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BETHEL UNIVERSITY
BETHEL SEMINARY SAN DIEGO

NARRATIVES CHURCH: A MISSIONAL CHURCH PLANTING PATH FOR
CULTIVATING A UNIFIED THEOLOGICAL VISION

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN ORGANIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

BY
MARK MILLER
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

MAY 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Justin Irving and Dr. Terry Walling for their excellent leadership throughout the D.Min. program. Their kindness and patience with me during my struggle to complete the degree was an encouragement to keep going. I wish to thank Dr. Mike McNeff for his role as my project and thesis advisor and the constant encouragement and his gentle approach, especially during times when life was challenging and major transitions were happening with me and my family. I want to underscore my gratitude to Dr. Sanders and the entire Bethel D.Min. department for their guidance and support in making sure that my thesis was completed with integrity and grammatically sound!

I wish to thank Glenn Herschberger from Converge Worldwide Church Planting, Daniel Yang of NAMB, Michael Smith of ARC, and Steve Hart, Lead Pastor for Soma Church and representative for Acts 29 Church Planting Network. These men are charting the course for future generations of missional church planters. Their contributions to this project are irreplaceably valuable and I could not have completed this work without their help and insights.

I wish to thank the community that I pastored up until the last year of this project. Narratives Church sowed into this research in more ways than I can list. They freely encouraged me to work on this mission, to take the time for cohort classes and filled the pulpit when I was too exhausted to preach. They have supported me in every way possible. They have been an Acts 2 community.

Lastly, and the most important, I wish to thank my family. My wife, Mary, of 20 years, my 16-year-old son--Ian, and 12-year-old daughter, Julianna. They have supported me tirelessly over the years to complete many accomplishments including my D.Min. program. They have freely given me space to get away for hours to write and study. This degree belongs to my family as much as it does me.

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ABSTRACT

This research project focused on the development of a unified theological vision for the missional movement with specific attention given to the United States. The researcher conducted a thorough investigation of Scripture and current biblical material in order to discern the barriers existing within the missional movement. The researcher looked at key areas that shape the missional church planting movement: leadership development, theological interpretation of the early church, church planting methods and practice, ecclesiology, and the application and interpretation of Ephesians 4:11.

Four church planting organizations participated: North American Mission Board (NAMB), Acts 29 Network, Association of Related Churches (ARC), and Converge Worldwide. The researcher developed a questionnaire of eight questions. Each leader from the four movements was asked the same eight questions. The questionnaire revealed that there is indeed a disconnect from one movement to the next in terms of areas mentioned above. For example, all four interviewees offered little knowledge or discussion of the Ephesians 4:11 passage nor the Acts 2:42-47 passage. The data also revealed that leadership development was focused more on curriculum outcomes as opposed to relational health; yet each interviewee mentioned the importance of raising healthy leaders. As a result of the findings from this project, the researcher offered four recommendations for creating a unified theological vision for the missional church movement.

Recommendation 1: that missional church planters should be fully engaged in the life of the community. Recommendation 2: that church planters focus more on the Kingdom of God than on issues of individual churches. Recommendation 3: that missional church planting movements develop a theological interpretation for key missional verses such as Acts 2:42-47 for an organic relational approach for a missional ecclesiology. Recommendation 4: that missional church planting movements move toward a theological understanding on cultivating an apostolic ethos from Ephesians 4:11.

To the Bride of Christ and those who choose servanthood over and against convenience.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.

Ephesians 4:11

Apostolic ministry is not just about founding new churches and movements; it is as much about the renewal of existing organizations, that is, helping the church retain its primal movemental nature and stay vibrant. And so it has ongoing relevance for established churches as well.

— Alan Hirsch

CHAPTER ONE
NARRATIVES CHURCH: MISSIONAL EXPRESSION

The Problem and Its Context

Statement of the Problem

The problem this thesis addressed was the lack of a unified theological vision for shaping and equipping leaders for missional church planting. In response to this problem the researcher addressed how Narratives Church will expand its missional intentions into a missional church-planting movement specifically geared toward the United States. The researcher examined the Biblical theological basis and methods that contributed to the early New Testament church's expansion with specific foci given to church planting, discipleship, leadership development, and the five-fold ministry described in Ephesians 4:11. Also examined was the literature regarding current missional church theology and practice related to expansion, church planting, discipleship, leadership development, and the five-fold ministry described in Ephesians 4:11. Finally, the researcher interviewed leaders from missional church planting movements within Converge, Association of Relational Churches (ARC), North American Missions Board (NAMB), and the ACTS 29 Network. Relevant data was gathered from each organization using eight questions. The data was then analyzed and discussed further in chapter five with an eye on developing a church-planting theory for developing missional leaders who would contribute to the wider pool of missional church planting.

Delimitations

This research was limited to missional churches and church planting organizations. Additionally, the research was limited to missional leadership development in the context of the five-fold equipping gifts outlined in Ephesians 4:11. Specifically, the research focused on Narratives Church with the intent to reproduce indigenous models throughout the United States. Lastly, this research was limited to discipleship in the missional community context.

Assumptions

This research has assumed the main text is God's Word for direction, guidance, and wisdom. When looking at leadership development in the missional church, it was assumed that apostolic leaders need to be vetted and developed to affirm that they are called to church planting. This study also assumed that a church-planting culture needs to be developed and cultivated and disciples need to be discipled in order to disciple others.

Sub-problems

To address the incongruent theological visioning of missional church planting the researcher conducted a review of the Biblical evidence of the early church's expansion with specific foci given to missional church planting, discipleship, and leadership development with a focus on the five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4:11. Besides the Ephesians passage, special attention was given to the Book of Acts. In addition, the researcher underwent a biblical review of relevant literature regarding current missional church theology and practice related to expansion, church planting, discipleship, leadership development, and the five-fold ministry described in Ephesians 4:11. To better understand the theological differences and practices of church planting the researcher

studied leading church planting movements as well as interviewed by phone and/or Skype leaders within Converge, ARC, NAMB, and the ACTS 29 organizations. Lastly, based on the findings, the researcher made suggestions and recommendations to provide a framework for missional church planting organizations.

