

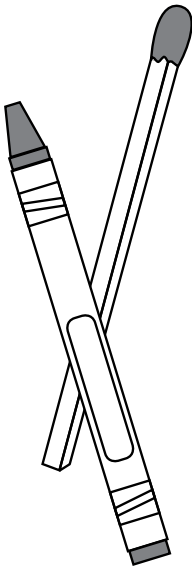
**IT'S NOT  
COMPLICATED.**



# IT'S NOT COMPLICATED.

*Simply Follow Jesus Simply to  
Multiply More and Healthier  
Disciples Literally Everywhere*

By Chris Suitt



*More Than a Sunday Faith Resources*

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For further information on being and making more and healthier Jesus disciples, receiving personal coaching or booking speaking engagements, please contact Chris Suitt at [morethanasundayfaith@gmail.com](mailto:morethanasundayfaith@gmail.com).

*It's Not Complicated!: Simply Follow Jesus Simply to Multiply More and Healthier Disciples Literally Everywhere*

By Chris Suitt

Printed in the United States of America.

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Cover and layout design by Kimberly Gonzales.

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# PREFACE

## *THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME BEGINS TODAY*

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This book is for fire starters. This book is for revolutionaries and creatives who want to be part of changing the world. This book is for those who are not satisfied with simply living to exist, waiting for the inevitable end, ignoring the “inconsolable longing” thundering in their hearts at night.

This book is for those of you who know you were made for something more, and for those of you who will simply not settle for less.

This book is for all of those who have dared to dream of living for a purpose outside the boundaries and restrictions of themselves and their culture. It’s for those who sense a calling beyond their capacity.

This book is for those who wonder how to step into and realize their place in such a Grand Design. It’s for all of those who wonder if they have what it takes to participate in the destiny preordained for them from before they were born.

I have good news for you. It’s really not that complicated.

What if I told you that you did not have to wait for some “Glorious Tomorrow” to enter into all that you were made for? What if I told you that you were born to step into a grand adventure by simply following the One who knows all about you?

What if that step led to a Journey of discovery where you were a part of changing the world one person, one small group of people, at a time? What if that Journey held just as much for you as it did for those you met? What if what you find along the Journey changes everything? Would it change the way you dared to believe or even live?

I have good news for you. It’s really not that complicated.

You can start that Journey right now. Today. Right where you are. On that Journey, you will discover everything you need, everything you

were made for, as you follow the Designer who laid the path out before you. It's just waiting for you on the other side of your obedience!

This book is meant to kindle a flame and stoke a fire in your heart. It's meant to provoke you to consider an Invisible Kingdom that existed long before the ways and means of the worldly system demanding your attention and allegiance today.

In these pages, is an opportunity to discover a different life prepared for you, and an invitation to step into the promise and fulfillment it holds. It will reverberate in your life and the world around you long after the "Important Things" of this world become mere ghost towns and graveyards.

In this book, Pastor Chris Suitt reveals that the life we are looking for is found by meeting the One who gave us our very breath. And he explains that this encounter is actually just the beginning of a life beyond what we expected, already available as we follow our Maker into all He made for us, and for all He made us for.

Pastor Chris outlines some important steps we can take to keep our focus as we follow the Designer. And he reminds us that this is not meant to be a solitary Journey either. In fact, Pastor Chris shows us, the Journey will be more complete as we walk with others we were ordained to encounter along the way and to invite them to join us as we continue walking on our Journey.

It turns out, Chris writes, that this common union becomes part of a process the Creator uses to shape and form us all, revealing the Image of His Son, Jesus. Indeed, the very Image we were all created to bear, and to then reveal to the world around us!

Chris casts a vision, for readers, of what will change if a world of revolutionaries will step into this Journey and submit themselves, as individuals and as a community, to this sacred process. He reports the amazing, almost unbelievable testimonies, of normal everyday people who have been brave enough to leap into this adventure, even in the most unlikely places, even dangerous ones. As his writing details, these pioneers are already experiencing miraculous revolution and transformation, one "pocket of people" at a time!

This book presents a challenge to all who are bold enough to peruse these pages and consider the thought provoking content. Are we ready to move beyond just dreaming; and, actually take hold of the Life and Love we long for deep inside our souls? Are we ready to come face to face not just with what we were made for, but with the One who made us?

This book is not for people content to drift numbly through an empty life. It's not for artists, creatives, or anyone else wanting to simply take their place in the system of pacification and comfort meant to distract us from all that life was really for. It's about more than a career, a market, or even more than music!

It's about a Calling to discover and reveal the most important message the world will ever know. It's about real life and that, more abundant! It's about following the only One who could ever offer such a Life to be experienced!

If you are satisfied living merely for consumables that will too quickly be consumed and gone forever, I dare you to consider the wakeup call I believe the Message of this book was meant to be. If you would rather sleep, you should probably put this book down.

But if you are ready to explore what kind of life and impact is waiting for you if you will follow Jesus, turn the page and begin the Journey that changes everything!

It's really not that complicated.

Simply Follow Jesus,

Ted Bruun  
*The Extreme Tour*  
Founder and Executive Director

# INTRODUCTION

## MAKING MORE AND HEALTHIER DISCIPLES

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The gospel message is quite simple; and yet, we can make living and sharing it quite complex. This can be seen in two contrasting pieces of art, one in a museum and another on the side of a mountain.

In the museum, I saw a video shown on three glass panels. It showed three still life flower pots reflecting on a mirror. These pots were repeatedly shattered into thousands of pieces and then were put back together again in a kaleidoscope effect. Was the artist talking about redemption? I'm not sure. Whatever the artist's message was, it got lost in its complex delivery.

Contrast this with another artist, Leonard Knight. Knight's philosophy of life was, "Love Jesus and keep it simple." He was a folk artist who wanted to spread the message of Jesus' love and each person's need to have a relationship with Him. He then proceeded to take discarded and recycled materials, endless amounts of adobe clay, gallons upon gallons of donated latex paint, and thousands of hay bales to create *Salvation Mountain*.

What you see as you drive up, besides cars from almost every US state and people speaking various languages, is a huge "mountain" rising out of nowhere. This mountain had the words, "God is Love," in big red and pink letters on the very top, and a heart shape just below it containing the words, "**ACTS 2:38 SAY JESUS I'M A SINNER PLEASE COME UPON MY BODY AND INTO MY HEART.**" A simple message delivered simply.

