

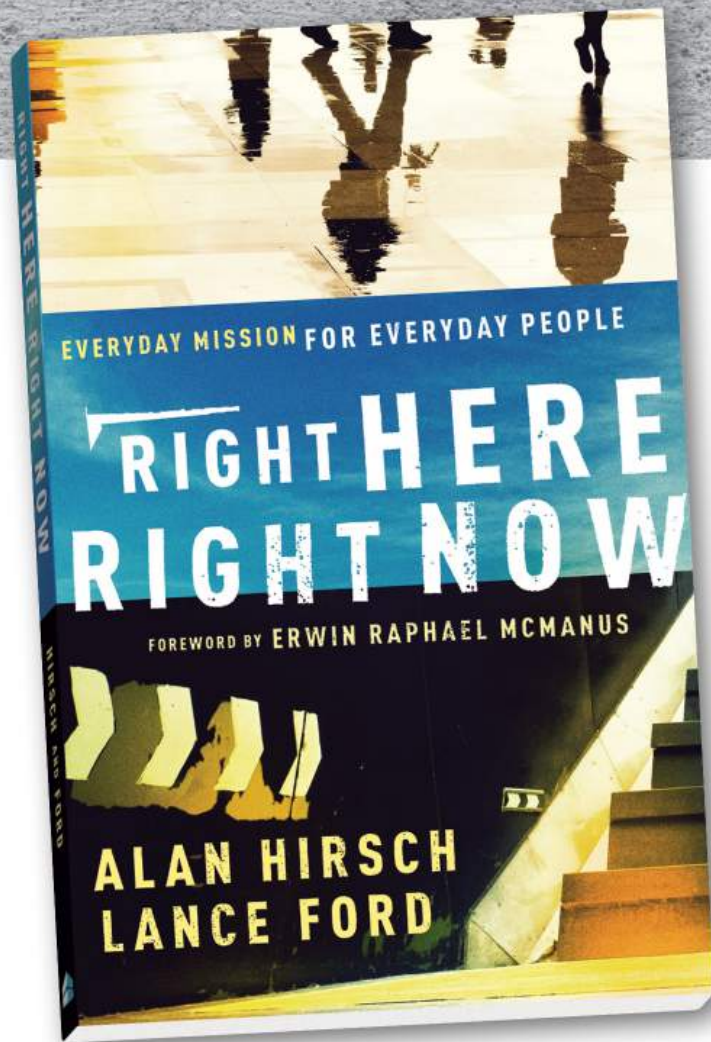
***FAST FORWARD* to MISSION**

Frameworks for a Life of Impact



Alan Hirsch

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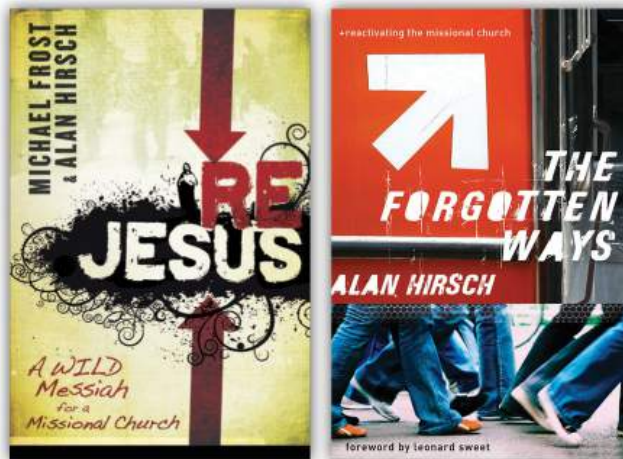
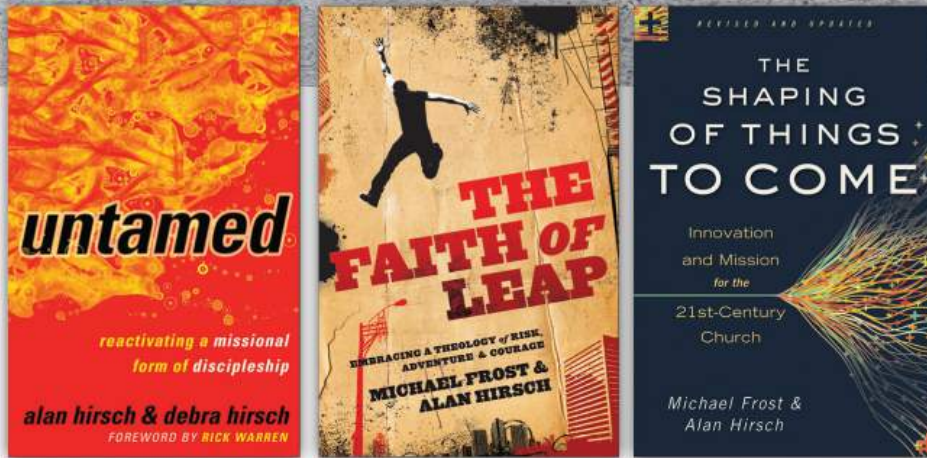
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FAST ***FORWARD*** to **MISSION**

**Frameworks for a Life
of Impact**

Alan Hirsch



BakerBooks

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by Baker Books
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakerbooks.com

Excerpted from *Right Here, Right Now*

Ebook Short created 2014

ISBN 978-1-4412-2260-2

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BRIEFING

Right Here

FRAMEWORKS FOR MISSIONAL CHRISTIANITY

You are here because you know something. What you know you can't explain but you feel it. You felt it your entire life. There is something wrong with the world but you don't know what it is. But it's there like a splinter in your mind.

—Morpheus to Neo,
The Matrix

You can no longer remain unconscious where you slept before; one way or another, you are creating your future. Wake up before you find that the devils within you have done the creating.

—Stephen L. Talbot,
The Future Does Not Compute

In many ways this book is all about connecting ourselves, not with a trendy new movement, but by reconnecting the current Christian church with the power of the original one. It is one of my deepest held beliefs that *all* of Jesus' people contain the potential for world transformation in them. Our problem is not that we don't have the potential, but rather that we have forgotten how to access these potentials be-

cause we have been so deeply scripted to think of ourselves through more domesticated, non-missional manifestations of Christianity. We have been so programmed out of our callings that it is generally hard for us to think and act differently than what we have for hundreds of years and not to persecute people who try to trailblaze alternative ways. But we have now come (at last!) to the point where we can recognize that the decline of Christianity in the West, and now in America, is directly related to the way we have done things to this point. The search for alternatives has just heated up. Aslan is on the move again and it's time to get unplugged, reframed, rescripted, and recommissioned to be the people Jesus designed us to be.

If this was said another way, I would suggest we are *perfectly designed to achieve what we are currently achieving*. If Christianity is in decline, at least part of the issue goes to the contemporary way we live out faith in a watching world. But this is not what Jesus intended. The church that Jesus designed is made for impact—and massive, highly transformative impact at that. Wasn't it Jesus who said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18 NKJV). Hang on! Jesus says that the gates of hell don't prevail against us! It is we as God's people who are on the advance here, not hell! Contrary to many of the images of church as a defensive fortress suffering the terrible, relentless onslaughts of hell, the movement that Jesus set in motion is designed to be an advancing, untamed, and untamable revolutionary force created to transform the world. And make no mistake—there is in Jesus' words here a real sense of inevitability about the eventual triumph of the gospel. If we are not somehow part of this, then there is something wrong in the prevailing designs and they must change.

Reading this (definitely but necessarily too big) chapter is going to feel like drinking from a fire hydrant, because it summarizes, hopefully in highly accessible ways, ideas that

have been formulated and developed in much more detail elsewhere. But this is my “formal briefing,” or conceptual framing, for a missionality that can be lived out right here, right now, by everyone. And this, my friends, takes some re-framing . . . some redesigning of the way we go about being God’s people. The concepts offered here *will* be made much clearer through the use of story and examples of everyday Christians and churches throughout the rest of the book. But we have to clarify what we are talking about in the first place, so this thorough briefing should be treated as the point of reference and returned to when necessary.

Move It

Let’s start this journey to what we call “missionality” with a big statement that sets the tone for all that will follow: I believe with all my heart that the future of Christianity in the West is somehow bound up with the idea of becoming a *people movement* again. Somehow and in some way, we need to loosen up and learn how to reactivate the massive potentials that lie rather dormant within Jesus’ people if we are going to make a difference to our world.

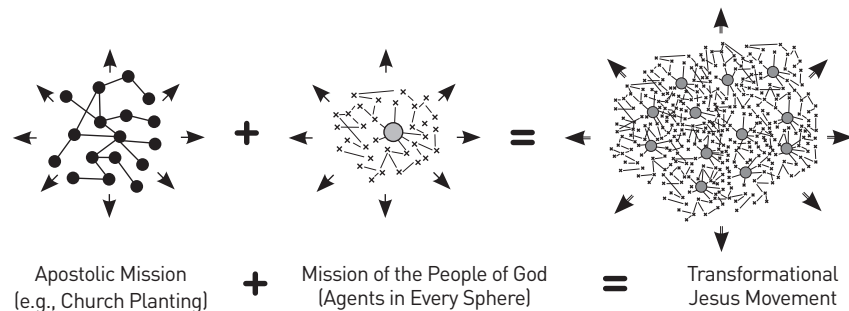
It is only when the people of God as a whole are activated in a movement that real world transformation takes place. And so understanding the nature of people movements is essential. When we look at high-impact movements in the Bible and history, we can see that there are two basic elements of a missional movement that can change the world. If one is missing, then the other will not be able to sustain, let alone reach, exponential impact.

One dimension relates to what I call the *apostolic mission* (AM), which involves the church or communal side of the movement—the distinctly *ecclesial* wing. It is critical for the *ecclesia* (the church) to multiply and cross cultural boundaries for a movement to take place. This is usually

spearheaded by people whose primary work is to direct and focus Jesus' people and organize groups, networks, and hubs into apostolic networks that expand exponentially. In other words, people committed to ministry with, and through, the church as an organized community. AM is therefore normally expressed through church planting and organized mission to the poor or cross-culturally. Most of the people reading this book will probably not fit into this category.

The other equally vital (and much harder to galvanize) aspect is what I call the *mission of the whole people of God* (MPOG), which involves activating the whole people of God and empowering every believer to be active agents of God's kingdom in every sphere of life. Everyone in this movement, and not just the so-called religious professionals, must be activated and thus play a vital role in extending the mission of Jesus' church. The people involved in this dimension of people movements are those committed to full-time ministry *outside* of the church community . . . but it is still full-time ministry. In fact, this false distinction in what constitutes ministry is one of the major hurdles we have to overcome if we are going to activate as Jesus' people.

And while most of my writings have focused on the apostolic mission side of the equation, it is absolutely critical that we as the whole people of God are activated. If missional church remains solely in the domain of leaders and clergy, then it is doubtful we will have any lasting missional impact



in the long term. It's going to take both *missional church plus missional disciples to make a missional movement*.