Setting of the Project

Narratives Church is a small nondenominational missional community in East County (El Cajon) San Diego, California. Narratives Church began in 2008. The weekly worship gathering rotated among five different homes for the first year and in 2009 Narratives settled into its current facility, a 3300-square-foot office suite in El Cajon, California. At the time of this research, the size of the community was approximately sixty people: forty-five adults and fifteen children ranging from newborn to age thirteen. The adult population was multigenerational and multi-ethnic. Thirty percent were 40 years of age and 70 percent between 18 and 29. Ninety percent have at least a high school diploma or college degree and ten percent do not have a degree.

Narratives underwent a structural reorganization with the intent to increase its outreach in order to impact the surrounding neighborhoods in which its parishioners live. In addition, to further her impact across the United States through church planting. The researcher was the lead pastor of Narratives who guided the community through this structural change.

Although Narratives was poised for outreach and impact in terms of congregational desire, the church lacked the actual resources to do so. Narratives did not have enough qualified disciplined leaders. The leadership team consisted of the lead pastor (who also served as the sole elder) and two deacons who needed to be equipped for

ministry impact. At its annual congregational meeting on February 21, 2016 Narratives Church voted to raise the money to add three part-time staff members, church administrator, children's director, and worship leader—beginning in April 2016. This was to enable the lead pastor to focus on leading the congregation in its visionary intentions and to raise up disciplined leaders for Kingdom impact.

In addition to Narratives Church as a setting, the researcher interviewed four leaders from four major church planting organizations: Acts 29 Network, Converge Worldwide, National American Mission Board (NAMB), and Association of Related Churches (ARC). Each of these movements contribute significantly to the development and resourcing of the missional church planting movement. Chapter 5 will discuss their contributions as length.

The Importance of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

The researcher has been involved in full-time ministry for the past 25 years and in 2015 a vision emerged that necessitated this research to raise up emerging apostolic leaders through the ancient pathways of discipleship for kingdom impact through church planting. Although the researcher had served his local missional community faithfully, he had struggled to find fulfillment and often felt ineffective in terms of impact. After a year-long journey struggling with his ministerial identity, the researcher was led to Ephesians 4:11 where he was drawn to the role of apostle. After further reading and investigation the researcher discovered his desire to be in alignment with the gift and calling of church planting, a function of an apostle.

At the time of these studies the researcher was in his early fifties and felt driven to expand Kingdom impact, not through a single local church but rather through younger leaders who would in turn become missional church planters.

The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

The researcher's local church was a missional community in East County San Diego. Although Narratives has been a missional community, its leadership strength had been developing internal relationships. However, Narratives was challenged by leadership with the task of discipling and then sending leaders, a key element of missional communities. Furthermore, Narratives struggled to see first-time conversions, a missional community value, emanating from neighborhood engagement. Essentially, Narratives was a missional community in theory but struggled in practice. This project has sought to convert theory into transformational praxis.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

The context for this research was San Diego, a hub of missional church planting activity and not representative of the national norm. The importance of this project has been to identify strategies that would help prepare and enable the local church to nurture and increase the impact of missional church plantings in the United States.

Research Methodology

This present study was qualitative in nature. The primary tool used in this project was phone interviews. The data gathered was taken from key church planting movements, relevant missional church planting literature and the biblical text with specific focus on two key passages: Acts 2:42-77 and Ephesians 4:11. Secondary data included biblical and theological resources. These addressed the development of

emerging apostolic leaders, church planting, discipleship in a church planting culture, and the church as a sending agent for Kingdom impact.

CHAPTER TWO RECOVERING THE MISSIONAL REVOLUTION

The missional church movement offers a hopeful future for the church. As Western culture continues to assimilate into a pluralistic and global village the Western Church has an incredible opportunity before her to return to the revolution God launched in the Book of Acts. She is to be faithful until the restoration of all things (Romans 8:22). She is also to serve as a movement of hope and restoration between fallen humanity and a loving God, a missional movement of redemption. However, history gives us an account of the church's institutionalization. Richard Halverson, former chaplain of the United States Senate, offered his succinct view of the church's consolidated history as cited by Skye Jethani,

In the beginning the church was a fellowship of men and women centered on the living Christ. Then the church moved to Greece, where it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome where it became an institution. Next it moved to Europe, where it became a culture. And finally it moved to America, where it became an enterprise.¹

Currently missional church theologians, advocates, and practitioners have not provided a unified theological vision that unites the impact of the missional church. At best, the missional movement understands that the mission of God requires the church and its people to move beyond the Sunday-only experience, acknowledging that the Sunday-morning experience alone is not the mission of God. They know this mission as engaging God in the world, to be sent into the world to be Jesus' ambassador in every

¹ Skye Jethani, *The Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 11.

sphere of being and activity of daily life. At worst, the missional movement has become trendy buzzword utilized by church leaders with different meanings, much like the current use of the word evangelical. The challenge is to create a unified theological vision for the missional movement that not only unites the missional church in doctrine but also takes it further in practice, by practice the researcher means discipleship, leadership, and cultural impact through missional church planting. Furthermore, a unified theological vision would bridge the gap between God's missional revolution beginning in the Book of Acts, which chronicles the movement of the early church and the modern church for powerful cultural impact.

