

1. Real Churches Multiply

We are born to reproduce; but how do churches multiply?

God designed life to be fruitful and to multiply. Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, gave a message in 1955 that became a classic, *Born to Reproduce*. In it, he challenges Christians not to keep Christ just to ourselves, but to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples. How do we multiply ministry in the local church so that we have healthy and multiplying churches? Donald McGavran cuts to the core: “What is the true fruit of an apple tree? The true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple, but another apple tree” (quoted in Schwarz 2012, 33). Gospel fruit is exactly the same.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is one of three major macromolecules that are essential for all known forms of life. Let’s look at the DNA of multiplication as we seek to multiply ministry at every level of the local church. Multiplication can happen with:

- Disciples who make, mature, and multiply disciples
- Small group leaders who make, mature, and multiply small groups
- Elders and staff who make, mature, and multiply elders and staff
- Worship leaders who make, mature, and multiply worship leaders
- Pastors who make, mature, and multiply pastors
- Movement leaders who train apprentices and new movement leaders

DNA of multiplication begins with DEATH

“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”
(John 12:24)

The context of John 12:24 is the cross of Christ. Jesus is the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies. Without the cross, there is no gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel in a word is “Jesus.” The gospel in two words is “Christ

crucified.” The gospel in a verse is: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Without death, there is no good news and no multiplication. In the gospel, God raises Jesus from the dead with the fruit of many sons and daughters, bringing them to glory. In the church, multiplying ministry begins with death, as God takes our single seed that falls into the ground and supernaturally multiplies it. John Piper beautifully describes how God works in the darkness of death to multiply life:

It will often look as though Christ is defeated. That's the way it looked on Good Friday.... If China was closed for forty years to the Western missionaries, it was not as though Jesus accidentally slipped and fell into the tomb. He stepped in. And when it was sealed over, he saved fifty million Chinese from inside—without Western missionaries. And when it was time, he pushed the stone away so we could see what he had done. When it looks as though he is buried for good, Jesus is doing something awesome in the dark. The world thinks Jesus is done for—out of the way. They think his Word is buried and his plans have failed. But Jesus is at work in the dark place. He lets himself be buried, and he comes out in power when and where he pleases. And his hands are full of fruit made in the dark. (Piper 1993, 65)

Multiplication begins with death. When we die daily and follow Christ, we reproduce disciples who take up their cross and follow Christ. I do not mean dying “to self-care, to our feelings of sadness, to anger, to grief, to doubts, to struggles, and to our marriage dreams” (Scazzero 2003, 22). As leaders, we die to things like doing everything ourselves so that other leaders can develop. Church members die to the desire to know everyone so that the church can grow beyond their friends. Carl Dudley addresses this.

But the basic obstacle to growth lies in the satisfactions of the present church membership. When the church is seen as one caring cell, the problem is neither complex nor judgmental. The small church is already the right size for everyone to know, or know about, everyone else. This intimacy is not an accident. The essential character of the small church is this capacity to care about people personally. The small church cannot grow in membership size without *giving up its most precious appeal, its intimacy*. (Dudley 1978, 49 emphasis added)

When we “die every day” (1 Corinthians 15:31), there can be multiplication. For example, we need to die to perfectionism. Years ago I remember Dr. Stuart Briscoe (long-time pastor of Elmbrook Church near Milwaukee, Wisconsin) saying: “Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly.” Perfectionists do not reproduce. If we do not allow people around us to try and fail, we do not reproduce. When pastors empower young eagles in the pulpit, they do not fly away to find another place to preach. When elders bring young bucks onto the church board, they grow and reproduce more leaders. When an excellent Bible teacher identifies other people in the church with a teaching gift and gives them an opportunity to teach God’s Word, ministry multiplies.

Death comes before multiplication. I ask myself, “What in my life needs to fall to the ground and die? What do I need to stop doing?” I once asked a ministry colleague to take on a new responsibility. He wisely replied, “Let me pray about what I can take off my plate.” Can we identify tasks we have mastered and hand them off to a young eagle so he can grow? What needs to end “... so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ”? (Philippians 1:10)

Application:

To what do we
need to die so
that the work
entrusted to us
multiplies?

