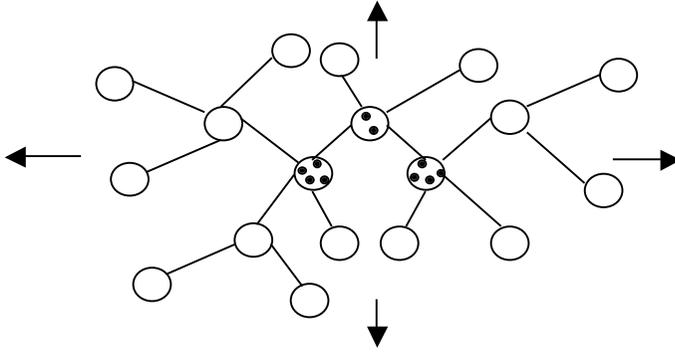


- 2) Next, I use this same basic idea to help them see my part in the story. I draw a simple sketch of the United States (my home country) and put a dot in Indiana (my home state). I then draw a concentric circle to encompass Kentucky, the place I lived after Indiana. I then draw a concentric circle toward California, the third place I lived. Finally, I draw a circle and some arrows outward signifying the "ends of the earth." This is my own "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth." Part of my mandate as a follower of Jesus has been to share the gospel in all of these places.



- 3) Now it is their turn to draw their own "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth." I never grow tired of watching peoples' faces light up as they sketch their geographical story. This is an indication that they are starting to see themselves as part of the storyline. (Usually there is a moment of laughter when we realize just how poor our drawing skills are).
- 4) Once they have finished their sketch, we place the rough sketch on the floor, lay our hands on it, and began to cry out in fervent intercession for these areas. Tears usually flow as the Holy Spirit begins to solidify a burden in our hearts.
- 5) When we have finished praying, I turn the discussion to the simple and practical mechanics of *how* the gospel most effectively advances from "Jerusalem" to the "ends of the earth": simple church multiplication. I draw a simple, easily reproducible picture of one disciple becoming two; two becoming four; four becoming eight; and so on exponentially until the entire nation and beyond is consumed with the gospel. Disciples make disciples, who in turn make disciples. They form groups, and when that group reaches ten to twelve people, they appoint leaders for a daughter church and multiply. In this exercise I am not trying to impress anyone with some complicated and convoluted model of church growth, but to pass on something that children and the most uneducated peasant can grasp and

draw in the dirt with a stick if necessary. In reality, church multiplication is a very simple process.



As I went through this exercise with Muhammad, it was a joy to watch the light bulbs go off in his mind and heart: yes, the God of the universe was deeply concerned about the salvation of the Moravian people—*his* people—and of the entire earth. Muhammad also grasped the concept of simple church multiplication within a matter of seconds. The most effective way to touch his people on a large scale with the gospel was through the rapid multiplication of small house churches. Understanding the dynamics of persecution well, he immediately saw the strategic value of small, scattered house churches that were networked relationally, but had independent leadership. If the believers in one house church were to be killed in an outbreak of persecution, the others would have enough time to adjust so that the gospel would continue to spread. Through the tools he learned in this exercise, Muhammad now had a vision through which his inbuilt desire to make lasting impact could be channeled into advancing God's purposes among his people. He was now a very dangerous man to the kingdom of darkness.

CONCLUSION

If a movement is to be of New Testament caliber, the cry of the apostles in Acts 4 must pulsate through its veins: "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word

with great boldness" (Ac. 4:29). Jesus loves the lost desperately. He wants to bring them into his family at the fastest rate possible in partnership with a church that is fearless and full of fire, even in the face of great suffering. A bold witness backed by God's power must be presented as the normal witness at the inception of a movement; new disciples should be equipped with practical tools for sharing their faith, along with concepts like *oikos* evangelism and simple church multiplication; prayer and a vision for the Great Commission must grip a movement in its early phases—when these components are in place, the stage is set for the rapid advance of the gospel.

ENDNOTES

¹ Kevin Greeson, *CAMEL Training Manual* (Bangalore, India: SUDHINDRA, 2004).

² I highly recommend Thom Wolfe's guidelines for increasing the effectiveness of a personal testimony, which I heard in a lecture he taught in July 2003: (1) Learn to communicate your own story in a concise manner (less than three to four minutes). (2) Leave out references to age and focus on themes that you know will communicate to your audience. (3) Structure the testimony around three basic parts: *before* Jesus, *at* Jesus, and *after* Jesus. (4) Keep it simple. Do not use any "churchy" or specialized theological language. Use language to which adult unbelievers who have no biblical background can relate.

³ I learned of these four questions from a missionary couple in Singapore.

⁴ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (small booklet), 21–26, 37–38. For more on *oikos* evangelism, see Thom Wolf, <<http://www.kristenonline.com/download/book/oikos%20evangelism.pdf>>.

⁵ Mike Bickle and Deborah Hiebert, *The Seven Longings of the Human Heart* (Kansas City, MO: Forerunner Books, 2006), 133–146.

10

Tethered to Community: Laying Foundations for Church-Based Movements

"**L**ike Josiah, I tear down the high places!" The passionate words flew through the air as "James," a young man in his early twenties, stood over his \$2,000 laptop with a large twenty-pound rock. With tears in his eyes, he lifted the rock above his head and slammed it down on the helpless computer. Fine rain carried on the heavy winds lent a cinematic feel to the scene. As our group witnessed James take his stand against sin, we could almost feel the rumbling of a heavenly war cry in the air. Once the computer was obliterated, a look of joy and freedom came over James' countenance. I do not think I have ever felt more proud of a young man in all my life.

James was one of six or seven young men in a small group of which I was a part in Kansas City. Most of these men were in their early twenties, and most of them were still trying to break free of sexual addictions. At our first meeting, we discussed the importance of holding one another accountable to a high standard. We agreed that if anyone in the group confessed to having looked at internet pornography, after the person was restored in love, he would destroy his computer. We were determined to "pluck out the eye" as Jesus had taught us (Mt. 5:29).

A few months later, James confessed to the group how he had stumbled in this area during the past week. After he repented, we prayed and declared the Lord's acceptance and forgiveness over him according to New Testament instruction (Jam. 5:16). Then we went

outside, and soon the computer was no more.

Later that day, James' father called from out of state. The night before James destroyed his computer, his dad had a dream. He saw James trapped in a room with four walls, being guarded by two sinister-looking demons. The back wall of the room, however, was made of glass. James could still see out through this window of hope. God's power rushed into James and levitated him in a horizontal position. Suddenly, the Lord shot him through the glass wall like a bullet. The glass shattered and James began to run. In the dream, he called his father and said, "Dad, I'm free." When he had this dream, James' dad had no idea about James' struggle with pornography or the events that would transpire in his son's life later that same day. After listening to his father's dream, James told his dad how he had smashed his computer. He told his dad that the computer meant nothing to him compared to his desire to walk in purity and wholehearted devotion to Jesus. After a pause, his father said, "I'm proud of you, son."

James later told me that this event was a watershed moment in his life. Something dramatic shifted in his life from that day forward. Through the agency of a simple, accountability-based small group committed to holiness, God had done a quick and accelerated work of transformation in the life of his precious child.

CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS: REPRODUCTION OF A DISCIPLESHIP MECHANISM

One critical element of apostolic foundation-building in the New Testament is a primary focus on establishing healthy and reproducing *communities*, or churches.¹ In many if not most instances, these churches were relatively small and met in homes:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer ... *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising*

God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Ac. 2:42, 46–47, emphasis added)

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in *each church* . . . (Ac. 14:23, emphasis added)

Greet also *the church* that meets *at their house*. (Rom. 16:5, emphasis added)

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does *the church that meets at their house*. (2 Cor. 16:19, emphasis added)

To Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to *the church that meets in your home*. (Phm. 1:2, emphasis added)

Let us *not give up meeting together*, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:25, emphasis added)

The apostolic priority of laying community-based foundations is another key reason why Paul could confidently leave new disciples behind after just a few weeks with them. When he moved on to a new area, he did not abandon isolated individuals with no support base. Rather, he left behind communities, usually small-group oriented, that were inherently wired to operate as self-propelling discipleship mechanisms. Disciples could worship together, eat together, pray together, laugh together, weep together, study the Scriptures together, and practice the spiritual gifts together. They could hold one another accountable in the areas of doctrine, holiness, sound scriptural interpretation, and evangelistic fervor. They could strengthen one another through seasons of persecution. Under the Spirit's direct leadership, they could spur one another on to greater love and obedience without Paul in the room.

Community-based discipleship, therefore, is one of the variables that ultimately make church planting movements (CPMs)—“a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment”²—much more desirable than traditional crusade events and people movements. As David Garrison states,

While it's true that Church Planting Movements include massive evangelistic proclamation, they go the second mile—resulting in churches where discipleship, worship, and spiritual development continue. In Church Planting Movements mass evangelism produces rapidly multiplying new church starts.

Church Planting Movements are not just people movements. Beyond mass evangelism is mass conversion where great numbers of lost people respond to the gospel. These are sometimes called “People Movements” which should not be confused with Church Planting Movements. In several locations around the world, these people movements are occurring today, but they do not always lead to multiplying churches.

Thousands of Muslims coming to Christ in Azerbaijan, Algeria, and other places show us that the Holy Spirit is doing his work of drawing the lost to faith in Jesus Christ. What distinguishes these mass conversions from Church Planting Movements is the troubling absence of new churches.

For a variety of reasons, many of these mass conversions aren't producing the pool of new churches needed to assimilate the converts. When this disparity occurs these mass conversions run the risk of being a miraculous *flash in the pan*, like a quick flash of lightning that dissipates into nothing. Mass conversion is part of Church Planting Movements,

but in Church Planting Movements, the new believers gather into rapidly reproducing new churches.³

CPMs not only bring in the harvest at the fastest rates possible, but they also disciple the harvest at the fastest rates possible. Like two thoroughbreds that run neck-and-neck to the finish line, in CPMs a community-based discipleship mechanism runs neck-and-neck with an exponentially increasing harvest. This happens as those coming to Messiah in the movement are immediately funneled into an accountability-based cell or house church. In other words, from its birth the movement's default setting is to reproduce new communities, not just individual disciples.

THE STRATEGIC FUNCTION OF SMALL CELLS

Most church planting movements are able to thrive because they are small-group oriented and focus on using pre-existing infrastructure and space: apartments, storefronts, homes, business offices, restaurants, garages, and even cars and taxis are all fair game for church meetings. The inception of CPMs is not slowed by the time, processes, or money needed to build and maintain large buildings. Therefore, house churches or small cells provide an easily-reproducible model that can actually keep pace with the harvest rapidly coming in as the movement expands. As soon as a group of disciples is ready or needs to multiply, it can. Indeed, one can hardly imagine the explosion of Christianity in places like China,⁴ Cambodia,⁵ Mongolia,⁶ India,⁷ Latin America,⁸ Africa,⁹ and even parts of the Muslim world¹⁰ without house churches and small cells.

In the context of persecution, house churches are not only strategic because of their reproducibility, but also for a number of other reasons, not the least of which is that they build resilience into the gospel's advance.¹¹ When persecutors kill the members of one house church or cell, the other small groups in the network can rebound and relocate quickly enough to ensure the church's survival in a geographical area.¹² Other benefits include:

1. Leadership responsibilities remain small and manageable.
2. If heresies do occur, they are confined by the small size of the house church. Like a leak that appears in the hull of a great ship, the heresy can be sealed off in a single compartment without endangering the whole.
3. You can't hide in a small group, so accountability is amplified.
4. Member care is easier, because everyone knows everyone.
5. Because house church structure is simple, it is easier to reproduce.
6. Small groups tend to be much more efficient at evangelism and assimilation of new believers.
7. Meeting in homes positions the church closer to the lost.
8. House churches blend into the community rendering them less visible to persecutors.
9. Basing in the home keeps the church's attention on daily life issues.
10. The very nature of multiplying house churches promotes the rapid development of new church leaders.¹³

While many church leaders in the Western world feel comfortable with and even applaud CPMs so long as they stay somewhere nebulously "out there" in Africa or Asia, when the conversation turns to the possibility of such movements occurring in their own back yard, it is not uncommon to hear nervous comments about the lack of hierarchical control and decentralization typically characteristic of CPMs. However, as demonstrated in Ch. 7, upon closer examination this attitude reveals a lack of trust in the Holy Spirit. It also reflects a failure to adequately think through the practical implications of the great harvest from all nations forecasted in Revelation 7, much if not most of which I believe has yet to come in.¹⁴ If a worldwide harvest of millions or even a billion or more human beings actually does loom on the horizon for the Body

of Messiah, this means that multitudes will come to Jesus at rates that even the largest mega-churches could never manage without imploding. When this harvest is birthed in the Western world, if we simply default to the church models that are familiar and thus feel comfortable to us, we will soon find ourselves trying to squeeze the harvest into old wineskins that simply cannot disciple it effectively. However, if our mode of reaping the harvest is CPM-oriented, then built into the harvest from its inception is a wineskin that can bring it to maturity at a rate proportionate to its rapid rate of expansion. To take the principle of Matthew 9:17 a little out of context, as the new wine of a movement expands, so does the new "wineskin," to the result that both are preserved.

My point here is not to devalue churches as traditionally organized in the West, or to say that buildings or large ministries do not sometimes have an important place in God's plans. God has entrusted many ministries dear to his heart with divine mandates that by necessity require buildings, infrastructural maintenance, regular economic intake, and more centralized organization. However, in my opinion, to pray for the birthing of a large harvest without also making room for CPMs alongside more traditional ministry expressions is tragically irresponsible. It is the equivalent of birthing a baby with no midwife or doctor. The baby falls to the ground and the umbilical cord remains uncut.

KEEPING CHURCH SIMPLE

For a new movement to become a church planting movement, a vision and commitment to community gatherings must be included as part of the movement's initial DNA. One way to go about this is to give new disciples an uncomplicated, easily memorable, and easily reproducible pattern for church meetings. The point we want new disciples to grasp is that while church meetings usually do need to be facilitated by leaders on some level, they are not contingent on buildings, professional expertise, or the presence of formally educated clergy. "Doing church" is simple and not just for the experts.¹⁵

The following outline¹⁶ is what I like to model and pass on to

new disciples, usually just a short time after a number of people within their *oikos* have come to faith. It is designed around a simple and easily memorable three-fold format:

I. Stage One (oriented toward intimacy—with God and one another)

1. Talk about each other's lives (small talk or serious issues). This provides a context for intimacy and bonding.
2. Accountability. Were we obedient this week? Have we been faithful to share the gospel with others (those prayed for previous week—see third stage)? How did it go?
3. Reconciliation and confession. Ask and receive forgiveness as necessary and appropriate in the situation. Prelude to worship (Mt. 5:23–24).
4. Pray for each other
5. Worship

II. Stage Two (oriented toward the Word of God)

1. Prayer: "Holy Spirit, we ask you to help us understand what we hear" (emphasis on hunger and reliance on God)
2. Use Matthew 5:43–48 as a text for modeling (love for enemies is key because persecution is soon to break out)
3. Use these three basic, easily memorable questions for inductive Bible study:
 - a. *What does the passage say?*
 - b. *What do I have to obey?*
 - c. *What do I need to tell others?*
4. After the study is finished, take some time to respond to the Lord in prayer. Cry out for the Holy Spirit to help us obey the things he has taught us.

III. Stage Three (oriented toward others: giving, communion, and intercession)

1. Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26
2. Offering: 1 Corinthians 9:6–8

3. Each person names at least five people to pray for and commits before others to share the gospel with them, for which they will be held accountable the following week.
4. Pray for the salvation of the people they have just named, as well as for boldness to share with them.
5. Close with a worship song.

Of course, the best way to pass this kind of pattern on to new disciples is to not only talk about it or write it down, but to model it. As house church or small group meetings are by nature community events, this typically requires the presence of more than one person.

In Muhammad's situation, within days of his decision to follow Jesus, he was no longer alone. He had faithfully shared the gospel with the people on the *oikos* list we had put together following his training in Universal Disciple. He now needed a simple and easily reproducible pattern for small groups that he could model for and practice with the other Moravian disciples. Muhammad met with me, my wife, and two others on our team. We spent the next few hours modeling house church for him according to the above outline, and then gave him a chance to practice facilitating the group. During worship, we used a cassette tape with worship songs in Muhammad's language. When we pushed play, Muhammad's face lit up as he listened to worship songs in his own language for the first time. The look of joy and excitement that came over his face at that moment will be etched on my memory forever. When we had finished the house church session, I gave him the cassette tape with the Moravian worship songs on it. His assignment was now to go back to the other new disciples and lead them through a house church meeting as soon as possible. Like the Bible on cassette tape (see Ch. 6), Moravian worship songs in this format could be reproduced easily by Moravians themselves. As new churches emerged, the tape was to be dubbed so that every new Moravian church could share in the joy of worship songs in their own language. This was critical not only because of the blessing it would be to the Moravians, but also because recent studies show that access to worship songs in one's heart language is often a vital factor in the perseverance of saints

undergoing persecution.¹⁷

Muhammad reported important developments in the house churches to me from week to week. Each house church was meeting twice per week, and the leaders of the house churches came together for an additional meeting once per week. Muhammad told me that the new disciples absolutely loved worshipping together along with the cassette tape, and that they devoured the Bible cassettes each time they met. Because they had been taught *how* to do house church and *how* to do a simple inductive Bible study on their own, their life in God was not contingent on someone from the outside constantly spoon-feeding information to them.

