

CHAPTER 4

Rapid Multiplication Drivers

Our bodies convert food, water and oxygen into fuel for growth and health. The original Jesus movement had fuel in the lives of dedicated people who died to themselves (often physically) for the cause of filling the earth with the knowledge of the Lord. They became fuel to the Body of Christ.

Let's look at six primary fuel sources that could potentially make the unsatisfied Great Commission a reality during the next hundred years. Think of these as forces which drive any church multiplication movement.

1. A Visionary Sponsor

Management guru Peter Drucker [once observed](#), “Whenever anything is being accomplished, it is being done, I have learned, by

a monomaniac with a mission.” Be it Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, McDonald’s Ray Kroc or inventor Thomas Edison, “narrow-minded” people lead the rest of us into a better future. To turn the flow of American culture back toward Christ, we need extremely focused individuals who can see that adding to the size of their churches has more value if addition results in multiplication. These are people who will build capacity to multiply rather than settling for geocentric addition. Addition should result in a greater capacity for multiplication. My question to you is, “Could you become such a monomaniac?”

2. The Backing of a Healthy Church

Most growing churches give substantial amounts of money to overseas missions. Many sponsor annual mission trips for church members while some liberally fund missionaries on other continents. However, most of the tangible resources in American churches go toward maintaining status quo. Status quo may include addition growth, but it’s still an exercise in more of the same. A church that achieves Level 5 multiplication will reallocate resources to mission rather than maintenance. If you don’t already know, the Great Commission is the mission.

One of my friends, Sundar Thapa, pastors a very large church in Kathmandu. He disciples leaders who disciple others who disciple people to Christ. This church cannot safely advertise themselves in the way Americans do—people would be killed if they did. Sundar is a freelance apostle. A successful land developer, he planted a church that grew to nearly 1,000 people (a megachurch in Nepal). The congregation has launched more than 160 others. They fund their planters by setting them up in small

businesses. Sundar loans microchurch planters money to start a small business, and they repay loans, interest-free, over a period of 10 years (you can pay off the loan for a dozen goats in 10 years at \$1.50 per month).

While it is easy to admire the creativity of the model, the bigger lesson is that Sundar is an apostolic thinker. He is the primary driver of this movement. Had he fallen into an addition-centric model of church, thousands of people would not be headed for heaven. The church multiplies because Sundar chose that it should. What will you choose? It takes a Level 5 thinker to drive a Level 5 church multiplication movement.

3. Microchurch as a Startup Tool

The idea of microchurch is not an end in itself. It is a tool for rapid multiplication of disciples and churches. The ideal would be for a freelance microchurch pastor to reproduce themselves multiple times with each new pastor doing the same. However, some will grow to macro status and may never reproduce. The power in this concept is that it offers a low-risk opportunity for the pastor of an existing church to launch a few disciples into a church planting experiment.

Because a freelance pastor maintains their career there is limited financial risk to both the sending church and the new pastor.

A microchurch is more than a Bible study. Bible studies come and go. As soon as you identify a group as a church, things change—some abandon you; the rest get serious. Simply using the word, “church” changes the nature of the thing from something

temporary to an enduring relationship. Add in the concept of tithing, and people either climb onboard or they get out.

A Bible study involves content, community and prayer. A microchurch adds disciple making with a goal toward a larger mission, including multiplying the church. It requires members ministering to each other. And there must be a worship aspect to it. Because they may meet in very public venues, some microchurches don't sing, limiting their worship to testimonies, etc. Others see more value in learning by self-discovery than a sermon. In this setup each member pores over a mutually agreed on scripture, then brings their insights to share with the group.

Ryan Paterson puts it this way, “Largely, I was looking for a combination of discipleship as spiritual formation and obedience; the priesthood of all believers; clear everyday mission and evangelism; and more faithful financial stewardship that would be compelling to post-Christian millennials. While this is what I was looking for, I also found that for the sake of my own soul these smaller communities empowered me to avoid the cult of self, tied to performance driven church. I wanted to cover a more relational identify in Christ not tied to my stature in Christendom. Microchurches also just started happening around a ministry to students in downtown San Jose as we began to think this way.”