We can die to doing it all ourselves and we can die to the good ideas so that we can experience the “God ideas.” Mark Batterson, pastor of the National Community Church in Washington, DC., uses this distinction frequently. Mark reminds us, “One defining decision can change your trajectory and put you on a new path toward the Promised Land” (Batterson 2011,49).

DNA of multiplication catalyzes NEW WINESKINS

He told them this parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.

No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.' " (Luke 5:36-39)

This parable pictures the contrast between the Old Covenant with Moses and the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the new wine and his church is the new wineskin. Without new wineskins, the new wine is lost. The new wine of the gospel needs new wineskins in every culture and in every country and in every time period. Cathedrals were new wineskins in their day. Changing times call for new-wineskin churches or we will litter the landscape with empty cathedrals.

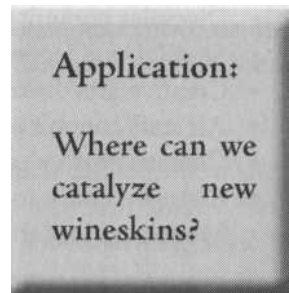
New-wineskin churches and catalytic leadership travel together. Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom opened eyes with their book, *The Starfish and the Spider*. They introduce the reader to "spider organizations," which have strong centralized control and hierarchies led by a CEO. If you strike the spider's head, it dies. By contrast, "starfish organizations" are decentralized. Similarly, a real starfish does not have a head you can strike down, so if you chop off one side of the starfish, it keeps going and growing. They contrast the approach of CEOs, beloved in old wineskins, to Catalysts who love new wineskins.

While both are leader types, Catalysts and CEOs draw upon very different tools. A CEO is the boss. He's in charge, and he occupies the top of the hierarchy. A Catalyst interacts with people as a peer. He comes across as your friend. Because CEOs are at the top of the pyramid, they lead by command-and-control. Catalysts, on the other hand, depend on trust. CEOs must be rational; their job is to create shareholder value. Catalysts depend on emotional intelligence; their job is to create personal relationships. CEOs are powerful and directive; they're at the helm. Catalysts are inspirational and collaborative; they talk about ideology and urge people to work together to make an ideology a reality. Having power puts CEOs in the limelight. Catalysts avoid the attention and tend to work behind the scenes. CEOs create order and structure; Catalysts thrive on ambiguity and apparent chaos. A CEO's job is to maximize profits. A Catalyst is usually mission oriented. (Brafman and Beckstrom 2006, 129)

My favorite example of a catalyst is iron. If you put nitrogen and hydrogen in a container, nothing happens. If you add iron into the container, you get ammonia.

In chemistry, a catalyst is any element that initiates a reaction without fusing into that reaction. In open organizations, a catalyst is the person who initiates a circle and then fades away into the background.... A catalyst develops an idea, shares it with others, and leads by example.... When the catalyst stays around too long and becomes absorbed in his creation, the whole structure becomes more centralized. The catalyst is an inspirational figure who spurs others to action. Circles don't form on their own. Put a bunch of people in the same room together, and they might talk about the weather in random groups of twos and threes. Add a catalyst, and soon they'll be sitting around in a circle discussing their shared love. (Brafman and Beckstrom 2006, 91)

Now, it's not a rule that CEOs are bad while Catalysts are good. Timothy Keller in *Center Church* adds a needed word of balance. "The Scriptures envision churches that are both *organism* and *organization* — or to put it simply, churches are organized organism... (see page 341 for a complete diagram)... the place of tension and balance between being a freewheeling organism and a disciplined organization. A movement that refuses to take on some organizational characteristics—authority, tradition, unity of belief, and quality control—will fragment and dissipate" (Keller 2012, 342, emphasis his).



We can seek to be a catalytic leader within an established organization. While we have CEO responsibilities, as we die to hierarchy we become more horizontal; we have clear boundaries based on vision, values, strategies, and measures that create responsibility without limiting creativity. We seek to be guides from the side, following the Holy Spirit.

DNA of multiplication commits to APPRENTICES

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

We reproduce who we *really* are and what we do. A woman invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to her six-year-old

daughter and said. "Would you please say the blessing?" "I don't know what to say," the girl whispered. "Just say what you hear mommy say," the mother answered. The daughter bowed her head and said. "Lord, why did I invite all these people to dinner?"