APPOINTMENT OF LEADERS

As stated in Ch. 1, the spontaneous expansion of the church hinges on unpaid disciples being empowered and equipped to multiply themselves under the leadership of the Holy Spirit from the beginning of their conversion. As a movement grows, new leaders for the next wave of church multiplication constantly need to be identified, equipped, and empowered. It is a telling truth that the empowerment of unpaid, nonprofessional lay leaders is a vital factor in *every* known church planting movement today.¹⁸ If you want a movement to flourish, empower local lay leaders. If you want to castrate a movement, extract and professionalize its leaders.

In the Western world today, we tend to define qualifications for church leadership primarily in terms of education and degrees, and therefore usually appoint leaders who have met certain educational requirements. Paul, in contrast, defined leadership qualifications primarily in terms of character (1 Tim. 3, Tit. 1), and viewed prayer and fasting (Ac. 14:23) as the context within which the Holy Spirit himself (Ac. 20:28) highlights the leaders whom he is raising up. Paul also saw the competency of the Spirit's leadership, not more degrees and conferences, as the primary key to the continued growth and strengthening of local leaders (Ac. 14:23). Furthermore, by appointing multiple leaders in the churches he planted, he instilled a measure of accountability and checks-and-balances in leadership.

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul does say that an overseer or elder “must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil” (v. 6). Here we must be careful not to read our own definition of “recent” into the text—e.g., someone who has been a professing believer for many years. If this was what Paul meant, then he did not follow his own instructions, because he and Barnabas themselves appointed elders in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch only a short time after the birth of the churches in those cities (Ac. 14:21–23). Three points are worth mentioning here.

First, “new convert” is a relative term depending on the context. In a Muslim context with no previously-existent churches, for example, *every* new disciple is a recent convert compared to Billy Graham. However, within that context, MBBs only one day old in their faith are “recent converts” compared to other MBBs in the same context who are eight weeks old in their faith. To an alcoholic just one day off the bottle, the man or woman who has been dry and sober for ten weeks is a spiritual giant. Leadership responsibilities must also always be kept in proper perspective. The pressures Billy Graham faces as the leader of a large ministry constantly in the public eye are much greater than the pressures faced by those called to lead small groups that no one but God sees. When God confirms his word with real power, resulting in disruption, a movement must work with the leadership resources available to it. In Muhammad’s case, like every disciple of Jesus he experienced growing pains and moments of weakness and spiritual immaturity. However, to the Moravians whom God had entrusted to his care at this stage of his journey, he was clearly a leader whom the Holy Spirit had sovereignly chosen, and the other disciples naturally looked up to him as the one who had led many of them to faith.

Second, if Jesus has strategies for keeping even the most mature apostles from becoming conceited and prideful, as he did for Paul (2 Cor. 12:7), certainly he has creative ways to do the same for all leaders and followers in his Body.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, again we must not forget that most new churches in the New Testament were birthed

through *a substantial release of the Holy Spirit's power*. Paul's instructions and practice only make sense in light of the reality he experienced and imparted. As we will see in Ch. 11, the maturation process is accelerated dramatically when a movement is birthed not simply by human ingenuity, strategy, and an entrepreneurial mindset, but by the Spirit of God.

EXPANSION OF A HOLY TEMPLE: IMPARTING A FRAMEWORK FOR INNER HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

The New Testament posits that the people of God constitute a holy temple, a sacred place in which God dwells through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). It also teaches that the evil one only has access to this temple to the extent that its constituent members *give* him a foothold in their midst (Eph. 4:27). This was why Paul was so zealous for the church in Corinth to repent of a divisive spirit (1 Cor. 1:10) and the sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18–20) that had crept into their fellowship. The degree to which sins like these were prevalent was the degree to which the church in Corinth was in agreement with the ways of Satan. The degree to which the people of God were in agreement with Satan, moreover, was the degree to which Satan had a foothold among them. Sins like those present in Corinth were therefore ultimately an attack on the temple of God itself (1 Cor. 3:16–17):

[Paul pointed out to the Corinthians that] as a gathered community, they formed the one temple of the living God, God's alternative to Corinth's countless pagan temples; and what made them his alternative was the presence of the Spirit in their midst.

But the Corinthians were in the process of dismantling God's temple, because their strife and fascination with wisdom meant the banishing of the revealing and unifying Spirit from their midst. Hence this strongest of warnings: the people responsible for the destruction would themselves be destroyed by God.

He will do this precisely because his temple, the place of his presence, is holy; and "you the church in Corinth are that temple." The gathered church is the place of God's own personal presence, by the Spirit. This is what marks off God's new people from "all the other people on the face of the earth" (Ex. 33:16).¹⁹

In other words, Paul saw the Corinthian church as a living entity that was to be a holy alternative and contrast to the local pagan temples in which Satan had been given the right to rule. The reason Paul wanted the Corinthians to clean up their act was so that God's Spirit could dwell more readily in their midst, thereby making the contrast of his holy temple more apparent and desirable to those not yet a part of it.

In light of this teaching, if a CPM is to be of New Testament caliber, in my opinion some kind of simple framework for removing demonic footholds must be included as part of its DNA. Many people in the world's remaining unreached people groups have been plagued by conflicts, famines, and various other kinds of disasters. In most UPGs, traumatized people do not even have access to basic medical care, let alone professional counseling. This was certainly true of the Moravians. Because of years of civil war, many if not most Moravians had been traumatized on some level. Many had seen family members killed before their very eyes. Few, if any, had access to professional psychological services as we do in the West. I knew that the only way the vast majority of Moravians would ever be able to deal with the oppression of their sin and brokenness would be through a rapidly-expanding holy temple that included a blueprint for inner healing and deliverance. Only then would any potential church planting movement be transformed into a *refuge* planting movement. My desire was that as soon as new disciples joined a house church, by default they would find healing in the hospital called the "priesthood of believers." As house churches multiplied, so would the hospital. For such a tool to impact believers from every level of society, not just the educated, like *Universal Disciple* it would have to be lay-oriented, pattern-based, easily memorable,

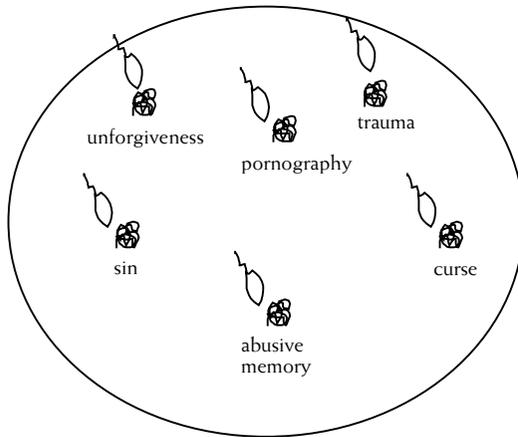
easily reproducible, and by design dependent upon the Holy Spirit's leadership.

With these concerns in mind, I decided to take a simple inner healing and deliverance analogy used by Charles Kraft—"rats and garbage"—and adapt it for Moravian culture. "Rats and garbage" is a simple picture that explains the relationship between footholds and deliverance:

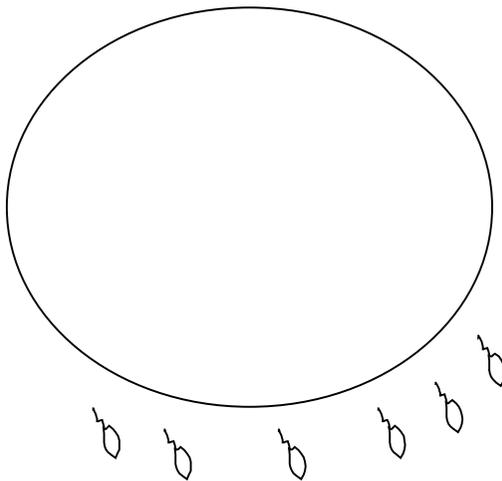
Here, we will briefly look at the interface of inner healing and deliverance from demons. That interface is very important since *demons are like rats and rats go for "garbage,"* the kind of inner emotional and spiritual damage to which deep-level healing seeks to bring health. If there are demons, then, there automatically is deep-level damage that needs to be healed. And it is this garbage, not any "rats" attached, that is the major problem.

Because people are integrated beings, whatever spiritual, emotional, and physical problems may be present all interact with each other. In seeking to bring healing, we must deal with all of them. We cannot deal with any in isolation from the others if we want the person to get well.²⁰

"Garbage" is a generic term for a broad range of issues that give demons a measure of legal access to our lives. Garbage can include things like sinful acts we have committed against others, or those committed against us; curses spoken against us by others; generational curses; unresolved trauma or painful memories; unresolved bitterness or grief; wallowing in anger, etc.



As garbage attracts rats, so our spiritual garbage attracts demons. However, when we repent, forgive, and turn all of our garbage over to Jesus, the footholds that give demons a legal right to affect our lives are removed. With nothing left to stand on, the devil is forced to flee when we rebuke and command him to leave through the Spirit's anointing:



Whenever people first accept Jesus, we may not know what their particular "garbage collection" consists of. They have their own history in a sinful world. However, the Holy Spirit knows all of their garbage, and he knows how to deal with it most effectively. In this

model, therefore, our role as the priesthood of believers is to simply help our new brothers and sisters position their hearts to allow the Holy Spirit to do his work. As the Spirit highlights certain issues in their lives, they must repent and turn these issues over to Jesus. As they do, the footholds that once gave Satan access to their lives will begin to collapse one by one.

Several months before I met Muhammad, I stumbled upon a Moravian proverb that captures the "rats and garbage" concept perfectly: "A fly is attracted to manure for its own interests." Because nearly all Moravians already knew this proverb by heart, it was easily reproducible. Furthermore, the concept was not literate-based and thus could be easily drawn. I had what I was looking for.

The evening I first worked through "flies and manure" with Muhammad is one of my most precious memories. I quoted the proverb and on a piece of paper drew a picture of flies being attracted to different pieces of manure. I then explained the concept to him, using the proverb as a bridge.

"Just as a fly is drawn to the stench of manure, so Satan smells the stench of sin and other garbage in our lives when we hold onto it," I said. "He takes advantage of us for his own wicked interests. Therefore, if we want to get Satan and his demons out of our lives, we must give the manure over to Jesus through confession and repentance."

I then gave him some concrete examples of garbage from my own past—a father who had abused my mother, fear of death, painful memories, sins I had committed, etc. I then explained how I had found freedom when I forgave, received forgiveness, and released these different types of manure to Jesus. To make sure that he understood, I asked Muhammad to explain the concept back to me. As he did so, it was clear that he understood the concept well.

I told him, "I'm going to pray for you now, Muhammad. When I pray, the Holy Spirit will begin to show you pieces of manure from your own life that you need to turn over to Jesus."

"What do I need to do?" Muhammad asked.

"It is the Holy Spirit's job to do the revealing. Your job is to simply repent and give everything over to Jesus as the Holy Spirit brings things to mind."

Now it was time for the Holy Spirit to do his part. I anointed Muhammad with oil, laid hands on him, and began to pray for him quietly. Almost instantly, the Holy Spirit began to manifest his presence in the form of heat on Muhammad's body. With his eyes closed and without being coached, Muhammad suddenly began to move his hands from his heart outward toward the air, as if he were putting his "manure" into Jesus' hands. He said that he saw Jesus appear in his mind's eye. The longer we continued, the faster he made the motion. The whole time I heard him offering prayers like, "Jesus, I'm so sorry," or "I give it to you."

As we continued, the Holy Spirit's presence increased and began to rest on him so powerfully that he began to get drowsy and almost giddy.

After about forty-five minutes of this process, he simply could not take anymore. He looked intoxicated with joy and relief. He was so relaxed that he could hardly hold his head up. I looked him in the eyes and said, "If there are any demons attached to that manure, I now rebuke you and command you to leave in the name of Jesus." When I said this, his eyes brightened slightly and he laughed with joy. He was so relaxed that I had to escort him to the gate like an old man.

Muhammad's assignment was to go back to the house church leaders and lead all of them through this same process. They, in turn, were to go back and lead the members of their house churches through this process. Several days later, Muhammad came back with a glowing report. He said that of all the things the other Moravian disciples had received from him thus far, this exercise had been their favorite. He said that the most common expression used to describe the experience was "I feel freedom."

THE CHURCH AS A HOUSE OF PRAYER

As the people of God, we are not only called to be a clean and healed temple. We are also called to be a house of prayer, made up

of living, breathing stones whose lips continually offer sacrifices of praise that honor Jesus' name (1 Pt. 2:15; Heb. 13:15). In Isaiah, we learn that the temple and the house of prayer are one and the same reality (Is. 56:7). In the New Testament, the people of God are likened to the temple (1 Cor. 3:16). If the temple is the house of prayer, and if the temple is the people of God, then the house of prayer is the people of God. Ontologically, the assembly or church of Messiah is a house of prayer. Our corporate identity as the temple of God is inextricably tied to our corporate identity as a nation of priests set apart to minister before God in a world otherwise hostile to him (1 Pt. 2:5). This truth about who we *are* as a house of prayer explains why we are called on a functional level as the Body of Messiah to "pray without ceasing" (1 Th. 5:17, ESV). We are a living temple of prayer that will never cease to exist because of our inclusion in the resurrection of the righteous.

As we saw in Ch. 7, constant prayer is the means by which we access the covenantal benefit of grace. If the Body of Messiah is not functioning as a house of prayer—if we do not actually pray together—her transformation and maturation will be severely impaired. Though unceasing prayer requires effort and focus, through the grace of God it is not a burden. God promises us that as we regularly and wholeheartedly give ourselves to intimacy with him through prayer, he will meet us and fill our hearts with great joy and spiritual pleasures (Is. 56:7). He also tells us that at the end of the age, the Bride's growth in both her identity and function as the house of prayer will be more vital than ever. We will be called to stand pure, holy, and radiant in the face of an anti-Messiah empire and a level of worldwide wickedness more vile than anything the world has ever seen (Dan. 7; Lk. 17:20–18:8; Rev. 13–14:5, 19:7). Jesus is zealous for the purity of his house (Jn. 2:17). He is coming back for a fiery, praying, pure, and passionate Bride (Rev. 22:17), not a dull, sleeping, unresponsive, and indifferent people.

Therefore, if a church planting movement is to be of New Testament caliber, it must also have a high vision for corporate prayer as part of its DNA. The living stones of God's rapidly

expanding house of prayer must actually pray together! In God's sight, a church planting movement is equivalent to a house-of-prayer planting movement. A CPM that does not value prayer highly is a temple that does not function as it should. The best way to ensure that a high vision for corporate prayer is instilled in a movement from its inception is to simply conduct prayer meetings, providing opportunities for the Holy Spirit to encounter new disciples and grip them with a hunger for prayer and intimacy with Jesus. Using culturally appropriate forms of worship and music as part of the prayer meeting helps to create an atmosphere for enjoyable prayer.²¹ Once a commitment to prayer has taken root, then they can pass this value on to others.

CONCLUSION

To leave disciples behind with confidence, we must leave them behind not as isolated individuals, but as churches that function as self-perpetuating discipleship mechanisms, as a holy temple, and as a house of prayer. House churches, small cells, corporate prayer meetings, and blueprints for simple church, inner healing, and deliverance play a strategic role unto this end. Leaders should be appointed on the basis of character and the Holy Spirit's leadership in the context of prayer and fasting. Jesus is coming back for a spotless Bride. Healthy church-based movements are the best way for large numbers of new disciples to be made ready for their Messiah at the fastest rates possible.

ENDNOTES

¹ Rolland Allen, *Missionary Methods—St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1962), 3–4.

² David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Bangalore, India: Sri Sudhindra Offset Press, 2004), 21.

³ *Ibid.*, 23–24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 49–64.

⁵ Ibid., 68–74.

⁶ Ibid., 65–68.

⁷ Ibid., 35–48.

⁸ Ibid., 123–137.

⁹ Ibid., 85–97.

¹⁰ Ibid., 99–122; see also Kevin Greeson, *CAMEL Training Manual* (Bangalore, India: SUDHINDRA, 2004).

¹¹ Ibid., 192.

¹² For more on the resiliency of decentralized movements, see Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2006).

¹³ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (book), 192–3.

¹⁴ Based on discussion of Facets 5 and 6 in Ch. 5.

¹⁵ For more on the value and strategic function of simple churches, see Jaeson Ma, *The Blueprint: A Revolutionary Plan to Plant Missional Communities on Campus* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 199–211.

¹⁶ This outline is a slightly altered version of a pattern I first received from a missionary couple in Singapore.

¹⁷ Mohit Gupta, *Servants in the Crucible: Findings from a Global Study on Persecution and the Implications for Sending Agencies and Sending Churches* (Unpublished Manuscript, 2005).

¹⁸ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (book), 189–91.

¹⁹ Gordon Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 18–19.

²⁰ Charles Kraft, *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing: Discovering the Vital Link between Spiritual Warfare and Inner Healing* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 257–8.

²¹ The harp and bowl model of the International House of Prayer, Kansas City, is an excellent tool for creating an atmosphere of enjoyable prayer. Live IHOP–KC prayer meetings are accessible through the internet. See <<http://www.theprayerroom.tv>>.