Why have Jesus believers taken a simple message and made it so complicated, especially as a war rages on for people's souls?

In Matthew 9:36-38 it is written, "*When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.'*"



People are hurting, being harassed and many are feeling helpless. They are being held captive by their “drugs of choice” or sinful choices—finding only temporary fulfillment outside of Jesus (Heb. 11:25). Some of these drugs are listed in Galatians 5:19-21 and Romans 1:28-32. As you review these passages, you’ll discover that Paul is not talking only about chemical or liquid drugs. He also includes thoughts, attitudes, words, actions and various lifestyles. It’s safe to say that everyone on this planet is broken while searching for joy, peace and love—even believers in Jesus. The question is, “Where are they going to find it?”

Jesus is the only source of lasting hope, abundant life, real peace, unending joy and fulfilling love today, tomorrow and into eternity. As we filter everyday life through Jesus and His Word and then put those discovered truths into practice empowered by the Spirit, we’ll find our needs met, faith healthier and lives changed. Our lives then become the simple message that others need to hear.

With that in mind, the following chapters contain stories that illustrate scriptural principles that show that all disciples, no matter their age, can be and make more and healthier disciples; that all disciples can start churches; and that, every location, no matter where it is, is a potential meeting place for a church if *we simply follow Jesus simply*.

*It’s not that complicated!*

# CHAPTER ONE

## CHANGING GEARS

---

### CHURCH COMES TO YOU!

I met Brandon when he was in our youth group. Just about every week, he attended the meetings. After graduation from high school, though, I didn't see him but every six months to a year.

When his life hit the skids, which it always did, I'd see him peek into the door of my office. He'd sit and we'd talk. He would always leave uplifted and with a challenge. "Hey, Brandon, let's start meeting on a weekly basis in a *Bible Impact Group*. Let's see God break this cycle."

"Okay, Pastor Chris, let's do it." Only I'd never see or hear from him again for another six months to a year. It was like clockwork and the rhythm went on that way for several years.

Then one day something happened. I got the devastating news that he was killed in a construction accident. I was stunned. And what made it even worse was that I was scheduled to be out of town on the day of his funeral! I was going to miss this important memorial. I felt awful.

When I got back to town, I went to the party house where I knew most of his friends would hang out. There they were, indulging in various forms of "liquid comfort," coping with the loss of a dear friend. To say they were surprised to see me would be a slight understatement. What came next surprised them even more!

As they drank, we hung out together for a while. Reminiscing about Brandon, talking about life, and even discussing Jesus and God. (For some of them, these were two different subjects.) As we enjoyed our time and conversation together, I offered to start having these "conversations" with them each week. Again, I had surprised them.

What I am about to say were their words, not mine. "You would come do church with us here, even while we're drinking?" I said, "Nawwwww, church can't be done in this ungodly place. You have to put down the beers and weed, dress up and come on Sunday *morning*."

Gotcha!

No, seriously, what I did say was, “You bet I’ll do church in this house with you all!” You should have seen the looks on their faces when I made that statement. What an awesome site to behold it was.

Some of those kids were believers who had given up on *church* and some were as raw and rude as could be. Yet, they kept coming to ask their questions and to discuss life’s issues while listening to what Jesus, the Word of God, had to say about them.

Those early conversations became a relationship and a time together that we all looked forward to each week. And the idea of *being church without walls* or simply following Jesus simply spread beyond the walls of the party house where we first met.

As the years have gone by, people have come and gone, and so has the weed and alcohol. The physical location has changed multiple times. Yet, from those first moments at the “Party House,” there is still a group of believers moving toward Jesus together.

And it all started when church came to them. Not just “Sunday Church” but “Simple Church.” It was here that I came to the conclusion: *We need to stop going to church and start being the church everywhere we go.*

### **SIMPLE CHURCH—BEING CHURCH WITHOUT WALLS**

“How is this possible? I don’t have time to go to church all the time!” Well, if we’re thinking about a service on Sunday morning in a building on First and Main as “being the church;” then yes, it would be impossible for us to *go to church* every day.

It would be possible, however, *to be the church* everywhere we go if we understood the scriptural meaning of the word “church.”

Our English bibles use the word “church,” which comes from the combination of two Greek words: *ek* and *kaleo*. Together, they make the word *ekklesia*. *Ek* means to move away from a position at point A to another location at point B. *Kaleo* means to call out very loudly. An *ekklesia* is a group of people being compelled to move away from one location to another by someone calling them.

A football stadium or a music venue filled with people can be a church with that definition, right? Yes, as this is how the word was used in Acts 19:32. So what's the difference between the football stadium/music venue and the church?

Jesus. He's the one doing the calling (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:22; 1 Tim. 3:15).

In all its simplicity, an *ekklesia* or "church" is a group of people being called out by Jesus to move away from themselves and the world (1 John 2:15-17). A group that He is calling to be closer to and more like Him.

Therefore, church has nothing to do with a mere building or a scheduled service or an event. It has *everything* to do with a group of people *listening to and following Jesus together every day*. Not just on Sunday (Jn. 10:27). Every day.

What's interesting is that all the metaphors used for the church have one thing in common: They need something else to be vital. Houses need foundations. A body needs a head. Branches need a vine. A temple needs indwelling, etc. In other words, they need Jesus to be fulfilled or completed. When you take Jesus out of the church, you don't have a church. You only have a building filled with people.

## **JESUS IS THE KEY TO SIMPLE DISCIPLESHIP**

Jesus is not only crucial to being the church, but He's also the only One who can build it as well (Matt. 16:18). And He does this "building" through His saints whom He commanded to make disciples everywhere they went (Matt. 28:18-20).

Another word, then, that's in need of a simple scriptural definition is discipleship. The biblical term for "disciple," *mathetes*, isn't about any particular disciplines or the filling of one's head with certain doctrines/beliefs. Instead, a disciple is a person who incorporates into their daily lives the beliefs of the one to whom they're listening. This kind of following leads to a changed life.