Conversion Is Commission

You *are* the church before you *do* church. If we take Jesus at his word when he says, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21), then we realize that our being “sent” (Latin: *missio*) is the basis of our “doing” church and not the other way around. What is more, this applies to every disciple and not just to the so-called clergy (the *called ones*). We are all called into the kingdom and into living our life under orders. What we normally infer by the word *church* limits what the Bible means by it. Church is not simply a building or a formal community meeting, it is who we *are*—a people who have been formed out of a direct encounter with God in Jesus Christ. If this is true, then general practice in church planting, which simply amounts to “service planting,” actually activates only one side of the movement equation—namely, apostolic mission—but it leaves the MPOG undervalued and almost totally passive and unengaged. This is a fatal error.

The Worldwide Message Tribe

We are a unique people formed by the life-changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ—in effect, a worldwide message tribe. But if we are recipients of a pay-it-forward type message, one that must be passed on, then that makes us all messengers! Every believer is therefore a messenger . . . and in the terms of this book, a *missionary*. And Christianity itself is an intrinsically *missional* faith. Even the newest believer seems to understand the universality of the gospel message; they rightly intuit that because it is “good news,” it is *meant* to be passed on, and that somehow to sit on the message is to fail in our obligations to Jesus and his cause.

This is how missional movements grow—through a group of people who have been changed by Jesus and are willing

to put themselves on the line for his cause. And the cause cannot be limited to evangelism, as if simply telling someone about the saving events of Jesus' life and death fulfills our missional obligations. Rather it is about living the gospel in such a way that people are drawn into the direct influence (lordship) of Jesus through our lives. It is about living according to a distinct vision of society built on God's dreams and desires—not ours. In other words, as Rick Warren wryly says, it's not all about you; rather it is about the kingdom (or rule) of God over all creation. It encompasses everything in human experience—from culture, race, economics, church, entertainment, family, and everything in between. A missional movement must apply the gospel to all spheres of life (business, family, art, education, science, politics, etc.)—it cannot be limited simply to “coming to church” or participating in building-based programs.

The reality is that it doesn't take millions of admirers to start a movement that can change the world (in fact, that might be problematic). What *is* needed is a few people who have been personally transformed and are committed enough to the cause to be willing to in some way or another put their lives in the service of extending it into every domain of life. It is the personal commitment levels that make all the difference—that's why Jesus was willing to invest most of his time in “the Twelve” and by extension in “the seventy.” Once he had seeded the essence of his message into his disciples, he could then focus on his upcoming death and resurrection (see Matt. 16:13–21), leaving behind a small band of people who did go on to change the world with it. And this is why being an authentic disciple is so important to his mission. As I say in *The Forgotten Ways*, embodiment (the capacity to actually integrate and live out the teachings and message of Jesus) is critical to transmission (the capacity to transfer the message through relationships).¹

And in some ways, this is all that is still needed today—real disciples. Jesus will do the necessary transforming; the part

we play is to be willing to be used in that process of living the message and getting it out into our worlds. All it needed was people who were willing to be an authentic message tribe. Seth Godin, pop movements guru, rightly notes that creating a highly dedicated and closely knit tribe usually leads to much more impact than simply trying to make a tribe bigger. “Beyond public relations and awareness related benefits, measuring the breadth of spread of an idea is not as important as looking at the depth of commitment and interaction of true fans, who end up being the people who recruit most new members.”²

In short, what is needed from us is the willingness to move with the Move of God that is the gospel. We suggest that there are a number of movements needed on our behalf if we are indeed going to partake of the movement that Jesus started. We have to be willing to

- move *out* (into missional engagement),
- move *in* (burrowing down into the culture),
- move *alongside* (engaging in genuine friendships and relational networks), and
- move *from* (challenging the dehumanizing and sinful aspects of our culture).

Move Out (Mission)

So the first movement of mission required of us is the willingness to move out—to simply go to the people, wherever that might be. Movement by definition suggests some form of motion, some type of action: it might not be far, but the obligation is on us to go to them, not them to us.

The Mission Has a Church

We have already mentioned that we are people who live under an obligation to extend the mission and meaning of

Jesus into our world. The way I framed this in *The Forgotten Ways* was to say that it is not so much that the church has a mission but that the mission has a church. What this meant is that we really are the result of God's missionary activity in the world: God sends (*missio*) his Son into the world. Another way of saying this is that God is the Sending God and the Son is the Sent One. The Father and Son in turn "send" the Spirit into the world (so it turns out that the Spirit is a missionary too). And what is more, Jesus says that as the Father sent him, so he sends and commissions each of us as fully empowered missional agents of the King (John 17:18; 20:21; Matt. 28:19).

Any Time, Any Place

Every Christian is a missionary and we are called to live out our commitment to Jesus' lordship in every sphere and domain of life. Church life, as we normally conceive it, is only one dimension of life and all of us inhabit many other realms that make up our lives. What marks Christianity as distinct is that it is truly a people movement: every believer (and not just some presumed religious elite) is an agent of the kingdom and is called to bring God's influence into all the realms of human existence. Just look to our New Testament for this! Because the Holy Spirit lives in us, and we are all bearers of the gospel message, we are all agents of the King right here, right now, and at any time and in any place.

Build a Bridge and Get Over It

My wife Deb has this wonderfully humbling thing to say about men and missional church. She says that we men tend to talk and write about it while most women just tend to do it. She follows up with a quick second blow by saying "After all is said and done, it's all about learning to love other people as Jesus did, isn't it?" And even though I find this argument exasperating, I really have to agree.

Learning the art of the small

1. One person can make an impact.
2. Concentrate your efforts on smaller and smaller areas. When your efforts are diffused over a wide area, they won't have much of an impact. So focus on smaller areas, and your efforts will be felt more fully. It could take time for change to happen, but keep that focus narrow.
3. Try to find an area that will cause a tipping point. You'll have the biggest impact if you can change something that will in itself cause further changes—the rock that causes the avalanche. This isn't an easy thing, to find that pressure point, that spot that will cause everything else to change. It takes practice and experience and luck and persistence, but it can be found.
4. Don't try to beat an ocean. You'll lose. Instead, focus on small changes that will spread.³

For most of us, what will be required to engage in missional Christianity is to simply reach out beyond our fears and ignorance of others, to overcome our middle-class penchant for safety, to take a risk and get involved in what God is already doing in our cities and neighborhoods. It's not a science really, although as we will see, there are sometimes tricky cultural elements to deal with. It is all about love. Just read 1 John again to remind yourself of this.

Use What's in Your Hand

One of the most significant things to remember in getting missional is often the thing we most overlook. It's not all about starting grand programs and running big organizations. It is just doing what you do . . . for God. The basic elements of missionality are already present in your life. It might develop into an organization (e.g., Tom's Shoes, Laundry Love),⁴ but it probably should not start there. In this book we will explore many ways we can simply use the basic constituents of life and make them an act of worship to God and service to his world. Sometimes simple gestures make all the difference. Don't be overwhelmed. Certainly, prepare yourself in prayer and study

of the gospel and culture, but trust that God will use you as you are—he has always done so. You don't need a degree to be a very effective agent of the King. A saint is merely a person who makes it easier for others to believe in God. Mother Teresa (of all people!) once famously quipped, "I don't do big things. I do small things with big love." We are not required to do a great thing in life, but many, many small things, each done with love.

Move In (Incarnation)

So we are called to be a missional (move out) people, and if we are willing to follow the missional Spirit, I venture to bet that we will end up in some rather unusual situations and places. And we don't mean just cross-cultural here: it might simply mean reaching over your fence, and beyond that into the local neighborhood. But don't be surprised if this is still a bit of a challenge to you. One of the things that has happened over the last decade or so is a massive cultural shift away from the Judeo-Christian heritage into a truly subcultural, multicultural experience . . . our neighborhoods have gone and changed on us.

To move deep into the culture is to take the idea of incarnational mission seriously. This in turn takes its cue from the fact that God took on human form and moved into our neighborhood, assumed the full reality of our humanity, identified with us, and spoke to us from within a common experience. Following his example, and in his cause, we take the same type of approach when it comes to mission.

Going Tribal

Whether we like it or not, we live in a world that is culturally fragmented and fragmenting. The result of cultural disintegration is that people now choose to identify with various subcultural groups. Any modern city is now made up of literally thousands of different subcultures: from sports groups, hobby clubs, interest groups, to groups that gather

around sexual preference (the gay community is always a big one in major cities throughout the West), to pubs, clubs, music groups, surfers, skaters . . . you name it!

Moving deep means that we choose to connect with, identify with, and belong to one or a few of these urban tribes. Don't try identifying with everyone within your reach—if this does not drive you mad, it certainly will exhaust you. Rather focus your efforts on meaningful connections with certain people and people groups. Go where they go, hang out where they hang out, do what they do. I have seen churches develop this in the strangest of normal places: along riverbanks with the waterskiing community, rave clubs, amateur drama theatres, online game communities. I know of one young mom who, instead of attending the local church's MOPS program, chose to adopt one of the many local non-Christian mothers groups. She was soon asked to lead it and her influence as a Christian was significantly magnified, more than if she had simply attended the local Christian version.

St. Paul Goes to the Movies

A few years ago I ran and organized a conference called St. Paul Goes to the Movies. The idea was to help Christians learn how to share faith from within diverse cultural settings in Western contexts. My advice to all Christians is, in order to take missionality seriously, you have to take culture seriously. There is no dodging this aspect. You simply have to assume that, in Western contexts, all communication of the gospel, let alone church planting and mission, is now cross-cultural. Don't presume you really know what's going on. The reality is that most Christians don't really know what goes on in the lives of non-Christian people. Research indicates that the majority of Christians have no significant relationships with people beyond their church community. To move out (get missional), and to move in (get incarnational), this must change.

If you find yourself called to a certain urban tribe, whoever they might be, then it is critical that you take *their* culture—in effect, their meaning system—seriously. Go to movies with friends and talk about the themes. Read the books they are likely to read (there is good demographical information about lifestyle preferences and people groups around). Browse bookshops and magazine racks as to what people are talking about and interested in. If people see a movie more than once, make sure you see it and try to work out what it is they seemed to resonate with. Then you can get to see how the Good News relates to the issue.

The missional Christian makes the connections between people's existential issues and the gospel, as we shall see, but it does take some cultural savvy to make this happen well.

Redeeming Your Hangout (Third Places, etc.)

Missionality right here, right now does not always require you to go to places and people you find so different and uncomfortable. In the principle of starting with what's already in your hand, make a list of the things you love to do. Odds are there are a whole lot of people who already do one of those things together, and if not, then there are probably people who would like to do that with others. Another approach is to list the vibrant social spaces in your area and simply adopt one and become a regular. Don't do this as some sort of lone missional ranger. How about a few of you take this on as a common mission.