11

Alloyed with Fire: Strengthening the Saints for Persecution

She was hungry for truth and receptive to the gospel, Muhammad told me. She was also under strict rule by her male relatives. Muhammad and the other disciples knew that sharing the gospel with “Iman” would involve great risk, but they had to try.

Most Moravians adhere to the Shafī’i school of Islamic jurisprudence. In Muhammad’s mind, this translated as, “Our people are not very strict in their observance of Islam.” In other words, while most Moravians would take swift, sometimes deadly, action against anyone defaming the name of Islam, getting them to put out their cigarettes and do their prayers was another matter.

While Moravian women wear the full body covering, or *hijab*, they typically have more freedom to travel—to and from the market, for example—without their husbands. However, scattered among the majority Shafī’i population are pockets of Moravians who adhere to the more rigid Hanbali school of Islamic law. Many of these groups have come into being in recent years through the influence of radical Islamists from abroad. Perhaps the majority of Islamic terrorist groups in the world are Hanbali.

Muhammad told me that many of Iman’s male relatives were Hanbali, including the uncle with whom she lived. Along with a handful of other women in her household, Iman was under constant surveillance. Moments when she was left alone outside of the home were extremely rare. With some exceptions, she could only go to

and from the market when accompanied by a male relative. When she sold goods in the market, usually the nearby relative would keep a close eye on her. Several times a day, Iman and the other women in her household were forced to say their prayers and endure long hours of the Qur'an being recited over them. Noncompliance could have brutal consequences. As I listened to Muhammad describe Iman's situation in more and more detail, I could not imagine a more oppressive and controlling environment. Any attempt to share the gospel with her would prove dangerous.

However, the new believers saw Iman as worth the risk. One of Iman's non-Hanbali cousins had accepted Jesus through Muhammad's witness. He told Muhammad and Muhammad's wife, Fatima, about Iman, whom he thought would be open to the gospel for several reasons. Several years earlier, while living in another city, she had somehow come across a New Testament and the *Jesus* film. By the time she moved to live with her uncle in Muhammad's town, she had been contemplating the message of Jesus on-and-off for several years. Though Iman had not yet confessed Jesus as the Messiah, because of the time she had spent thinking about the New Testament and the *Jesus* film, her heart was very receptive to the gospel. Iman was an extremely intelligent and thoughtful woman. She knew the ins-and-outs of Islam and the dynamics of Moravian culture as well as any man. According to Muhammad, she was a contemplative person who also had incredible leadership gifts. Most important of all, she was *hungry for the truth*. One day, Fatima shared her testimony with Iman. Iman wanted to know more. Could it be true that there were actually more Moravians interested in Jesus? What a contrast this man Jesus was to the men in her life! Though sharing the gospel with her would not be an easy task, Muhammad, Fatima, and the other believers concluded that Iman's leadership could be an important key to seeing the gospel advance among Moravian women.

Their first attempts to share the gospel in more depth with this hungry heart met with frustration. Though Iman's uncle and the other men in the house kept a close watch on her, at certain times they permitted her to host female visitors. On several occasions,

Fatima and some of the other female disciples tried to visit Iman at home. However, they did not get to share much with her, because the men were listening and quickly became suspicious. After two or three visits, Fatima and some of the other believing women were threatened in very strong terms and told not to come back.

At this point, Muhammad decided to use the Hanbali sub-culture against itself. He knew that those who adhere to the school of Hanbal among Moravians never allow "their" women to meet with a man who is not a relative. However, there is one small loophole: if a man expresses interest in *marrying* a woman, he will be given a small amount of time to meet with her alone in a public place. The woman's Hanbali overseer still observes both of them from a distance, but he is usually not within hearing distance. Muhammad had no intention of taking another wife, although it was permissible in that culture. But with the support of the other believers, including his wife, he decided to take advantage of the "courtship loophole" for the sake of the gospel. On a couple of occasions, he met with Iman and shared parts of the gospel with her. In the meantime, her overseer looked on from a distance, thinking that Iman was being evaluated for marriage. However, even these times were too short. Iman still wanted to hear the gospel further explained before making a decision.

One day, Muhammad called me. "I need your help," he said.

Iman had been working in her family's store and was getting ready to shut it down for an hour. As she did so, she noticed that there was no one watching her. Now was her chance. She immediately called Muhammad, and Muhammad called me.

"Can I bring Iman over to your house?" he asked. It was enclosed by a wall, which provided a small measure of security.

"I don't know if that's a good idea in broad daylight," I said. "Neighbors and passers-by are constantly watching my house."

Everyone knew everyone in this small town, and if Iman were seen coming into our compound, news of this would undoubtedly get back to her uncle and other relatives. She would be beaten for

sure. We decided to meet elsewhere.

I jumped in my truck and drove to the meeting place: a vacant alley. Muhammad and Iman quickly got in and ducked down in the back seat. I drove some distance out of town to the countryside to an area with a lot of bushes and trees and stopped there. We went behind the trees, sat down, and began talking about Jesus.

We did not have much time. Together, Muhammad and I shared the gospel with Iman. Muhammad then took what I shared and went on to explain it at a much deeper level than I ever could have done in his own language. I was impressed. Iman's face radiated hunger, as Muhammad's had when he first heard the presentation. Something was clearly moving in her heart as she listened. Her facial expressions and soft affirmations indicated that she understood everything.

After we finished the presentation, we told Iman that God wanted to confirm the truth of this message to her through his power.

"Since no other woman is with us, is it all right if we lay hands on your shoulder and pray for you?"

She said yes, and we laid hands on her and began to bless her with the love, joy, power, and peace of God through the authority of Jesus' name. Immediately, a huge smile came over Iman's face as the power of Holy Spirit swept through her body, manifesting his presence in the form of heat and fire. She told us that she felt immense joy and peace flooding her heart, and that fear was leaving her.

"Are you ready to follow Jesus?" we asked.

"Yes, I am," she said, smiling. We led her through a confession of faith on the spot.

During the drive back, Iman said that she had never felt such overwhelming joy and happiness. She talked on and on about how happy she was. We just laughed and rejoiced with her. I dropped them off quickly on the edge of town and then went home. Iman later told Muhammad that during the night of her decision, the Lord began to speak to and encourage her through dreams. Though all

of the men in her life had treated her like a slave, she now found comfort in the arms of this one called Jesus, whose thoughts were nothing but tenderness for her.

A few days later, Muhammad told me about a dream he had had before this event, but which he had forgotten about. In the dream, Muhammad, a woman, and myself were in a truck driving out to the countryside. When we stopped, we got out of the vehicle and crushed a snake under our feet. Muhammad made the interpretive connection: we had taken Iman out to the countryside and, through the gospel, had crushed Satan's work in her life under our feet.

Several days after her conversion experience, Iman's radical Islamist overseers proceeded with their usual routine of forcing her to do prayers and listen to the recitation of the Qur'an. One day, she simply refused to comply. When they began to reprimand and threaten her, a surge of boldness came over her and she cried out, "I know the truth better than you do!" Enraged, one man began to beat her. However, as he hit her, in Muhammad's words, "a miracle happened." The power of the Holy Spirit began to manifest his presence on Iman's body in the form of intense fire and heat. When the man hit her, he immediately jumped back in panic because his hand began to burn. Terrified, he ran out of the room and came back with some of the other men in the house.

Betraying the tragic extent of their deception, these men told Iman that God was punishing her by "setting her on fire" because she had become an "infidel." Now afraid to touch her, they began to beat her viciously with donkey whips while reciting the Qur'an over her with demonic fervor. They ordered her to deny her faith in Jesus. She later told Muhammad that during the reciting of the Qur'an, she began to feel confusion, intense oppression, and doubt about her faith. However, she still refused to deny Jesus and endured the beating.

Thankfully, Iman did not have to endure this trial alone. She now could turn to a growing number of brothers and sisters in Messiah. Over the next few days, the other disciples rallied around her, nursed her wounds, and helped her through the trauma of this experience.

They rebuked and renounced the demons that had attacked her during the Qur'anic reading, and she felt the confusion, doubt, and oppression lift. They then took her to live with one of her female relatives.

BEING CANDID ABOUT PERSECUTION

Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever hid the reality of persecution from their disciples. They were up-front and frank about the implications of being a disciple of Jesus on this side of his return:

Remember the words I spoke to you: "No servant is greater than his master." *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.* (Jn. 15:20, emphasis added)

All this I have told you so that you will not go astray (advanced warning provides strengthening). They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. *I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you* (Jesus tells them up front to strengthen them for later). (Jn. 16:1–4, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, *strengthening and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.* "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said (warning of inevitability of persecution). (Ac. 14:21–22, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, *to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled*

by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted (warning of persecution up-front). And it turned out that way, as you well know (no lack of integrity on Paul's part because he had warned them up-front). For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith (wants to make sure they have not denied Jesus). I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless (i.e., that they had denied their faith). (1 Th. 3:1–5, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

In this age, the people of God are confronted with a paradox. Before Messiah's return and the establishment of his kingdom on the earth, God backs up the gospel with precisely enough power to:

- 1) Provide an authentic, experiential, and credible witness to the coming kingdom of God, in which his justice and glory will be fully revealed on the earth. The accompanying power substantially confronts hearers' unbelief. It is a *sign* that points to something beyond itself without (usually—cf. Ac. 5) killing them (as will happen with the wicked at Messiah's coming; see Zech. 14). The gospel confirmed with signs of power is thus God's offer of mercy to unbelievers before Jesus comes to judge the earth.
- 2) Birth fruit (new disciples) in an accelerated way.
- 3) Give these new disciples a living hope of the coming Messianic kingdom, of which they are now a part of by faith and which will be theirs at Messiah's return.
- 4) Stimulate some form of persecution to bring new disciples to maturity at the fastest rate possible, preparing them to rule with Messiah in the coming kingdom. At present, in the Western world this persecution typically comes in verbal and emotional forms, such as slander against a new or unusual work of the Holy Spirit or non-traditional forms of church

(such as house churches). In many parts of the non-Western world, verbal forms of persecution are often joined by more physically aggressive forms of persecution, such as beatings, job loss, incarcerations, and martyrdom.

5. Create more opportunities for those persecuting God's people to be saved from his coming wrath. As believers bless and love their enemies in the midst of their suffering, not only do God's people become more like Jesus, but their persecutors see the cross of Messiah recapitulated before their eyes. By this, they are given more opportunities to submit to Jesus before they are purged from the earth at Messiah's coming. In other words, the power functions as a living testimony to the benefits of salvation (resurrection from the dead and inclusion in the kingdom of God), and the persecution spawned by the power functions as a living testimony to love and to the cost of that salvation (the forgiveness of sins made available through the cross).

Though the fruit of this process is glorious, that does not make it easy. Therefore, like Jesus and the apostles did, from the inception of a movement we must clearly warn new or potential disciples about the realities of persecution inherently connected to a decision to follow Jesus. To obscure the biblical reality that persecution is part of our training in this age and will persist until Jesus' second coming is to set new disciples up for failure and disillusionment when they face difficulties. We do new disciples a disservice if we make the gospel seem more attractive by cloaking the difficulties. From the beginning of their life in Messiah, they must have no illusions about what they are getting themselves into. If we make clear both the benefits of the gospel and perils that await disciples of Jesus, potential disciples can then weigh the cost without illusions. The gospel is not a commodity. It is an invitation to death, so that we might truly find life.

Whenever I share the gospel with anyone, I typically make both the benefits and costs of following Jesus vividly clear to them before I even offer to lead them through a decision. I especially made this

a priority when I shared the gospel with Moravians, for whom a decision to follow Jesus would almost always be met with swift and often violent persecution. The way I did this was by concluding my gospel presentation with a song written a number of years ago by some Moravian martyrs:

Chorus: The Eternal God, who created the world, he has given a promise, and I am not going to miss out on it.

If I stay on the top of the mountains for a month, with the snow and ice pounding me, I will not deny my Savior.

If I stay in the wilderness a hundred years, and fail to find a garden, livestock, or a wife, I will not deny my Savior.

If I am slaughtered, and hurled into the ocean, and beaten with a club, I will not deny my Savior.

If I am in need, and fail to find money, I will not deny my Savior.

When I am injured and sick, he nurses me back to health and heals me, I will not deny my Savior.

After singing this song, I would then ask them if they still wanted to follow Jesus. If they still said, "Yes"—as very few actually did—only then would I proceed with the discipleship process, during which I would continue to remind them of the importance of staying faithful through trials. Should persecution actually come upon them as they had been warned (1 Th. 3:4), not only would my integrity be preserved and my conscience remain clear, but they would view their future trials as opportunities by which means their faith could be proved genuine (1 Pt. 1:7), rather than a tragic result of never having received the "fine print" when they first made their decision to follow Jesus.

On another level, making the cost of following Jesus known up-

front works as a kind of sieve to sift the truly committed from the insincere in the initial stages of a movement. When this happens, it is much more likely that the movement will continue to weed out nominal elements as it unfolds.

IMPARTATIONS OF STRENGTH

While making the cost of following Jesus known to new disciples up-front plays a vital role in bracing them for persecution, an infinitely more significant factor is the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit himself. Though Muhammad and I had warned Iman of the trials she would face as a disciple, it was the Holy Spirit who alloyed her faith with fire when the storm came just days later.

According to the New Testament, one of the ways God imparts the power of his Spirit into his people is through the laying on of hands (Ac. 8:18; 2 Tim. 1:6). One of the key purposes of this power is to give divine strength:

I long to see you so that I may *impart to you* some *spiritual gift to make you strong* (perseverant in the faith)
... (Rom. 1:11, emphasis and parenthetical comment added)

Therefore, when we lay hands on new disciples, like the apostles and the early church, we must ask God to release an impartation of the Spirit's fire that will sustain them through the persecutions and difficulties they will face as followers of Jesus.

I do not pretend to fully understand all of the complex spiritual dynamics involved in the act of impartation. But based on my experiences, I believe that when we fervently and persistently pray, fast, and cry out for God to birth a harvest by the Spirit, not by our own strength (Zech. 4:6), as part of God's answer we can confidently expect him to release an impartation of strength and power that:

- 1) is transferable through the hands of every disciple participating in the movement
- 2) is sufficient to sustain new disciples through difficult trials

early on in their faith journey

- 3) accelerates the rate of numerical expansion (increased grace for the gifts of the Spirit)
- 4) accelerates the maturation process (increased grace for the fruits of the Spirit)

Once the beginning of the harvest is actually birthed through prayer, from that point on the impartation of strength naturally flows from one person to the next like dominoes (see opening testimony in Ch. 9).

THE GIFT OF RETELLING A STORY

As many of the New Testament epistles demonstrate, when the heat of persecution gets turned up on our brethren and life feels overwhelmingly complex to them, we can help them regain perspective by articulating the true power of their own story afresh for them. In a way, this is a form of intercession, because we are helping them do what they may not be able to do for themselves—make sense of what is happening around them—given the high levels of emotional strain they are experiencing. The following story illustrates this point well.

It was a Wednesday morning when I received the phone call from Muhammad. Just two days earlier, my wife and I had moved out of his town after a stay there of nearly ten weeks. We were now in a larger city, preparing to return to the United States for a time of rest and recovery and to be nearer to my mother, who was very ill at the time. Muhammad told me that on Tuesday night, several men wearing masks burst into his house with AK-47s and kidnapped Fatima, who was eight months pregnant, and their children at gunpoint. Fortunately, Muhammad had not been home at the time. He told me that the men were radical Islamists and were demanding a ransom. This was the second time that some of the disciples had been kidnapped in recent weeks. Muhammad mobilized the house churches for intercession, and my wife and I joined the concert of prayer from the larger city.

On Wednesday evening, Muhammad sat in his empty one-

room house, overwhelmed by loneliness. He finally fell asleep after shedding many tears. That night, the Lord visited him in a dream. He told Muhammad that he was experiencing a test of faith and that he should trust God for his family's deliverance.

Between Thursday night and Friday morning, Muhammad and the other believers paid the ransom. They immediately took Fatima to the hospital. While in captivity, Fatima's kidnappers had kicked her in the stomach several times. That night in the hospital, she gave birth to a stillborn baby boy. The tests showed no heartbeat and no breathing. The baby was pronounced medically dead. On Friday morning around 8:30AM, Muhammad called and told me the news.

According to Islam, people have twenty-four hours to bury their dead. Thus, in most Muslim cultures, corpses are usually buried as soon as possible, within hours of a person's death. Though he had given his life to Jesus, by cultural instinct Muhammad started to make preparations for the baby to be buried as soon as he heard the news. He had already hired several people to dig the baby's grave by the time he called me on Friday morning.

After we got off the phone with Muhammad, my wife and I sat on our bunk bed in the small room we were staying in, teary-eyed and filled with grief. As we prayed for the situation, however, suddenly a surge of faith came into my spirit. The Holy Spirit whispered, "We are not going to give this baby up without a fight!"

I immediately called Muhammad. He was carrying some items to the gravesite by wheelbarrow when I called.

"Muhammad, I encourage you to take some time to first listen to the Holy Spirit before burying the baby," I said.

Muhammad was responsive even in his grief. "What do I need to do?"