*Hence, a disciple has not been disciplined until what has been put into their head comes out in their life.*<sup>1</sup>

Quite simply, a disciple is not a disciple until their life has been changed. A Jesus disciple, then, is a person who listens to and follows Jesus in their thoughts, words and actions throughout their day, no matter where they are. As their lives are changed, others will see and hear Jesus in and from them. This is the very beginning of the discipleship process, “As you go make disciples.”

When someone comes to faith through any Jesus disciple, this disciple has been given the authority from Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20) to continue the discipleship process by baptizing and teaching the newest disciples “to obey everything I have commanded you.”

This started with the Eleven, who obeyed this command and passed it onto those they met, who obeyed and passed it onto the next generation, right down to today.

Each disciple can pass on what Jesus has already taught them; and thus, all disciples can make disciples. Biblical church is simply a group of disciples who actively walk through life together to become more like and move towards Jesus.

With that in mind, you can stop going to church and start being the church everywhere you go—being church without walls. And, not only can all disciples make disciples, but all disciples can also start churches because both churches and disciples are about a person: The Seed, Jesus.

Who is Jesus to you? Can He, the Word of God, use anyone to make disciples and start churches? Yes, He can if we don't complicate what He made simple!

# CHAPTER TWO

## TRUST THE WORD AND SPIRIT OF GOD

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### CHURCH AT THE RACETRACK

Michael was asked while putting on his riding gear, “Is that your church?” Under a canopy at a local motocross track, he’d just finished a gathering of the church where the riders were heading off to prepare for their individual races. He smiled and said, “Yes.”

Church, at a motocross track? Yes, but it took Michael a while to get there.

I met Michael ten years ago in an airport. We boarded a plane to Israel. He and his wife, Donna, joined a group that was heading to experience Israel first hand. We got to know each other, initially, as we traveled throughout the Land.

Not long after the trip, Michael was asked by a friend of mine, who was relocating back home to Israel, if he would lead the Jewish ministry he had started at their church in Hermosa Beach, CA.

Michael had no training up to this point, other than being part of a MiniChurch, a small group gathering of believers who walked together to become more like Jesus.

When asked whether he should do it, he sought his pastor’s advice. Michael was given the best advice I’d ever heard. “Just go do it. Listen to and follow Jesus. He’ll show you what to do.” Michael followed that advice, which led to one of our many conversations.

One weekend, he invited me to share with his group about the Seven Jewish Feasts of Leviticus 23, in both their historical and prophetic contexts. I crammed it all into two meetings. After each meeting he, Donna and I would go to lunch and talk. It was at one of those lunches that he talked about the need for more training.

It was during that conversation that I invited them both to go through our *Discipleship Training Center*. I knew it would be like nothing they had probably ever experienced before.

I promised them that I would not teach them *what* to think, but *how* to think biblically; and then, let the Spirit help them to arrive at their own biblical convictions. It would be a journey from life change now (*More Than a Sunday Faith*) and later (*Eschatology*).

I told them that they would leave each week with a headache as they would be forced to think in a biblical way, not a Western one. Each course would be taught in a Hebrew manner and would take them three years of coming my way for four weeks every quarter to complete the program. They took me up on the offer.

As they were making steady progress (Donna would bring the best cookies!) another offer came. Michael was asked if he would take over a ministry called *MotoMinistries*. He was challenged to provide chapel services at events hosted by a certain motocross club. He'd never done it before and had never been trained to do it either. Yet, his pastor's advice came back to mind, "Just go do it. Listen and follow Jesus. He'll show you what to do." So...he did and has been doing this ministry for years.

After finishing all the courses, we'd continue to meet and talk. In one of them, Michael said, "I'm really feeling called to be a pastor. What do I do?"

I said, "What do you mean? You are a pastor." With a quizzical look on his face, Michael listened as I made a number of statements about what pastors do and asked him if he was doing them. With each statement, he answered in the affirmative. Then I said, "If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, flies like a duck and swims like a duck, what is it?"

He still had that quizzical look on his face when he said, "But, I don't have a band, a pulpit, a building, a budget..." I stopped him and said, "Where do you find any of that in Scripture?" He was defining pastor by his old paradigm, not a scriptural one.

As he continued to filter this old paradigm through Jesus, the Word of God, the lights began to shine. He was beginning to grasp what Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me." Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. Our job is to simply listen and follow Him. When this finally sank in, Michael realized he already was a pastor...at the racetrack.

## JESUS, THE WORD OF GOD

In Mark 4, Jesus tells a very important story. It's about only two things—seed and soil. In His explanation of this parable, Jesus says something very important to His disciples. “Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand *any* parable?” Jesus was saying that if they didn't get His point here, they probably wouldn't get anything else He taught either. What was He trying to teach them? Simply this: Everything is about Him.

The soil is people's lives and the seed is Jesus. He *is* the *logos theos* or the Word of God (Lk. 8:11, Jn. 1:1; Rev. 19:13). Stop and think about that for a moment. Jesus alone is being planted!

It's interesting to note that there are three words used for the Word of God in the Bible: The Spoken Word or *Rhema*, the Written Word or Scripture, *Graphe*, and Jesus Himself as the *Logos*. The written Word of God, Scripture, is absolutely essential to know how to listen to and follow Jesus, the Word of God, every day and in every place we go as His disciples. We learn who Jesus is, what He thinks and how to listen to Him through Scripture.

Yet, Jesus told another story in Mark 4 about the seed. He said the seed could do the job of growing and bearing fruit without human effort (4:26-29)! We must never forget that Jesus Himself *is* the Word of God. He, not any curriculum, program or human leader, is the seed that causes fruit in a person's life. He said that *He* would build His church.

What should we be doing as a church? What are we doing? Are we creating a layer between the disciple and Jesus? Or, are we putting them into direct contact with Him? Are we giving them scriptural facts to fill their heads through various teachings and classes or showing them how to hear directly from Jesus?

The goal should be to give His disciples the ability to hear from Jesus directly rather than being dependent upon a certain teacher or pastor. Let's put the soil and seed together without a middle person!

## THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Scripture also teaches that it's the Spirit's job to lead people toward Jesus both at salvation and in sanctification, the process of becoming



more like Jesus (Jn. 3:5-8; 1 Pet. 1:2) Are we using methodologies that replace His work in Jesus' disciples and church; or, are we giving the Spirit room to do the job that only He can do?

