

MEGA

M | U | L | T | I

MULTIPLY

YOUR CHURCH AS A MULTIPLICATION PLATFORM



Foreword by Peyton Jones

RALPH MOORE
with **TODD WILSON**

INTRODUCTION

“He maximized all he had!”

These are the words I want to see on my tombstone. Every one of us hopes that we will someday hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” For me, getting there means leveraging every one of my spiritual gifts, skills and resources for the Kingdom of God.

If you’re reading this, I bet you feel the same way. In these pages, I’m hoping to help you along your way. My purpose is to help you satisfy both the investments and callings that God put in you. I want you to die happy, knowing you did all you could with what you had.

What would it take for you to be part of God’s work in bringing a million people to faith in Jesus Christ? I’m not talking about mass media, but direct disciple making. I believe that every church pastor could make one simple paradigm shift that would drive their lifetime accomplishment from thousands of disciples

to at least hundreds of thousands, if not millions. And those of us touching fewer than a hundred people at a time could multiply to reach thousands. It's been done in other countries, and it can be done in the United States.

Dave Ferguson presses this even harder in the book, *Hero Maker: Five Essential Practices for Leaders to Multiply Leaders*. Beginning with a goal of evangelizing a million people over his life he accepted a challenge from Neil Cole to write his current vision on a paper napkin then multiply it by a thousand. The result was a billion people. His vision far surpasses mine, but it holds great promise if there is a workable strategy to back it up. The key to this is making disciples who make disciples and multiplying churches that multiply churches to the fourth generation (2 Timothy 2:2).

In this book, I'll teach you how to *widen the pathway* into pastoral ministry. We'll discover how the Lord may have already answered your prayer for more labor for the harvest. Finally, we'll explore how a local church can produce a movement of reproducing churches.

Read along while I teach you *one option* for multiplying your church into an expanding movement of churches. This is no end-all solution for world evangelism, but it is a simple, workable approach to church multiplication that any leader can implement. It's a low-dollar, but high-commitment investment. If you care more about evangelizing the world than building a single church, this book may be an answer to your prayers. Of course, as I said, it's one option among many. Everybody believes their practice is the best since the invention of ice cream. I'm not arguing with any other model. The goal is to expand your options.

A Simple but Eternity-Altering Shift

Form tends to follow function. But we often focus on form without closely examining function. For decades we've favored "bigger is better" over a strategy that assumes that "more is better." Sadly, it hasn't produced enough church growth to keep up with the population let alone bring the world to Jesus. We need to shift into a strategy for multiplication rather than addition. It's the only way to disciple a nation, or nations.

For the sake of a common vocabulary, we'll look at becoming movement makers through the lens of the book *Becoming a Level 5 Multiplying Church*.¹ In this paradigm, Level 1 churches are in decline, struggling to survive. Churches at Level 2 hold their ground but may grow complacent and stagnate. Level 3 leaders value numeric growth above all else (whether or not the church is growing—a lot of Level 1 pastors are Level 3 wannabes). Level 4 churches reproduce by adding services, sites and even planting new churches, often at great cost. Level 5 congregations multiply rapidly, mostly by discipling Christ followers into church leaders.

The major differences occur between Level 3 and Level 5 pastors. At Level 3 the scorecard is all about the number of people attending services while Level 5 focuses on the percentage of a given population brought into a discipling relationship with Jesus. Level 3 operates like a magnet. It draws leaders toward its easy-to-conceive measure of success, as it offers side benefits as this type of success is enjoyable to any leader. As a magnet it also pulls leaders away from levels 4 and 5. Once you build the machine at Level 3, you are forced to sustain it. This makes it difficult to give away members, money and leaders. The tension here is very real and those struggling with it deserve great respect.

Three Assumptions

Let's start with three assumptions that might help move us along a natural pathway from mega to multisite to multiplication. They show that repeating the forms of the recent past will only *hinder* the kind of multiplication enjoyed by the first century church. Understanding these assumptions will help us build new *forms* of ministry that better service the *function* of the Great Commission.

Assumption 1: Most megachurch pastors are apostolic (e.g. pioneering, entrepreneurial, activators, etc.), but not all apostolic pastors lead megachurches

An apostolic leader, whether in a large place or small, feels the need to keep moving. Some, like Paul, move from city to city. Today, most shift from project to project while extending the boundaries of the gospel.

These people are catalyzers. If this is you, you naturally spark change. You are a mapmaker, leading others on your latest adventure. Or, perhaps just a little more cautious, you may closely follow the mapmakers as an early adopter of fresh ideas.

Others may deride you as a radical or a revolutionary, but your heart is to see the gospel fill the earth. And you believe that constant change is necessary to the task. Apostles instinctively seek new territory. If we can refocus this energy toward multiplying ourselves and our churches, we can see our footprint grow to astonishing proportions beyond the specific work of our hands.

Assumption 2: Every church contains the DNA for a movement

Churches around the world have morphed from single congregations into fast-growing movements. This is the history of Europe dating back to Barnabas, Paul and the folks in Antioch.

Most American denominations got their start in the same way. The Methodist movement traces its strength back to Francis Asbury. Baptists became the largest segment of American Christianity by rapid church multiplication, spawned from local churches. Recent decades saw three local churches, Calvary Chapel (Costa Mesa, California), The Vineyard (Yorba Linda, California) and Hope Chapel (Hermosa Beach, California) morphed into movements chronicled by University of Southern California professor Donald Miller in his book, *Reinventing American Protestantism*.²

Make no mistake. This can be done. We don't have to shrink into oblivion. It takes a shift in the way we view church coupled with a different perspective toward mobilizing church members. Instead of viewing a congregation as only a portal into localized disciple making, we can change the world by visualizing it as a platform to launch churches and disciple making beyond our immediate geographic context.

The key is leadership. If you're dissatisfied with the status quo, you are a potential catalyzing movement maker. My goal is to get you there.

Assumption 3: EVERY church should multiply

The rise of the American megachurch is both inspiring and disappointing.

The megachurch movement in the US is a recent phenomenon, dating back to the 1970s. The number of these churches has grown quickly, and they are effective in evangelism. Their rise is positive, but congregations exceeding 1,000 members still account for only about 10 percent of all evangelical churchgoers.³ We cannot expect them to shoulder the load of cultural change alone.

Megachurches grow faster than mid-size or smaller congregations. That's how they got to be "mega." A lead pastor with a winning personality, an innovative approach, and a suburban location all factor into success.

Growth-restricting obstacles like traffic, high land costs, and simple logistics gave rise to the tremendous move toward multisite churches. But even these innovations are beginning to bump against logistic ceilings.

Pulling together the above assumptions points to a *singular* problem: Our focus on building bigger, addition focused "come and see" churches, without a balanced "go and be" dimension, does inhibit most pastors from experiencing multiplication.

Our forms tend to restrict the methods Jesus gave to us for accomplishing the Great Commission. The Great Commission remains unfulfilled, apostolic leaders focus on single congregations instead of multiplying in other locations and few local churches reach the potential that lies dormant within them. We need new scorecards for success that will allow us to embrace *new wineskins* for action.

Most apostolic leaders focus their gifts on addition because it fuels the scorecard of success that we've embraced in the church growth movement of recent decades. Multiplication then appears more complicated and inaccessible because our addition paradigms get in the way.

Fortunately, you don't need to lead a large church to multiply. Level 5 multiplication starts with making disciples who make disciples and moves toward pastors who make pastors of leaders in their churches. Multiplication movements always grow out of disciple making movements. Want to become a Level 5 church, start by becoming a Level 5 disciple maker.