"I'm going to hang up and then send you a text message with some instructions," I said. Two passages came to me: Luke 7, where Jesus raises the widow's son at Nain; and Acts 9, where Peter raises Dorcas from the dead. I sent these two verses to Muhammad by text message:

Read these two passages, I wrote. They'll tell you what to do. Remember that this same power lives in you. As soon as I sent the text, my wife and I began to intercede.

Two hours later, we received a call from a very excited Muhammad: "It's a miracle! It's a miracle!" After receiving the text message, Muhammad had run to intercept those who were taking the baby to the gravesite. He took the lifeless body home. With his mother in the room as a witness, Muhammad read these two passages out loud, laid his hands on the baby, and began to cry out to his heavenly Father. As he did this, the power of God swept through his hands into the baby's body, and the baby began to cry! Immediately, the fear of the Lord came upon Muhammad, and he ran out of the house. Then, the fear of the Lord gave way to the joy of the Lord, and he ran back into the house. His mother was stunned and did not know what to make of it all. When my wife and I heard the news, we did our best not to bang our heads on our bunk beds as we leaped for joy.

The miracle itself moved us to tears and laughter. But the fact that the Holy Spirit had used Muhammad—not his mentor—to perform it was even more significant than the miracle, from a discipleship perspective. Muhammad now knew firsthand that the Holy Spirit's presence, power, and leadership were not tied to the foreign bodily presence of the one through whom he had initially experienced God's power. He kept saying excitedly, "Brother, you have got to teach me about this Holy Spirit! You have got to teach me about this Holy Spirit!" When he took the baby to the hospital, it created a stir as doctors and relatives tried to figure out what to make of this miracle. When Muhammad told the news to his brother, a radical Islamist living in Europe, his brother told him, "Put Mom on the phone. If this is true, I'm in."

However, events soon shifted in another direction. Several days after this miracle, Muhammad was brought before the elders and religious leaders of the community. The number of disciples had grown to the point where they were now perceived as a threat. The elders told Muhammad that he had two options: either he could

deny his faith, in which case they would provide him with a means of "financial security;" or they would stone him to death. He had one day to decide.

Despite all that Muhammad had experienced up to that point, this ultimatum ushered him into a serious crisis of faith. The promise of financial security in itself was temptation enough. He had learned to trust God for his daily bread, and God had not let him down. However, a life of faith can get seriously uncomfortable at times. Was the gospel *truly* worth it? Not only that, was the gospel *worth losing his life over*?

This was the first major life-or-death test Muhammad faced in my absence. All the props had been removed. Would he stay faithful to Jesus? Had his experience of *God* been more powerful than his experience of *me*? When he called me and told me his situation, I could hear the wavering and the doubt in his voice. I encouraged him to be strong and sent him the following letter through email:

Dear Muhammad,

Hello my brother in Jesus Christ. First, I praise God for your faith, love, and hope in Jesus Christ. I constantly thank God for the love and power he has put in your life. God knows how much I pray for you and for the other disciples.

I want to encourage you to stay faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you.

When you first came to me, I told you that I did not have silver or gold or a job for you, but that what I did have I was ready to share with you: the good news of the kingdom of God. When I told you about the kingdom, I told you that people who enter the kingdom will experience two sides. First, there is the side of blessings: joy, peace, love, a clean heart, and the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. You have experienced this side of blessings many times. You

have had many dreams. God has met your needs miraculously many times. Jesus came to you in a dream one night and you felt his power all over your body. Even your wife touched you and felt the power of God on you. He has given you much wisdom. Even your baby was dead, and Jesus brought him back to life.

I also told you that there is the side of persecution, because Satan is not happy when people enter the kingdom. Therefore, Satan tries to bring attacks against us by using people who have not entered the kingdom. I told you that our true enemies are not human beings, but that Satan and his demons are our true enemies. Therefore, we have to rebuke Satan when he tries to make us doubt and be afraid. I told you that you would experience persecutions, but not be afraid, because God is with you. I also sang the song "The Promise of God" to show you how it is important to stay faithful when persecutions come. You have experienced persecutions. Your wife was taken to another town. The Holy Spirit showed you that this was a test of your faith. Then, you saw your dead baby brought back to life by the power of the Holy Spirit. You said that even your brother is ready to obey.

So, I did not hide from you the side of persecution. I told you that God does not force someone to enter the kingdom. Therefore, each person has a choice. When you entered the kingdom, it was not my choice, but your own free choice. I told you that I did not have money or a job for you, and you still decided to enter the kingdom. You made this choice because of your love for Jesus. Many times, you told me that your heart was feeling very happy and joyful. You told me that I had given you something better than anything else.

Today, the situation is still the same. I don't have money or a job for you, but I will encourage you to stay strong in the kingdom. Take some time to sit down and listen to the Holy Spirit, and he will show you what to do. As I told you before, in some dreams the Holy Spirit told me that he wanted me to go to your town for a short time. Then, I would meet someone who would enter the kingdom. Then, he told me that he was going to send me to see my sick mother and preach the good news in other places. God showed this to you in a dream. Therefore, when I left your town, I left because I was obeying the Holy Spirit, not because I was leaving you behind. God is your strength and protector, not me. He is the one who provides for you, not me. Jesus has now given you his kingdom work among the Moravian people. If you obey with all your heart, you will do a wonderful job. He loves you and is confident in you. Now God wants you to share the good news with your own people, without being afraid.

The Holy Scriptures tell us that persecution is normal for those who enter the kingdom. I have been through many tests for the kingdom. We had to leave our home country and our families and loved ones behind to preach the good news in a strange land where people hated us. Also, many people in my family don't believe the good news. When I was in a different place, some people from the community wanted to do something very bad to me and my family. People made many threats and told many lies, and some of the people made plans to hurt and even kill us. But, praise God, he delivered us from their hands. In the future, perhaps I will die for the kingdom. Or maybe one day you will die for the kingdom. Around the world, there are many of our brothers and sisters in

Jesus who are dying for their faith. Disciples in China are dying for their faith in Jesus. Disciples in India are dying for their faith. Disciples everywhere are dying for their faith and love for Jesus. They love Jesus more than their own lives, because they know the reward they will receive when Jesus returns to the earth.

Therefore, the issue of persecution is not between you and me. You entered the kingdom by your own choice as an adult man. The issue is between you and Jesus. Do you love Jesus enough to stay with him even when you see persecution and difficulties in your life?

Muhammad, you are a leader, and there are many disciples now. These ones look to you as their example. "A camel follows the gait of the camel walking in front of it."¹ If you stay strong, they will stay strong. If you are afraid, they will see you and will be afraid. Be a good example of faith, courage, love, hope, and boldness for these disciples. Many of the new disciples have gone through more difficult persecution than you. One was whipped with a donkey whip. Another man was stoned. So, if you are one of their leaders, you should be a good example of someone who loves Jesus in both good times and bad times. As it says in Matthew 10:28, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." I need to warn you, my brother, about the danger of denying Jesus. In the Holy Scripture, in Matthew 10:32–33, Jesus says, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."

Don't be afraid of any man. Don't be afraid of any sheik. Don't be afraid of any fundamentalist. Encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ not to be afraid. Encourage them to be bold. Continue to share the good news of Jesus Christ without fear, because it is the only hope for the world. I will continue to pray that the good news may spread rapidly among your people. Don't forget "The fly is attracted to the stench of manure for its own selfish interests."² Don't let Satan come to you through the stench of fear and doubt. Rebuke Satan in the name of Jesus, and he will run away from you. Continue to work very hard for the kingdom. God will provide your needs. I encourage you to read the book of Acts again, to see the love and courage they had for Jesus even in persecution. You will be encouraged. Also, below I have written some verses from the Holy Scriptures, to show you that it is normal for people to suffer because of their love for Jesus. God bless you.

Blessings,
Tim

(I wrote out the following passages as part of the letter: Mt. 5:10–12, 6:25–34, 10; Jn. 15:18–27; Ac. 14:21–22; 2 Th. 1:3–12; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 10:32–39; Ja. 1:2–8)

After I sent this letter, I prayed like I have never prayed before. A few days later, I received the following responses:

Brother, I received your valuable letter, and I am confident. It is true that you did not offer money. I am not going to forget Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Thank you. I tell you that I will not fear any sheik or any other such person.

Brother, I greet you. Truly, you are my friend and

brother, because you directed me to a wonderful place. It now stands that I have had victory over the men (those I mentioned who were persecuting me), and that I am a man who knows that Jesus is the Savior. I thank you for the honorable way you brought the good news to me. Brother, know that I will never forget you.

Muhammad had not been stoned, and he had not denied his faith. He had remained faithful and stood the test. From what I could discern, Muhammad, in keeping with Jesus' admonishment—"when you are persecuted in one place, flee to another" (Mt. 10:23)—had chosen to flee to another area.

Only a few days earlier, Muhammad had observed a dramatic and extremely personal example of what Jesus had to offer when he watched God raise his own child from the dead. Just days later, these blessings were now being starkly juxtaposed against a dramatic example of the cost of following that same King, as he stood before his own local version of the Sanhedrin. Was the former worth the latter? Only Muhammad could answer this question for himself. Interestingly enough, both events happened just after his mentor, a cultural outsider, had left town. God had set him up. With only the Holy Spirit to rely on now, would he stay true? Yes. His faith was not only real, it was *bis*.

When I wrote the above letter to Muhammad, I had two purposes in mind. First, I simply wanted to help him see afresh the undeniable case that God himself had made to Muhammad since he had first decided to follow Jesus. As happens so frequently to all of us, the enemy was trying to paralyze Muhammad by turning his gaze away from the sufficiency of Jesus' leadership. One of the greatest gifts I could give him in this situation was a word that directed his focus back to God's faithfulness and the truth of the gospel. Many times in my own life, the only thing standing between me and despair has been a single word of encouragement and admonishment from a brother. None of us can finish the race well without the help of other members in the Body of Messiah.

Second, it was important that Muhammad define the persecution he was experiencing in terms of his love for Jesus, not in terms of his relationship to me. One of my former mentors once interviewed persecuted believers from over fifty nations. He constantly used to tell me that one of the greatest gifts we can give the persecuted is to help them see that they are being persecuted primarily for Jesus' sake, not because of secondary factors like racism, politics, or their relationship to Westerners.

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE TENSIONS OF FOLLOW-THROUGH

Writing the above letter to Muhammad was one of the most difficult things I have ever had to do in my life. I wept and prayed as I wrote it. I found myself second-guessing everything I had done up to that point. All of my convictions about the sufficiency of the Spirit's leadership were being severely tested, and this created an almost unbearable tempest in my soul. Did I truly trust in the Spirit's ability to bring Muhammad through the fire? Was Muhammad's foundation strong enough to withstand such intense pressures? Had I been deluded in thinking that the New Testament standard was actually recoverable in our day? The situation drove me to my knees in prayer. When I received the news that Muhammad had stood firm through the test, I cannot begin to describe the sense of relief that flooded over my soul. For the first time, on a minor level I could understand Paul's words to the Thessalonians:

For this reason, when I *could stand it no longer*, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you (to deny their faith) and our efforts (in preaching the gospel and building a foundation) might have been useless. (1 Th. 3:5, emphasis and parenthetical comments added)

Had the Thessalonians stayed faithful to Messiah in the face of the persecutions that Paul had warned them about while with them? Had

the foundation he had laid been solid enough to see them through times of severe testing? Questions like this must have tugged at his heart and driven him to his knees in intercession wherever he went.

Honestly, I can say that the thought that Muhammad might not stand firm through his test, and that our efforts might have been in vain, were like needles in my heart and mind. For several days I walked around in a constant state of nausea. However, God showed himself strong in the context of both my weakness and Muhammad's (2 Cor. 12:8–10). Like Paul, my earnest prayer is that one day God will open a door for me to see Muhammad again for the purpose of our mutual strengthening (1 Th. 3:10; Rom. 1:11–13). Until then, I simply have no option but to trust in God's ability to "guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). Those who buy into the thesis of this book must come to terms with the fact that these kinds of tensions and pressures come as part of the package.

WRESTLING FOR THE HARVEST IN PRAYER

One of the striking things about the weaknesses Paul lists in 2 Corinthians 11 is that he does not conclude the list with a climactic example of violent persecution or difficult circumstances, but with "the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). Paul lived with the knowledge that the quality of each person's labor would be tested by fire on the day of Messiah (1 Cor. 3:10–15). No doubt this vivid reality caused him to tremble with the fear of the Lord, and was one of the core factors that drove him to a life of focused, unrelenting prayer on behalf of the churches birthed through or influenced by his ministry:

God ... is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times. (Rom. 1:9–10)

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. (Eph. 1:16)

... We have not stopped praying for you ... (Col. 1:9)

... We constantly pray for you ... (2 Th. 1:11)

... Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. (2 Tim. 1:3)

At the same time, not only was Paul driven to constant prayer because of the responsibilities that came with the task entrusted to him (1 Cor. 4:2), but also because of what he had no control over: the free will of other human beings (Ac. 20:29–30; Gal. 1:6–8, 5:4; 1 Th. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:19; Heb. 6:4–6). No matter how much effort, thought, time, and prayer we invest in new disciples, and no matter how scripted or well-planned a church planting strategy may or may not be, human beings still have free will and God is simply not willing to violate it. However, while our prayers never negate or override the free will of those for whom we pray, somehow in God's economy prayer does *reduce* the likelihood that people will deny their faith in Jesus. How this is possible becomes clearer when we look at the kinds of things the apostles themselves prayed. For example,

I keep asking (persistence in prayer) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better (NKJV: "revelation in the knowledge of Him;" i.e., through the deposit of the Spirit more and more we come to know and experience the ways of God as revealed in Jesus). I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened (through the revelatory work of the Spirit) in order that you may know (increased and experiential understanding of) the hope to which he has called you (in the gospel), the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints (revelation of the value God places on us, his inheritance), and his incomparably great power for us who believe (revelation unto increased conviction of God's power and commitment to raise us from the dead as he raised Jesus from the dead, cf. v. 20). (Eph. 1:17–19, parenthetical comments added)

For this reason (the administration of God's plan as revealed in the mystery of Messiah, cf. 2:11–3:13) I kneel (in prayer) before the Father, from whom his whole family (i.e., not just Jews, but Gentiles as well) in heaven and on earth derives its name (God has one family in one household made up of the heavens and the earth). I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being (impartations of grace and strength for faithfulness and perseverance), so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (unto inheritance of the Messianic kingdom). And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love (following the example of self-sacrificial love as modeled by the crucified Messiah), may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep (Paul possibly using analogy from his experience as a tentmaker, God measuring the dimensions of our "tent" or resurrected body, cf. 2 Cor. 5:1–5) is the love of Christ (who stayed faithful and loyal to us through sufferings), and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (that you, like Messiah, will receive an eternal weight of glory in the resurrection, cf. Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17; Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 2:9–11). (Eph. 3:14–19, parenthetical comments added)

In these examples, we see Paul primarily interceding for the saints to more deeply understand the core content of the gospel as revealed in the mystery of Messiah (see Ch. 5). In essence, Paul asks the Lord to secure the loyalty of his people by unambiguously showing them the unmatched superiority of what he has to offer both now and in the age to come. Those sitting in jail cells *now* will inherit cities as a reward *then* (Luke 19:17). Those persecuted because of righteousness *now* will inherit the kingdom *then* (Mt. 5:10). Those who "surrender

their bodies to the flames" *now* (1 Cor. 13:3) will inherit glorious, imperishable bodies *then* (1 Cor. 15:52). Paul knew that if the saints *experientially* understood the superiority of the blessings that await those who carry their cross as Jesus carried his, then they are much less likely to deny their faith. We must not forget that the apostolic prayers of the New Testament were fashioned and offered to God in a context where persecution was commonplace.

One of the key reasons that we must learn to labor long and hard in prayer is that one day God may call us to carry *by* prayer those whose salvation has been birthed *through* prayer. It is our responsibility to pray new sheep through persecution. Paul could leave new churches behind with confidence after spending just weeks or months with them, partly because most of his work of discipleship was accomplished through intercession. In that sense, he never left them at all. In the words of Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China: "My claim will be alone in God and I must learn before I leave England to move men through God by prayer alone."³ In prayer, we wield a sword that moves men, angels, and demons irrespective of our geographical location.

Not until Jesus returns will Muhammad or the other Moravians know how much time our little team spent praying for them. Though we tried to stay in the shadows as much as possible (see Ch. 8), our role was not passive in any way. Each day our team conducted both morning and evening prayer meetings, which we called our "morning sacrifice" and our "evening sacrifice." In addition to these, as Muhammad's mentor I spent many additional hours praying for him. I knew that only God himself could effectively navigate Muhammad and the other Moravian disciples through the complexities and dangers of their environment. They were living as sheep among wolves. During these times of intercession, I often experienced great spiritual attack. I constantly felt like I was fighting off demons in Jesus' name. The battle was real and intense. Interestingly, just before, during, or after some of these encounters, I would receive news from Muhammad about some new and important development taking place among the house churches or in their evangelism.

By the time Muhammad was brought before his local version of the Sanhedrin following our departure from his area, I had given him everything I had been prepared to pass on to that "one man" (see Preface), and God had clearly answered our prayers. Muhammad and the other Moravians had experienced the guidance of the Holy Spirit through dreams and visions in ways beyond anything I could have asked or imagined. Jesus had visited and commissioned Muhammad through a direct visitation, and had used Muhammad's own hands to raise his newborn son from the dead. In very powerful ways, the Lord had made his case to Muhammad. Now, the community elders were making their own offer: Muhammad could deny Jesus and get so-called "financial security," or they would kill him. What would he choose? We prayed that God would strengthen Muhammad and give him boldness, but in the end, only Muhammad could decide.