Some popular interests include art forms, murals, beer brewing, cooking, cycling. A look at your local newspaper will reveal hundreds of such groups around. For example, I know of a group of believers who simply loved bush walking—trekking through the mountains and hills around Melbourne. Problem was, the only free day they had was Sunday, so they decided to make that their church. They would trek out into the bush, taking in the glories of God's creation and good comradeship along the way. At a certain point they would

stop, have a meal and communion together, share around Scripture, take an offering, pray for people, and then continue bush walking for the rest of the day. About 40 percent of the group were non-Christians deeply interested in the mix of nature and spirituality that The Earth Club provided. The church that Jesus built doesn't need all the institutional paraphernalia that we have been scripted to think it does. You carry it with you everywhere you go.

Speaking the Lingo (All Mission Is Cross-Cultural)

All missionaries must deal with language. To speak the lingo means to understand and adopt the language forms of the people we love and serve. We do so in order to represent Jesus meaningfully in the group itself. Tim Keller, one of the elder statesmen of the missional church world, encourages us to enter and retell the culture's stories with the gospel rather than the other way around.⁵ For instance, in church circles there is a certain insider language—a common worldview that allows us to simply exhort Christianized people with little or no real engagement, listening, or persuasion. In a missional setting, communication should always assume the presence of skeptical people and should engage their stories, not simply talk the church's insider story and language. This requires that we are sensitive to story and language and how these inform identity and community.

The older culture's story was to be a good person, a good father/mother, son/daughter, to live a decent, merciful, good life. Now the culture's story is—(a) to be free and self-created and authentic (theme of freedom from oppression), and (b) to make the world safe for everyone else to be the same (theme of inclusion of the "other"; justice). To "re-tell" means to show how only in Christ can we have freedom without slavery and embracing of the "other" without injustice.⁶

To listen to the culture's stories, we need to be attentive. Once again movies and art form will give us a good clue,

because great art is a way in which people seek to express meaning. For instance, in what way do the movies *Revolutionary Road*, *The Matrix*, or *The Pursuit of Happyness* tell us about our culture's story and values? Test this; try asking people what their absolutely favorite movie is, and why this is so, and you will hear a lot about that person. This is a great way to try to understand and unlock people's culture code.

Watch Paul the missionary in Athens: he is very sensitive to their religion, poetry, and philosophy (Acts 17). In this context Paul exegetes the culture, allowing the biblical story to inform and guide him—but he starts with the culture and ends with the gospel. In Jerusalem it's a different story; he whips out his big black King James (or equivalent) and he begins with Scripture and proceeds to culture. The more and more America slips into the encroaching post-Christian experience, the more and more we are going to have to take an Athenian approach to engaging it. In a missional context, Christians must learn to behave like culturally tuned missionaries.

Wired for God

One of the most basic assumptions of the incarnational missionary is to assume God is already involved in every person's life and is calling them to himself through his Son. Our mindset should not be the prevalent one of taking God with us wherever we might go. It must be, instead, that we join God in *his* mission.

This means that the missionary God has been active a long time in a person's life. Our primary job is to try to see where and how God has been working and to partner with him in bringing people to redemption in Jesus. Understanding that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27), and in the deepest possible way made *for* God, we can assume that every human is motivated by spiri-

tuality and search for meaning. Even idolatry indicates that people are seeking to worship something beyond themselves. It is deformed spirituality to be sure, but it *is* spirituality nonetheless—and you can work with that. Recognize that behind many of the things not-yet-Christian people do lies a search for something else. C. S. Lewis once noted that all our vices are virtues gone wrong. If we take this as a clue, we can develop new missionary eyes to see what God is up to in people’s lives.

Let’s take a deeper look at this: consider Las Vegas, the consummate sinner’s town. And it is that—a deeply broken place where people get really messed up. But we can put aside our moral misgivings and choose to look at the gambling dens with more missional eyes. We might ask, what is the person who is sitting at the slot machines *really* searching for? Perhaps it is the search for redemption but in the wrong place. It is the belief that to win the jackpot means to be changed and transformed into a new life. This search might also be driven by a now pathological need to take risks because life has lost its sense of real adventure.

We can literally work our way through any type of event or activity in this way:

Event or activity	What is <i>really</i> being sought?	How the gospel addresses this issue
Gambling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redemption by luck/money • Need for risk • Overcoming unhappiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding meaning in doing things • Hope • Call to live adventurously and risk lovingly as a disciple
Sports events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cause to belong to • Transcendent experiences • Community with team/fans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A real cause that aims at changing the world • Real transcendent experience • Authentic community

Event or activity	What is <i>really</i> being sought?	How the gospel addresses this issue
Pubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • A partner • Overcoming loneliness • Fun/chill time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real but loving community • Highs without drugs • Nonexploitative relationships • Lasting joy
Drug-taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecstatic experiences • Escaping from life • Overcoming guilt and pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encountering God • Meaning and purpose • Forgiveness and healing
Movies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing the stories and myths that shape life • Suspension of disbelief • Entertainment/escape • “Feeling” again (laughing, crying, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection with the Story that makes sense of our stories • Reality, not fantasy • Passion leading to compassion

We can trust that because of the way God has designed us, in the end human beings are always searching (albeit in false and idolatrous ways) for real meaning, authentic relationships, to love and be loved in return.

One more dimension of this that must be mentioned is that all people have religious experiences. It is false to say that only Christians can experience God. Anyone looking at a sunset can experience an in-breaking of God-awareness. In *The Color Purple*, Celia recalls a time as a child walking with her mother past a field of violets when she felt that God was making a pass at her in the flowers. God is constantly “making a pass” at us in everyday experiences—we simply need to become much more aware of him. People call these experiences *theophanies* (God encounters), and our task as God’s sent people is to bring a meaningful interpretation to these experiences and point people to Jesus as the center of the God experience. This is what Keller means by telling people’s stories in the light of God’s story—the gospel.

*Priests in the Hood (Making Connections
between God and People)*

Another way to look at this role of seeing “the virtue in the vice” is to conceive of ourselves in terms of one of our deepest identities as disciples, namely, the priesthood of all believers. In *Untamed*, Deb and I suggest that unlocking this is one of the most potent things we can do to allow God to work through all of his people. A priest is essentially someone who mediates the knowledge of God. Our priestly role therefore is to introduce people to Jesus and Jesus to people, and as far as we can, make sure that it is a right understanding of Jesus that we are mediating, and then step out of the way—let Jesus do his thing with people. He knows exactly how to deal with them.

What Is Good News for This People?

As we have seen, a missionary is essentially a messenger obligated to somehow deliver the message in a way it can be received. This means that we have to be able to speak meaningfully into a culture, but in order to do that, we have to seriously examine a given culture for clues to what God is doing among a people. One of the best ways to start this “listening process” is to go to your tribe. And standing where they stand, and having explored the dynamics of their search, simply ask yourself this question: “What is good news for this people?” What is going to make them throw a party and invite their friends? This is exactly what Matthew did (Matt. 9:9–13). This will mean trying to delve into the existential issues a people or cultural group deals with. It means searching for signs of the quest for meaning and therefore for God. Just like Paul in Athens (Acts 17), it will also mean a study of the religion, art, and literature of the group.

Volunteering, according to Mark Van S

Most urban areas have social service organizations in place. I suggest you volunteer with them instead of starting church programs—at least early on in the life of your church. In the West part of our city, there are over a dozen organizations that will take volunteers. When we started, we tried to do our own English as a Second Language program. It didn't work like we wanted. I'm realizing now that it would have been better to put our energy towards volunteering at existing ESL courses. When we volunteer, we submit to the service organizations—yielding to their agenda instead of forcing our own. In that place, we can begin to make relationships with people. As we meet people and get to know them, we have the opportunity to take that friendship outside of the volunteer organization. As we find out more of their needs, then we may try to serve them as a church.

The basic idea is this: utilize existing structures. Build relationships within the existing systems. Social services provide a great way for you to meet people (both volunteers and those with needs) without having to put a lot of time and energy into planning. You get the benefit of meeting people by simply volunteering. And you will grow in your understanding of the people you want to serve. Plus, you are helping people. And too many churches don't do enough of that.

This, of course, doesn't mean that a church should never start programs. A church may be obligated to do so because there is a profoundly unmet need. Or you may be led to do so; these are simply suggestions to help you think through being incarnational, not hard-and-fast rules.⁷

Follow the Ant Trails

Once we have named the existential issues that our adopted tribe faces, our task will then turn to developing communities (because that's what good mission aims at—a community of Jesus disciples). In the debriefing at the end of the book, we will look at how we might reframe our understanding of church. At this point it might simply mean asking the question, What is church going to look like for this particular tribe of people? To answer this will require that you look at the social patterning of the group. Follow the ant trails and

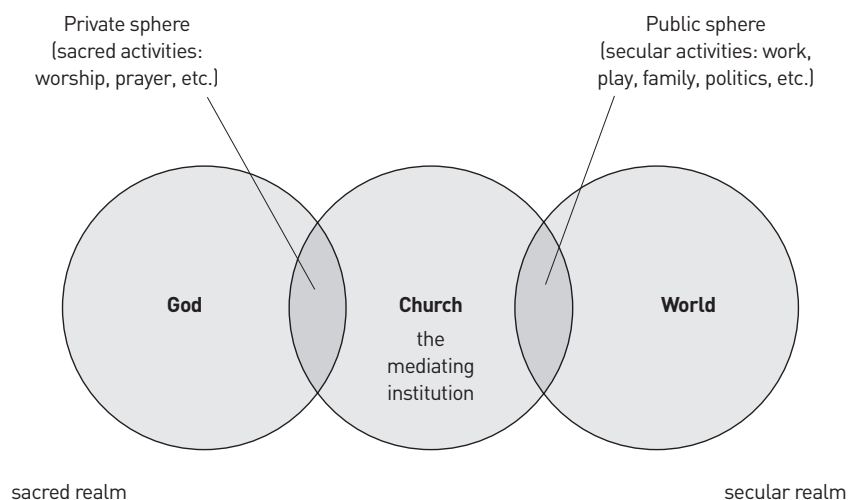
they will lead you to the “nest.” Where do they meet? Why do they meet? What is the cultural dynamic of the group? And once you have done this, try to articulate what an authentic expression of church might look like within that cultural setting. If it’s a tribe that meets regularly at the local pub, then it’s pretty easy. If it’s a group of mountain bikers, it might be a bit more difficult, but you can be sure they meet somewhere. The aim will be to incarnate the gospel in the place by first planting the gospel (Jesus) and then allowing a local and indigenous expression of community to grow out of that encounter.

Experiencing Seamlessness

One of the important dimensions of incarnational mission is to somehow break the dualistic impasse that seems to exist between various aspects of our worlds. We experience God, church, and the rest of life as being in separate, nonintersecting compartments. We live as if there is an insurmountable distance between the “sacred” and the “secular.” But if Jesus is Lord of all of life, there is no such distinction.