The question now becomes, "Will we trust the Word of God, both Jesus and Scripture, and the Spirit of God to do their job in making more and healthier disciples?"

It's all about planting Jesus and letting the Spirit bring about the fruit—as they determine, not us. Church and discipleship are all about the Word of God and Spirit of God, not a particular method. Churches can do a lot of programming without Jesus or the Spirit ever being allowed in their ministry. Remember, Jesus was on the outside of the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22).

Will we allow the Spirit of God to help each disciple and gathering of believers to be in the Word of God and *walk with* the Word of God (Jn. 5:39-40) each day by listening to Jesus, who brings good fruit?

We can if we don't complicate the process by keeping it about *simply following Jesus simply*.

# CHAPTER THREE

## PLANTING JESUS SEEDS

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### CHURCH IN A CIGAR SHOP

“Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” Exodus 40:34

The following is a story from a good friend and co-laborer of mine, Ed Waken.

“God often shows up in powerful ways in the midst of clouds! I smoked my first cigar and created my first cloud on Anini Beach, Kauai. We had four generations of family together on vacation when my son invited me to enjoy a cigar with him on the deck overlooking the Pacific Ocean. As we smoked our cigars, he told me about a cigar bar where he had been hanging out in our city.

“I heard stories about some of the men who frequented there and my heart was captured. My son invited me to join him at this cigar lounge to pray for these men and see what God might stir up. God does move in the midst of clouds!

“We began hanging out at this cigar lounge together and found other believers who were already hanging out there. Could God be up to something in all of this smoke?

“We began a few *Life Transformation Groups* [Ed. Note: These are groups of 2-3 men/women who hold each other accountable to scriptural life change principles. They’re also called *Bible Impact Groups*]. We met throughout the week and hosted some breakfasts and chili parties for the guys during sporting events. Spiritual conversations are regular and church gatherings break out.

“Being light where there is so much darkness is adventurous and faith building. Connecting with men in manly environments is a powerful experience. When men know you are the real deal, will be their friend and will love them no matter what, strong bridges are built and the light of Christ shines bright.

“As relationships are built, you hear their stories and obvious points of prayer emerge. Telling them a few days later that you are praying for their situation is something many of these guys have never experienced. You can see the breath being taken away as you look into their eyes.

“If you are inclined, find a cigar lounge to create a cloud and begin conversing with new friends about the things of life and God and see where God takes it. You might find a “glory cloud” descending upon you for a holy experience!”

### **GO WHERE PEOPLE ALREADY HANG OUT**

Jesus said He would build His church (Matt. 16:18), make it healthy (Eph. 5:25-27), and make more disciples. Furthermore, He said He would use His disciples in the process of planting Jesus seeds (Mark 4:1-20). He said they would also be reaping or making more disciples, everywhere they went (Matt. 28:19).

We see a good example of this in Acts 13-14. Paul and Barnabas went to the following cities: Cyprus, Paphos, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. What happened? Disciples were made and churches begun.

They went to the locations where they knew people would naturally gather. They planted seeds through preaching the gospel while sharing their Jesus stories. In some cities, no one came to faith. In others, many disciples were made. Before heading home, the team returned to the cities where disciples were made to strengthen them and to appoint elders in each *church*.

The bottom line is this: They planted Jesus seeds by going to where people hung out; and then, disciples were made and churches started. What we see in Paul’s ministry can be duplicated today in every city of the world by anyone, no matter their age or background, who is committed to being and making more and healthier disciples wherever they are.

The following has been modified from “Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens.”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus said the harvest is ready and believers should pray for Him to

send workers into His fields to gather a harvest (Matt. 9:38; Lk. 10:2)! Seeing more disciples made starts, continues and ends with the ***practice of prayer***.

Notice Jesus says, “His fields.” We are to ask Him where He wants us to go. You live in a home and a city, and are gifted with abilities and interests that you’ve been given for a reason. There are disciples to be made from a harvest just waiting for someone to enter it, if only we will.

As we pray, we’re looking for ***pockets of people*** (Lk. 10:3), places where pre-believers already hang out. As a Jewish rabbi, Paul started with synagogues because he knew people would already gather there. He also knew he would get an opportunity to speak. Believers should do the same—go where people already gather.

One simple way to do this is to ***repurpose a present activity*** (Lk. 10:1). Take something you’re already doing—hiking, reading books, skating, cooking, playing music, kids’ sports activities, etc.—and now do it with those don’t know Jesus in your area. Except this time, you’re going with a different purpose—to make more and healthier disciples.

After discovering where people naturally gather and getting Jesus’ permission to go, then ***participate with your BIG partner*** in this activity (Matt. 10:5-8; Lk. 10:1).

Whether or not your BIG partner actually does this activity with you, doesn’t matter. The point is that they’ll be going with you into the battle. They will be holding you accountable to becoming more like Jesus, and praying for you to share Jesus with those at this activity. This provides a great foundation for the next step. As you go into His fields to plant seeds and harvest souls, you’re now bringing the ***power of His presence*** to these pockets of people (Lk. 10:4-5).

Keep in mind that a single candle has its greatest effect in a dark room, not a lit one. As you allow the power of God to continue to change your life, the light within you will shine ever brighter as you share your Jesus stories with those you hang out with (Acts 1:8—be a witness).

You’re not just going to hang out in these pockets of people. You’re asking the Lord to lead you to the ***person of peace*** (Lk. 10:5-7). This is the person who is engaged by your efforts, resonates with your

heart, and will be interested in the gospel. This person of peace will be connected to and is well known by many in that pocket of people where you were asked by Jesus to go. What's interesting, though, is that this person may not be the most obvious. This person may even be on the fringes of the group.

Case in point: Jesus healed a demon possessed man no one wanted to be around. Yet, his Jesus story made a huge difference to all who knew him (Mk. 5:18-20). It was the same with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4) and the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16). Always be asking Jesus to show you this person(s) and then start building a relationship with them.

You've found your pocket of people. You've engaged in deliberate activity to make His presence known in that pocket. Once there, stay focused on being a **person of purpose** (Mk. 4:30-32). One who is not just participating in the activity, but is deliberately open to the Spirit to ways in which to plant Jesus seeds.