CONCLUSION

Before we moved to Muhammad's area, I had a dream in which my wife and I walked into some kind of army headquarters, where we sat down to take a test. As we did, some military personnel sat down next to us and began to explain the test to us. They told us if we wanted to know how to pass the test, we should look to the example of the Chinese church. The next morning, I wrote the dream down and tucked it away in my journal.

Two weeks later, we moved to Muhammad's town. As the number of new disciples grew following Muhammad's conversion, and as persecution and opposition against them increased, in prayer one morning I asked the Lord to show me what he was doing with the Moravians. Immediately, I saw a vision of earthworms starting to come out of the ground by the thousands. Suddenly, a bird swooped down to grab one of the worms. He tried to pull this worm out of the ground but could not, because the worm was firmly rooted in the ground. The bird gave up and retreated to the sky. Then I saw a multitude of earthworms come together. They intertwined until they formed a huge hammer. When the bird swooped down again to attack the worms, this hammer came down and smashed the

bird. Suddenly the scene shifted to nighttime. I saw the worms with flashlights attached to their heads, working vigilantly under the cover of darkness. As soon as the vision ended, a phrase from a passage in Isaiah passed through my mind: "O worm Jacob." I recognized the phrase as being from the Bible and immediately looked it up. I found it in Isaiah 41:14–15:

"Do not be afraid, *O worm Jacob*, *O little Israel*, for I myself will help you," declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. "See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff . . ." (emphasis added)

In this passage, God promises to take a vulnerable, despised people—"worms"—and make them strong through *his* power. Psalm 22:6 uses the metaphor as a prophetic picture of the Messiah's own sufferings at the hands of wicked men before his vindication later in the Psalm.

As soon as I put my Bible down, the Lord brought to my mind a book that I had purchased nearly a year earlier. The book was about the Chinese church and the "Back to Jerusalem" movement.⁴ Though I had owned the book for a year, the only time had ever looked inside its covers was after I had first purchased it. I had totally forgotten about it. But now, I remembered it seemingly out of nowhere and felt compelled to pick it up. I opened up to the table of contents and could not believe what my eyes landed on: a section of the book entitled, "An army of worms."⁵ When I turned the pages, my jaw dropped even more when I saw Isaiah 41:14–15 quoted as the centerpiece of this section. As soon as I read this, my dream about looking to the example of the Chinese church came back to my mind with great force. The pieces of the puzzle were finally coming together. As he has done among the Chinese, God was now raising up an army of worms among the Moravians:

The Back to Jerusalem mission and the fulfillment of the Great Commission face powerful adversaries.

Islam holds more than a billion souls in captivity and blindness. Buddhism and Hinduism have been established for more than two thousand years. The devil feels safe in these strongholds that have largely gone unchallenged throughout Christian history. When faith-filled believers start taking flames of fire from God's altar into these dark regions, and those fires start spreading to others and the light increases, Satan will be furious ... Satan will not surrender without a fierce fight! But when the devil fights against God's children he is fighting against God himself, and our Lord's weakness is much stronger than the devil's strength. Nevertheless, we expect that much blood will be spilled. One of the most powerful ways we can overcome the spiritual giants of Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism is by witnessing with our own blood and laying down our lives. For each Christian that the devil tries to kill, the light of the gospel will shine a little brighter and his hold on the people will loosen little by little. It will not be an army of elephants that marches into nations like Saudi Arabia ... Sometimes it seems as if a lot of mission effort consists of "elephant" plans – huge and grandiose strategies for overwhelming the devil's strongholds and making him surrender his captives. But it is easy for border guards to detect an elephant entering the country! It makes a lot of noise and is impossible to hide. Elephants are easy to catch because they move slowly and are so visible. This seems to be how much mission work is conducted today. Instead of an army of elephants, we believe God wants to send an army of insects and crawling creatures to cause the collapse of the house of Buddha, the house of Hinduism and the house of Mohammed. The Chinese church is not strong in human terms.

We don't have a lot of money or any grandiose plans. But we are an army of little ants, worms and termites who know how to work underground, because that is how we have learned to work in China for decades ... While an elephant cannot advance into sensitive areas, little worms and ants can go anywhere. They can go into temples, mosques and even into king's palaces ... Termites are very hard to detect. They do their destructive work inside the walls of homes and underneath the floorboards. Usually, the owner of the house has no clue that his magnificent structure is being eaten away until it is too late and it collapses in a heap! The termite can do what even an elephant is unable to do.⁶

To this day, I do not know where Muhammad is or if he is even still alive. All contact with the Western world was severed when he had to flee. Some historical examples indicate that this severance is probably for the best.⁷ I do not know how many disciples and house churches exist—assuming that they have not all been martyred. All I know is that if the Moravian disciples who were connected to Muhammad in some way are still alive, and if they have stayed true to the faith, God is strengthening his cherished “army of worms” under the cover of night as they quietly go about their business. At Jesus’ return—when Moravians are plucked up from the grave one-by-one in resurrected glory—I will find out whether they received a foundation of straw or gold in the Lord’s sight or not (1 Cor. 3:12–15). This causes me to tremble.

At the end of the day, all of us are simply weak vessels. However, God’s strength and grace is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9–10). One day our time of trials and tribulations will come to an end. Until that day, let us pray fervently that the Holy Spirit would birth authentic New Testament movements whose participants stay faithful to Jesus through suffering and persecution.

ENDNOTES

¹ Moravian proverb.

² Moravian proverb.

³ Quotation found in "100 World Christian Quotes," *The Traveling Team: Igniting Vision and Passion for the World*, <<http://www.thetravelingteam.org/?q=node/196>> (accessed January 2009).

⁴ Paul Hattaway, Brother Yun, Peter Xu Yongze, and Enoch Wang, *Back to Jerusalem* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2003).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶ "Messages from the Chinese Church Part 3: An Army of Worms," *Asia Harvest*, <[http://www.asiaharvest.org/pages/newsletters/73%20-%20Jan%202004%20-%20Messages%20from%20the%20Chinese%20Church%20\(Part%202\).pdf](http://www.asiaharvest.org/pages/newsletters/73%20-%20Jan%202004%20-%20Messages%20from%20the%20Chinese%20Church%20(Part%202).pdf)> (accessed January 09).

⁷ For example, in the nineteenth century, a wave of great persecution broke out against the church in the country of Madagascar. Foreign missionaries were expelled and absent from the nation for twenty-five years. During this time, church growth increased dramatically as indigenous disciples were forced to take the reins of leadership and organize themselves in the face of persecution (Rolland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church—and the Causes which Hinder it* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1962), 8). The same phenomenon occurred on an even more dramatic level in China when the Communist party came to power and all foreign missionaries were forced to leave the country between 1949 and 1952. Though many of the missionaries themselves bemoaned this exodus as a tragedy and defeat, the exact opposite was true, as Chinese disciples began to reorganize themselves amidst the attacks being waged against them. Under indigenous leadership, house church multiplication began to explode and eventually blossomed into the fastest growing movement in the history of Christianity (see Paul Hattaway, Brother Yun, Peter Xu Yongze, and Enoch Wang, *Back to Jerusalem* [Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2003], 8–16; "Christianity in China," *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_China> [accessed January 2009]).

Conclusion

In light of the large amount of material and content contained in the New Testament, it would be foolhardy for a book such as this to claim an exhaustive knowledge of how to lay foundations for the birthing of New Testament-caliber movements. In no way do I presume to have complete understanding on this topic. However, on the basis of the preceding discussion I can confidently assert that at the very least a New Testament mode of foundation-building:

1. Presupposes the gospel is backed up by the power of God and conviction of the Holy Spirit. This often causes social disruption.
2. Births movements, the expansion of which is not fueled by guilt and external motivators, but by passion and fiery love for Jesus.
3. Empowers new and indigenous disciples to share their fire with others from the beginning of their conversion experience.
4. Trusts in the Holy Spirit to orchestrate encounters with persons of peace and even apostles who have been sovereignly prepared and called by God for strategic turning points in redemptive history.
5. Proclaims the biblical gospel divested of Hellenistic defilements.

6. Communicates the gospel in ways that are receptor-oriented, and for the sake of the gospel uses culturally-meaningful bridges of communication that do not conflict with biblical truth.
7. Understands miracles in the present age as signs confirming the certainty and promise of a future hope.
8. Looks to the gospel itself as the anchor of all subsequent discipleship and as the framework that inherently supplies motivation for righteous living, holiness, and perseverance in the face of suffering.
9. Depends on and imparts the mystery of Messiah as the backbone of discipleship.
10. Entrusts new disciples and churches to the universally applicable pattern of apostolic teaching, and imparts this pattern in a reproducible way.
11. Reinforces the foundation by constantly drilling into new disciples the core values of obedience, respect for the authority of Scripture, hunger for the Word, constant covenant-based prayer, holiness, urgency (within an eschatological framework), and freely giving.
12. Imparts a bold vision of the Holy Spirit's sovereign leadership and continually instills confidence in the Spirit's competence as a leader.
13. From the outset defines the Holy Spirit, not the outside catalyst (i.e., a church planter or missionary), as the main agent of discipleship.
14. Preempts spiritual, financial dependence, and a compromised witness by teaching disciples to trust not in man but in the Holy Spirit. In many situations, shadow-mentoring is very helpful unto this end.
15. Instills a vision for boldness and fearlessness in proclaiming the gospel.
16. Utilizes pre-existing relational networks or the *oikos* to

facilitate the advance of the gospel and the rapid growth and expansion of the church.

17. Imparts a vision for the Great Commission and the gospel moving to new frontiers.
18. Helps new disciples see their place in God's redemptive story.
19. Focuses on birthing church-based movements, not on making individual and disconnected converts.
20. Encourages the use of house church and small cells when strategic and appropriate.
21. Trusts the Holy Spirit himself to point out leaders in the context of prayer and fasting.
22. Encourages the appointment of leaders on the basis of character, not formal education.
23. Encourages the appointment of more than one leader in each church for the sake of accountability in leadership.
24. Facilitates the removal of demonic footholds from God's holy temple.
25. Facilitates the church's growth in her identity and function as the house of prayer.
26. Warns potential and new disciples up-front about the costs of following Jesus and the persecution that will come with such a decision.
27. Releases an impartation of strength that accelerates the maturation process and the rate of numerical expansion; that sustains new disciples through difficult trials early in their faith journey; and that is transferable through every disciple participating in the movement.
28. Strengthens the saints by retelling their stories and spiritual history for them as they experience the emotional turbulence created by persecution.

29. Wrestles fervently and constantly for the birthing and maturing of the harvest in the place of prayer and intercession.
30. Entrusts new disciples, churches, and movements into the hands of the Holy Spirit in the confidence that he will protect and preserve them until the day of Messiah.
31. Conducts follow-up visits when possible and as the Holy Spirit opens doors.
32. Continues to influence new movements from afar through prayer and follow-up communications when possible or appropriate.
33. Trusts the Holy Spirit to strengthen the saints through seasons of persecution and trial.

My prayer is that this book has stimulated readers to begin to creatively integrate more of the first-century heartbeat into their own calling and ministry expression. When Jesus disrupts the systems, may we all be poised for harvest and braced for backlash.

Father of glory, Lord of mercy, we love being your children. There is none like you, O Creator of the universe. God of Israel, your mercy, compassion, and covenant faithfulness never fail us. Thank you for loving us and for setting us free from our sins through the blood of your Son, the God-man in whom all things are held together. We declare that you, Jesus, alone are God's appointed Messiah, and that all other claimants to the throne are idolatrous imposters. Father, we agree with your burning desire to give Jesus his full bridal inheritance. I pray for every person who reads this book. I ask you to strengthen them with power through your Holy Spirit in their inner being. Let them experience the depth of your love for them in fresh and powerful ways. Give them divine insight into your heart, plans, and purposes through dreams and visions. Unlock the treasures of your Word to them in ways unlike anything they have ever known before. I ask you to confirm the preaching of your gospel through them with signs, wonders, and miracles that bring great glory and honor to Jesus. You are worthy of our love and affection, Jesus. Grant all of us much grace and strength to persevere in holiness, blamelessness, prayer, and watchfulness as we wait for your appearing. Let your word run swiftly and be glorified with power throughout the nations! Save Israel! Complete the mystery! Resurrect the dead! Establish your kingdom! Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Appendix A: Step-by-Step Discipleship Sessions

The following more or less represents my own session-by-session approach to putting the ideas of this book into practice. Before proceeding, two things are worth mentioning.

Firstly, while New Testament precedent evinces the possibility of laying a solid foundation in shorter timeframes (relative to today's standards), this obviously does not mean that we cannot continue to exhort and encourage disciples from a distance, as Paul did with his letters or through coworkers (e.g., 1 Th. 3:2), or reconnect and visit as God opens the doors (e.g. Rom. 1:10, 13; 1 Cor. 16:7–9). Nor does it mean that God may never send someone like Apollos to build on a foundation that we have helped build (1 Cor. 3:6). Having said this, in some cases circumstances—persecution, imprisonment, isolation, severed communications, etc.—may not allow us to stay in contact with new disciples. In these instances, we must simply continue to trust the Holy Spirit to lead his people creatively and strategically.

Secondly, intervals of time between each session will vary depending on the circumstances. For instance, I spent a total of about ten weeks in Muhammad's area, during which time the discipleship process went through three phases. During Phase 1 (the first two weeks), I focused on leading Muhammad through the discipleship sessions in this appendix. Once he had gone through a session, his job was to go back and lead the other house church leaders through it; they, in turn, instructed the members of the new house churches. This stage was heaviest in terms of informational transfer. During

Phase 2 (about six weeks), my role shifted primarily to that of coach, encourager, and intercessor. When Muhammad came to me, I would pray for him and simply admonish him to keep going deeper in the things he already knew, and to encourage the others to do the same. I left Muhammad's area for one week after Phase 2. In Phase 3, we made a brief return visit to his area. During this time, we focused on closure and commissioning.

- I. Ten-fold strategy outline (summary)
 - A. Pray, fast, worship, and listen to the Holy Spirit
 - B. Discover persons of peace
 - C. Share the gospel with them. Let God confirm his word with power.
 - D. Before they make a decision, make clear the cost of their decision up front—they *will* be persecuted (e.g., 1 Th. 3:4). Share with them the blessings of the gospel, and be clear about the persecution and resistance they will face should they accept it.
 - E. If one or more people respond in faith, then set up a time to meet with them as soon as possible, preferably on the spot or later that same day.
 - F. Train them (using the below sessions). Engage in shadow-mentoring as appropriate.
 - G. Empower them. They must pass on everything they receive from us.
 - H. Pray them through persecution
 - I. When it is time to go elsewhere, commission them and commit them to the Holy Spirit
 - J. Continue to disciple them from afar in the place of prayer. If circumstances permit, maintain contact with them and provide follow-up training as God opens doors.
- II. Session 1 (Allot three to four hours)
 - A. Confession of faith: Lead them through a confession of faith

using Romans 10:8 and Luke 11:13: "Jesus, I confess that you are Lord, and I believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead. I ask you to fill my heart with the Holy Spirit."

B. Learning to hear the Holy Spirit's voice

1. Give them practical examples of the many different ways God speaks to his people: dreams, visions, sermons, the still small voice, circumstances, the created order, other people, etc. Then give them some specific examples from your own experience.
2. Next, explain that while hearing God's voice in these ways is important, the primary way God speaks to us is through the Bible. The Bible is our supreme, completely trustworthy, infallible authority (core value introduced). Every subjective experience must be tested and measured by the Scriptures. Have them repeat the following simple principle until they can repeat it on their own without your help:
 - i. The Bible is our authority. Anything we hear that contradicts the teaching of Scripture, we throw away. Anything that is expressly taught by Scripture, we can trust that it is the Lord speaking to us (core value reinforced). E.g., if we hear a voice telling us "God does not love you," we know that it is not God, because the Bible is clear that God does love us.
3. Now give them a chance to practice hearing the Holy Spirit's voice. Have them close their eyes and wait for the Holy Spirit to speak. As they wait, lay hands on them and ask God to release grace for them to begin hearing the Holy Spirit's voice. Ask him to begin releasing an impartation of strength.
4. Ask them to share what the Spirit told them.
5. After they have experienced hearing the Spirit's voice, boast about the competency of the Spirit's leadership.

Assure them that God will take care of their every need; that he will provide for them financially; that he will strengthen them through persecution; and that he will continue speaking to and guiding them through every leg of the journey until Jesus returns. Drill into them the truth that while Jesus does appoint human leaders in his Body for specific tasks, Jesus himself, and not yourself or any other person, is their primary leader. He alone is the one before whom they will stand accountable on the day of Messiah's appearing (Rom. 14:4, 12).