A microchurch is a congregation planted by a leader who does not aspire to a full-time salary. The church intentionally starts small. With limited overhead, a microchurch can multiply rapidly because it requires no money to do so, or it can grow to something larger, bringing both addition and multiplication to the table.

I believe microchurches represent the next (and absolutely necessary) step in churches' influence on American culture.

4. An Army of Freelance Pastors

We need to take a closer look at the concept of freelance, pastors. Currently, the bivocational paradigm is somewhat distasteful. After all, we invest time, money and life itself in educating ourselves toward what we hope is full-time vocational ministry. As time passes, we discover that they can't lead a congregation large enough to sustain their family (many Level 1 churches and pastors fall into this category). The choices are simple: 1. Resign from the church to take a better job. 2. Take a second job to supplement your income.

Because our current system demands that the best years of a person's life get spent in seminary, most pastors are untrained for any other profession. Some make it as mortgage brokers or real estate agents while pastoring bivocationally. However, the majority of bivocational pastors struggle in menial jobs that pay little and satisfy less.

While necessity drives most bivocational pastors to take on a job to support their ministry role, the freelancer does it by choice. This person sees their career as their mission field. The freelancer brings financial capital to the Great Commission, as does the bivocational pastor. The difference being that the freelance pastor continues in their career as a means to expand the kingdom while the bivocational person is mostly focused on survival. The freelance pastor sees a synergy and opportunity in their paid vocation that propels them and allows them to be more creative and innovative in their approaches.

If we were to adopt a freelance model, a young person would be encouraged to fulfill God's calling by completing an education that would allow them to follow John Wesley's admonition to

“Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.” They would have less chance of living near the poverty line and more chance of discipling people they met in the marketplace than do many vocational pastors. And, unlike many bivocational pastors, they would be equipped with marketable skills during their college years. There are vast differences between the experiences of vocational, bivocational and freelance pastors.

Jeph Chavez planted a Hope Chapel in Lewiston, Idaho several years ago. Beginning as a microchurch they multiplied two other congregations within a year and grew to about 150 people at the same time. We helped fund their move, and they chose the freelance route.

Jeph launched a landscaping business in partnership with an existing building contractor. His wife also began practice as a physical therapist. “We recognized that by owning our own businesses, we had more flexibility to do ministry or make appointments to meet with people. We eventually gave away the landscaping business and still operate our therapy business today.” He adds, “Choosing the freelance route was the most natural way to meet new people and get a pulse on the community. It also underscored a value that we wanted to emphasize, and that was about getting people to see the church differently. We wanted them to see that the “senior pastor” wasn’t separated or some lofty individual just needing your time and money but was an individual the Lord had transformed and was now serving Him through love and obedience.”

Let’s look to scripture as a way to better understand the difference between freelance and bivocational ministry...

Making Tents in Corinth

We often think of Paul as a tentmaker or bivocational leader. That source of income appears to have been a fallback when he lacked funds. Scripture paints a different picture of Aquila and Priscilla and their ministry. They were tentmakers who planted ministry in Corinth before Paul arrived (Acts 18:1-3). They did more of the same in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-26) and Rome (Romans 16:3).

Aquila and Priscilla seemed to have embraced tent making as their *primary* funding source, even after engaging in ministry. They planted from their career. Aquila was a career entrepreneur doing ministry on a freelance basis. Paul was a ministry guy serving bivocationally, in our current understanding of the concept. There is a difference in the motivation and the need for funding. Aquila lived with liberated finances. Paul did not.