There can be no fruit without seeds. There can be no more disciples without planting Jesus. Ask yourself if you are there to skate, to hike, to play music or to plant Jesus seeds? Stay focused on your purpose for being there so you'll be ready to share Jesus as the Spirit opens the doors.

As you keep planting Jesus seeds, some will put their trust in what Jesus did for them by dying on the cross and rising from the grave (1 Cor. 15:1-5).

**What do you do when that person of peace comes to faith? Read on!**

# CHAPTER FOUR

## *DISCIPLESHIP: THE POWER OF TWO OR THREE*

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The stories in the following three chapters have been changed to protect the identity of our persecuted brothers and sisters in the Middle East. It was here, in this troubled region, that one brother soberly told me, “Two or three gathered together are considered a crowd; and, larger numbers than that are “crowds” that are considered a threat to authorities. But as believers, we still meet.”

They have an arguably deeper appreciation for something we in the West often take for granted: The fellowship of and being a community with other believers. Make no mistake about it. We need other believers to move toward Jesus.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters know they need Jesus’ presence (Matt. 18:20) to survive in a world where they can be severely persecuted, either through threats, imprisonment, beatings or any combination of the three.

It is true that there may be some who will not meet at all out of fear of persecution. Yet for many, despite the threats, will still gather in the most unlikely places out of the need to be church. They take these risks in order to become more like Jesus; and so that, together, they can hold up under such conditions.

### **CHURCH IN A CAR**

My wife and I had recently come home from a trip to the Middle East. While there, we met a couple who regularly put their faith into action, even to the point of being persecuted for making more and healthier disciples.

One day, we received an email about their need for a new car. Their old one broke down after 300,000+ miles in less than a few years. I couldn’t believe that a car could get that many miles on it so fast! That is, until I read what they were doing with that car.

*They were holding church services in it!* Seriously! Here's how it worked. A brother would somehow get permission to leave or would just *sneak out* of his living area so that he could "take a drive" with the husband from the couple we knew. The man and this brother in the faith would then *be church* while driving. They would never stop. The husband wanted to make sure he did everything he could to protect the brother he picked up from being spotted with a known believer in Jesus from "enemy" territory.

This unorthodox location for *church* enabled the brother to make more and healthier disciples when he returned home. It encouraged him to grow stronger and take bolder steps in sharing his faith within his known pockets of people in order to make more and healthier disciples himself.

This boldness landed him numerous times in jail, with its ensuing "interrogations." Yet, as often as he could, this brother and the husband got together, putting more and more miles on that car to *be church*.

Needless to say, my wife and I listened to the Spirit and followed Jesus by giving to this effort. I was even able to experience this church gathering for myself. On another trip to this region, I was given the privilege of being church with them. As I sat in the back seat and took in the glory of God in our midst, my brothers *were church*. What an awesome sight that was! Church in a car, who would have ever thought, right?

## THE DNA OF DISCIPLESHIP

Peter preached the good news, for the first time, in a setting where there was definitely a natural pocket of people: Jerusalem. Jews gathered there from around the world for Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11). As he shared, the Spirit used Peter to plant Jesus seeds where "about three thousand" disciples were harvested/made on one day!

How did the Holy Spirit disciple these new believers? Acts 2:42-47 tells us in what has been termed the **DNA** of a healthy/mature faith: **D**ivine Truth, **N**ourishing Relationships, and **A**ccomplish Jesus' Mission. This passage tells us that these new believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (vs. 42-43). The apostles were passing on what they remembered Jesus taught them directly (John 16:12-14), and what the Spirit showed them in their study of Scripture (Acts 6:4) or *Divine*

*truth*. These new believers were shown how to listen to Jesus for themselves using Scripture (Jn. 10:27; Eph. 4:11-16). In this way, they could express their love for Jesus through their obedience to Him (John 14:23). *And so, healthy believers use **Divine Truth** to keep **loving Jesus**.*

This love grew in the context of a community. These disciples also “devoted themselves to *the* fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers” (vs. 42-44). It was a specific group of people that formed this community, the Church (a group of people together getting closer to Jesus).

This community devoted themselves to being involved in and praying for each other to become more like Jesus (*Nourishing Relationships*—James 5:16-20), or making healthy Jesus disciples (Matt. 28:19). *For this reason, **becoming like Jesus** with other Jesus believers is another sign of a healthy faith.*

As believers become more like Jesus, they have something to share with those around them—what Jesus has done in and for them (vs. 47). ***Sharing Jesus**, a further sign of a healthy faith, is what Jesus asked His disciples to do—be His witnesses (**Accomplishing Jesus’ Mission**—Acts 1:9).*

How did the disciples do this together or be church? And could it be done in such a way that every disciple could do it? The answer is a resounding yes!

## **BIBLE IMPACT GROUPS—THE IMPORTANCE OF TWO OR THREE**

Let’s remember the simplicity of the biblical definitions of church and discipleship: Disciples give each other biblical tools to listen to and follow Jesus in their everyday decisions, so that they become more like Jesus. The church is a group of disciples moving together, away from themselves and the world, in order to become more like Jesus.

Jesus said, “Where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them.” (Matt. 18:20)

It’s interesting that one of the five words used for the gathering or meeting of the disciples that we call “church” is found in this verse.



Jesus is present when two or three disciples gather together. Therefore, the Word of God and the Spirit of God can do their job of making more and healthier disciples in a meeting with as few as two or three disciples. Why? Because Jesus is present.

Think about it. Two or three disciples can meet anywhere, at any time. For example, driving around town in a car! Together, they can encourage and stimulate each other to love, to share, and to become more like Jesus. It can't get much simpler than that, can it?

May I suggest *Bible Impact Groups* (BIGs) for this gathering of two or three? BIGs apply the DNA of healthy believers as found in Acts 2:42-47. To be clear: BIGs are not meant as an accountability group to stop a certain sinful behavior. BIG partners hold each other accountable to the biblical life-change process or discipleship. Jesus didn't come to add Himself or new behaviors to who we are. He came to completely *replace us with Himself*. We become what we focus on and what we focus on only gets bigger. Therefore, we should be focusing on; and thus, becoming more like Jesus.

BIGs do this through a gathering of 2-3 men or 2-3 women who ask four simple questions each time they meet (James 5:16). This process gives each disciple the biblical tools they need to become more like Jesus or hear His voice, and then follow Him (Jn. 10:27). All the while being used of the Spirit to make more disciples as they go about their everyday lives (Matthew 28:18-20).