The bad scripting downloads through the way we do church: the language and experience of church is generally worlds away from our experience of work, play, politics, etc. In fact they all seem to be so disparate and exist on their own autonomous principles. The world of commerce, for instance, seems to run on its own principles (e.g., radical competition), ones that you would never apply to your personal relationships and family (which requires a fundamental cooperation), or vice versa. Living under the lordship of Jesus requires that we bring all elements into relation with him—we cannot exclude dimensions from God’s concern or we create dark zones that invite the idols to enslave us. The way I illustrate this in *The Forgotten Ways* is as follows:⁸

Right Here



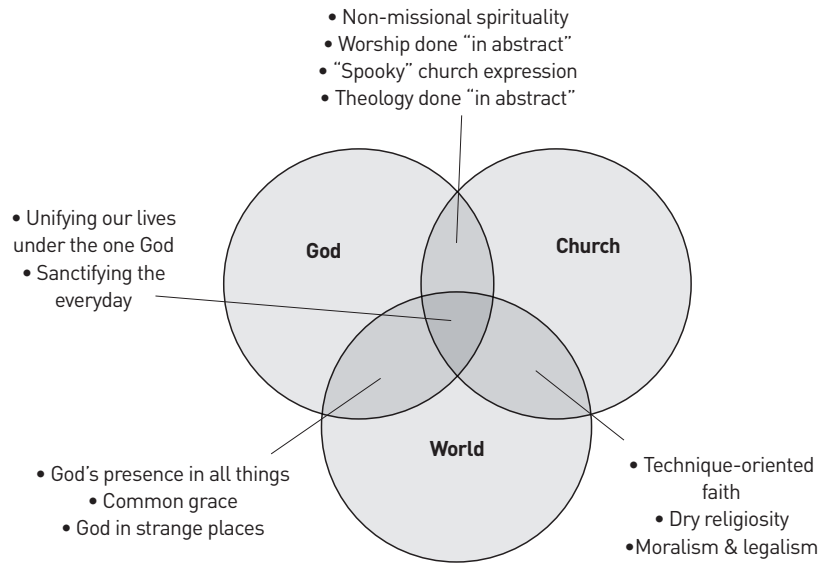
The Dualistic Christendom Mode

Here our “worlds” never seem to meet but rather are experienced as pulling in opposite directions. We divide our worlds into the sacred (on the left) and the secular (on the right), and they are experienced as worlds apart. Incarnational approaches try to see the kingdom in all elements of life and seek to bring the dimensions closer. We take the church with us into the world, because in the deepest possible way, we *are* the church.

Moving deeper therefore means bringing the disparate elements of life together in a way that creates a more seamless experience of the Christian life. We allow our various worlds to collide. We try to be the same person in at least three places—church, home, and work—but an integrated, incarnational spirituality also means that the gospel seeps into the nooks and crannies of our lives.

So to sum up, we first move out and then move in. Or as incarnational missionary Mark Van Steenwyk wisely advises,

Once you move into the area (or if you already live in the area), spend time just observing. Don't get frenetic. Don't start doing things until you understand the ethos of the neighborhood. Let the spirit of the place make its impression. Fall in love with the



Jesus Is Lord of All
 Nondualistic Spirituality

little things. Get to know the people. If you start “doing your thing” before you are familiar with the place, then you’re forcing things too much. Ministry should fit with how God is already working in a place. If you start pushing your agenda before you start making friends with the neighbors and finding out about their lives, then you’re a salesman, not a minister of reconciliation. And throughout it all, pray. Pray for spiritual eyesight. It is the Spirit’s job to reveal Christ . . . not just to “them” but also to “you.” Pray that you can see Christ’s fingerprints in your neighborhood. Pray to see the face of Christ in the face of those who live around you. Pray for the Spirit to show you what is wrong in your area, and also what is right. Seek to understand.⁹

Move Alongside (Urbs and Relationships)

SUBurb: A Theology of Geography/Place

The reality is, to become a missional Christian, we begin by simply paying attention to the neighborhood and the

relationships in various aspects of our life. But if the tribe you are seeking to touch with the love of Jesus lives in another part of town (or in the case of a missionary, overseas), you will need to seriously consider relocating. It is interesting that our Lord is called Jesus of Nazareth. So it's clear that Jesus got into Nazareth, but I have often found myself wondering how much of Nazareth got into Jesus. The truth is that in the incarnation, Jesus took up residence in Nazareth, in ancient Judea, among a distinct people, and became one of them.

We used the idea of being the priest in the hood above. Well, just like a local gang, we should have a “turf.” When seeking to touch a people, an urban tribe, it is no good simply visiting their area and then traveling over half an hour to get home. You should live where you want to serve. You should be able to bump into the tribe in the local shops and supermarket. This allows for what I call three practices of incarnational engagement: proximity, frequency, and spontaneity.¹⁰

Ground Control to Major Tom: Making Contact

In Western settings, we should simply assume that all communication of the gospel is cross-cultural. If you do this, at least you won't make the mistake of assuming the same worldview and beliefs as the people you are trying to reach. Train yourself to be inclusive and invitational in posture. And while the missional posture requires a go-to-them approach, it will also be an invitation to relationship. So find ways to invite people into your life: to a BBQ, to a party, or whatever. And remember to talk as if nonbelieving people are present—learn to drop the insider/church lingo. Tim Keller says that if you speak and converse *as if* your whole neighborhood is present (not just scattered Christians), eventually more and more of your neighborhood will find their way into your life and community and feel a part of it.¹¹

Beyond Functional Friendships

In *Untamed*¹² Deb and I suggest that for the large part, we have generally misinterpreted the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20) as an *evangelistic* text, whereas in fact it is a *discipling* text. It is not about simply sharing the Good News with people through abstract concepts about Jesus and calling for a response—this is at best only part of the deal, at worst a shoddy witness and mere salesmanship. Friendships should be part of the equation. We are called to disciple the nations, which means we are committed to a long-term relationship with them that must surely include meaningful friendships, genuine involvement, and compassionate concern for a person’s best good. Christians should know how to be the best friends a person can have, because friendship (in the truest sense of discipleship) lies at the heart of the biblical commission. Think of the Great Commission in this way: as pre-conversion discipleship AND post-conversion discipleship, but it is discipleship all along the way.

The Art of Conversation(s)

In many ways this recipe is part cultural savvy, part organic friendship, and part hospitality, but in our experience Christians are not necessarily good at conversation. We tend toward functionality in our relationships, we lack cultural breadth, and we are too quick to want to get to the Bible and spirituality. In short, we should strive to be more culturally interesting. For men, sports features quite strongly in conversation, and for women, family and relational issues. Whatever the content, genuinely artful conversation uses all of these in a dialogue that is authentically conversational—subtle, spiritual, and culturally tuned to the issues of the day—to really engage people at the level of their lives and story. Remember, pop culture is where people live! Be aware of what’s going on at that level. And stop being overly “spiritual,” using insider, religious language, to talk about God—it

mostly alienates people. Rather, bring a God interpretation to ordinary life without forcing conversations to the four spiritual laws.

Conversation invites friendship, provokes intrigue, promotes mutual quest, weaves story with opinion, extends a listening ear, and offers something of the self in the equation. At best it is done around tables or in places of social engagement. And make no mistake; it is a powerful way of missionally engaging people. In *Untamed* we suggest that if every Christian family in the world simply offered good conversational hospitality around a table once a week to neighbors, we would eat our way into the kingdom of God.

Sneezing the Gospel

In *The Forgotten Ways* I suggest that all good ideas spread like viruses and that the gospel, insofar that it is an idea (of course it is more than that), is no exception. In other words, we “sneeze” the gospel into various social settings as we let it travel along relational lines.¹³

This phenomenon of viral movements is demonstrated in the power of social networking so prevalent in our day. To be missional disciples, we need to learn how to use the power of ideas and relationships and bring these together. To do this we need rich relationships, or in terms of people movements, lots of “social surface” to be big influencers in people’s lives. The greater the social surface, the higher the likelihood of influence/spread, and therefore missional impact. It is important to remember this because the gospel always travels along and within the relational fabric of a given culture.¹⁴ Missional Christianity needs to get relationally savvy, and it should come naturally because we are called to love and discipleship.¹⁵

Matthew’s Party

In Luke 10 Jesus sends the seventy out with some very sage missional advice. Among other things he tells them not

to start groups in their own houses but to “go” to people’s houses and start things up there. The reason? Well, it is their turf, and because of that they are most likely to invite their friends to a social gathering that they host. If it was at your place, they might come but are unlikely to invite their friends.

The principle here is that we should be aware of social dynamics and the role of gatekeepers. It’s part of relational savvy-ness mentioned above. Missionaries have long understood that identifying the person who holds “the keys” to entry to the tribe plays a strategic role in reaching that tribe. Without being manipulative about it, we would be wise to focus on such people. If they open up to us (and God), then they in turn will win their own social circle over.

Matthew the tax collector is a case in point (Matt. 9:9–13). Mathew becomes a disciple and holds a party where he invites all his friends. Zacchaeus does the same thing (Luke 19:2–10). They don’t have to go to church or to a house church to meet Jesus. He comes to them. And this is not equivalent to using people, because we choose to love them authentically in their own world; it just means being strategic with our time and influence.

So to develop missionality right here, right now, we move *out*, move *in*, move *alongside*, and as we shall now see, sometimes move *from*.

Move From (Subvert)

Contrary to a narrow fundamentalist understanding of things, the gospel does not challenge or undermine *everything* in any given culture. There are many good things that are entirely consistent with a biblical understanding of society and life. For example, non-Christians who value speaking the truth, doing good to others, and living outwardly moral lives. Theologians have always called this *common grace*. These include aspects of culture that can be affirmed and deepened by com-

ing into contact with the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, there will be things in any culture (including our own) that jar up against what Jesus teaches—aspects that are ungodly and dehumanizing. It is the missional Christian’s duty to be very discerning here, because failure to recognize the deficiencies in our own culture means that we will simply impose our culture (and sometimes not the gospel) on a people group or tribe. But when it comes to being missional right here and right now, sometimes we are simply going to have to issue a direct challenge, or in the language of this heading “move from,” in order to bring Good News into the tribe.

Questioning and the Quest

The truth is that we don’t always have to take issues head-on. Sometimes our role is to be undercover subversives. Yes, there are times when we need to be overt and verbal and confrontational, but perhaps not all that often. There is another deeply biblical way of going about bringing profound change in a society. Jesus talked about the kingdom of God as being like yeast that leavens a whole lump without our direct influence. He talked about it being like a field where the farmer plants and waters, and it grows all by itself. In other words, the kingdom works covertly to undermine the way things are now and to initiate God’s rule in its place. Scholars call this aspect of Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom “the now and the not-yet.” Some people see it and respond. Others cannot see it at all. One day God will concentrate it all to a point and close the deal once and for all. But we can be sure the kingdom is here right now . . . active in the entire world, but especially through his people.

Many times in pastoral work, when we have brought someone to the Lord who was sleeping with his/her partner, we didn’t throw the rule book at them. Rather, we would introduce them to Jesus and trust that the couple would come to the right conclusions themselves. We would

plant good seeds, water them, and voilà, the Holy Spirit would do his work.

