

Chapter 9

Mobilization

“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21).

It’s easy to miss the power of Jesus’ words in this single verse—Jesus, the sent one, revealing to His followers an even bigger calling than they’d first understood. A mission extending beyond the relational warmth of their small group. A cause without the safety and security of their Master in bodily form.

Just a few days earlier before Jesus appeared to His disciples and followers, this band of Jesus freaks had hidden themselves away behind locked doors, grieving the loss of their Founder, unable to see any forthcoming movement. Now Jesus was standing in front of them, giving them their new marching orders.

Jesus knew the disciples’ tendency might be to stay together and accumulate. He proactively addressed their bias (and ours). His words are deliberate and intentional. The question is not, *are we sent* but rather *to where and to whom are we sent?* For most of us, the answer lies directly in the mission field already embedded in our lives. The real challenge for the disciples, and for us, is to think and to see through a different paradigm and lens than we’ve become comfortable with.

Could it be that we spend so much time and energy on attracting and accumulating that we’ve either forgotten or don’t take seriously Jesus’ call to “live sent” to the world around us? If Jesus appeared to you and your church this week in bodily form and confronted you with His words—“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”—what would you change? What would you do differently? Would you try to rationalize that all the accumulating and attracting is somehow acting in obedience to Jesus’ command to go?

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The desire of the Father's heart is that we are to multiply. It's why He sent His Son. We see it in Jesus' words in John 20 and Matthew 28.

Mobilizing Disciples to Make Disciples: The Third Dimension

As a Multiplier, your role is to simultaneously manage the tensions in these first two dimensions of multiplication: disciple making and building capacity for disciple making. You might say you need the genius of the “*and*” in both disciple making *and* capacity building!

But these two key dimensions are not enough to fulfill Jesus' command to “go.” We must also *mobilize* disciples to carry the fullness of Jesus into every corner of society as they make disciples. We must have a culture of empowerment where the fruit of mature disciple making is disciples who *go*.

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul connects the dots for us, showing us how we fit into the disciple-making mission of the Church. In the opening chapter, he offers a great description of the potential of the Church, essentially saying that we (the Church) have the capacity to carry (or to be) the fullness of Jesus into every crack and cranny of society. In the second chapter, he tells us that we are each a unique creation with a specific role to play in carrying the fullness of Jesus to society. And in the fourth chapter, Paul notes that Jesus Himself has equipped each of us with specific gifts to play our unique roles in the mission. To fulfill our mission, we must *mobilize* and *go*!

But mobilization gives us two simultaneous tensions to manage. Scripture calls us to “live in common” as a family of believers via the church community *and* to simultaneously “live deployed” as missionaries in our unique corners of society.



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As I did research for my book, *More*, I learned that church historians look at personal calling through two lenses. The first is what they call “common” or general calling. We share this calling with all Christians. For example, Jesus has called us to be disciples who make disciples wherever we are. We are also to be healthy functioning children in God’s family via the church community. Like the church in Acts 2, we are to “live in common.” Look at the collective “they” statements we find in Acts 2:

They met daily.

They broke bread together.

They had everything in common.

They sold property and possessions to give to those in need.

We see corporate behaviors leading to personal salvations. But it was what individuals were doing together, to and for each other—and not what the institution was doing to or for its members. “They” activities are at the heart of corporate macro-addition capacity and of living in common.

At the same time, we’re called to “live deployed.” We each have a mission field of influence and a specific gifting. We are to “live deployed” via that unique calling.

In his book, *Real-Time Connections: Linking Your Job With God’s Global Work*, Northwood Church planter/pastor Bob Roberts Jr., shares the insights he gleaned when he realized that God has called the whole Church—not just vocational missionaries—to live deployed.

“Rather than encouraging people to use their vocations to serve the church, what if we made it the church’s task to mobilize Christians to use their everyday vocations to serve people in need—both locally and globally?” Roberts writes. “What would happen if Christians used their jobs, skills and passions to directly answer Christ’s call to minister to those in need? What if we started to

feed the hungry, clothe the naked, minister to the oppressed, and shelter the homeless? Could this be God's plan for reaching the nations and fulfilling the Great Commission?"¹

This seismic shift in thinking inverted Roberts' approach to evangelism: "Instead of focusing on building a church by bringing people into it," he writes, "we focused on being missionaries to our area, making disciples who would fill churches."²

Creating and Managing Tensions

This dual command to live in common and to simultaneously live deployed often creates a tension in our churches. We need people to use their gifts as part of our addition-capacity activities. Local churches need all kinds of volunteers—greeters, ushers, set-up and teardown crews, small group leaders, nursery workers, student ministry volunteers, hospitality teams, etc. Unfortunately, in our zeal to create addition-growth capacity and "feed the beast" through volunteers, we often miss or even mute this dimension of "living deployed" to "release the beast." The average church doesn't see equipping and mobilizing people to *go* and be missionaries in their communities as their role. Instead, volunteers are primarily recruited and mobilized to "run" the church.

Think about an aircraft carrier. What distinguishes the aircraft carrier from a cruise ship? Its mission is to send air power to places the carrier can't go. A carrier without planes would simply be a floating cruise ship. In a similar way, the mission of the church is to carry the fullness of Jesus into the world. A church without deployed missionaries is most likely an ever-enlarging cruise ship filled with cultural Christians.

Within this addition-growth culture, churches experience a real and challenging tension: people lead busy lives. Instead of seeing church as a family positioned at the center of life, church becomes just one of the many commitments throughout the week. Thus, we tend to put some form of "pick three" in place. How many times have you heard churches call their members to commit to three

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things: (1) attend Sunday services; (2) get into a small group; and (3) spend an hour volunteering at church (often during one of the worship services). Our addition-growth strategies take 100 percent of a member's allocated time, with no margin for equipping and mobilization beyond the walls of the church.