Theological Foundations of the Missional Movement

Old Testament

Scripture abounds with embedded “sending” language which speaks of the missionary nature and activity of the triune God. God sends the Son and the Son sends the Spirit and the church is sent by the triune God into the world to be missionaries. In the sending of the church by the triune God, the church, the people of God, participate in the relational redemptive work of God's love through methods of servitude. God's sending of His people is rooted in the nature of God. This is witnessed in the first missionary account found in Genesis 3 which records Adam and Eve's decision to acquiesce their calling, to glorify God, to Satan's deception. Yet, God comes down to visit with Adam and Eve as he had done prior to the Fall, even with the knowledge of their betrayal. God called, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9).² This question illustrates God's desire to reconcile and redeem fallen humanity to Himself. The mission of Jesus,

² All scripture taken from the ESV Study Bible, English Standard Version, Crossway, 2011.

encapsulated in John 3:16, is the fulfillment of this missional mandate. In Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, God provides a way to reconcile fallen humanity to Himself, a glimmer of restoration stemming from Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." He declares the promised blessings to all nations in the calling of Abraham:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

The Missionary Call of Abraham

The Old Testament is woven together with narratives of God's people. Beginning with the narrative of Abraham's call to leave his people and his land in Ur and follow YHWH's leading to the promised land. Later, Abraham and the group of people that followed Abraham would be known as Israel. Israel's purpose would serve to fulfill two significant missional purposes, each purpose flowing from the metanarrative of all 66 books of the Bible, God's redemptive mission in the world. First, Israel was to be the community of people in which the covenant promises of YHWH would be fulfilled through the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Gen. 12:1-3, 15:5-7, and 17:4-8). Secondly, they were to be a light to the nations by telling the story of God's preeminent redemption plan through His Son Jesus (Is. 42:6-7, 44:8, and 49:6).

Though the story of YHWH found in Gen. 1-11 illustrates His heart to redeem and reconcile people, the calling of Abraham is YHWH's first movement to redeem what was lost in the Garden of Eden. YHWH calls Abram to "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12). The calling to

“go” is significant for Abraham. God is requiring a blind obedience of Abraham and his immediate family. As Abraham obeys by faith and sets out on his journey, God rewards him with not only land but also the promise that YHWH would make him a great nation and that his name would be great.

However, though it seems that the “land” is the focus of Genesis 12, it is not the primary purpose. The land merely serves as a place to establish the Hebrew people for a far greater intention:

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Gen.12:2-3).

If Abraham had not gone, there would have been no blessing for him and no blessing for the nations. As Christopher Wright states: “There is an implied conditionality.”³ This does not mean that Abraham could earn God’s favor. Wright clarifies,

It should hardly need to be said that this does not in any way mean that Abraham has merited God’s covenant promises. We are not slipping into some caricature of works righteousness by making these observations on the biblical text itself. God has addressed Abraham out of the blue and prior to any action on Abraham’s part. But Abraham’s response of faith and obedience not only moves God to count him as righteous but also enables God’s promise to move forward toward its universal horizon.⁴

The focal point of this pericope is not the land; rather, the focal point is on the blessing. God blesses Abraham so that in turn he and the Hebrews would be a blessing to the nations. Notice it is God who possesses the blessing. It is not Abraham. There is nothing in him aside from God’s covenanted blessing that is good. This is God’s mission upon which Abraham is embarking. It is YHWH who initiated the covenant. In the

³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2006), 206.

⁴ Wright, 206.

sending of Abraham God expresses his desire for all nations to be blessed by ultimately being reconciled to their creator. Wright states, “The election of Israel, therefore, does not imply the rejection of the rest of humanity, but is set in close context with the prospect and promise of blessing for the nations through Israel.”⁵ The blessing is for Abraham and the nations. Abraham’s missional journey is embedded in a covenanted promise and stands out as a first: the first clear journey to fulfill the redemptive mission of God.

Advent: Christ as Missionary in New Testament Portraits

If the Old Testament is the story of Christ concealed, then the New Testament is the work of Christ revealed. The New Testament is the expansion of God’s redemptive mission through the person and work of Jesus Christ; the Messiah is on display. In the New Testament God incarnates Himself as the divine missionary fulfilling the mission of redeeming and reconciling a fallen world to himself.

The Gospels

In the gospels the locale of God’s mission moves from “the Promised Land” in the Old Testament to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The gospel writers track the missional movement through the life of Jesus and His disciples and provide the blueprint for the modern missionary. Each writer of the Gospels writes to inform his specific community with the intention of connecting Jesus as the “blessing” flowing from the covenant made with Abraham as recorded in Genesis 12. Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that “all nations will be blessed by you.”

⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, “The Christian and Other Religions: The Biblical Evidence,” *Themelios* 9.2 (1984), 2.

Matthew's Gospel

Matthew, the tax-collector-turned evangelist, begins his Gospel by listing in great detail the genealogy of Jesus for his Jewish audience. Matthew uses key phrases (Kingdom, fulfill) that Jews would have understood. In addition to the historical account of Jesus' genealogy, Matthew quotes extensively from the Pentateuch, Isaiah, Daniel, and Psalms to further substantiate to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. Popular phrases found in Matthew's writing credibly blend the eschatological tensions of Isaiah's prophecy and the life of Jesus as the fulfillment of those prophecies. For example, Matthew's use of Isaiah in the following passages underscores Matthew's intent to squelch any doubt that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Matthew 1:23- Virgin with child (Isaiah 7:14), Matthew 3:3- Voice in wilderness (Isaiah 40:3), Matthew 4:15- A light in darkness (Isaiah 9:1), Matthew 8:17- Carried our diseases (Isaiah 53:4), Matthew 12:18- Behold My Servant (Isaiah 42:1), Matthew 12:21- Hope for Gentiles (Isaiah 42:4), Matthew 13:14- Closed eyes and ears (Isaiah 6:9), Matthew 15:7- They worship in vain (Isaiah 29:13), Matthew 21:13- A house of prayer (Isaiah 56:7)

After Matthew walks his audience through prophetic witness that Jesus is the Messiah he declares the purpose of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus has come to fulfill God's mission and that he calls His followers to imitate him. God's missional activity as witnessed through Jesus is stated best in the closing chapter and verses of Matthew's Gospel:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold, I am with you always, to the 'end of the age' (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus the Messiah was sent and therefore he sends. His message is clear: to participate in the redemptive work as reconciling ambassadors of the Kingdom. Matthew 6:10 embodied Jesus through the way he lived life on earth. Matthew's Gospel gives the audience a picture of the Messiah making known the rule of God not only through word but also in deed—serving others and performing miracles, signs, and wonders. The person and work of “Jesus of Nazareth gives God’s loving mission a face, a voice, a pair of sandals.”⁶

Mark’s Gospel

Bursting forth in Mark’s Gospel is Jesus “proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near’” (Mark 1:14-15).⁷

To clarify to the Markan community, primarily consisting of Gentiles,⁸ the author, Mark, illuminates and informs his audience using evangelistic snapshots of Jesus in action.