- C. Passing on Universal Disciple using MAWL: Use the MAWL training cycle—**M**odel, **A**ssist, **W**atch, and **L**ease¹—to pass on *Universal Disciple* (see Ch. 6). Firstly, model the pattern from beginning to end as the new believers watch. Do this a couple of times. It is important that you yourself know it from memory, because that is what you are asking them to do. Secondly, let them try as you assist them. Cheer them on as they try to reproduce it in front of you. Enthusiastically affirm them when they get it right. Gently correct them if they forget a point or two. They may feel nervous, so build their confidence as much as possible and jog their memory as needed. Thirdly, sit back and watch them reproduce it several times without your help. Once they have learned it, stress over and over the importance of obeying the pattern's precepts by the grace of God. Finally, emphasize to them the necessity of imparting it to those they lead to Christ. You leave only after they can reproduce the pattern in front of you without your help. Once they have reproduced *Universal Disciple* in front of you, it is now time to drill core values into them.
- D. Inculcation of core values
1. *Respect for the authority of Scripture.* Remind new disciples again of the principle in Lesson 1, Part B. Also tell them that when the Bible does not make sense to us, in humility we are to trust God's Word more than our own minds. As we do, God will honor this act of humility by opening

the truth of the Scriptures to us over time.

2. *Obedience to the Head of the Body, Jesus.* Take them back to this part of *Universal Disciple* and continue to stress the importance of obeying Jesus in all things.
3. *Hunger for the Word.* Refer to the point in *Universal Disciple* called "abiding in God's Word every day." Tell them that they need to begin reading or listening to the Bible as soon as possible. Hammer home the necessity of hungering for the Word as the key to understanding it. Stress to them that they need to continually ask the Holy Spirit to grant them hunger for the Word. Have them repeat the following principle until they can repeat it on their own without your help:
 - i. As we read the Bible: the parts we do understand, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us obey. The parts we do not understand, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand. Then, when we do understand it, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us obey.
4. *Constant covenant-based prayer.*
 - i. Benefits of mercy and peace: Take them back to the parts of *Universal Disciple* called "Putting off" and "Putting on." Explain to them that we cannot obey God in our own strength, but must completely rely on the provisions of the covenant that he has made available to us in Jesus' blood. We do this by constantly calling on Jesus' name in prayer. Tell them that when they stumble in their pursuit of holiness, they must not give up and should remember that God loves to show mercy to the repentant, contrite heart. Tell them that when they sin, they will receive God's forgiveness upon their confession and sincere repentance. Assure them of God's love and faithfulness to them in their weakness.

- ii. Benefit of grace: Next, review the part called "offering sacrifices of praise and prayer." Encourage them to cultivate a life of intimacy in Jesus and not to fight in their own strength, but by the grace of the Spirit. Stress the importance of carving out sacred time and space to meet with God. While God wants us to pray continually, we need focused times with him in prayer and in the Word. Give them practical examples of how they can do this. For example, new mothers can pray during nap times, or business people can pray on lunch breaks and before they leave for work. Stress that abiding in Jesus is key to accessing the grace of the covenant.
5. *Holiness*. Take them back to their new identity as discussed at the beginning of *Universal Disciple*. Remind them that they are now children of God and are thus called to be holy, set apart from the wicked ways of the world around them. Through prayer, they should actively ask God to cultivate in them a life of holiness that differentiates them from the world.
6. *Freely giving*. Stress to them the importance of freely giving everything they have freely received. Tell them that they are now responsible before God for passing on everything they receive from you to others they lead to faith or with whom they have influence.
7. *Urgency*.
 - i. Now take them back to the part of *Universal Disciple* called "Sharing the good news boldly." Have them write down the names of five to ten unbelieving friends, family members, or co-workers from their *oikos*. Tell them about Jesus' love and zeal for the lost, and how each minute people we love are dying without Jesus unto an eternal destiny in a lake of fire. Tell them about

our urgent responsibility to pray for and share the gospel with the lost. Tell them that we know Jesus' return will be soon, but not yet, and therefore we must share the gospel boldly with others while we know we still have time.

- a. For those working in a contexts where nominal Christianity is a major phenomenon—e.g., some parts of the Bible belt in the United States—when you have someone write down their *oikos* list, it might be beneficial to ask them to not only write down the friends, family members, and co-workers whom they consider lost, but also those they know have backslidden or fallen away. Most of the time the latter are lost and living in sin, but trapped within a cultural milieu that tells them they are fine so long as they attend church.
 - ii. At this point, begin to pray for the people on the list one by one. You take the first few names. Model sincere and heartfelt intercession for the lost. Then let the new disciples pray for the rest of the people on the list. As you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to fan the flames of urgency, fervency, and compassion. Once you have finished praying, now it is time to give them some practical tools for sharing the gospel.
- E. Tools for sharing the gospel
1. To teach disciples how to share their testimony using **MAWL**, you must first learn to communicate your own testimony effectively, concisely, and in a manner to which adults without biblical background can relate. As you share your testimony, leave out references to age and focus on themes that both communicate to your audience and make up a valid part of your story. Structure

it around three basic parts: *before* Jesus, *at* Jesus, and *after* Jesus. Keep it simple. Do not use any "churchy" or specialized theological language. Compare the following two testimonies:

- i. I had been going to Vacation Bible School all my life, but I did not get saved until I was 9 years old. The preacher made an altar call, and I went forward to accept Jesus. I decided there was no looking back. I knew that death had lost its sting. I've been justified through faith; I am now being sanctified; and I am on my way to being glorified.
- ii. I used to be afraid of death, and I used to be tormented by evil spirits. I even wanted to end my life. I felt ashamed because of all the evil things I had done. Then, I gave my life to Jesus, and he gave me a new heart. The demons no longer torment me. I now have hope and power to live a new life.

Not many adult unbelievers can relate to the first. Most human beings can relate to the second. Once you have modeled sharing your own testimony, let the new disciples now have a shot at it. Encourage them to share their testimony boldly as the Holy Spirit opens up opportunities.

2. Next, remind them that they are now filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Tell them that the Spirit's power is their greatest weapon as they share the gospel. Encourage them to actively look for opportunities to pray for the sick when they share the good news, and to offer to lay their hands on those with whom they share the gospel. The Holy Spirit will confirm the gospel with power.
3. Encourage them to begin sharing the gospel with those in their *oikos* immediately. If their encounter of the

gospel has been of a New Testament caliber up to this point, they should have little trouble sharing the gospel spontaneously and genuinely.

F. Water baptism

1. Briefly explain the meaning of water baptism using Romans 6. You can use the imagery of a coffin as an analogy: we die to the old self and we come up alive in Messiah. When we go into the water, it is like we're going into the coffin as our old life is put to death. When we come out of the water, it is like we are coming out of the coffin with our new life in Messiah.
2. Before they go into the water, ask them the following four questions:
 - i. Have you decided to follow Jesus?
 - ii. Do you know your sins are forgiven?
 - iii. When you experience hardships of many kinds—financial, relational, etc.—will you still follow Jesus?
 - iv. When they come into your house to drag you away, throw you in prison and threaten to kill you and your family, will you still follow Jesus?
3. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19–21).
4. Note in cross-cultural situations: If more than one person is being baptized, let the first person being baptized go on to baptize the next person. We want the new disciples to know that the significance of baptism is not derived from the one baptizing, but from the One into whom they are being baptized. In this way, we are avoiding the idea that the baptism performed by the missionary is somehow more significant than that performed by their own hands. As the movement spreads beyond your direct influence, it is important that they have confidence baptizing one another.

G. Send them out

1. Now it is time to send them out. Emphasize again that they are now responsible before God to obey everything that has been entrusted to them, and that they are also responsible to immediately pass on *everything* they have received from you to those they lead to faith.
2. Set up the next appointment. If they are faithful to follow through on this session, hopefully the next time you meet with them they will no longer be alone in their journey. When this happens, they will then be ready to receive a discipleship pattern for house church.

H. Intercession: Now the hard work begins. Set aside large chunks of time to begin laboring in prayer. Focus on praying the apostolic prayers of the New Testament. Pray for the rapid advance of the gospel (2 Th. 3:1–5); for the maturation of the disciples who will soon come to faith (1 Cor. 1:4–9); for the power of God to be released as the movement grows (Acts 4:29–30); for the release of dreams and visions (Acts 2:17–21); for new believers to encounter the Holy Spirit in ways that unlock understanding and revelation (Eph. 1:15–23, 3:14–21); etc.

I. Continual reminders and reinforcement: As long as the Holy Spirit allows you to be with a group of disciples, remind them of all of these truths over and over and over again.

III. Session 2 (Allot three to four hours)

A. Pass on a simple church pattern/format

1. If they have been faithful to obey and pass on the things they learned in Session 1, the number of new disciples is likely to increase quickly. It is now time to model and pass on a simple, easily memorable, and easily reproducible house church/small group model.
2. If you are shadow-mentoring, gather one to three of the new disciples you have led to faith. If you are simply incorporating new disciples into a small group you are

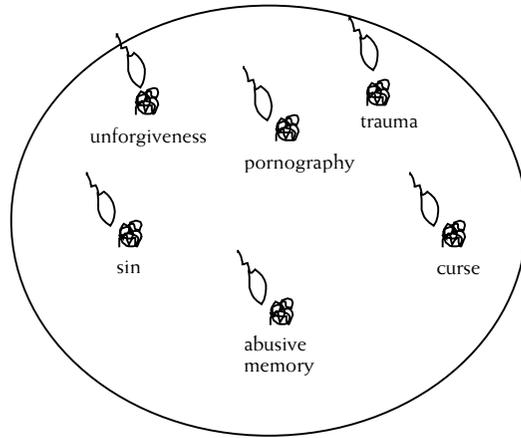
leading, then they will lead when the group multiplies.

3. Take them back to the part of *Universal Disciple* called "In the fellowship of God's people." Tell them you are now going to show them more about this.
4. Model and let them participate in the following three-part house church model:
 - i. Stage One (oriented toward intimacy—with God and one another)
 - a. Talk about each other's lives (small talk or serious issues). This provides a context for intimacy and bonding.
 - b. Accountability. Were we obedient this week? Have we been faithful to share the gospel with others (those prayed for previous week—see third stage)? How did it go?
 - c. Reconciliation and confession. Asking and receiving forgiveness as necessary and appropriate in the situation. Prelude to worship (Mt. 5:23–24).
 - d. Pray for each other
 - e. Worship
 - ii. Stage Two (oriented toward the Word of God)
 - a. Prayer: "Holy Spirit, we ask you to help us understand what we hear." (Emphasis on hunger and reliance on God)
 - b. Use Matthew 5:43–48 as a text for modeling (love for enemies is key because persecution is soon to break out).
 - c. Use these three basic, easily memorable questions for inductive Bible study:
 1. *What does the passage say?*
 2. *What do I have to obey?*

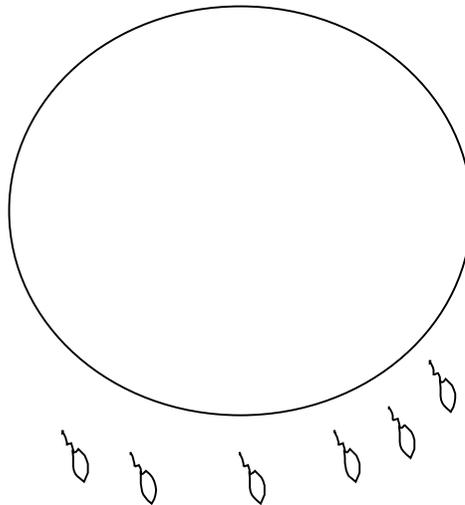
3. *What do I need to tell others?*
 - d. After the study is finished, take some time to respond to the Lord in prayer. Cry out for the Holy Spirit to help us obey the things he has taught us.
- iii. Stage Three (oriented toward others: giving, communion, and intercession)
 - a. Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26
 - b. Offering: 1 Corinthians 9:6–8
 - c. Each person names at least five people to pray for and commits before others to share the gospel with them, for which they will be held accountable the following week.
 - d. Pray for the salvation of the people they've just named, as well as for boldness to share with them.
 - e. Close with a worship song.
- B. Debrief: Now, take a few moments to debrief what they just experienced. Drill the three questions for the inductive Bible study into them until they can say them from memory. Also, point out the importance of eating together, either before or after the meeting if possible.
- C. Let them practice leading: Now, give each disciple a chance to practice by leading the group through the pattern. Assist them as necessary, but refrain from taking the lead. Really force them to work at it. This will build their confidence as they prepare to go and lead others.
- D. Send them out
 1. Now it is time for them to gather and lead the other disciples in a small group setting. Tell them that they are responsible to pass on the things they have experienced to those they lead to faith. Give them a reproducible CD or cassette tape of worship songs in their language. Admonish

them to meet together regularly. Tell them that each small group and house church should have at least two leaders.

2. Set up the next appointment. If they are faithful to follow through on this session, house churches are likely to emerge soon.
- E. Intercession: The hard work continues. Set aside large chunks of time to labor in prayer. Focus on praying the apostolic prayers of the New Testament. Pray for the rapid advance of the gospel (2 Th. 3:1–5); for the maturation of the disciples that will soon come to faith (1 Cor. 1:4–9); for the power of God to be released as the movement grows (Ac. 4:29–30); for the release of dreams and visions (Ac. 2:17–21); for new believers to encounter the Holy Spirit in ways that unlock understanding and revelation (Eph. 1:15–23, 3:14–21); etc.
- F. Continual reminders and reinforcement: As often as you see or talk to them between sessions, continue to drill into them the values and other information they learned in Session 1.
- IV. Session 3: (Allot two to three hours)
- A. Rats and Garbage
1. Now that a church has been formed, it is time to train them how to help each other get cleaned up and delivered.
 2. Draw the rats and garbage picture and explain to them the concept:
 - i. "Garbage" is a generic term for a broad range of issues that give demons a measure of legal access to our lives. Garbage can include things like sinful acts we have committed against others, or those committed against us; curses spoken against us by others; generational curses; unresolved trauma or painful memories; unresolved bitterness or grief; wallowing in anger, etc.



- ii. As garbage attracts rats, so our spiritual garbage attracts demons. However, when we repent, forgive, and turn all of our garbage over to Jesus, the footholds that give demons a legal right to affect our lives are removed. With nothing left to stand on, the devil is forced to flee when we rebuke and command him to leave through the Spirit's anointing:



3. Next, give them some examples of the garbage that used to plague your life. This is a time to be transparent and vulnerable. We all are messed-up human beings in need of help. These examples from your life will help them understand how the Holy Spirit wants to cleanse, heal, and forgive.
 4. Have them draw and explain the concept until you know they have grasped it and can pass it on to others.
 5. Assure them that Jesus loves them very much and that the Holy Spirit already knows what garbage he wants to help them deal with at this time. Tell them not to be afraid to turn everything over to Jesus. Tell them that as the Holy Spirit brings people to mind, they need to release forgiveness or receive forgiveness as appropriate.
 6. Now ask them close their eyes and fix their eyes on Jesus. Anoint them with oil, lay hands on them, and pray for them. The Holy Spirit will begin to bring things to their minds: sins, traumatic memories, etc. As the process continues, they may begin to weep. Just love them and keep encouraging them to give it all to Jesus.
 7. When they are finished, encourage them to let the Spirit lead them into this process as often as necessary. Tell them that at first, it may feel like the emotional heart surgery is never going to end, but that they will continue to feel more and more freedom over time.
- B. Send them out
1. Now it is time for them to go back and pass this on to the other disciples whom they have led to faith in the context of house church.
 2. Set up the next appointment.
- C. Intercession: The hard work continues. Set aside large chunks of time to labor in prayer. Focus on praying the apostolic prayers of the New Testament. Pray for the rapid advance of the gospel (2 Th. 3:1–5); for the maturation of the disciples

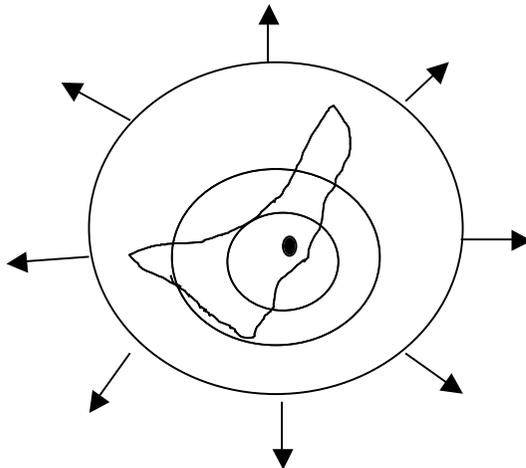
that will soon come to faith (1 Cor. 1:4–9); for the power of God to be released as the movement grows (Ac. 4:29–30); for the release of dreams and visions (Ac. 2:17–21); for new believers to encounter the Holy Spirit in ways that unlock understanding and revelation (Eph. 1:15–23, 3:14–21); etc.

D. Continual reminders and reinforcement: As often as you see or talk to them between sessions, continue to drill into them the values and other information they learned in Session 1.