The parables are classical tools of subversion. In *The Shaping of Things to Come*, Michael and I probe why Jesus never seems to answer a question directly.¹⁶ Sometimes he answers with a counterquestion. But most often he uses parables. Now a parable is not some cute little illustration to make things clear. In fact, Jesus says that they are quite the opposite—they are puzzles that can really confuse the hearers (Matt. 13:1–23). They are not clear-cut, three-point sermons with good illustrations to boot. They are designed to provoke a search—a quest—in which the hearer is invited to fill in the blanks for themselves. And clearly they are subversive, because some get it and some miss the point. Some like what they hear and others hate it.

Lifestyle

The most consistent way to challenge the destructive forces in popular culture is to live contrary to them—to actually *be* the change we want to see. In a world obsessed with consumerism, we choose to live more simply. In a world obsessed with social status and image, we choose to associate with poor, “invisible,” and uncool people and invite them into our lives. In a world obsessed with money, we choose to be very generous. In other words, without withdrawing ourselves from our tribe, we have to model what a Jesus alternative looks like to our tribe. They must see the gospel embodied in us, for in the end, the medium *is* the message.¹⁷

In relation to lifestyle, Tim Keller suggests that

in a missional church, . . . Christian community must go beyond that to embody a “counter-culture,” showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power. . . .

- In money. We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice

and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, the economically and physically weak.

- In power. We are committed to power sharing and relationship-building between genders, races, and classes that are alienated outside of the Body of Christ.

In general, a church must be more deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice than traditional liberal churches and more deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion than traditional fundamentalist churches. This kind of church is profoundly “counter-intuitive” to American observers. It breaks their ability to categorize (and dismiss) it as liberal or conservative. Only this kind of church has any chance in the non-Christian West.¹⁸

Community

One of the most profound ways to embody countercultural dissents against the evil propensities in our cultures is to embody the gospel in a community of Jesus’ people. It has been said that the real task of Christians is to be the church rather than to transform the world. In other words, the church doesn’t *have* a social strategy, the church *is* the social strategy. Here we get to show the world a certain type of life the world can never achieve through social coercion or governmental action.

When the church gets its act together, it is the most potent force for the transformation of the world.¹⁹ When we try putting into effect a Christian political agenda/party, we inevitably mess it up—if the European Christendom experience taught us anything, it taught us this. Most Christian political parties end up being domineering, angry, religious bullies operating through coercive power—hardly consistent with Jesus’ approach to changing the world. In fact, we end up looking more like Jesus’ opponents—the scribes, Sadducees, Zealots, and Pharisees.

This communal aspect is also why missionality is not the work of a lone ranger that is so much part of the American individualistic mythology. The kind of change God requires of the world can only be achieved through communal action. It's the trick that God has played on our individualism. We can do truly great things only when we find each other and do it together. This is the realm of *missional church*, and we are all part of it. Besides, a community that embodies the life and teachings of Jesus is the kind of community that is itself deeply attractive to a lonely and lost world. The best thing we can do is simply become ourselves and live it out as authentically as we can.

Sexuality

We live in a world obsessed by sex. Clearly this presents a challenge to our view of the world. Quite honestly I am not sure that historically we have done a good job of representing God on this one. We have largely been experienced as life-suppressing moralists and/or dangerous bigots. The reality is that our Lord Jesus actually dealt very mercifully with “sexual sinners” (e.g., Luke 7:36–50; John 8:1–11) and extremely harshly with self-righteous moralists (e.g., Matt. 23). The church should become more like Jesus on this one.

Speaking from within his experience of New York's urban context, Tim Keller suggests that we should avoid both the secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. “We must also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life-patterns are different.”²⁰ Too right! The issue is that we must demonstrate an alternative vision of sexuality, but we must do so without being moralistic. People are watching us on this.



OK, enough. Well, at least enough to make a good start of being a darn good missional disciple in any context we

Right Here

might find ourselves in. We have explored four aspects of what it means to be a movement: move *out*, move *in*, move *alongside*, move *from*.

Needless to say, all this is well within your power and means. Jesus designed you for influence, change, and impact, right here, right now. And in your healing and salvation lies the healing and salvation of others around you and through you. You simply have to live it in ways that are meaningful and accessible to all. Our lives, for his glory, and for his kingdom—this is our true worship.

DEBRIEFING

Right Now

RECOVERING MISSIONAL MOXIE

That which you wish to change, you must first love.

Martin Luther King Jr.

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it

Jesus (Matt. 16:18)

By now the reader will have gotten the impression that my role is to be the missional conscience providing the more theoretical framework for missional living right here, right now. While it's true I am deliberately playing a somewhat geeky role, and that I often sound somewhat theoretical, make no mistake, I really do believe that it is due to our largely unreflective approaches to church, mission, and evangelism that we have found ourselves beached on the shores of the twenty-first century. These ideas need to be prayerfully wrestled with, and integrated, if we are going to faithfully negotiate the complexities of this century. The way we think of ourselves and conceive our most basic purposes in this world

make a massive difference in the way we behave. For good or for ill, *ideas have consequences*. I always remind myself of Einstein's famous dictum when he said that the problems of the world cannot be resolved by the same kind of thinking that created them in the first place. The truth is that we do need the wrestling and the reframing, and to do that we need to *think differently* about our tasks. For sure, we are going to have to repent of our ways—but that's a good thing.

I believe so deeply in the power of God's good news people that I have committed my life to somehow awakening this now sleeping giant. If we, the people of God, can "find ourselves" again, right here, right now, in *this* time and place, then the most profound of revolutions is on! And right now, we have a good chance of it, but for Western Christianity at least, it might well be our last chance to get it right—witness the now almost complete demise of *biblical* Christianity in Western Europe!

I will go further and say that the battle for the future of Christianity in the West will be worked out in America—and I say this as a non-American, an Aussie with South African roots and a deep Jewish heritage. If we fail *right here, right now*, in America, then I really fear the eventual passing of a vibrant biblical Christianity in Western contexts. And so, I have left kith and kin and come to America to help awaken the sleeping giant of God's people. I am, at core, an activist and not a theoretician! I am a stakeholder who has played all his cards on this time and this place, on the belief that it is a strategic time, a time when our choices are really going to matter.

To awaken the people of God to their dormant potentials, we have to shake off certain ways of imagining ourselves that hinder and therefore bind us from being the people we were designed to be. Truth is, we have all drunk so deeply from institutional wells of thinking about Christianity that it is hard to think of ourselves differently. We have, to co-opt Marx's words, taken a big dose of what he called "the opiate of the people"—*religion* (in the really bad sense of the word). Marx saw religion as the cultural force that kept people docile and

submissive to the prevailing order of reality, and to be honest, in this at least, I think he was right. Use your imaginations here: morphine or heroin is an opiate (opium-based drug). Ever seen a person taking a hit of heroin? I have, and they effectively go into a deep, trancelike sleep. Religion does that to us . . . it dulls us and puts us to sleep. We become ineffective.

The good news is that the Way of Jesus was never the way of “religion.” In fact, Jesus reserves his harshest possible condemnations for the very “religious” people of his day and condemned religion for what it does to people—just read Matthew 23 for a taster. Far from being a toxic hit of heroin, Jesus was a sobering splash of bracing, icy water! He awoke people to God, kingdom, their own potentials, and he started a movement that swept out from backwater Judea to utterly transform the world of its day. Everyone who was touched and transformed by Jesus was able to, in turn, participate in the transformation of others around about them. The Jesus movement that emerged from the dusty boondocks of the Roman Empire has swelled through history to transform billions of lives, and it still does, as millions are added every year.

This is the power of people movement, and *this* is the church that Jesus designed to change the world—a thoroughgoing people movement that had little of what we normally conceive of as what constitutes a “church”—buildings, clergy, bookstores, seeker-sensitive services, priest-run liturgies, complex theological formulas, or whatever. In fact, this very question provided the initiating impulse of my book *The Forgotten Ways*, which was to answer how they did this. My attempt at an answer to this question has guided the writing of *Right Here, Right Now*. It constitutes some of that reframing that is needed to reinvent ourselves in our time.

But my role is not quite finished. I started with the *briefing*—an attempt to give some positive framework of how the everyday Christian might engage in Jesus’ mission more effectively (I don’t even use the terms “clergy/laity” because I believe that lies at the root of many of our problems). And

then my slightly zany buddy Lance offered his somewhat folksy all-American twist to what it means to activate your own missional moxie. His story should provide some cultural references that connect with the story of most of our intended readers. In this final chapter, I will do what we can call the *debriefing*. There are some things that just need to be said. So this chapter will involve naming some of the things that I believe must be dealt with if we are going to do the particular tasks God has for us to do at the dawn of the twenty-first century (Eph. 2:10). These are some of the proverbial elephants in the room: the big issues we must face but most people simply dodge because they are considered too hard to deal with.

To chase the elephants from the room, I am going to have to use a stick at the very least. So here you have Hirsch with a stick in his hand. Not me at my nicest, but to heal a system that you deeply love, you sometimes have got to get over being “nice.”

There’s Nothing like a Good Stretch

As you will have noticed by now, this book stretches the meaning of what we normally mean by “church.” We make no apology for this: there is no doubt that over time, our idea of the church has shrunk to unbiblical proportions—so we need some stretching, as ridiculous as that sounds. Our best thinkers have long recognized that the gospel has been effectively marginalized and Christianity relegated to the realm of private, individualized, religious opinion with little impact on the broader world of politics, science, economics, art, and culture.¹ If ever there was a time to reimagine the church and its mission, it is now.

We certainly need to think of the church more as an exponential *people movement* involving all of God’s people and not an institution run by religious professionals offering different brands of religious goods and services. But to

stretch our ecclesiology will require that we have to somehow get a handle on the basics of what makes a church, well . . . a *church*. This is because in reinventing the church for the particular challenges of our era, we run the risk of ending up being less of what the Bible means by “church” than before. So we must go back to Scripture to rediscover what theologians have called the “marks” or “identifiers” of the church that Jesus built and start again from there.

In saying this, I am not suggesting it’s all bad. But I do think that the traditional marks of the church that stemmed from the Reformation are woefully inadequate to equip the contemporary Western church to deal with the bewildering missionary challenge we face. The traditional marks all orbit around the practice of the sacraments. The Reformers argued about whether it was two, three, or seven (the Catholics), but they all agreed that the church is the place where the sacraments are administered and experienced. The problem with all these formulations, however, is that they effectively “institutionalize” grace by making it something that only the priests can handle, usually in “churchly” contexts. Gone is the idea of a people movement that so characterized the early church. Gone is the idea of a Philip simply baptizing the eunuch, gone are the actual meals in houses that made communion a daily affair. Not to mention that they say nothing about mission, discipleship, and cultural life beyond the confines of the church institution itself. What is clearly inadequate can therefore prove to be culturally oppressive to the so-called laity—those believers who have to exercise their following of Jesus outside of the confines of the church’s organizational life. It’s time for a stretch, don’t you think?