Mark plunges the reader “immediately into the ministry of Jesus.”⁹ Strauss sums it up:

Jesus appears on the scene abruptly, taking the Galilean countryside by storm. Short vignettes tumble one after another in quick succession. Within a few short paragraphs, Jesus is baptized by John, tempted by Satan, and embarks on a ministry of teaching, healing, and exorcism.¹⁰

⁶ Dean Flemming, *Rediscovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 61.

⁷ Flemming, 62.

⁸ D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1992), 99.

⁹ Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 178.

¹⁰ Strauss, 179.

The important perspective for this community was not the Jewish connection read in Matthew's Gospel, but to see Jesus as the Son of God in power and authority, a dominating theme throughout Mark's Gospel.¹¹

Jesus' ministry launches after John the Baptist baptizes him and God the Father affirms Jesus by sending the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove to rest on Jesus. Immediately he is sent by the Holy Spirit into a season of testing. Afterwards, he is sent "immediately" on mission. Like Matthew's narrative of Jesus on mission, the Gospel of Mark's account is filled with many signs and miracles, but they are not the point of His mission. His mission is to proclaim the Good News—the Kingdom of God has come! The miracles and signs and wonders were expressions of the Kingdom that usually happened while he was going from one place to the next to preach the Gospel. The Markan community is witness to the inseparable power of the proclamation and the activity of that proclamation.

Jesus calls his first disciple, a fisherman, on his way to Capernaum via Galilee and says, "Come follow me and I will teach you how to become fisher of men" (Mark 1:16-18). He preaches in a synagogue in Capernaum astounding the attendees, "for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). An unclean spirit declares, "You are the Holy One of God!" Jesus stops what he's doing, casts out the demon, and carries on with His mission (Mark 1:24). Next, he visited Simon and Andrew's house for the night and healed Simon's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31). After leaving Simon and Andrew's house he heals "many who were sick with various diseases. He drives out many demons (Mark 1:34). Mark chronicles Jesus' ministry journey as he

¹¹ Strauss, 179.

went to neighboring towns proclaiming the message, “for that is what I came out to do” (Mark 1:38). He moves through Galilee proclaiming the Gospel, casting out demons, healing lepers and others who were sick. Jesus was a man on a mission, God’s mission. Mark’s Gospel captures Jesus in missional activity—words inseparable from deeds demonstrating that the Kingdom has come.

Luke’s Gospel

Like a physician exploring the facts of a new discovery, Luke meticulously lays out the truth of Jesus. His purpose in chronicling the life of Jesus in such great detail was so that his community “would know the truth” (Luke 1:4). In reflecting on previously discussed Gospels it is understood that in Matthew’s community Jesus is presented as High Priest. In Mark’s gospel he is presented as servant and Son of God. Luke presents Jesus as the compassionate Messiah who was prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus’ first recorded quotation from Luke’s narrative is from Isaiah 61:1-2. In the following passage Jesus not only reveals that he is under the unction of the Holy Spirit, but that he is the Holy One, the Son of God (1 John 2:20) and that he is sent with a purpose: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18-19).

Though Luke records many of the same movements of travel, healing, signs and wonders, his unique contribution to the Gospels is his ability to draw the connection between Old Testament prophets and Jesus’ mission. For example, Luke records Jesus quoting Isaiah, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and he has sent me.” The Spirit is intricately involved with Jesus. Brian Miller clarifies,

The poor included those who had little social status as well. The Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:26-35) had no clothes, showing his illness and his lack of status in community. Zacchaeus (19:1-10) may have had money, but his status as a tax collector excluded him from the wider community. When Jesus healed the ten lepers (17:11-19), he did more than take away their sickness. He told them to show the priests in order to be restored to the community. Jesus showed, as recorded in Luke, that his purpose was to redeem and restore those who had been pushed out of the broader society.¹²

Luke's perspective of the mission of God through Jesus appears to focus on the local community. He omits "two of Mark's references to the gospel being shared to all the nations (Mark 13:10; 14:9)."¹³ In the book of Luke, Luke records Jesus as the redemptive Savior who sets people free from sin and heals them from bodily affliction. In the Book of Acts the mission of God is expanded. Miller states,

The Father sent Jesus as a fulfillment of the greater goal. From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus prophetically proclaimed a new world and shared good news that included the outcast. This inclusion was based on the promise of God to Abraham and was heralded by Isaiah. Further, Jesus directed his ministry toward any who were poor, whether Jew or Gentile. State of need, rather than state of ethnicity, determined the orientation of Jesus in the third gospel.¹⁴

Luke's portrait of Jesus on mission reflects the heart of God the Father as a compassionate servant proclaiming the healing power of a reconciliatory God.

Book of Acts

As the second volume of Luke's writings Acts covers the expansion of the early church. In Acts Luke moves from the universal church to a specific community. If the covenant blessing that Yahweh made with Abraham in Genesis 12, that all nations would be blessed, was fulfilled in Jesus Christ in the Synoptics, then the Book of Acts is the

¹² Brian Vann Miller, "Images of the Missional Church: Leadership, Culture, and Practices in Context" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2011), 32.

¹³ Miller, 33.

¹⁴ Miller, 33.

universal inclusion of all nations being blessed. The convergence of the covenant blessing found in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the Messiah crystalizes God's missional intention. The disciples of Jesus had read the Old Testament as a means to know God's commandments as taught by the religious leaders of that day. The commandments must now be understood in light of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Their Old Testament scrolls must be understood both *messianically* and *missiologically*.¹⁵

Wright explains,

The same Scriptures that point inexorably to the Messiah also point to the good news going to the nations. Luke continues this angle in his second volume, again and again showing how the Gentile mission is nothing more nor less than a fulfillment of the Scriptures, and especially of the prophecies of Isaiah. Even the overall structure of Luke's two-volume work expresses this underlying theology. It begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome; from the heart of the faith of Israel (the temple) to the heart of the world of all nations.¹⁶

In other words, the church and mission are inseparable. The church is not only to be a community of holy people, called out ones, but a discipling sending church community. The community both edifies and disciples each other to bless the nations.

