

CHAPTER 9

Three Personal Moves Toward a New Wineskin

To become the leader of a Level 5 multiplying church requires a profound adjustment. At Level 5 you need a different operating system than you do at Level 3. The transition is analogous to switching from Android to IOS. The move may appear simple, but its implications are massive.

You'll face a measure of opposition in the process, or at least a fair dose of scorn. It might be difficult to convince an entrenched church board of the value of these transitions (I strongly suggest that you meet with your board to read and discuss Exponential's watershed book, *Becoming a Level Five Multiplying Church* by Todd Wilson, Dave Ferguson and Alan Hirsch,³⁰ to disciple them toward the need for change).

You will likely face three difficult transitions. They are essential to implementing a new scorecard that places more value on Level 5 multiplication than on Level 3 addition.

1. From CEO to Disciplemaker.

Our culture is loaded with hierarchies. We make superheroes out of the likes of Elon Musk (Tesla technology) and Jeff Bezos (founder of Amazon), rejoicing in their hierarchical successes. Simultaneously, we vilify leaders whom we perceive to overstep their bounds (such as U.S. presidents) or leaders of companies that succeeded a generation ago like Walmart or McDonalds.

Good or bad, hierarchical thinking moves the church away from shared leadership (APEST) to casting the pastor/teacher in the CEO role. Personally, I find playing the CEO ego-satisfying and would enjoy it if it weren't for those pesky scriptures about making disciples who make disciples.

I've come to identify with Barnabas, the son of encouragement. Barnabas made it his business to bless others while nudging them toward fruitful service. He first shows up to aid a poverty-stricken church in Jerusalem. Later, he champions Saul of Tarsus to the Jerusalem elders. He then endorses the church at Antioch before running off to recruit Saul. After this, he discipled Saul but eventually parts company with him over John Mark. Saul (Paul) wrote two-thirds of the books in the New Testament, and Mark gave us the first gospel. Where would we be without Barnabas (who ended life in obscurity)?

If Barnabas hadn't believed in Saul and then Mark (and expressed that belief to them and others), we might not have the New Testament, as we know it. I'm not sure what we would do

without him, but I know that one day this consummate hero maker will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.”

I want to be Barnabas when I grow up.

As a leader in my church, I make disciples in groups and individually. I currently work with three groups each week along with individually discipling two young millennial men who show promise as church planters. All this in a congregation numbering fewer than 300 people. When I pastored two megachurches, I held the same priorities. My job description then and now is to:

1. Hear from God.
2. Love my family.
3. Make disciples.
4. Preach sermons that anchor our disciple-making network.
5. Administer the church (but that is simplified by the existence of our disciple-making systems).

2. From hero to hero maker.

Hero making is easy for me. I like to tell stories, especially about the accomplishments of those I discipled. It’s even better to tell stories of the exploits of my disciples’ disciples. Richard Agozino, who planted the first church coming out of our fledgling congregation back in 1971, is famous throughout the Hope Chapel world. After we moved to Hawaii, distance intervened, causing us to lose touch for several years. At a recent reunion, it was fun to watch him register surprise at his face in my books and the sense that “everybody knows his story.”

We show testimony videos in church on a regular basis—stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Each weekend, church members bring personal testimonies before praying over our tithes. It's another way to make heroes of "ordinary people." And I use stories from our movement for more than half of my sermon illustrations.

I wish everyone was a hero maker. I once heard a pastor tell a dramatic story about how he triumphantly shared his faith with a Buddhist priest. That afternoon, I stumbled on to the exact same story in another person's autobiography. I don't know if I was more taken back by the coincidence or the fact that the speaker stole someone else's story. This pastor seemed stuck on making himself the hero in every story. I want to do the opposite. I know that I will become a hero if my disciples do great things. A major part of my job is to make them understand their own heroics. Another element is the momentum we gain when others hear the stories and say, "I could do something like that..."

3. From accumulator to sender.

At Level 3, churches accumulate followers. The idea is to build the biggest church possible in hopes of fulfilling the Great Commission in our community. Many Level 3 churches are expanding to a multisite model, which extends the boundaries of the gospel. This is a good thing. However, Level 3 is self-limiting in two ways. First, it confines us to people who look much like us. Most American megachurches are predominantly Caucasian or African-American. Most are located in the suburbs. Five of the 100 largest churches in America are pastored by African Americans. Caucasians lead the rest. Of the 1,664 U.S. churches

numbering more than 2,000 members, several hundred are African American, 33 are Hispanic, one is Russian and 25 are Asian American—23 of those post-Korean language websites. One Chinese and one Japanese church made the list.³⁰