BIGs allow the Spirit to bring to light the area(s) He wants to change in a person's life as they learn how to use the Word of God in their daily decisions (2 Cor. 10:5, Jn. 16:13).

BIGs have no curriculum other than Scripture. Each disciple is challenged to read through the Bible in a year while asking Jesus to speak to them while reading. BIGs have no leader or teacher; therefore, all believers, even brand new ones, can be used by the Spirit to make more and healthier disciples.

As one author put it, "If we can't multiply a group of two or three, then we should forget about multiplying a group of fifteen to twenty. By focusing on the simple, we actually can see dramatic results in the complex."

Start small and see what the Word of God and Spirit of God will do.  
When that *person of peace* comes to faith, it's time to form a BIG.

All disciples can make disciples. Even the newest and youngest ones can do it just like a fourteen year-old is doing in the Philippines! (You can find BIG cards with the questions at [morethanasundayfaith.com](http://morethanasundayfaith.com).)

**What happens when these BIGs reproduce into more BIGs? Read on!**

# CHAPTER FIVE

## CHURCH: SPECTATOR OR PARTICIPANT

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### CHURCH IN AN OLIVE GROVE

On another trip to the Middle East, I attended a church service in quite a different location—an olive grove.

It was quite normal for people in this region to gather in olive groves to relax while drinking coffee. Hidden in the center of row after row of olive laden trees, this coffee break was not your normal coffee house affair. They would get a red hot coal fire going, place either a flat or round metal tin over the top, and then make some great eats and incredible “thick-as-mud” coffee.

As the church gathered and the smell of fresh coffee filled the air, the church service began. Well, actually, it had already begun the moment people arrived. From that moment, they were greeting each other with warmth and love. Through hugging, sharing Jesus stories and Scripture, encouraging each other and praying for one another church was taking place.

Even though I didn’t speak the language, with a mug of Turkish coffee in hand, I was brought into the presence of Jesus through the presence of Jesus in these brothers and sisters. They were practicing the simplicity of following Jesus simply. Church doesn’t have to be complicated. Jesus and a few believers meeting together anywhere can definitely make more and healthier disciples.

### SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES FROM EARLY CHURCH MEETINGS

Simply stated, *church* meetings were a gathering of believers, who allowed the Spirit to empower and enable each disciple to make more and healthier Jesus disciples wherever they met.

They met indoors and/or outdoors, in both public and private locations, at least weekly, but most likely daily, in Jesus’ name.

They did life together as seen in the words used to describe the believers—brother/sister, family and saints; and also, to describe the church—body, bride, and household.

They praised, prayed to and heard from Jesus directly and through His people. They let the Spirit guide the meeting so the believers attending were edified, encouraged and strengthened in their faith.

Everything was done in an orderly manner; though, *every person participated* by using their Spirit given and guided gifts. They partook in communion, baptized and took up a collection. They met for additional training as necessary. And they eventually grew to the point where a citywide group of elders for the entire church of that town provided a spiritual covering.

It was expected and considered normal that more and healthy disciples would be made. Loving correction was provided, as necessary, to keep people moving toward Jesus. Interestingly enough, other than the above, Scripture is silent on how the disciples made more and healthier disciples as a group/church.

Who led the meetings isn't mentioned. And neither is a set format, time, frequency or "ideal location" for meetings. What is mentioned is that everyone participated in ways meant to help each other listen to and follow Jesus, empowered by the Spirit. This seems to be the scriptural pattern laid out for us to follow.

From experience, though, believer participation tends to go down as the group size goes up. Thus, it is perhaps a good idea to limit the group size at 12-15 people. This is not a hard and fast rule. The key is to keep asking, "What does Jesus want done?"

The meeting of the church is more about who we're following, Jesus; and who empowers it, the Spirit. It's not about simply maintaining a methodology on how it's done.

With that in mind, we see again that all disciples can make disciples. A church is not just a large group of people started by charismatic leaders. No, *all* disciples can start churches!

A church isn't just a building with a cross on top. No, *every* location where the Spirit provides, like a truck stop, a government building or a truck cab through a smart phone linking long distance truckers, is a potential meeting place for the church to make more and healthier disciples.

# CHAPTER SIX

## *A PROPOSED CHURCH GATHERING MODEL*

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### **CHURCH IN A PLACE OF BUSINESS**

Through a good friend of mine, I heard a story about a group of believers who faced an urgent need for a meeting place to gather. In this particular region, meeting in homes had become a challenge. Regular meetings were attracting attention, especially from nosy neighbors who might leak information to the authorities.

Even though it was just a few people meeting in their home, the wife of the believing husband started to get a little uncomfortable about having “these people” in her house. She put up with her husband’s wishes for a while, but eventually said, “No longer.” She was tired of taking the risk of losing her home to the authorities and her husband to jail. So the believers came up with an idea.

Why not start a business where people would be expected to gather? This way, small groups of believers could come and go at various times and not draw suspicion. At the same time, this would take the pressure off the wife.

It’s not important to tell you what the business was. What is important is that money was raised to purchase a building for a particular business where church gatherings could take place, right under the nose of the authorities! Multiple church gatherings are still taking place at this location today.

Church is not about a building; and yet, buildings *can* be used for the church to meet, no matter where and what those buildings may look like. Simple church can take place anywhere at any time.

### **IT’S A JESUS GATHERING!**

You might be thinking, “What happens when these healthy disciples reproduce more healthy disciples?” Answer: Keep forming new BIGs and starting new gatherings of these combined BIGs. This doesn’t have to be in a building, but it can be. They can even happen at the very

location where you found your person of peace—like on a cruise line or a construction site.

Let's remind ourselves of what *ekklesia* is and is not about. An *ekklesia* is a community of disciples who are becoming more like and are moving towards Jesus together. It's not about a service where the few minister to the many in a church building. The *ekklesia* can call itself whatever it wants—home fellowships, house churches, simple/organic churches, etc. I use the word *gathering* in this booklet to simply distance myself from the English word “church.” “Church” can be a word with a lot of baggage that leads to misunderstanding.