America's Freelance Explosion

It was at a recent Exponential event that my friend, Dave Rhodes, pointed out the tidal wave of freelance energy in America. This is an important distinction in the twenty-first century. And it's a vast event, touching nearly every area of work and business: "Employment experts routinely cite the increasing number of everyone from lawyers to technological whizzes who work as freelancers, permalancers and small-time entrepreneurs as one of the fastest growing segments of our economy."²¹

A group called Freelance Union spells out that more than 53 million Americans work as freelancers. That's 34 percent of the population. Freelancers total more than the combined populations of 25 states: Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Montana,

Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming. More people work freelance in America than the number of voters who supported either Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton.²² *Fast Company Magazine* projects that by 2020, more than 40 percent of the American workforce, or 60 million people, will be independent workers or freelancers.²³

There are so many people operating as freelancers that the culture spawned a new slang term, “side hustle.” I don’t know what you think about pastoring as a “hustle.” But if it works, use it.

This gets better when considering reaching millennials and Gen Z with the gospel. A higher percentage of millennials do freelance work (43 percent versus 34 percent of the general populace). And *Forbes Magazine* found that 63 percent of Gen Z intend to work as freelancers throughout their careers.²⁴ Churches should hop on the freelance express—the plane is about to take off. Question: Will you be on board when it does?

5. Persons of Peace

Evangelism is often a family affair. Wherever we go with the gospel, Jesus tells us we’re supposed to connect with a “person of peace” (Luke 10:6). Through this person, we’ll reach their tribe. As we bond to this single individual, we find our way into their tribe. This reflects the New Testament idea represented in Peter touching the “oikos,” or, household, of Cornelius (Acts 10:1- 48). Cornelius was the person of peace as was Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:14, 40) or Crispus in Corinth (Acts 18:8).

Each of the examples I reference in this book began with such a person. Randall Ishida started with the suicidal man he met in the gym.

In the last chapter you met Wendell Elento who resigned from a large church staff to “pastor” a company where five employees had been murdered. The person of peace, in this instance, was the woman who caught him and demanded to know what he was doing.

In his words he was “singing worship songs to irritate the demons” that he felt occupied that room. This lady was the one supervisor whom most employees feared. She was also a Buddhist who believed in demons. When he fearfully confessed his plan, she began to weep. She asked him to sing to an empty room on a weekly basis. Word got around. People would stop to ask for prayer. Eventually, this turned into a microchurch on the premises. They multiplied from there. The important lesson here is that of Wendell’s relationship with this woman. They became family in the sense of a strong relationship. She was the gateway into the lives of others. Without their relationship the project would have stopped cold.

In the context of Jesus sending his disciples, the person of peace was that individual in a community who the disciples found receptive to the gospel. In the story about the Russian man reaching out to Jewish immigrants from Turkey the family that invited him to plant a microchurch were not believers but expressed interest in knowing Jesus. A clue to a would-be microchurch planter is their connection to such people. Who in your church has contact with people who wouldn’t feel comfortable in your weekend gatherings? These are the potential microchurch planters among us.

6. Perseverance

If there is any “secret sauce” in the multiplication process it is perseverance. Whatever success I have known in church multiplication is simply the result of relentless pursuit of the Great Commission via disciplemaking that leads to equipping church planters from within the local church.

Truth is, most of our church plants do not reproduce, many do so only once or twice. Most of the expansion came from the rare apostolic individual who determined to do what we have done to the fourth generation. In other words, we could have grown discouraged and given up when things didn’t follow the recipe. But, we just kept keeping on until the numbers of churches added grew and the rare multipliers showed up. Our secret is found in the old Living Bible translation of Proverbs 21:5, “Steady plodding brings prosperity; hasty speculation brings poverty.” I see addition growth as hasty while multiplication requires mundane, relentless disciplemaking.

Addition can be splashy while multiplication often goes unnoticed. The results show up over decades, not years.

I’m hoping the church of the future is fueled by these six elements. Let’s take a look at what it might look like in the next chapter.