Dave and Jon Ferguson are pastors of Community Christian Church in Chicagoland. They *really* commit to having apprentices and they *really* do experience multiplication. Our son, Derick, worked at the Naperville campus as a worship leader for one year. His first responsibility according to the job description for all staff was to have apprentices. Derick took the challenge. He found a few musicians and began to teach these volunteers to be worship leaders. Some became part-time worship leaders, and the leadership pipeline in this church is full because of a commitment to reproduction. It was amazing to see the change in our son. Derick soon enjoyed empowering new worship leaders more than personally leading thousands of people in worship. There is joy in training apprentices. This multiplying church includes apprentices at every level.

- Disciples commit to have apprentice disciples
- Small group leaders commit to have apprentice small group leaders
- Creative arts directors commit to have apprentice creative arts directors
- All staff commit to have apprentice potential staff
- Campus pastors commit to have apprentice campus pastors
- Pastors commit to have apprentice pastors
- Movement leaders commit to have apprentice movement leaders

When the vision is clear and leaders are accountable to have intentional apprentices at every level of the ministry, a church can move from addition to multiplication.

How do you work with an apprentice? In their book, *Exponential*, Dave and Jon Ferguson give a clear path that works for most tasks.

I do. You watch. We talk.

I do. You help. We talk.

You do. I help. We talk.

You do. I watch. We talk.

You do. Someone else watches. (Ferguson and Ferguson 2010, 63)

Who do you choose for an apprentice? NewThing, the church planting ministry of Community Christian Church in Chicago, teaches leaders to look for people with spiritual velocity-not perfect people, but people making rapid progress in following Christ. The old acrostic FAT helps. Derick looked for people *faithful* to Christ and to practicing the piano, the guitar, or another instrument, who were also *available* to use their skills to serve the body of Christ. They also needed to be *teachable* to learn from Derick how to lead God's people into worship. Someone with an arrogant, "know it all" attitude cannot be an apprentice.

People who commit to apprentices value investments in individuals. Some will teach a hundred people, but they will not spend much energy on one person. Our Savior celebrated leaving the ninety-nine to find one lost sheep. Barnabas cared so much about Saul, who became Paul, that he risked himself and the apostles for this one eagle (Acts 9:26-27).

Acts 11 describes unnamed catalytic Christians who started a new-wineskin church in Antioch. The church in Jerusalem died to any efforts of external control, and sent Barnabas, son of encouragement, to come alongside this new church as a catalyst. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he could have thought, "I never did preach much in Jerusalem, now is my chance!" Instead, Barnabas died to self and traveled to Tarsus to recruit a gifted young apprentice named Saul. Together, Barnabas and Saul taught the people in Antioch. Then, God sent them on a global mission to multiply churches.

Barnabas had Saul as an apprentice for a season in Jerusalem and now he does it again in Antioch. Soon the teaching team of Barnabas and Saul empowers a team entrusted with the ministry of the Word of God. This teaching team of two became a teaching team of five with amazing diversity. One came from Tarsus, one from Cyprus, one from Libya, one from Africa, and one from near Jerusalem. Barnabas died to self, catalyzed a new wineskin, and committed to Saul as an apprentice for a season in Jerusalem and again in Antioch. God blessed these two leaders who died to self, empowered new wineskins, and committed to work with new leaders as apprentices.

For apprenticeships to work in the local church, commitment must start with the pastor and the elders. As the intriguing book *The Leadership Pipeline* outlines, "Start with the Boss and Not the Subordinate.... The leadership pipeline's viability⁷ is riding on a real

value shift among the leaders” (Charan, Drotter, Noel 2001, 156, 158).

Application:

Who can we
ask to be an
apprentice in our
responsibilities?

Leaders in the local church can catalyze gospel multiplication. Disciples can create new mentoring relationships so that disciples make disciples who make disciples. Elders can die to control, and empower new leaders through a commitment to having apprentices at every level. Members can “fall into the soil and die” so that new congregations multiply. God’s design is

for us to be fruitful and to multiply. There is real joy in fulfilling his plan.