In *The Forgotten Ways* I tell the story of how my own community had to get back to basics to assess if, and how, we were being an authentic and faithful expression of Jesus’ church. The outcomes of that inquiry I believe still stack up well in providing us with some working essentials for a New Testament ecclesiology (doctrine of the church).² So this is

what I believe is a useful (but not the *only*) way of identifying a faithful expression of church.

A church is . . .

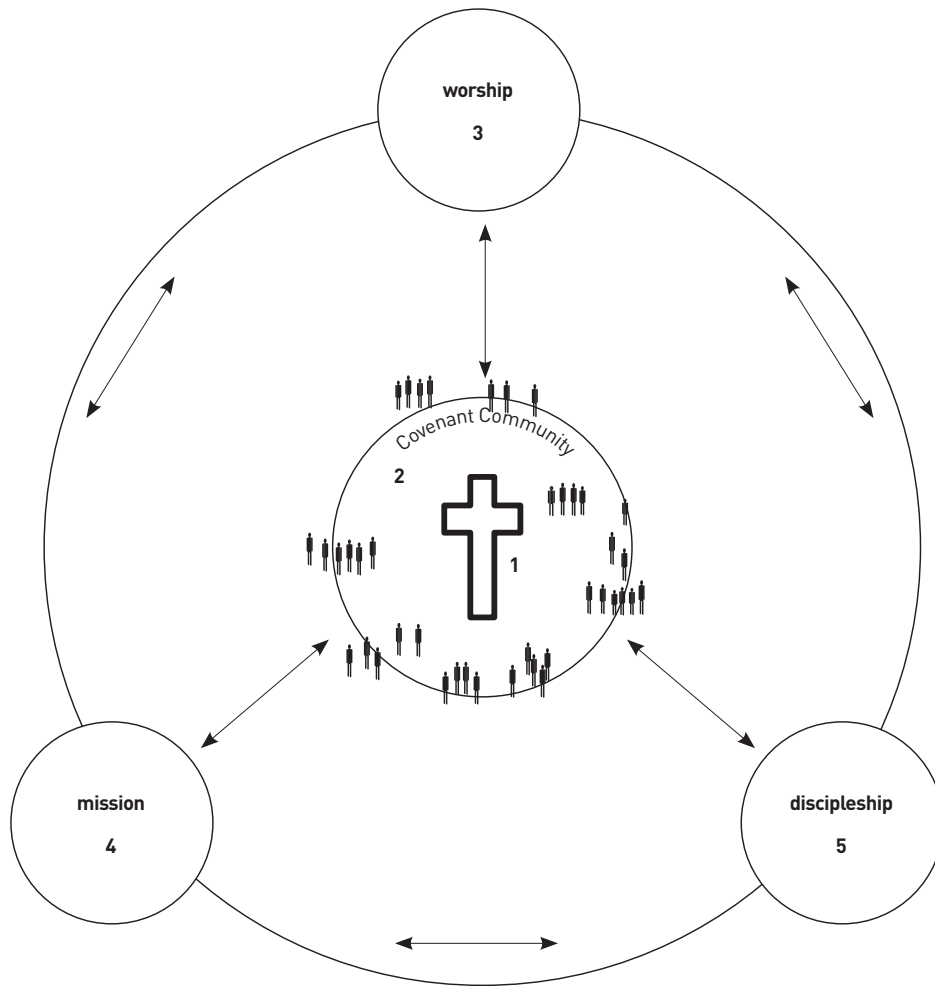
- *Centered on Jesus*: He is the new covenant with God and he thus forms the true epicentre of an authentic *Christ-ian* faith. An ecclesia is not just a God-community—there are many such religious communities around. We are defined by our relationship to the Second Person of the Trinity, the Mediator, Jesus Christ. We believe in the Trinity to be sure, but take Jesus out and it simply isn't a church anymore. A community centered on Jesus as Lord participates in the salvation that he brings. We receive the grace of God in him.
- *A covenanted community*: A church is a formed people, and not by people just hanging out together, but ones bound together in a distinctive bond. There is a certain obligation toward one another formed around a covenant. So here a covenant community is a network of relationships formed around Jesus our Lord. Remember this does not imply buildings per se.

But, more is required to truly constitute a church. Let me suggest that a true encounter with God in Jesus must result in . . .

- *Worship*: defined as offering our lives back to God through Jesus. Note that this is an all-of-life, biblically stretched definition. It includes communal praise and learning, but extends to every aspect of a life and a world offered back to God in worship.
- *Discipleship*: defined as following Jesus and becoming increasingly like him (Christlikeness). Again, this is not just “church” as we tend to define it. It's the relational fabric of the church that reaches way beyond organizational boundaries.

- *Mission*: defined as extending the mission (the redemptive purposes) of God through the activities of his people in every sphere and domain of life, including, of course, church planting but not confined to it.

So there are five identifiers, or marks, in the above model. Graphically it might look something like this:



We can easily see that these are profoundly interlinked and inform each other to create a complex phenomenon that con-

stitutes the basics of church as Jesus intended. They describe the core (minimal?) aspects of a faithful *ecclesia*. If some are really missing, or are significantly diminished, we should be asking some serious questions about ourselves.

Filling the Gaps

Another absolutely central issue we face in a world that is largely turning away from Christianity is that we have to reestablish credibility. That people all across America (and the Western world for that matter) think that *Christ*-ians are fundamentally *unlike* Christ is a serious problem! And research is clear on this trend;³ as we have seen, most people in the various neighborhoods and contexts we inhabit are actually very open to God, Jesus, and spirituality and are willing to engage in meaningful dialogue around these topics. What they manifestly *are not* open to is “the church.” That means the basics of our message are intact; but the medium of the message, the messengers so to speak, are excluded from the equation. And while “the church” is always an easy target and often gets unjustly bad press, this should give us pause to think seriously about what we are currently doing that gives the impression it seems to be giving.

Credibility is a major source of currency for any organization, but especially for the church that Jesus built, and its loss will almost definitely result in a proportionate loss of missional influence on those around about us. Let’s face it, if we are not fundamentally different from anyone else (and statistics indicate that this is the case in almost every sphere of morality: money, sex, and power), then why would anyone want to take on the “yoke” of the kingdom of God? If the gospel with all its demands of living under a Lord doesn’t seem to have any transformative effect on its messengers, why believe the Message?

Without deemphasizing the contribution of the great missionaries like Paul, seminal sociologist of religion Rodney Stark in his various books maintains that the greatest factor in the growth of early Christianity was the example of ordinary Christians living out their faith in their communities.⁴ In fact, he documents the fact that Christianity grew substantially at the time of the terrible plagues that swept the Roman Empire in the first few centuries; there were massive spikes in the growth of the church around these times. The reason for these growth spurts, he suggests, was because while all the pagans abandoned their sick and ran to the hills, the Christians stayed behind to care for the sick and many of them died in this sacrificial service. But many of the sick survived to tell the tale, and tell it they did. The sheer mercy and goodness of the ordinary, marginalized Christians stunned the pagan peoples of that time because such Christlike compassion and service was unknown to them. It was the sheer *goodness* of the Christian church that established the moral credibility of its message and laid the grounds for the spiritual transformation of the Roman Empire. The early church did not seem to have the credibility gap that we so struggle with. *The medium was the message!* Jesus was alive and real in, and to, the people.

As far as I can discern, the only way for Christians to overcome our credibility gap, after centuries of Christianity, is by reactivating an authentic discipleship. Why? Because at its core, discipleship is becoming more like Jesus, or as I tag it in *The Forgotten Ways*, “becoming a little Jesus.” God knows, the world certainly doesn’t need more “religion”; but it can certainly do with a whole lot more Jesus-like people around the place. One of the key roles of Jesus in the life and imagination of believers is to provide a model for our own humanity. Jesus as Man is the prototypical humanity as God defines it. Ask yourself the question, how bad will I be if I became more and more like Jesus, the most perfect human who ever lived? And this is why getting back to the basics of discipleship is so essential to the mission of the church—it’s

about establishing Christ's presence everywhere through our lives as his people *right here, right now*, through the very medium of a life well lived. If we miss *this . . .* well, then surely it doesn't really matter what we do elsewhere. In fact, as stated in *Untamed* and *reJesus*, if we just simply get more "religious" and moralistic, then we are likely to do more damage than good.⁵

All-Consuming Fires

The overwhelming economic and social environment in which we are raised in the West profoundly impacts us all. We are all born into a culture that gets to shape us—in fact, *disciple* us—from the time of birth to death. The truth is that Western culture at the dawn of the twenty-first century is a particularly potent culture because of the omnipresent pervasiveness of media and the predominant role of market forces (with associated money and consumption) in our lives. We have to simply assume that the prevalent values and perspectives of the culture are being downloaded into each one of us from an early age; some of them are clearly good, some of them not so much.

The problem with these cultural ideas is that we generally can't "see" them. Culture is invisible to those immersed in it; it's like asking the proverbial fish to define water. We assume its rightness until we are confronted with an alternative vision of reality that calls it into question. It takes a fair bit of self-reflection, and I would say a very proactive, untamed discipleship in the Way of Jesus, to discern the darker sides of the culture. This is why the kingdom of God can only be experienced as a conversion from one system (kingdom) into another (e.g., Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:9).

The point of this unnerving piece of information is that we simply have to be more aware of our own largely middle-class, and profoundly consumerist, biases if we are going to

be effective missional agents in our time. Once again, it's not that being middle-class is wrong per se; it's just that it has *some* values that are consistent with the kingdom of God, but make no mistake, it has others that work to undermine Jesus' mission and purpose in the world.⁶ Obsession with personal security or the desire for increasing amounts of money and power are problematic when dealing with the Lord Jesus. Even something as seemingly right as "getting an education" can become an idol that is designed to secure ourselves and resist God's will for our lives—and let me be clear here, I am *not* saying that education is wrong, far from it, but just like all things, it can become a means of disobedience and rebellion. *Education is real social power and capital*, and the fact is, we middle-class folk use it all the time; it's unlikely to be spiritually neutral.

Likewise with consumerism; to buy things is basic to survival in a market-based economy like ours, but *to be defined* by what we buy is another thing altogether. The truth is that marketing exploits our deepest fears and desires in order to sell products. They have to. The factories and the economy produce much, much more than we *need*, so in order to keep the system operative, to make the capital work on its own terms, we have to keep the fires of consumption burning. To do this, marketing has to *create desire* and then seek to fulfill it through the purchasing of products. I am not being snide, cynical, or anticapitalist here, so please don't dismiss what is being said for reasons of defensiveness. This is patently the case; consider how much of what you buy today will still be used by you in six months' time. Research says that only 5 to 10 percent will still be in use in six months; the rest is either thrown out into the garbage or becomes someone else's product—mostly thrown out.⁷ Track what happens to the Christmas toys you buy for the kids, or last season's fashions, to make the point.