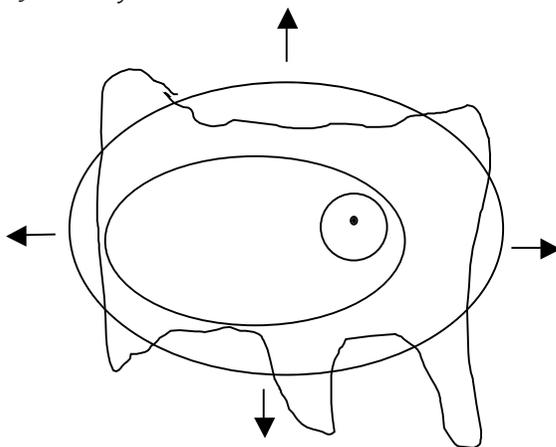
V. Session 4 (Allot two to three hours)

A. The Great Commission

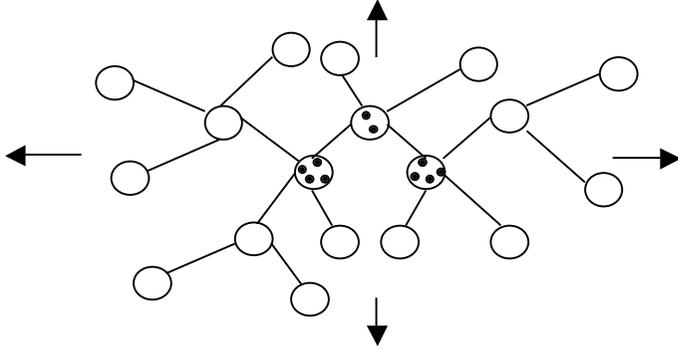
1. It is now time to help them see how their story fits into the big picture of God's redemptive storyline.
2. Read to them the Great Commission from Matthew 28:18–20. Remind them that Jesus is the head, and that we are to obey everything he says. As followers of Jesus, as we go about our daily lives we are to share the gospel and make disciples.
3. Now read Acts 1:8 to them. Draw a rough sketch of the nation of Israel. Draw a small point, indicating Jerusalem, surrounded by concentric circles denoting Judea, Samaria, and the "ends of the earth." Explain how Jesus wants us to make disciples wherever we go and to move outward as the Holy Spirit leads.



4. Now, draw a picture of your "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth." Draw concentric circles around these. Do not get hung-up on whether you have a Jerusalem and Judea but not a Samaria! They will get the point. Just do your best.



5. Have them draw their "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth," with corresponding concentric circles.
 6. Now have everyone get on their knees, lay their hands on the picture, and cry out for God to bring salvation to these areas. As you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to begin imparting a vision and burden for the Great Commission to the disciples.
- B. Simple church multiplication
1. After you have finished praying, it is time to pass on a simple pattern for church multiplication. One person becomes two; two become four, etc. These ones form a church. When the church reaches ten to twelve people, the church should multiply, and so on until Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth are entirely filled with praying and worshipping communities who love and serve Jesus. Point out to them that this is one of, if not the most, effective ways to fulfill the Great Commission. Draw a simple and reproducible diagram to help them grasp the concept.



- C. Leadership: Tell them that as each church multiplies, at least two people are to be appointed as leaders for each house church. Stress to them that these leaders are to be appointed on the basis of character, humility, and the Spirit's leadership, not on the basis of education.
 - D. Send them out: Now it is time for them to go back and pass this on to the other disciples in context of house church.
 - E. Set up the next appointment.
 - F. Intercession: The hard work continues. Set aside large chunks of time to labor in prayer. Focus on praying the apostolic prayers of the New Testament. Pray for the rapid advance of the gospel (2 Th. 3:1–5); for the maturation of the disciples that will soon come to faith (1 Cor. 1:4–9); for the power of God to be released as the movement grows (Ac. 4:29–30); for the release of dreams and visions (Ac. 2:17–21); for new believers to encounter the Holy Spirit in ways that unlock understanding and revelation (Eph. 1:15–23, 3:14–21); etc.
 - G. Continual reminders and reinforcement: As often as you see or talk to them between sessions, continue to drill into them the values and other information they learned in Session 1.
- VI. Session 5 (Allot four hours)
- A. Cast a high vision for corporate prayer
 1. It is time to cast a high vision for regular corporate prayer meetings.

1. If you are in a shadow-mentoring situation, gather the key leaders you are mentoring.
 2. Before beginning, highlight and stress the strategic links between prayer meetings, intimacy with God, and the gospel's advance. Most importantly, highlight the importance of prayer simply for the sake of enjoying the enjoyable God. Expect the Holy Spirit to show up in power.
 3. Set aside four hours for an extended prayer meeting. Use the apostolic prayers of the New Testament as a guide. If possible, use music or instruments to make the atmosphere of prayer more enjoyable. I recommend some kind of contextualized version of the harp and bowl model used at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, MO.
 4. As the evening progresses, let them lead the prayer meeting.
 5. Toward the end of the meeting, debrief and review the value of regular corporate prayer meetings.
- B. Send them out: Now it is time for them to go and gather other disciples for a prayer meeting. They are now responsible to pass on what has been freely given to them.
- C. Intercession: The hard work continues. Set aside large chunks of time to labor in prayer. Focus on praying the apostolic prayers of the New Testament. Pray for the rapid advance of the gospel (2 Th. 3:1–5); for the maturation of the disciples that will soon come to faith (1 Cor. 1:4–9); for the power of God to be released as the movement grows (Ac. 4:29–30); for the release of dreams and visions (Ac. 2:17–21); for new believers to encounter the Holy Spirit in ways that unlock understanding and revelation (Eph. 1:15–23, 3:14–21); etc.
- D. Continual reminders and reinforcement: As often as you see or talk to them between sessions, continue to drill into them

the values and other information they learned in Session 1.

- E. Set up appointments for encouraging, coaching, prayer, and admonishment as appropriate and necessary, as long as God keeps you there.

VII. Session 6 (Allot three to four hours)

A. Timing

1. While the above sessions should typically take place toward the beginning of the discipleship process, this session should be conducted toward the end, just before you move on to your next assignment.

- B. Referrals and resources: As you deem appropriate under the Spirit's leadership, point them to available resources that you think could further aid them in their spiritual growth following your departure (e.g., ministries that specialize in certain areas, like helping people overcome sexual brokenness). The kind, quality, and availability of resources will vary depending on location and cultural context. Be careful not to point them to any resources that may compromise the vision of the fullness of New Testament faith that they have received.

C. Commissioning and dedication

1. Now it is time to commission and commit those you have been mentoring to the Holy Spirit.
2. Gather the disciples whom you have been mentoring.
3. One final time, review the previous sessions and core values that you have been drilling into them from the beginning.
4. When you are finished, lay hands on them and commit them to the care of the Holy Spirit. Freely express your confidence in the Spirit's ability to keep them blameless and pure until the day of Messiah.
5. Inform and warn them that the task is now fully in their hands under the Spirit's leadership. Remind them Jesus is the One before whom they will stand on the day of Messiah's appearing, and that therefore in your absence they should

- go deeper and deeper in the things they have received from you.
2. Say goodbye.
- D. Send them out: Release the entire situation to the Lord in the confidence that the Spirit will strengthen and lead them well to the end.
- E. Exit the context
1. If your departure is under voluntary circumstances, then move on to your next assignment as the Holy Spirit directs and leads.
 2. If circumstances permit, try to stay in touch from afar.
- F. Intercession
1. The hard work continues. Set aside large chunks of time to labor in prayer. Focus on praying the apostolic prayers of the New Testament. Pray for the rapid advance of the gospel (2 Th. 3:1–5); for the maturation of the disciples that will soon come to faith (1 Cor. 1:4–9); for the power of God to be released as the movement grows (Ac. 4:29–30); for the release of dreams and visions (Ac. 2:17–21); for new believers to encounter the Holy Spirit in ways that unlock understanding and revelation (Eph. 1:15–23, 3:14–21); etc.
 2. In the future, pray for opportunities to return to the area as the Holy Spirit leads and opens doors.

ENDNOTES

¹David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (small booklet) (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, 1999), 19.

Appendix B: Core Elements of the Kerygma in Peter and Paul's Major Messages in the Book of Acts

Messianic Accreditation: God accredits Jesus as promised Old Testament Messiah through his life and ministry

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 2:14–39)

- Firstfruits outpouring of the Spirit in fulfillment of Joel 2, implying that the Messiah had come (Is. 44, 59:21; Ps. 68:18, etc.) (vv. 14–21).
- Through signs, wonders, and miracles of Jesus' ministry, God has accredited Jesus as the Messiah (v. 22).
- Messiah, at the Father's right hand (cf. Ps. 110), has received the Holy Spirit from the Father (Ps. 68:18; cf. Eph. 4:7–8) and has poured out the Holy Spirit as Joel prophesied (Is. 44, 59:21; Joel 2; etc.) (i.e., expected Messianic functions) (v. 32–35).

Peter to Cornelius (Ac. 10:36–43)

- Reference to the power, signs, and wonders that marked Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus went about doing good, and through the Holy Spirit's anointing set free those held captive by the devil (i.e., accredited by God as Messiah, cf. Ac. 2:22) (vv. 37–38).

Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Ac. 13:16–40)

- Background of Israel's history from Hebrew Scriptures leading

up to the Davidic Covenant. Jesus the promised Messianic Seed of David (in accordance with the Davidic covenant; cf. Rom. 1:3) (vv.17–23).

- John the Baptist testified to Jesus as Messiah (v. 24–25).

Messianic Suffering: Crucifixion of Jesus as an atonement for the forgiveness of sins

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 2:14–39)

- Jesus was crucified according to the Father's plan (v. 23).

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 3)

- The author of life (expected Messianic function—the one who will resurrect the righteous and execute judgment at the end of the age; e.g. Is. 49:8–9; cf. Jn. 5:25, 11:43) has been killed (v. 15) (Messianic mystery).
- These events prophesied—Messiah had to suffer as atonement (first, before entering his glory, cf. Lk. 24:26) (vv. 17–18) (Messianic mystery).
- Messiah sent first time as atonement for forgiveness (see Ch. 5) (v. 26).

Peter and apostles to Sanhedrin (Ac. 5:30–32)

- Those who killed Jesus did so thinking he was cursed (implied: he was actually carrying our curse; Deut. 21:23; cf. Gal. 3:13) (v. 30b).

Peter to Cornelius (Ac. 10:36–43)

- God's message sent to Israel, good news of covenant of peace (Is. 54:10; Ez. 34:25) through Jesus Messiah, New Covenant made in his blood with believing remnant in Israel (see Ch. 5) (v. 36).
- In the crucifixion, Jesus took our curse upon him, unto the forgiveness of sins (v. 39).

Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Ac. 13:16–40)

- Jesus' crucifixion fulfilled the words of the prophets (v. 27).

Jesus was innocent but put on a tree or was condemned and executed, bearing a curse (vv. 28–29).

- The Mosaic sacrificial system, the blood of bulls and goats, couldn't bring forgiveness (cf. Heb. 9–10) (i.e., they were types of Messianic atonement, unto the forgiveness now being offered in v. 38) (v. 39).

Messianic Vindication: Resurrection of Jesus as firstfruits of the resurrection of the righteous, and as vindication of his innocence and Messiahship

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 2:14–39)

- The resurrection—Messianic vindication; no sin in Jesus, therefore death, which comes through sin, was reversed in Jesus' resurrection (v. 24).
- Jesus, the crucified one, has been vindicated by God as the Messiah through his resurrection (v. 36).

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 3)

- God has resurrected and glorified Jesus, the innocently crucified one (but vindicated as innocent through resurrection) (vv. 12–13). Implication—Israel still guilty (vv. 13–14).
- Jesus was killed, but God raised him from the dead (vindicated as a firstfruits of the final resurrection of which he will be the author through his word; Is. 49:8–9; cf. Jn. 5:25, 11:43) (v. 15).

Peter and apostles to Sanhedrin (Ac. 5:30–32)

- God of our fathers (God of covenants with Israel) raised Jesus from the dead (thereby vindicating him as righteous) (v. 30a).
- God vindicated and exalted Jesus as Messiah through resurrection (implication—those who killed him are therefore the ones cursed; implication of curse—those who crucified the Messiah are presently excluded from Messianic kingdom and destined for resurrection of wicked and lake of

fire; repentance, therefore, is needed) (vv. 30a, 31).

Peter to Cornelius (Ac. 10:36-43)

- Jesus resurrected on the third day (as firstfruits of resurrection of righteous—cf. 1 Cor. 15; see Ch. 5) (v. 40–41).

Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Ac. 13:16–40)

- Resurrection: God raised Jesus from the dead (thereby vindicating him; implication—the curse that he bore was ours) (vv. 29–31). These events are a firstfruits fulfillment of Old Testament covenants (v. 32).
- Governmental installment of Jesus as Davidic Messiah by means of resurrection. Prophesied that Messiah would be resurrected in agreement with Davidic Covenant, which included promise of resurrection and Messianic installation through resurrection (vv. 33–34).
- Unlike David himself, Jesus, the promised Davidic Holy One, did not see decay (vv. 35–37).

Paul in Athens (Ac. 17:22–31)

- Jesus' resurrection (vindication of the righteous by means of resurrection) is a firstfruits sign and proof, guaranteeing that God will be true to his word to righteously judge the righteous and wicked through his Messiah (cf. Ps. 110) (v. 31).

Coming Messianic Judgment and Kingdom: Messiah's return at the end of the age to judge the wicked, resurrect the righteous, and establish the kingdom of God

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 2:14–39)

- Jesus is God's appointed Judge. Implied from reference to Ps. 110 (see Ps. 110:5–7) (vv. 34–36).

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 3)

- Second coming will result in the resurrection of the righteous and the restoration of all things in the Messianic kingdom (v. 21).

Peter and apostles to Sanhedrin (Ac. 5:30–32)

- Messianic judgment temporarily withheld as Jesus waits at Father's right hand (Ps. 110) for purpose of offering mercy and forgiveness of sins (cf. Lk. 24:47). The coming judgment implied (v. 31).

Peter to Cornelius (Ac. 10:36–43)

- This Jesus is Lord of all (all the earth, Jews and Gentiles—i.e., he will judge Gentiles too, like Cornelius, as lord of all) (v. 36).
- Jesus is God's appointed judge, who will judge living and dead (v. 42).

Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Ac. 13:16–40)

- Warning against unbelief (unto eternal punishments in the resurrection of the wicked and the lake of fire) (vv. 40–41).

Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (Ac. 14:8–18)

- Turn from worthless idols to the living God, who created everything (implying that he is Lord and possessor of all creation, and will hold everyone accountable for the way we have corrupted it; cf. Ac. 10:36) (v. 15).

Paul in Athens (Ac. 17:22–31)

- The truth about God is being proclaimed (v. 23). God is the Creator and, unlike false idols, does not live in man-made temples (v. 24). God gives all men life (v. 25). Unlike idols that have to be fixed or "healed" or given therapy (Gk: *therapeuo*) by human hands, God gives all men life and breath and sustains them (implying the worthlessness of the idols in Athens) (v. 25). God sovereignly establishes the boundaries of the nations (allusion to Deut. 32:8) (implying that he is thus the owner and Lord of the nations, "Lord of all," and will hold all nations to account; cf. v. 30, Ac. 10:36) (v. 26).
- Repentance needed because God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice through his appointed Messiah

(administering eternal rewards for the righteous, and eternal punishments for the wicked) (v. 31).

Messianic Mercy and Offer of Forgiveness: Repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord and Messiah for the forgiveness of sins, unto inclusion in the resurrection of righteous and the Messianic kingdom

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 2:14–39)

- Summons to repentance and faith in name of Jesus, baptism—for the forgiveness of sins (now available through the atonement in Jesus' blood) (v. 38).

Peter in Jerusalem (Ac. 3)

- Summons to repentance and faith for forgiveness of sins unto inclusion in Messianic kingdom and resurrection of the righteous, and all Israel's repentance unto Messiah's return (cf. Rom. 11:26–27) (vv. 17–20).

Peter and apostles to Sanhedrin (Ac. 5:30–32)

- Messianic judgment temporarily withheld as Jesus waits at Father's right hand (Ps. 110) for the purpose of offering mercy and forgiveness of sins (cf. Lk. 24:47) (v. 31).

Peter to Cornelius (Ac. 10:36–43)

- Faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins (unto inclusion in resurrection of the righteous and Messianic kingdom) (v. 43).

Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Ac. 13:16–40)

- Forgiveness of sins offered in Jesus' name (unto inclusion in resurrection of righteous) (v. 38).

Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (Ac. 14:8–18)

- In the past, God let wicked people have their own way (cf. Rom. 1:26: "gave them over"), choosing to temporarily restrain from punishing the wicked because of his patience

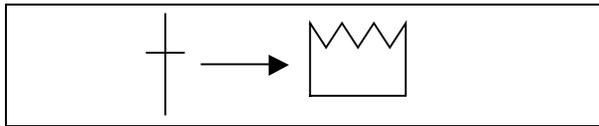
and mercy (cf. Ac. 17:30; 2 Pt. 3:9) (v. 16). Despite their wickedness, God has continually provided himself a testimony, reaching out to the nations in love and patience through undeserved acts of kindness (cf. Mt. 5:35) (v. 17). (Implied: Therefore repent and believe, before the time of mercy comes to an end at the second coming of Israel's Messiah).

Paul in Athens (Ac. 17:22–31)

- God determined boundaries of the nations (possible allusion to scattering at Babel, cf. Gen. 11) so that they might seek and grope for him (v. 27). God is near to us, wanting to be found (implying mercy and delay of judgment despite rebellion of nations on plains of Shinar, cf. Gen. 11) (vv. 27–28). We are God's offspring, made in his image. Idols that we fashion in our image are futile and worthless (v. 29). God has been patient and merciful with the nations worshipping these idols, restraining from judgment. Now he commands all people from all nations to repent of such wickedness (v. 30).