Where and how the gathering operates should be dictated by Scripture, not culture (Christian or otherwise). Remember, a gathering is not about a method, but about making more and healthier Jesus disciples using the principles in Chapter 5. So pick a location where the gathered can talk confidentially with minimal distractions. If there is a person with the gift of hospitality, let them host the group. If more have this gift, rotate locations.

Keep things simple so anyone can facilitate the group, which leads to making more gatherings of healthier disciples! But whatever method you use, think it through according to these five basic elements. These “gathering elements” reflect the DNA of healthy disciples found in Acts 2:42-47. Each gathering should strive to balance the following:

1. Community—connection with each other;
2. Praise;
3. Time in and with the Word;
4. Time spent praying with and for each other; and,
5. Time spent pursuing and Accomplishing Jesus' Mission—purpose.

The proposed format is never meant to be a rigid schedule. Rather, it's a guideline of what is possible. As you learn to listen to the Spirit, you might come up with a different format or get a sense of when a certain gathering should consist of more community, praise, teaching, prayer or purpose.

If, however, one of the five elements is continually ignored, the gathering can get out of balance and not end up making healthy disciples. As the facilitators develop a deeper walk with Jesus, they will

know whether it's God or people controlling the group. Either way, it's a training ground to grow closer to Jesus together.

Furthermore, the gathering should be a place where people can be "real" on their journey. We all stumble and fail forward at times. We have challenges that need answers. We also find victory as we submit to Jesus (1 Cor. 10:13). When this happens, others will see it and gain hope for their own lives, marriages, families, careers, etc.

The gatherings should be a place to be known and to know others. A place where we can support and pray for each other to grow in our faith. The gathering should be a safe place to ask and research answers together to life's questions in the Word of God.

### **A SIMPLE GATHERING FORMAT:**

#### **CONNECTION TIME**

Give the group time to connect with each other, either before the meeting or during the initial portion of the gathering. It's simply a time to get the group interacting with one another, to be the church. Some gatherings eat together (snacks, potluck) to help this connection happen.

#### **PRAISE TIME**

Transition to praise and thanksgiving by helping the group focus on Jesus, giving Him permission to accomplish *His* agenda for the gathering. This can be done with or without music/instruments. That week's facilitator can ask any of the following questions (or something like them).

How'd your week go? What are you thankful for? Where did you see answered prayer? How'd it go with what we prayed for you all week? How did you see Jesus this week? What did He tell you? Anything you learned about Jesus you want to share or give Him praise for?

These questions can be asked in a number of ways. But now, the group will be focusing on who Jesus is and what He has done for them. Also, if there is a musically gifted person in the group, they could lead the group with live or taped music. They could even go *acapella* using songbooks. Individual members could *also* bring a song to be sung or for the group to listen to. The key is to *keep it simple* so others can do it and *all* can participate.

## WORD TIME

The norm should be to go through a book of the Bible, chapter by chapter. As the Spirit leads, a video or tape series could be used; but, staying in Scripture is optimal. The goal would be for each person to read the section before the gathering and be ready to discuss it when they come.

Here are five *suggested* questions that can be easily answered to bring out the truth of each passage that Jesus wants them to hear for that gathering.

These are suggestions, so don't go through them as if you're checking off a list. If you do, the gathering will quickly become mundane and human led. It's *okay* to make variations on the questions. The point is to get them into the Word, focusing on, thinking about and listening to Jesus.

Silence is okay. Give them time to think about the Word and then respond. They are learning how to hear Jesus. And please, resist the urge to give the answer! It's amazing how the Spirit gives different insights to each person, which together make an entire picture. If the passage that is being covered is long, it can be broken up and the first two questions can be asked of each section.

The first question is, "What does this passage tell us about God or Jesus?" or "Who is God and what can He do?"

The reason for "God" is that when your group is in the *Tanakh* (the Old Testament), they will not yet find the actual word *Jesus*. Jesus *is* God, of course, but for some, especially new believers, the connection may be hard to make at the start.

The second question is, "What does this passage tell us about people and/or us, as to how or what do people think, need, want, feel or act?"

The third question is, "What are you going to do this week to live what we talked about tonight?" or "How does this apply to you?"

The group could brainstorm ways to apply the truths they've heard.



Or, you can leave it up to each individual to say how Jesus wants them to apply it.

Questions two and three are some of the reasons why both BIGs and gatherings are vital in the effort to make more and healthier disciples.

It's important that BIGs are made up of only one gender. This allows certain life areas to be discussed and worked through, with the Word of God, that couldn't (and/or shouldn't) be discussed in a mixed group. BIGs also don't need any specific spiritual gift to produce Christlike character.

The gathering, though, is the place for people to practice using their spiritual gifts. It also allows men and women, who are unique in the way God created them, to bring out different insights from Scripture. The Spirit can use this to make more and healthier disciples of both the disciple that speaks or shares *and* the disciples that hears.

### **PRAYER TIME**

The fourth question is, "Who will pray for you this week to live out what you heard?"

The key here is for disciples to be praying for each other to be living out what God is asking each of them to do. This becomes the basis for praying for each other throughout the week. Texting works great for sending out prayer requests, as the person can quickly get the gathering praying for them if they start struggling to live it out.

You can pray as a group or break up into smaller groups. As the Spirit leads, the entire group can even spend time praying for one person. The point is that you're applying James 5:16, where praying for each other brings about life change. The more specific the confession, the more specific the prayer can be.

Here's something to think about when it comes to prayer. Unless what is being prayed for affects the person sharing the request, be careful not to let the gathering get bogged down in taking requests for others not part of the gathering (unless it's for the salvation of specific people).

This doesn't mean you don't pray for those not in the gathering. It's simply that you don't take these requests during the gathering. Emails and texting can be used to share these types of requests.

## **PURPOSE TIME**

The fifth question is, “Who needs to hear what I heard tonight?”

This goes to the heart of the truth: Every person struggles with the same challenges (1 Cor. 10:13). As the gathering works through that issue and sees victory, others need to hear their Jesus story of how He changed or helped them.

The Spirit brought together the people He wanted for this specific gathering and has placed them in a specific location. He has designed it, for those who happen to be around it, to find Jesus. Gatherings are a family of believers, being used by the Spirit, to plant seeds and harvest in Jesus’ fields.