When this happens, we end up creating tension for people: choose between participating in a small group and serving as a volunteer. Notice how this tension is between priorities within the “living in common” (local church context) rather than the “living deployed” dimension. This is how accumulation growth cultures neuter the mobilization dimension—cutting multiplication potential off at the knees.

Some churches are even satisfied with allowing members to “pick one” (small groups or volunteering), thereby alleviating the tension altogether.



This is not the way Jesus intended the Church to function. God has designed each of us to live in common, doing whatever we need to do to support the church body, while simultaneously going into our unique corners of society. When people aren't using their unique calling and gifts to *go*, as leaders we negatively impact Jesus' mission for His Church. When we do find ways to lead our churches so that we're simultaneously living in common *and* living deployed, we mobilize biblical disciples to go and be Kingdom Multipliers!

Mobilization Motives

When it comes to mobilization, you can put churches into one of three categories, based on their underlying motives for mobilization. First, most churches focus on *mobilizing volunteers*

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to fill the service opportunities inside the church. Running Sunday services and ministry programming requires significant volunteer hours. These churches prioritize the first fruits of volunteers to running internal programming requirements.

Second, some churches focus on *mobilizing leaders* to help scale the addition (and sometimes multiplication) capacity of the church (see chapter 8 for more on capacity building). In most cases, leadership development systems and pipelines are the next natural progression of building addition capacity. Leadership development is an essential element for both addition and multiplication capacity. The only question is whether or not the primary motive for leadership development is building addition capacity or multiplication capacity.

Third, few churches focus on *mobilizing everyday missionaries* to carry the fullness of Jesus into every crack and cranny of society. Most churches don't focus on "living deployed" practices like helping people understand their unique personal calling; equipping them to be missionaries; and helping them claim a mission field in their unique corner of society. This third motivation requires a church to flip itself upside down. Instead of mobilizing volunteers to build capacity to attract, serve, and accumulate more people, this third category of churches sees developing and deploying everyday missionaries to their unique corners of society as its role. Level 5 multiplication requires this type of radical, counter- church culture commitment.

With 96 percent of churches never reproducing, we can safely conclude that the first category or motivation is the prevailing approach in church (mobilizing volunteers). While the growing numbers of churches with leadership development systems is encouraging, it's also safe to assume that most of these emerging approaches are strategies for building addition capacity rather than multiplication capacity.

A Balancing Act

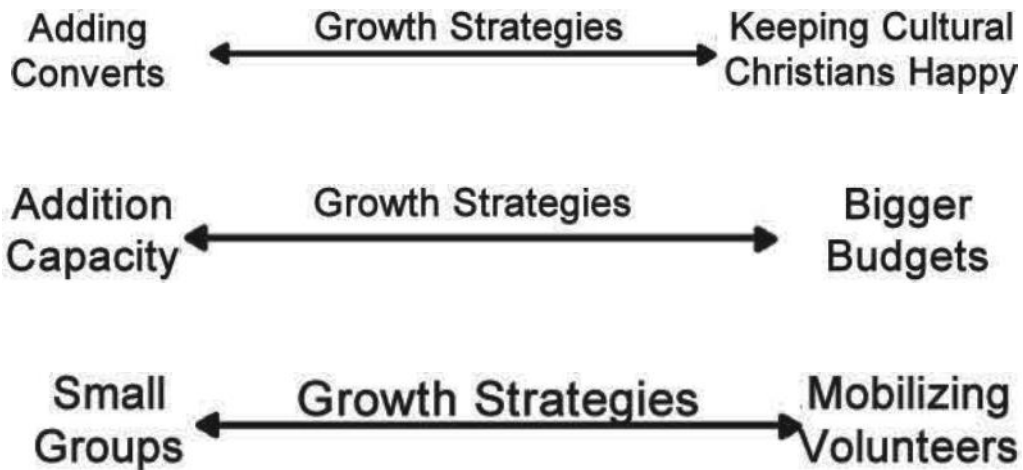
The three core dimensions of multiplication—disciple making, capacity building and mobilization—require an intentional, disciplined balancing act to ensure we manage the tensions at each end to give us the genius of the *and*. We need to add disciples *and* multiply disciples; build addition capacity *and* build multiplication capacity; and we need to live in common *and* live deployed.

Each of the three elements has a natural addition and multiplication tension. Without our intervention, the natural tensions are:



We balance these tensions by focusing on making disciple makers, creating cultures that simultaneously value growing and going, and making everyday missionaries. Notice there are three addition elements (the left side) and three corresponding multiplication elements (the right side). We get in trouble when we replace the multiplication elements with addition elements. This produces tensions such as:

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Notice that our focus on Level 3 growth strategies takes the place of focusing on making disciple makers, creating a sending culture, and making everyday missionaries. Our internal focus on Level 3 growth strategies takes our eyes and attention off multiplication. The result? Less than 4 percent of U.S. churches ever reproduce.

Some models are rooted in Level 3 addition and will naturally lead us away from multiplication. It's critical that we define our priorities for addition AND multiplication, and then embrace models that can deliver our desired outcomes. In the next chapter, we'll look at the characteristics of models and five key shifts that will position and empower us to more naturally embrace and focus on the three dimensions of multiplication.

Putting It into Practice

- *How would you define and describe the difference between "living in common" and "living deployed"?*
- *How do these two dimensions create a natural tension for you and other church leaders?*
- *Do you see your church as an army of missionaries with the capacity to fill every crack and cranny of your community?*