Appendix C: Example of Universal Disciple for Non-Literates

- I. The Cornerstone and Foundation of God's house: Jesus, the *crucified* Messiah, is Lord
 - A. Precept: Jesus is fashioning his people into saints worthy of the resurrection of the righteous and of inclusion in his kingdom. When you repented and confessed Jesus as Lord, you became a child of God. Therefore, you are now a new creature, called to be holy as God is holy, set apart from the wicked ways of the world as God's own possession. Before Jesus received his reward of resurrection, he died on a cross in full obedience to the Father for the forgiveness of our sins. The example of the crucified Messiah is now the foundation upon which everything in our life is built.
 - B. Sketch:

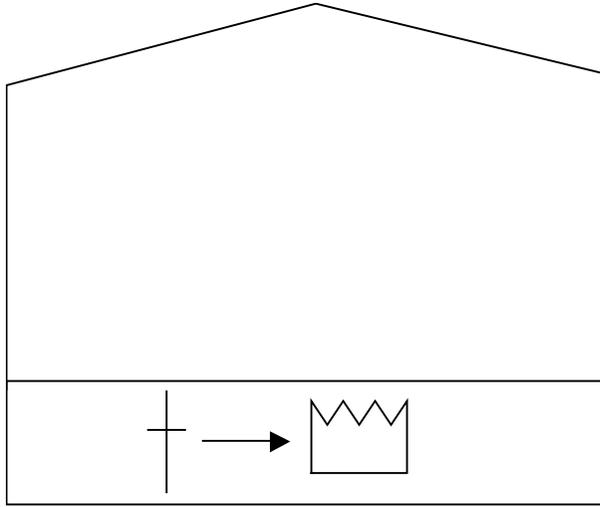


- C. Reinforcement of new identity: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:
 - a. Q: "What are you?"
 - b. A: "A child of God, a new creature, called to be holy as God is holy."

- D. Behavioral response: This is how we build our lives on this foundation daily (the following to be accompanied by hand gestures to increase memorability)
- a. Abiding in God's Word every day (gesture: put your hand to your ear to communicate engaging God's Word through listening—oral culture)
 - b. Offering up sacrifices of prayer and praise (gesture: raise hands in the air)
 - c. Fellowshiping with God's people (gesture: a hand clasp)
 - d. Sharing the good news boldly with others (gesture: a movement of the hand from the mouth, symbolizing words going from the mouth)
 - e. Looking to Jesus as your example of perseverance in the face of suffering (gesture: lift up the arms in the form of a cross)

II. God's temple/house

- A. Precept: When you submitted your life to Jesus, God put his Spirit into you as a deposit, guaranteeing your resurrection if you hold firmly to the faith until Jesus' return. You are now a part of God's house, his temple. Together with all of the saints, you are being built into a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Jesus is Lord over this house.
- B. Sketch:

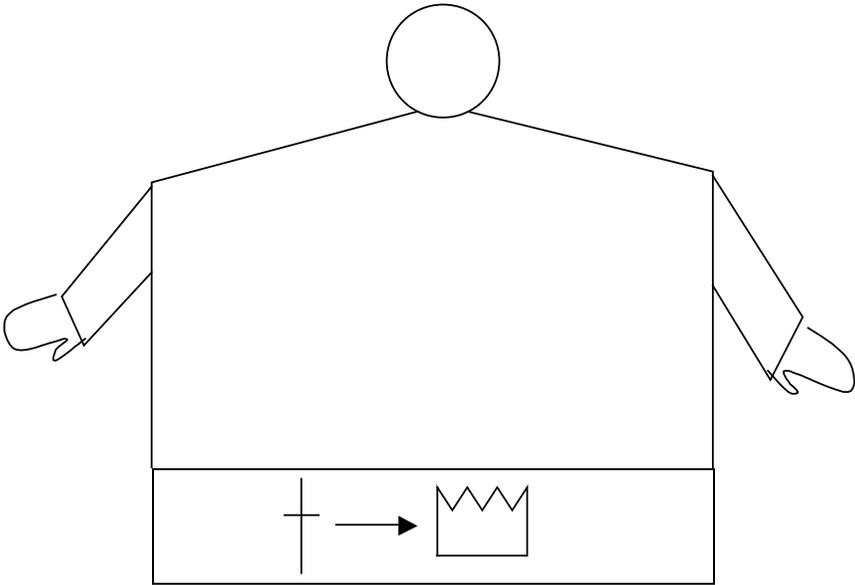


- C. Reinforcement of corporate identity: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:
- Q: "What are you part of?"
 - A: "God's house, in which his Spirit dwells."

III. The Body of Messiah

- A. Precept: Moreover, you are also part of the Body of Messiah, the head of which is Jesus the Messiah. Jesus has full governmental authority over his Body. Just as the members of our body obey our heads, so you are now to wholeheartedly obey Jesus in everything.

B. Sketch:



C. Reinforcement of corporate identity: have them repeat their new identity to you until they do not need your help:

- a. Q: "What are you part of?"
- b. A: "Messiah's Body, of which he is the head and authority."

IV. Three pillars: faith, love, and hope

A This temple has three pillars that make it stand firm and strong to the end: faith, love, and hope

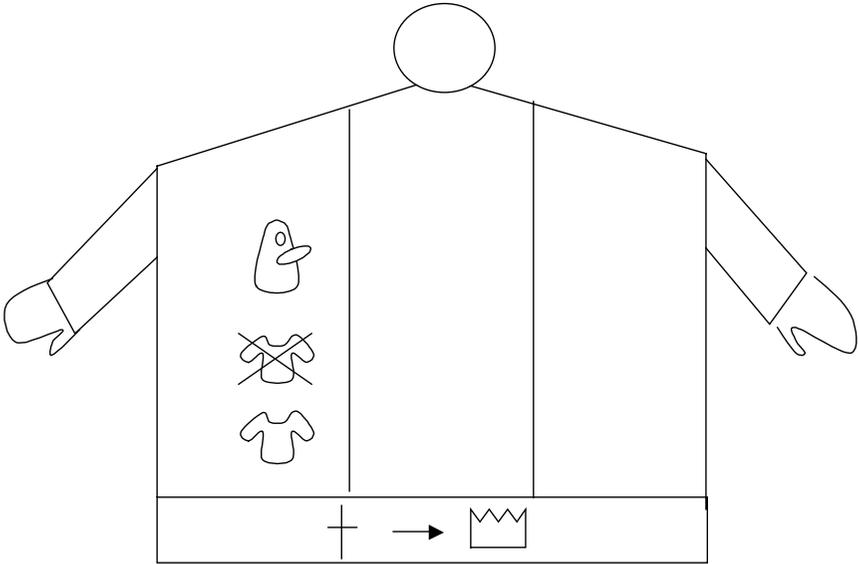
B. Reinforcement of pillars: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:

- a. Q: "How many pillars are there in this house?"
- b. A: "Three: faith, love, and hope"

V. Faith

- A. Precept: Though you do not see Jesus now, by faith you believe that he is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and the Judge who will come again to resurrect and reward the righteous, punish the wicked, and establish the kingdom of God. Through faith and trust in his atoning sacrifice, you have received the forgiveness of sins and a firstfruits deposit of the Holy Spirit. Through this deposit, God enables you to resist sin and persevere in righteousness until Jesus returns. This enabling power is called grace.
- B. Sketchable metaphor: The Spirit now lives in you. As a young child receives nourishment and strength by daily nursing at his mother's breast, so now all of you receive the power you need to live a new life. The Spirit's grace is like the milk by which one lives. Faith in Jesus is like the breast. And prayer is the means by which one regularly takes in the source of nourishment and power.
- C. Behavioral response: Therefore, through the power of this grace, every day you:
 - a. *Put off and mortify* your former nature: lust, pride, jealousy, meanness, selfishness, greed, anger, deceit, slander, gossip, and all other such things. These are not appropriate for a holy child of God.
 - b. *Put on and clothe yourselves* with your new nature: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, kindness, self-control, mercy, humility, and all other such things. These are appropriate for a holy child of God.
 - c. *Persevere*: When you stumble in your pursuit of holiness, do not give up. God loves to show mercy to the repentant and contrite heart. Confess and repent of your sin, receive God's forgiveness, and keep fighting not in your own strength, but by the grace of the Spirit. God is faithful. Constantly ask the Holy Spirit for help in prayer, and he will give you the grace you need to mature in righteousness over time.

D. Sketch:



E. Reinforcement of faith pillar: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:

- a. Q: "What will Jesus do when he returns?"
- b. A: "Resurrect and reward the righteous, punish the wicked, and establish his kingdom."
- c. Q: "What then do you need to do?"
- d. A: "Live righteously. Every day, put off the old, and put on the new by God's grace."

VI. Love

A. Precept: When Jesus put the deposit of the Spirit into you, he poured out his love into your heart. The fruit of the Spirit is love. The Spirit empowers us to love God and others as Jesus loves God and others. Jesus is a priest who loves and obeys his Father with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength. He is also a servant-ruler, who continually and humbly lays down his life for the well-being of his people. He is also

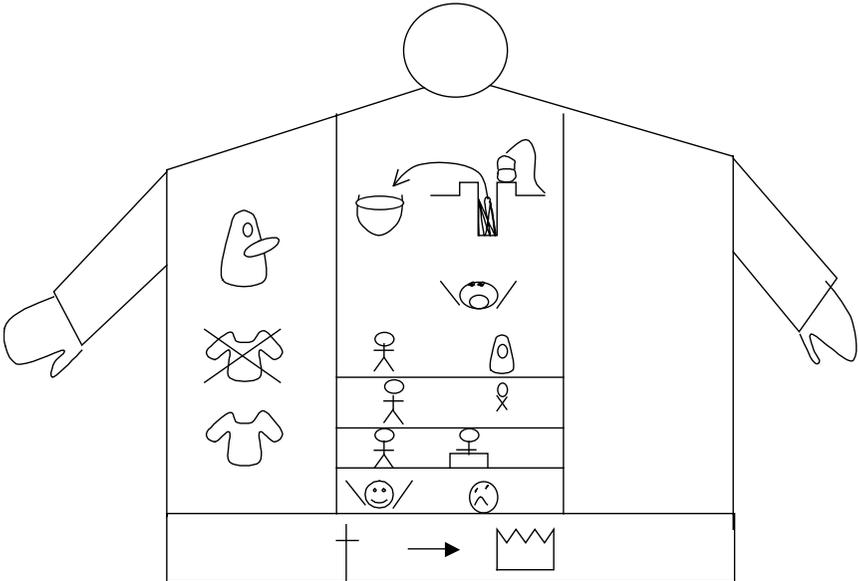
merciful and patient. When he died on the cross, he forgave and blessed his enemies and persecutors.

- B. Sketchable metaphor: When God gave you the Holy Spirit, he poured his love inside of you. Jesus is like a well. The love of the Holy Spirit is like water drawn from the well. And your heart is the container into which that water is poured.
- C. Behavioral response: Therefore, with this new power in your heart to love through the Holy Spirit, you are commanded to:
 - a. Wholeheartedly obey the first commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength." Do this through:
 - i. *Thanking*: continually offer thanks to God the Father for all he has done for you in Jesus.
 - ii. *Singing*: continually sing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord.
 - iii. *Teaching*: let the Word of God dwell in you richly as you admonish one another in love.
 - iv. *Submitting*: continually submit to Jesus' leadership in humility. Voluntarily submit to one another in love.
 - b. Love others self-sacrificially as Jesus loves you self-sacrificially:
 - i. *Husbands*, don't treat your wives harshly, but love and humbly serve them as Messiah loves and serves his Body. *Wives*, love, serve, and humbly submit to your husbands, as the Body of Messiah joyfully serves and submits to its head, Jesus.
 - ii. *Fathers*, don't provoke your children to anger, but serve them and raise them up in the discipline and counsel of the Lord. *Children*, humbly obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.
 - iii. *Employers (masters)*, serve your employees. Do not

cheat them, but treat them fairly and give them what they deserve. *Employees (slaves)*, obey your employers, and do your work well and honestly. Everything you do, do it as to the Lord, not men.

- iv. *Insiders (those within the Body)*, continue to serve and lay down your lives for one another. In regard to *outsiders (those outside the Body)*, pray for them. Walk in wisdom toward them and make the most of every opportunity. Let your speech be seasoned with salt, that you will know how to answer everyone. When they persecute and oppress you, forgive them, as Jesus has forgiven us.

D. Sketch:



- E. Reinforcement of love pillar: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:
- Q: "What has God put into us by the Spirit?"
 - A: "The love of Messiah"

- c. Q: "What then do you need to do?"
- d. A: "Love God and others as Jesus does"

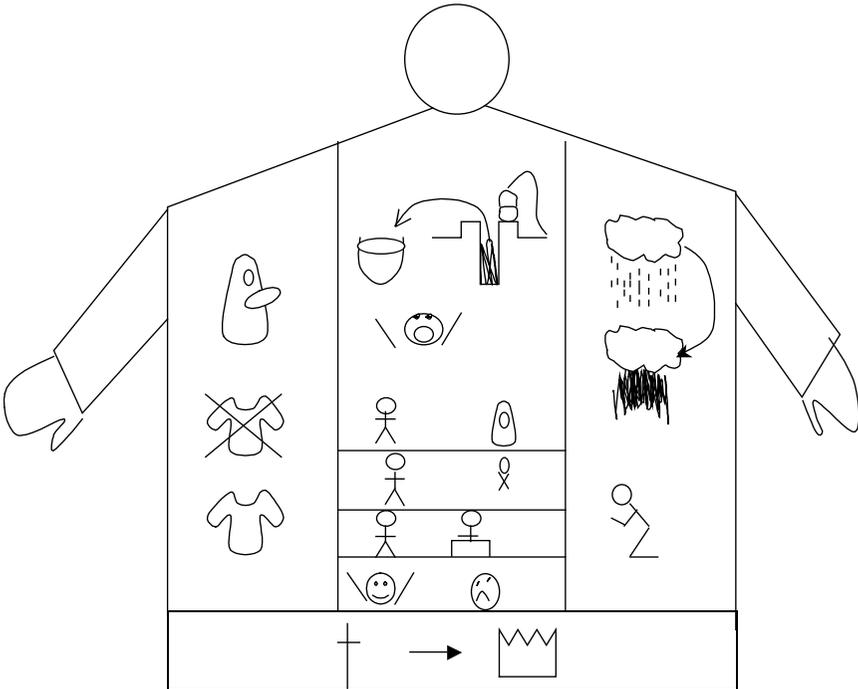
VII. Hope

- A. Precept: Your hope is in Jesus' return. He is coming soon. The hour is urgent. When Jesus returns, he will complete our redemption by giving us resurrected bodies. His Spirit in you is a deposit guaranteeing your bodily redemption at his return. When Jesus returns, he will deliver us from our persecutors and oppressors, both human and demonic. He will reward the saints. He will establish the kingdom of God and install the saints in positions of authority in his kingdom. He will purge wickedness from the earth and fill it with the glory of God. He will return after the completion of the Gentile harvest and the salvation of the Jewish people. Until that day, we are in a fierce battle against demonic powers trying to resist God's purposes. You do not wrestle against flesh and blood.
- B. Sketchable metaphor: God imparted the Holy Spirit to you as a deposit. That present deposit points to the future, when God will complete your redemption in the resurrection and establish the kingdom of God. It is like small showers before a heavy rainstorm. The showers point to the heavy rains which are soon to come.
- C. Behavioral response: The hour is urgent. As you wait for your hope to be realized, you must fervently:
 - a. *Pray, fast, and watch*: we must cry out to God night and day in prayer. We must pour out our heart to God in fervent intercession, asking for the lost, for the Gentile harvest, for Israel's salvation, and for the maturity and perseverance of the Bride as we face tests and difficulties.
 - b. *Proclaim*: we must proclaim the gospel boldly to all, summoning people to repentance and faith for the forgiveness of sins. We must boldly proclaim the gospel

to both Jew and Gentile.

- c. *Persevere, resist, and fight*: we must put on the armor of God and vigilantly resist the temptations of the devil through prayer. We must put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet of readiness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.
- d. *Pardon*: We must bless, forgive, and pray for your human persecutors
- e. *Provoke*: We must provoke Israel to jealousy for her Messiah through self-sacrifice on behalf of the undeserving, as Jesus sacrificed his life for us when we were undeserving. The Bride is God's chosen instrument for provoking Israel to jealousy at the end of the age.

D. Sketch:



- E. Reinforcement of love pillar: have the disciple repeat his or her new identity to you until he or she does not need your help:

- a. Q: "What will Jesus do when he returns?"
- b. A: "Complete our redemption, deliver us from our enemies, reward the righteous, and establish the kingdom of God"
- c. Q: "What then do you need to do until then?"
- d. A: "Pray, proclaim, persevere, pardon, provoke"

VIII. Summary

- A. Precept: Jesus is going to return for a pure, spotless Bride. This is the desire of his heart. He is not coming back for a compromising prostitute, but for a pure virgin. This pattern is God's blueprint for transforming us into the image of Messiah, into a Bride made ready.
- B. Behavioral response: Wholeheartedly obey the pattern until Messiah's return.