Heck, we all go into debt to buy things we don't really need. Ever asked why? What's really driving us? Well, the aim is to

create need in order to keep the factories, and therefore the economy, firing. But this takes a significantly spiritual twist in our own day—because in a more and more competitive environment, marketers have to reach deeper and deeper into human motivation to be able to sell us things we don't really need. There is no doubt that when we go shopping, something akin to spirituality is at work. We buy not just to live and survive but also to fulfill a search for meaning, identity, purpose, and belonging. And here is where consumerism clashes with the claims of the kingdom.

And why is all this important? Well, apart from the serious implications for discipleship, global justice, and the environment, because it's our culture, and as we saw in the briefing, sometimes in order to be faithful agents of the King, we simply have to subvert it. Also, we need to demonstrate, witness to, a more righteous way of life. The fact is that all the consumption and the relative wealth of people in the West has not made us happy at all. Depression and suicide are largely problems in Western cultural contexts. The children in America are more likely to kill themselves than those in a Brazilian slum! This has to say something to us. It's a big elephant in the room and it has to be confronted if we are going to be missional Christians *right here, right now*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- To explore the various hindrances that keep us from being revolutionary disciples, read Alan Hirsch and Debra Hirsch, *Untamed*.
- Watch Mark Sayers's stimulating video (with book and study guide) *The Trouble with Paris* with a group of people and discuss.
- View and discuss the online video *The Story of Stuff* (www.storyofstuff.com).

- For implications of consumerism on Christian spirituality, read Skye Jethani, *The Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity*.
- For Christian authenticity in the suburbs, explore books by Albert Y. Hsu, *The Suburban Christian: Finding Spiritual Vitality in the Land of Plenty*, and Dave L. Goetz, *Death by Suburb: How to Keep the Suburbs from Killing Your Soul*.

Kingdom City Limits?

Here's a biggie, and one most believers seldom, if ever, stop to think about even in a lifetime. It goes something like this: we tend to so completely identify the church with the kingdom of God that we end up with what we might call *ecclesiocracy* (rule by the church). And if this sounds like a rather absurd notion (that the clergy once ruled the world), be assured that it has dominated European understandings of the church for a long, long time. In fact, this dangerous error of category lies at the root of false ideas of the church. For instance, when the Roman Catholic Church talks about the pope as Christ's vicar, they mean that he is Jesus' sole, authoritative representative, and that Christ rules his world through the medium of the church, of which the pope is the unquestioned boss! I kid you not. As far as I am aware, this basic understanding of the doctrine of the church is still held by the Catholic Church.⁸

But we all continue to get the distinction between kingdom and church very wrong, and with disastrous consequences. Let me suggest that the basic mistake here is to make a complete correlation of the church—the redeemed community of Jesus' people—with God's kingdom—his active government or rule in the world.

Is the kingdom of God simply to be equated with the church? I sincerely hope not. As much as I love the church and believe that it is a nonnegotiable part of God's plan, it is to King Jesus

and not any human agency that I must give my ultimate allegiance. The church is not simply the same as the kingdom. The church is an expression of the kingdom, perhaps even the most consistent expression of it, but the kingdom (God's active rule in and over his universe) is *much* larger than the church—in fact, it is cosmic in scope.

Reggie McNeal wisely suggests that we need a kingdom-shaped view of the church, not a church-shaped view of the kingdom. In other words, as God's people we must always assess ourselves in the light of God's active rule in the world and not the other way around. Theologian Richard Neuhaus is right when he says,

Our restless discontent should not be over the distance between ourselves and the first century Church but over the distance between ourselves and the Kingdom of God to which the Church then and now is the witness.⁹

Why all this church-kingdom stuff? Well, because if we are to be effective agents of God's kingdom in this world, we need to be freed to see his kingdom express itself everywhere and anyplace—as indeed it does. God turns up in places where we might least expect to see him, but we need the *eyes* to see what he is doing if we are going to join him in the redemption of the world. A complete association of the kingdom with the church locks up God's activity and links it exclusively to organized church activities like Sunday school, communal worship services, and the like. And as wonderful and necessary as these are to Christian community, the diminished view of the kingdom that results from this will never get us beyond the four walls of the church so that we might fulfill our mission of discipling the nations.

The kingdom of God can't be institutionalized in this way. To the contrary, it challenges all these idolatrous attempts to control it—be it churchly and otherwise! Besides, it's not about simply getting more church-based services up

to scratch; it is going to take the *whole body of Christ* as a fluid, dynamic, witnessing agency, active in every possible arena of life, to bring the gospel of God’s love into his world. This, in fact, goes to the heart of our mission in the world.

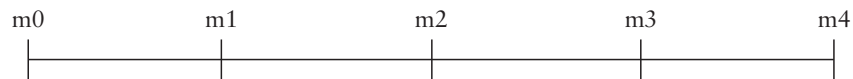
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- John Wimber, *The Cost of Commitment*, DVD
- Jim Peterson, *Church without Walls: Moving Beyond Traditional Boundaries*

Attractional-Extractional

Another elephant in the room is the whole issue of what has come to be called the attractional versus missional church debate. As someone responsible for helping introduce the term into common parlance, let me try to explain it. When we use the term *attractional*, it is an attempt to describe how we conceive of our church in relation to our culture. In other words, it describes our missionary stance or the expectations we have about the role that church plays in our contexts.

To grasp the importance of this, consider the idea of cultural distance.¹⁰ This is a conceptual tool that we can use to discern just how far a person or a people group is from a *meaningful* engagement with the gospel. In order to determine this, we have to see it on a scale that goes something like this:



Each numeral with the prefix *m* indicates *one significant cultural barrier to the meaningful communication of the gospel*. An obvious example of such a barrier would be language. All would agree that if you have to reach across a language barrier, you have got a problem and it’s going to take

some time to communicate *meaningfully*. But others could be race, history, religion/worldview, culture, etc. The more boundaries one has to cross, the harder meaningful communication will be. So for instance, in Islamic contexts, the gospel has struggled to make any significant inroads because religion, race, and a whole lot of *history* make a meaningful engagement with the gospel very difficult indeed. But this is not limited to overseas missions; it is directly related to missionality right here, right now.

Let me bring it closer to home by applying it to the various spheres in which we have to live. If you see yourself (or your church for that matter) standing on the m0 point above, this is how we *might* interpret our own context(s):

m0–m1	Those with some concept of Christianity who speak the same language, have similar interests, probably the same nationality, and are from a similar class grouping as you or your church. Most of your friends would probably fit into this bracket.
m1–m2	Here we go to the average non-Christian in our context: a person who has little real awareness of, or interest in, Christianity but is suspicious about the church (they have heard bad things). These people might be politically correct, socially aware, and open to spirituality. This category might also include those previously offended by a bad experience of church or Christians—some call them “bruised fruit” and they are hard to reach. Just go to the average local pub/bar or nightclub to encounter these people.
m2–m3	People in this group probably have no idea about Christianity. Or they might be part of some ethnic group with different religious impulses or some fringy subculture. This category might also include people marginalized by conservative Christianity—e.g., the gay community. But m2–m3ers are also likely to describe people actively antagonistic toward Christianity as they understand it. E.g., the new atheists.
m3–m4	This group might be inhabited by ethnic and religious groupings with a bad history of the church—e.g., Muslims or Jews. The fact that they are in the West might ameliorate some of the distance, but just about everything else gets in the way of a meaningful dialogue. They are highly resistant to the gospel. Or they are people of completely different language, experience, and worldview. Some immigrant/refugee communities might fit here.

We are all deeply scripted to believe that we must bring people to our church, and so we seldom take into account the cultural dynamics inherent in that equation. But it's *all about culture*. Our church has a distinct culture, as do the people we are hoping to reach! In fact, as we saw in the briefing, I believe we have come to a situation where all mission in Western settings now should be considered a cross-cultural enterprise.

And remember the obstinate little truth that it is *we* who are the “sent” people of God, and whatever that means to our identity as God’s people, it must also sometimes mean *we* must go to where the people are. If we fail to “go” to the people, then to encounter the gospel meaningfully they must “come.” This is the inbuilt assumption of the attractional church; and it requires that the nonbeliever do all the cross-cultural work to find Jesus, and not us! Make no mistake: for many people, coming to church involves some serious cross-cultural work for them. They have to be the missionaries!

Another very important fact must be remembered here. We know from now old research that within three to five years of a person becoming a Christian, they will have no meaningful relationships with anyone outside the church. So, assuming that we bring them to our church, and we happen to do a good job at it and effectively socialize them into our church community, we are in effect snapping the natural, organic connections that they have with the host community they come from. This is very problematic because we know that the gospel travels along relational lines. Sever the relationships and we effectively stop the outward movement of the gospel into the broader culture. In other words, *attractional evangelism in missionary contexts results in extracting them* from their previous relationships and cultural context. This is a big no-no if we are serious about initiating movements right here, right now.

And this is not to say that churches should not gather. Of course we should—churches are worshiping communities.

Nor is it saying we should not be thoroughly *attractive* when we do. We should be as culturally spicy as we possibly can be. It simply means that when engaging people in m1–m4 distance from us, we should gather *incarnationally* within a host culture/community and not necessarily extract people from their cultural tribe(s) into our church tribe.

Attractional forms of church in missionary contexts eventually are self-defeating because the church quickly exhausts its supply of relationships and because the new converts quickly become a cultural clique or religious ghetto increasingly marginalized from the original culture.

Sustainability

Over many years of being involved in missional expressions of church, I perceive one of the biggest issues facing the movement as a whole is that of sustainability. Tragically, many wonderful, spunky people start out with all the right ideas only to end up exhausted and marginalized because they have simply become, well . . . unsustainable.

Part of the issue many disciples face is that of lifestyle and the cultural expectations associated with life in the suburbs—no small matter and one that should be reflected on under the rubric of discipleship. For most believers, the idea of missional discipleship seems like a far-off dream because they work most of the time, come home exhausted, spend what little spare time they have with family and kids, and don't seem to have any time for anything else. Now I don't mean to diminish the sacredness of work and family, but if work is too demanding for us to involve ourselves in being authentic disciples in realms other than work, it is the dominance of our work that should be questioned and not the viability of our discipleship. Work like this is more of an enslaving thing than it is a means of living. We can all live with a lot less. Work four days a week instead of five, if only to find more

space for God in your life, let alone serve others. Much real life, relationships, and spiritual meaning can be added by simplifying our lives in order to engage more fully in Life.

Another aspect of unsustainability is the loner mentality that goes along with American individualism. Clearly there are times when one cannot avoid being something of a lone ranger, but we have to learn to see this as the exception that only proves the rule. Jesus always intended that we should seek to engage in mission two by two *at the very least* (Luke 10). Not all of us will be involved in establishing new communities of faith (what I called in the briefing, *apostolic* mission), but all of us ought to be involved in community life in one way or another. And mission in the Way of Jesus should always aim at developing communities of Jesus followers—isn't that what Jesus did? Paul? Other heroes of faith?