Beginning in Acts chapter 2, this new community of believers baptized in the Holy Spirit became the church, a movement with Jesus as the new hermeneutic for interpreting the Old Testament. Directed by the ubiquitous Spirit it was a movement that was to emulate Jesus in word and deed. In fact, various forms of the Greek root word *pneuma* appear 70 times in Acts. As recorded in Acts 2:1-4, Peter preaches a powerful message and on the day of Pentecost the revolution begun by Jesus exploded with a new experience in the Spirit.

¹⁵ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 514.

¹⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 514.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Peter explains to the crowds that what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy:

In the last days," God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:17-21).

Furthermore, Peter includes King David's prophetic insights:

David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence (Acts 2:25-28).

What Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2 about the Spirit and the work of the Spirit now moves from singularity, Jesus Himself, to hundreds, eventually millions around the world.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19).

The community of faith in Acts was a prophetic community: a Christocentric, Spirit-filled, missionary-sending community. From the position of centripetal mission the community disciplined one another daily merging with centrifugal mission as a way of life.

The early church seems to have understood what life on mission, to be the church 24/7, 365 days a year, should look like.

Formation of the New Testament Community

The early church desired to follow the pattern of Jesus by loving and serving as he did. Therefore, it is important to examine what life lived in community looked like on a daily basis including their best practices and daily rhythms. It is also important to understand how they stayed connected with one another and to the mission of God, especially in light of rapid growth (Acts 2:41). The Acts community wrapped their discipleship around four shared experiences.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

Paul wrote of the importance of prayer and instructed the church to “follow our example” (I Thessalonians 1:6). In this context Paul spoke about disrupters who were infiltrating the Thessalonica community and reminded them to continue to practice what the apostles did to keep the community from being disrupted from their mission.

Regardless, these four rhythms stayed the Acts community's focus and solidified its impact in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and ultimately the uttermost parts of the world.

They Devoted Themselves to the Apostles' Teaching

The reader is not told the exact content of the apostles' teaching. However, the gospels and other New Testament writers explain that the early Christian community was centered on studying the identity of Christ and His purposes. According to Joel Green,

Luke devotes much of his two letters, Luke and Acts, to the redemptive work of Christ and how the church lived out the Gospel. He notes,

The purpose of Luke-Acts would have been to strengthen the Christian movement in the face of opposition by (1) ensuring them in their interpretation and experience of the redemptive purpose and faithfulness of God and by (2) calling them to continued faithfulness and witness in God's salvific project. The purpose of Luke-Acts, then, would be primarily ecclesiological—concerned with the practices that define and the criteria for legitimating the community of God's people, and centered on the invitation to participate in God's project.¹⁷

Participants in the early Christian community disciplined each other with the teachings of the apostles aiding in the growth of not only those studying but also in witness and impact. The church grew daily as a result of people sharing the Gospel. We know that Paul preached to the Corinthians (Acts 18) and many who “heard him believed and were baptized.” The same results happened in the cities, towns and villages of Philippi, Antioch, Thessalonica, and Rome. The Gospel was taught and preached and many accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior and became part of a learning community. As the early church devoted itself to studying daily it was a fresh reminder that Jesus of Nazareth was present in individuals, the community and world. Studying the apostles' teaching was key to discipling a learning community.

They Devoted Themselves to Fellowship

Fellowship was a natural outflow of an early Christian community steeped in the Word, the apostles' teaching. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines the word *koinonia* as “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint

¹⁷ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 21-22.

participation, intimate, conveying the idea of joint participation in the willingness to fellowship to have in common and united reason to be together.”¹⁸

Devoted fellowship for the early church was more than a social gathering; it was a gathering in the fellowship of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14) and partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). To be gathered in fellowship was essential in discipling not only those who had been serving Jesus for some time but also for those who were previously in darkness to walk and grow in the light. In other words, to walk in darkness is to be out of Christian fellowship (1 John 1:6) and to be out of Christian fellowship is to practice lawlessness (2 Cor. 10:20). Because fellowship was a shared experience, Christians could not have fellowship with the world—to share in other people’s sins (1 Timothy 5:22) and their evil deeds (2 John 11).

Koinonia served the young church in several ways: for personal accountability, to grow with one another (Proverbs 27:17), and to love one another so that the world may know that they were His (John 13:35). In fellowship the early church could be mutually edified through using their God-given spiritual gifts found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. In fellowship they could pray for one another and partake in holy communion. Through *koinonia* the community “finds concrete expression in the community’s social and economic practice. For example, Luke describes the new believers as having ‘all things in common’ (Acts 2:44; Acts 4:32).”¹⁹ Flemming explains, “As a regular practice, they would sell their possessions and share the proceeds with others as a loving response to the needy in their midst. By Acts 4, this radical generosity

¹⁸ “Bible Study Tools,” accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/koinonia.html>.

¹⁹ Flemming, 150.

progresses from selling goods to selling lands and houses to care for the poor (Acts 4:34).”²⁰ Koinonia was breath to the early church.

They Devoted Themselves to Breaking of Bread

Luke does not clarify the exact meaning of “breaking of bread”. There is much debate. According to Thayer’s Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament,

Luke records four occasions where Jesus broke bread (Luke 9:16; 22:19; 24:30, 35). One of those (22:19) was the occasion when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. The others, while speaking of ordinary meals, use language that clearly evokes the Lord’s Supper (language such as “bless,” “broke,” “gave”). In the Book of Acts, Luke records two occasions where disciples broke bread. One (20:7) refers to the Lord’s Supper, while the other (27:35) refers to an ordinary meal.²¹

Acts 2:42 refers to the “breaking of bread” as a shared common practice and in Acts 2:46 “breaking of bread” happens daily “from house to house.” These shared meals were joyous and celebratory moments in remembrance of Jesus’ resurrection. In addition, Flemming notes “The church’s practice of hospitality proclaims the community’s oneness, acceptance and responsibility toward one another.”²² He states, “Furthermore, by sharing meals, the community was following Jesus’ pattern of eating with all sorts of people” (see Luke 5:29-32; 14:12-24; 19:1-10). Breaking bread was the celebration portion of the early Christian community.