Therefore, to what pockets of people does God want this gathering to make His presence known? Start a practice of praying for this pocket and then seek a God directed plan to bring Jesus’ presence to them!

## **MORE THOUGHTS ON GATHERINGS**

The gathering time can be used for planning fun activities to further build community. It can be used to strategize ways the group can continue to make Jesus’ presence known in the pockets of people they know. Let those in the gathering use their gifts to plan these activities.

The gathering should strive to be a place that is welcoming, accepting of differences (and there will always be differences) and unrushed in rhythm and tone. The goal is to hear what Jesus has to say through His revealed Word, as individuals and as a gathering.

Let the Spirit put your gathering together. He can work in each believer’s life through people of all ages and backgrounds, even though the Spirit may put together gatherings of men, women or youth.

Transparency is crucial. The believer in Jesus can not grow without being honest with other believers (James 5:16). Honest sharing will not occur without struggle, being uncomfortable and/or pain. This is why we are commanded to be devoted to each other (Rom. 12:10) and to work through these struggles together. It allows us all to have a healthier faith.

Will some leave? Yes. Will more come? Yes. Is it about numbers? No.

Remember, Jesus said He would build His church. We are to focus on making more and healthier disciples. Let Jesus and the Spirit do their job.

Furthermore, the Spirit gives every believer a gift He wants them to use. Each disciple then, not just a few, should participate in the gathering somehow.

With that in mind, the following are a few things to think through. First, there may be a person with the gift of teaching, but be careful to not let only one person do all the “teaching” in the gathering. A biblical gathering involves everyone. So let the Spirit use the entire gathering to minister to each other, even if only one person leads the teaching from Scripture that week.

Second, keep in mind that the ability for everyone to be involved starts to decrease at about 12 people. This is why it’s a good idea to let everyone have a turn at facilitating the gathering. You don’t need the gift of teaching to have a gathering. Anyone can facilitate the above format, so let others practice facilitating the group. This allows them to use their gifts, while preparing for the time when the Spirit wants to start another gathering. Remember the Word of God and the Spirit of God produce the fruit God desires.

Third, as a general rule, the gathering should take about an hour and a half to two hours. But, it can last longer as the gathering itself hears from the Lord. Some gatherings have been known to go all day! The gathering should be sensitive, however, to the needs of those with crazy work schedules and/or with young children who attend. Thus, beginning and ending at an agreed on time is important. If you consistently go over that time, some people will stop coming.

Some gatherings want to meet more than once a week and others want to meet all day. That’s okay! It’s also okay to take time off. Some gatherings meet for three weeks and then do something fun together during the fourth week. Allow the gathering to listen to Jesus as to how He wants the gathering to handle their time. Remember, even Jesus got away for rest!

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## BEYOND THE GATHERING

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Because God wants to use the church to be and to make more and healthier disciples, what happens when a gathering senses it is getting too large for transparent life and sharing to take place?

After listening to the Lord, it's been my experience that usually one of two things happens, though be open for more! One, more gatherings are started independent of each other by trained people from the previous gathering. This is why it's important to let different people lead the gathering. It becomes a training ground for future multiplication of gatherings.

And two, multiple gatherings gather together once a week/month/quarter in a larger space (like a park) or a rented facility (sometimes gatherings with buildings will allow a meeting for little or no charge) to celebrate what Jesus is doing in His Church.

One gathering leader put it this way, "It simply feels good to be part of a larger group—to see how God is working in other people's lives and/or gatherings. This is especially true when it *seems like* He's not working in yours. It brings encouragement."

This larger gathering can be a time of praise and praying. It can be a time of sharing "Jesus stories" about what He's doing, or simply a fellowship time with other gatherings to show that each gathering is part of a larger body. There could even be a coordinated teaching, especially if all the groups seem to be having similar challenges. Again, it's all about Jesus. He'll show you what He wants done.

Will those who are making more and healthier disciples have questions that puzzle them? Yes. Will they need further biblical tools, and/or be asked questions to which they or those in the gathering can't answer? Certainly. Will challenges arise at the gathering that create tension? Again, the answer is yes.

There are a few remedies for these situations. One, start a *Discipleship*

*Training Center* that all disciples, even gathering leaders can attend to increase the number of their biblical tools that enable them to be better listeners and followers of Jesus.

We see Paul doing this in Acts 19 when he took the disciples and held “discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus” for two years. These meetings led to an entire region hearing the good news of Jesus!

I’ve developed simple and reproducible materials to make this happen that are available to you for little or no cost. Or, you’re welcome to participate in my *Discipleship Training Center* meetings in-person or via Skype/ooVoo. You can contact me at [morethanasundayfaith@gmail.com](mailto:morethanasundayfaith@gmail.com) for more information.

A second option is to find someone outside the gathering to disciple a member inside the gathering or be a biblical resource for individual disciples. We see this in Scripture. Paul wrote letters and sent leaders to help out local gatherings (Timothy to Ephesus and Titus to Crete). In fact, 1 Corinthians was written in response to questions believers at Corinth had.

Another solution, when multiple gatherings occur, is to start thinking about 1 Timothy 5 and Titus 1. These passages outline how to raise up elders or spiritual leadership who oversee gatherings under Jesus’ leadership. These leaders then can care and train the facilitators of each gathering.

Again, it doesn’t have to be complicated. Simply love Jesus and keep it simple. He will show you what to do; and, the Spirit will empower you what to do it.

# CONCLUSION

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The purpose of this booklet was to help every believer understand:

- All disciples, no matter their age, can make disciples. If kept simple, churches can be started even by teenagers!
- All disciples, then, can start churches;
- Every location is a potential church meeting place; and,
- All church owned/rented facilities can be used to gather pockets of people and to train disciples to be and make more and healthier disciples.

Scripture doesn't make it complicated.

This can happen because the Word of God and the Spirit of God can use just one Jesus disciple to start it all. It can happen as long as, if being the church and becoming a disciple are kept as **simple** as Scripture says they are.

It's time to simply listen and follow Jesus, The Shepherd.

# ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> *Discipleship: Copies of the Original*, [morethanasundayfaith.com/resources](http://morethanasundayfaith.com/resources).

<sup>2</sup> *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*, Neil Cole, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2005.

# NOTES

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