In terms of sustainable multiplication church planting associated with people movements, I have always felt that a group of about 30 to 120 has a much greater chance of survival than the smaller cell-group size. Mike Breen, a deeply apostolic friend of mine, rightly notes that this is because what he calls “midsize communities” have their own inbuilt ecology of survival, especially when each person in the group really looks after the other and is mutually involved in worship, play, economics, and life together. He says we are “hardwired for extended family.” We simply don't flourish in the smaller, more nuclear, versions of family, and we are depersonalized in the much larger “tribal” gatherings.¹¹ Not too big to be unwieldy and mechanical, not too small to seem closed and distressed—that is the trick. But the genius of this lies in the fact that it is church that nonprofessionals can handle and therefore anyone can do. And it's the basis of sustainability.

But a movement that can change the world has to be larger than a local midsize community. I believe strongly in the power of networks and networking.¹² Networks are the fabric of movements and are formed by relationships and mutuality beyond the local expression of church or mission. Through a

network, we become a working part of the whole of what God is doing in a city—part of something bigger. It's being part of a *movement*. These networks should be sought after and developed. Depending on where one is starting, as a brand-new pioneering project or an essential, innovative part of an existing church, it is important to seek connection to like-minded established churches, organizations, and networks. The trick is to find a balance of interdependence and not to be dominated by the agenda of some centralist organization. Networks exist on synergistic, win-win relationships throughout the system. Therefore identify and associate with those who understand and practice this.

The other key area of sustainability is the area of finances. Many of the readers of this book will not be church-based professionals and are already involved in “regular jobs” whatever that might mean. Much is to be gained by looking at the idea of business as mission (BAM). BAM approaches don't accept the dualism that separates the secular from the sacred and sees that all of life can, and indeed must, be made sacred by engaging it in Jesus' name . . . including business. The businesses most likely to engage people personally are obviously the best ways to engage missionally (cafés, Laundromats, coaching, HR, etc.), but even less people-oriented businesses (e.g., engineering firms) have employees who are not disciples of Jesus. These businesses provide a wonderful opportunity for God's kingdom to express itself through his people. In the hands of a missional Christian, the business can become a wonderful tool in the kingdom of God.

In terms of forms of support, in *The Shaping of Things to Come* we suggest that financial support could also come in the following ways:

- Personal support/sponsors: imagine for instance forty people giving \$1/day to your support—most of us can get that form of support together.

- Working part-time: great way of modeling what we are asking others to do while engaging non-Christians and keeping our nonchurch skills up.
- From the established church: if what you are doing can be envisioned as part of the broader mission of the local church, then it is not too much to ask for (and expect) a budget allocation.
- Social entrepreneurialism and BAM as described above.
- Mixture of all of the above.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come*
- Bob Hopkins and Mike Breen, *Clusters: Creative Mid-sized Missional Communities* (London: ACPI, 2008), or visit <http://www.3dministries.com/>
- Michael Baer, *Business as Mission: The Power of Business in the Kingdom of God*
- Steven Rundle and Tom Steffen, *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions*

Getting Over Risk Aversion

By and large the church as we know it tends to embody a culture of social restraint and risk aversion. We do not tend to think of “church” as a place where we are likely to experience life-defying adventure . . . or any at all for that matter. Now clearly there is a role for creating a safe environment to raise children and to worship, but when our need for safety overwhelms our vision of a better world, and stifles our sense of obligation to this mission, then there is a need for a serious rethink. The church that Jesus built should be a place of learning and adventurous discipleship. And these by definition

must involve to some degree the willingness to experiment, to take risks with people, to venture out into the world in order to change it.

The truth is, *mission is risky*. It involves putting ourselves out of our comfort zones and dealing with people we ordinarily might not engage with. And far from being bad for us, taking risks is actually good for the soul, necessary to a healthy learning process, and vital for innovation in all social contexts. Risk aversion, when it becomes part of the culture of church, will result in a stifling status quo that will resist anything, including God, which comes along to disturb it. We do well to consider that Jesus is always “dangerous” to our all-too-human penchant for safety and security. He is a Lord, how else could it be otherwise?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Faith of Leap: A Theology of Adventure and Risk and the Implications for Discipleship, Mission, Leadership, & the Church*¹³
- Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, chap. 8
- Watch several adventure movies and ask what makes them so appealing to the human spirit.

This chapter is filled with both a sense of urgency and a sense of desperation. Urgency, because it’s hard to dodge the fact that the twenty-first century presents a major challenge to Christianity as we currently know it. Think about any science fiction movie of significance. Is there any mention at all in them of even the possibility of Christian faith? I certainly cannot recall any. And remember, science fiction, as a literary genre, is about human imagination exploring the possibilities of the future . . . whether they be nightmarish or utopian. The fact that the church is missing from the genre means that it plays no significant role in the imagination of what the

future holds. It's seen as irrelevant to the great issues of our day—people are not looking in our direction to lead them into the future . . . and yet who better to do that very thing?

Henri Nouwen underscored the perception of those outside the church as he told the story of serving as a chaplain of a cruise ship that was navigating a dangerous fog. “The captain, carefully listening to a radar station operator who was explaining his position between other ships, walked nervously up and down the bridge and shouted his orders to the steersman.” When he suddenly stumbled over Nouwen, he blurted out what a lot of people think about the church and its ministry: “God damn it, Father, get out of my way.” When it came down to navigating the ship out of danger, Nouwen felt totally useless and unwanted—it seemed that chaplains are only called in to life out of a sense of an obligatory tip of the hat to religion.¹⁴

The reality is, we have been pushed from the places where it really matters. Even if we can project ourselves onto the end of the twenty-first century, what will we see there in terms of viable Christian faith? To be honest, I find it very hard to see the privatized, institution-based religion that we experience now surviving into any of these futures—at least as a significant social force for good. That is, *unless* we adapt. It's all there in the “unless”—the possibility of repentance and change.

I believe with every inch of my soul that the church that Jesus built, when it is authentic and true, is by far and away the most powerful force for the transformation of the world. The gospel will always be the good news of God that always addresses the human situation. But the church as we know it is going to have to become more aligned with it, more relevant in all spheres of life, more missional right here, right now, if it is going to effectively deliver its Message to the end of this, what will prove to be an extremely challenging, century.

The desperation I feel stems from knowing that we have a great opportunity right here, right now to recalibrate ourselves for what is coming. In fact, I believe that this recalibration, this rebooting, is well under way. We can, and I believe

will, become a people movement again. But only if we can awaken both sides of the movement equation as discussed in the briefing. We need the *apostolic mission* to engage in exponential church planting, creating communities of faith wherever and whenever we can—many of them, and much more diverse than what we now experience. But the other side is also vitally important. We need to awaken the sheer missional moxie of God’s people as a whole. And we all need to recognize and live out the reality that we are all commissioned (dare I say, *ordained*) agents of the King, and we live out that agency in every sphere and domain of society. Everyone gets to play! If we fail to awaken the sleeping giant of the body of Christ, then I believe our opportunity will be lost and the church will continue to decline, and eventually become a mere cultural footnote to Western history.

Much depends on our choices and actions now. I dream that some brothers and sisters, standing at the dawn of the next century, will look back to our time and say that the course of history was changed because many of us broke from the herd and under God rediscovered our courage, along with the missional potentials that lie dormant in God’s people.

All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.

—T. E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”),
The Seven Pillars of Wisdom

NOTES

Briefing

1. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 114.
2. From notes at <http://www.seobook.com/review-seth-godins-tribes>.
3. <http://zenhabits.net/2009/05/the-art-of-the-small-how-to-make-an-impact/>.
4. Read the Tom's Shoes story at <http://www.tomsshoes.com/content.asp?tid=227>.
Read the Laundry Love story at <http://laundrylovesantaana.com/about/>.
5. Much of what follows is taken from an article by Keller on Missional Church found here: <http://www.pdfdownload.org/pdf2html/pdf2html.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.redeemer2.com%2Fresources%2Fpapers%2Fmissional.pdf&images=yes>.
6. Ibid.
7. Mark Van Steenwyk, "Incarnational Practices," *NextWave*, <http://www.the-next-wave-ezine.info/issue82/index.cfm?id=5&ref=COVERSTORY>.
8. Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 95–97.
9. Van Steenwyk, "Incarnational Practices."
10. Alan Hirsch with Darryn Altclass, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 92–97.
11. Tim Keller, The Missional Church, June 2001, <http://www.pdfdownload.org/pdf2html/pdf2html.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.redeemer2.com%2Fresources%2Fpapers%2Fmissional.pdf&images=yes>.
12. Alan Hirsch and Debra Hirsch, *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010). We suggest that the reader explore what is said there in relation to pre-conversion and post-conversion discipleship.
13. Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 211ff.

14. Addison notes that preexisting relationships are a critical factor for the exponential growth of a movement. “New religious movements fail when they become closed or semi-closed networks. For continued exponential growth, a movement must maintain open relationships with outsiders. They must reach out into new, adjacent social networks.” Stephen Addison, “Movement Dynamics: Keys to the Expansion and Renewal of the Church in Mission” (unpublished manuscript, 2003), 52. Stark argues that as movements grow, their “social surface” expands exponentially. Each new member opens up new networks of relationships between the movement and potential members—provided the movement continues to remain an open system. The forms of social networks will differ from culture to culture, but “however people constitute structures of direct interpersonal attachments, those structures will define the lines through which conversion will most readily proceed.” Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal, Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 22.

15. For an excellent exploration into the power of networking, see Dwight Friesen, *Thy Kingdom Connected: What the Church Can Learn from Facebook, the Internet, and Other Networks* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); or Neil Cole’s *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

16. Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Mission and Innovation for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 100.

17. See *Untamed*, section 2, to explore ways in which we as disciples must challenge prevailing views of culture and *The Shaping of Things to Come*, chap. 9, to explore how and why the medium is the message.

18. Compiled from Keller, Missional Church.

19. Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 17.

20. Keller, Missional Church.

Debriefing

1. For instance Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

2. Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 40–41.

3. George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2006); Dave Kinaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity . . . and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); and Dan Kimball’s *They Like Jesus but Not the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) are just samplings of the research available.

4. Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), chap. 1, and *Rise of Christianity*, chaps. 1–3.

5. See Deb’s and my book on missional Christianity/discipleship called *Untamed*, especially chapters 1 and 2 on toxic religion and Frost and Hirsch, *reJesus*, on Christianity minus Christ equals Religion, 68ff.

6. Deb and I wrote a whole book about obstructions that get in the way of discipleship. See *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship*.

7. See the video “The Story of Stuff” at <http://www.storyofstuff.com/>.

8. Eminent philosopher Karl Popper traces the basis of this ecclesial structure to Plato's idea of the Republic as the mediating institution between the real world of ideas and the false world of senses. The church assumes the role of mediating agent between God and the people. He, I think rightly, sees it as one vast negative that led to an oppressive authorizing of the institution over the people. See Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: The Spell of Plato*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2002).

9. Richard J. Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 33.

10. Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 56–57.

11. See their website for great materials at www.3dministries.com.

12. Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, chap. 7.

13. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Faith of Leap: Embracing a Theology of Risk, Adventure & Courage* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

14. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 86.

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