They Devoted Themselves to Prayer

In the early Christian community prayer was offered in the temple (Acts 2:46). It is also believed that when believers gathered “from house to house” (Acts 5:42) their

²⁰ Flemming, 150.

²¹ “Bible Commentary on Acts 2:42-47,” last modified 2016, accessed August 16, 2017, <https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/acts-242-47>.

²² Flemming, 151.

prayer was personal as they prayed for one another, a greater connection than “pray for me” (Acts 1:14, 24; 4:24-31; cf. Acts 12:12). The early Christians prayed for God’s manifestations of healings, signs and wonders as testimony that the “kingdom of God has come to earth.”²³ It would make sense that the mission of God was the focus of the early Christian community since Luke highlights it as a pivotal prayer point (Acts 1:14, 24-25; 6:4; 8:15; 9:11; 13:3). Acts 4:24-31 is the longest recorded prayer focusing on “Jerusalem’s request for intrepid witness and the strength to engage in missionary work.”²⁴

The early Christian community was more than a social gathering; it was a movement that disciplined and made disciples of Christ who were sent ultimately all over the entire world. This young, vibrant Spirit-filled community served as witness to the resurrected Lord. They served each other using their spiritual gifts. They met daily in the Jerusalem temple for prayer and in homes where they fellowshiped, studied, ate, and prayed together. The early community shared life in the deepest sense of everything they possessed, materially and spiritually, and were one as a people created in the image of God. Whether it was at work, at home, in the streets while strolling from one place to the next, or in the market buying food, wherever the people of God found themselves at any given moment, they understood that they were on God’s mission. In summary, Acts records the daily activities of the Gospel of Jesus at work in His disciples. The mission of God in Acts could be summarized as:

Preaching the gospel and healing the sick. Extending forgiveness to sinners and justice to the oppressed. Delivering from Satan’s power and bearing witness to the

²³ Flemming, 151.

²⁴ Flemming, 151.

nations. Confronting insiders and embracing outsiders. Touching the poor with compassion and liberating the rich from an addiction to money. Restoring the lost and loving one's enemies. Explaining the Scriptures through symbols. Doing ministry in the company of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit. Announcing and embodying the Good News.²⁵

Leadership: A Five-Fold Approach

In the Old Testament, Israel was guided and equipped by prophets, kings, judges, and high priests. However, in the New Testament there is a shift in the way that the early church is equipped for acts of service for ministry. This equipping described in Ephesians 4:11 is often referred to as the five-fold equipping ministry, or as (Apostles, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, and Teacher),²⁶ an acrostic used by leading missional thinkers and scholars.²⁷ Although the Bible clearly designates five distinct offices in Ephesians 4:11, there is debate on whether all five-fold ministries are operating in the twenty-first century. Some scholars and theologians such as John MacArthur, Thomas Schreiner, and John Piper hold the cessationist view of the first two equipping gifts, apostles and prophets, and maintain that these two gifts ceased after the original twelve apostles. Others such as Mike Breen, Alan Hirsch, J.R. Woodward, Michael Frost, and C. Peter Wagner hold the missional view that all five gifts of 4:11 are functional in the twenty-first century. The common agreement from both camps, cessationists versus the continuationists, is that at least three, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher, are relevant in the church today.

²⁵ Flemming, 110-111.

²⁶ APEST is interchanged with APEPT. See Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003).

²⁷ See Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006).

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown states regarding the book of Ephesians,

The object of the Epistle is “to set forth the ground, the course, and the aim and end of THE Church of the Faithful in Christ. He speaks to the Ephesians as a type or sample of the Church universal.” Hence, “the Church” throughout the Epistle is spoken of in the singular, not in the plural, “churches.” The Church's foundation, its course, and its end, are his theme alike in the larger and smaller divisions of the whole Epistle. “Everywhere the foundation of the Church is in the will of the Father; the course of the Church is by the satisfaction of the Son; the end of the Church is the life in the Holy Spirit.”²⁸

Jamieson-Fausett-Brown’s assertion “to set forth the ground, the course, and the aim and end of THE Church of the Faithful in Christ” gives solidarity when considering the major themes and doctrines set forth in the Book of Ephesians: The new life which God has given us in Christ (1:3-2:10). The new society which God has created through Christ (2:11–3:21). The new standards which God expects of his new society, especially unity and purity (4:1-5:21). The new relationships into which God has brought us—harmony in the home and hostility to the devil (5:21-6:24)²⁹

These are foundational concepts for a new movement and a new society. John Stott elaborates,

The letter focuses on what God did through the historical work of Jesus Christ and does through his Spirit today, in order to build his new society in the midst of the old. It tells how Jesus Christ shed his blood in sacrificial death for sin, was then raised from death by the power of God and has been exalted above all competitors to the supreme place in both tune universe and the church. More than that, we who are “in Christ’, organically united to him by faith, have ourselves shared in these great events. We have been raised from spiritual death, exalted to heaven and seated with him there. We have also been reconciled to God and to each other. As a result, through Christ and in Christ, we are nothing less than God’s new society, the single new humanity which he is creating and which includes;

²⁸ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, “Bible Commentary on Ephesians,” accessed August 17, 2017, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/jfb/ephesians/1.htm>.

²⁹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 25.

Jews and Gentiles on equal terms. We are the family of God the Father, the body of Jesus Christ His Son and the temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.³⁰

The body of Christ, the church, the ecclesia, the community of God is established in Acts by bringing every tribe, tongue, and nation together. The church is to be “one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:5-6). Like Acts, the Book of Ephesians is foundational for the Church. The Apostle Paul in writing this passage is not addressing a single church in particular, but the Church universal. Therefore, the foundational doctrines presented in Ephesians are directives from the Apostle to the church on how to live within this “new” movement, how leadership is given and the respective roles of that leadership, and how the church is to engage the world and expand the Kingdom of God. Without proper leadership to guide the “new” movement, the fledgling community of Jews and Gentiles—now experiencing shared lives—no doubt struggled. Paul, writing from prison, describes what a missional ecclesiology looks like in Ephesians 4:1-16. Stott summarizes,

Through Jesus Christ, who died for sinners and was raised from death, God is creating something entirely new, not just a new life for individuals for a new society. Paul sees an alienated humanity being reconciled, a fractured humanity being united, even a new humanity being created. It is a magnificent vision.³¹

In Ephesians 4 Paul moved his audience from what he had taught them (1:15-23) and prayed for them (3:14-19) to the foundational operations of this new movement, from theology to praxis. Paul urges the Ephesians of the importance of walking in godly character, exemplifying their high calling in Christ Jesus (4:1). Paul lists behaviors that are essential for “maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:2). They are

³⁰ Stott, 145.

³¹ Stott, 146.

charged to diligently pursue “humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.” In verses 4-6 Paul gives the reason for the need to be unified, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit and the bond of peace (4:4-6). Though there are differences among the people of Ephesus, for the sake of the risen Lord and for the glory of God, they are reminded of what unifies the believers, “one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Verses 1-6 explain the spiritual context necessary for the equipping of the saints for ministry in the following verses. Unity in the Spirit would promote this kind of environment, whereas sin and selfishness would promote the opposite—disunity and divisiveness. J. Hampton Keatheley gives meaning to the word “environment,”

It is not so much a program that is needed but an environment (an atmosphere). What does this mean? An environment is the sum total of the social, spiritual, and relational attitudes and factors in a group that influences what the individual thinks of him or herself and what he or she does.³²

Leadership in the First Century: Ephesians 4:7-16

In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul laid out the foundational basis necessary for unity in the Spirit for this new movement. There is a need for the Church to recognize what God has done and is doing through Jesus Christ. There is the need for godly character to be preferred above sinful and selfish desires. There is a need to acknowledge the “oneness” of this new movement in the midst of diverse people groups, thoughts, and opinions. Oneness doesn’t just happen.

In verse 6, God, who is Father of all, is also above all and through all and in all. Yet verse 7 reads that grace was given to each one of us. He goes from general to

³² J. Hampton Keatheley, “The Unity of the Spirit: Ephesians 4:1-6,” accessed August 18, 2017, <https://bible.org/article/unity-spirit-ephesians-41-6>.

particular, from us all to each one of us, and “from the unity to the diversity of His church.”³³ There is the celebration of diversity of all people and all gifts being used for a two-fold purpose: theologically, to glorify God and, practically, for the building up of the body (Rm. 12:6, I Cor. 12:4). All gifts mentioned in the New Testament are not of human origin but of divine impartation. Each gift is Christ’s gift; he is the dispenser of these graces (4:7). The Apostle Paul links the following quote from the Septuagint verses 7 and 8 to Psalm 68:18: “This truth is now enforced in the following verse [verse 8] by a quotation from Psalm 68:18: When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”³⁴ Stott elaborates on the Psalm 68:18 connections and meaning:

Paul applies this picture to Christ’s ascension, not arbitrarily because he detected a vague analogy between the two, but justifiably because he saw in the exaltation of Jesus a further fulfilment of this description of the triumph of God. Christ ascended as a conqueror to the father’s right hand, his train of captives being the principalities and powers he has defeated, dethroned and disarmed.³⁵

In other words, not only has “Christ ascended to the right hand of the father but, in saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things” (Ephesians 4:9-10. Peter O’Brien explains,

A recent interpretation takes the descent of Christ to be subsequent to his ascent to heaven, and thus referring to his descent in the Spirit at Pentecost. This view, it claimed, makes more sense in the immediate context, with the result that v 9 and v. 10 do not need to be treated as parenthesis. Christ’s descent in the Spirit fits neatly between the two main foci of the passage, namely, his ascent and his given of gifts. Paul has already spoken of the Spirit’s work in unifying the body (vv.3, 4); now he makes the important connection with the coming of the Spirit. Such an interpretation is interesting in the light of the Jewish exegetical tradition which applied the going up mentioned in Psalm 68 to Moses: he ascended to receive the

³³ Stott, 155.

³⁴ Stott, 156.

³⁵ Stott, 156, 157.

law and then descended in order to give it to Israel. So, Psalm 68 is no longer a Jewish Pentecostal psalm relating to Moses but ‘a Christian Pentecostal psalm, celebrating the ascension of Christ and his subsequent descent at Pentecost to bestow spiritual gifts upon the Church.’³⁶

The meaning “that he (Christ) might fill all things” is significant in not only giving the five gifts mentioned in 4:11 but also that in His supremely authoritative position “above all things” he also dispenses the five gifts through the Holy Spirit to administrate the discipleship and leadership of his bride, the church, so that God’s people may mature “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (v. 13).

Five-Fold Equipping Gifts (v. 11)

The five-fold equipping gifts (for the sake of continuity from here forward five-fold will be replaced with APEST) mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, “given” by Christ for His Church. There are two views surrounding this topic; 1) the cessationist view, 2) and the continuationist view. Both views share one thing in common. They both believe that of the APEST equipping gifts mentioned in 4:11 all but the first two are a current reality: the evangelist, the pastor/shepherd, and teacher. What does that mean for apostles and prophets? Since both views share in common acceptance the last three, EST, and have varying views on the first two, AP, this portion of chapter two will focus primarily on apostles and prophets.

Two Views on the Meaning of Foundational

The Cessationist View

The Cessationist view holds to the belief that the apostles and prophets ended with the original twelve apostles in the first century. These two gifts were only necessary

³⁶ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians Commentary* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1999) 295.

for launching the early church. By “apostles” it should be noted that this researcher does not simply mean “sent ones,” but the apostles—those directly appointed by Christ. After the deaths of the original twelve Apostles the gifts found in Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 either were limited or disappeared altogether. Ephesians 4:11, for example, has been limited to three equipping gifts instead of five. What constitutes an original apostle?

Apostles and Prophets

There are three mentioned in Scripture: An apostle had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 10:39–41; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–8), appointed by Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; 10:41; Gal. 1:1) and able to confirm his mission and message with miraculous signs (Matt. 10:1–2; Acts 1:5–8; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12; 8:14; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4).

With these qualifications as the marks of apostolic leadership, even some continuationists, such as Wayne Grudem, say that “it seems that no apostles were appointed after Paul, and certainly, since no one today can meet the qualification of having seen the risen Christ with his own eyes, there are no apostles today.”³⁷ Grudem builds this theological argument from Ephesians 2:20, which states “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” The word “foundation” is key for the cessationist, with “foundation” viewed as a time and space within the context of history, a dispensation of grace for a specific purpose, the foundation of the church.

³⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 911.

This view relies heavily on the early church fathers as a hermeneutic to unlock the meaning of “foundation.” Below are statements by early church fathers:

Ignatius (c. 35–115) in his Epistle to the Magnesians, wrote (speaking in the past tense): “The people shall be called by a new name, which the Lord shall name them, and shall be a holy people.” This was first fulfilled in Syria; for “the disciples were called Christians at Antioch,” when Paul and Peter were laying the foundations of the Church.

Irenaeus (c. 130–202) in *Against Heresies*, echoes the past tense understanding that Peter and Paul laid the foundations of the Church (in 3.1.1) and later refers to the twelve apostles as “the twelve-pillared foundation of the church” (in 4.21.3).

Tertullian (c. 155–230), in *The Five Books Against Marcion* (chapter 21), notes the importance of holding to apostolic doctrine, even in a post-apostolic age: No doubt, after the time of the apostles, the truth respecting the belief of God suffered corruption, but it is equally certain that during the life of the apostles their teaching on this great article did not suffer at all; so that no other teaching will have the right of being received as apostolic than that which is at the present day proclaimed in the churches of apostolic foundation.

Lactantius (c. 240–320), also, in *The Divine Institutes* (4.21) refers to a past time in which the foundations of the church were laid: But the disciples, being dispersed through the provinces, everywhere laid the foundations of the Church, themselves also in the name of their divine Master doing many and almost incredible miracles; for at His departure He had endowed them with power and strength, by which the system of their new announcement might be founded and confirmed.³⁸

The “foundational” age has passed. A more modern opponent of the continuationist position is John MacArthur. He also builds a cessationist proof by using early church fathers while at the same time rebuking continuationists such as C. Peter Wagner. MacArthur writes,

The fact is, the New Testament apostles served the Body of Christ in a specific, unique way that is unrepeatable. They weren’t just gifted pastors, evangelists, and missionaries—they were the *foundation of the church*. That passage [Ephesians 2:19-20] equates the apostles with the church’s foundation. It means nothing if it doesn’t decisively limit apostleship to the earliest stages of church history. After all, a foundation is not something that can be rebuilt during every phase of

³⁸ Nathan Busenitz, “Are There Still Apostles Today?” July 21, 2011, accessed August 20, 2017, <http://thecripplegate.com/are-there-still-apostles-today/>.

construction. The foundation is unique, and it is always laid first, with the rest of the structure resting firmly above it.³⁹

The same meaning would be true for prophets based on a cessationist interpretation of Ephesians 2:20. The Church was launched from the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets and now that that era has passed, prophecy has also ceased, cessationists argue. Currently, the church relies on the functions of evangelists (though some cessationist question their current reality), shepherds/ pastors and teachers to mature the body.

Critics of cessationism argue that there is a foundational problem with their theology. If the five-fold equipping ministry of Ephesians 4:11 was “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” then the church would be perfect. Harold R. Eberle confirms “These goals have not yet been reached. Therefore, all five-fold ministry gifts will be with the Church until the Church attains that which is promised in these verses.”⁴⁰

Furthermore, the cessationist argument fails according to Jon Ruthven because:

(1) “foundation” indicates a pattern to be replicated, not a generation frozen in time; (2) the foundation of Eph. 2:20 represents Christ himself and the recurring apostolic and prophetically inspired “foundational confession,” as Peter’s “great confession” (Matt 16:16–18), revealed to all Christians in every era; (3) traditional Protestantism sees a NT apostle as a 16th century pope rather than as an ongoing ministry function in the church; (4) the cessationist metaphor, in an illogical, question-begging move, confuses the death of the apostles and prophets with the death of their gifts; (5) the metaphor is destroyed if Christ the

³⁹ John MacArthur, “Marks of a True Apostle: Foundation of the Church,” December 18, 2013, accessed August 22, 2017, <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B131218>.

⁴⁰ Harold. R. Eberle, *Systematic Theology for the New Apostolic Reformation: An Exposition in Father-Son Theology* (Yakima, WA: Worldcast Publishing, 2015), 595.

“cornerstone” is, as is likely, also the “capstone” or “long-high cornerstone” holding the walls together like interlacing fingers (Eph 2:21), who is also in contact with each stone; (6) this cessationist metaphor violates the clear teaching of Eph 4:11; and (7) it substitutes the “letter” of the NT for the Spirit-revealed experience of Christ himself as the ultimate foundation.⁴¹

Since Constantine the church has struggled to live God’s mission and has to this day struggled to be revolutionary. Institutionalization has a way of running off catalyst-type leaders such as apostles and prophets; consequently, there have been long periods of apathy and indifference toward God’s mission. Reggie McNeal writes, “After Constantine Christianity became a clergy-dominated religion centered around designated places of worship. This differed radically from the first three centuries”⁴² The emphases on a designated place seems like something from Old Testament Israel. Time and time again the Israelites centered their lives around the Promised Land instead of God’s mission. McNeal further states,

The movement founded by Jesus was largely a marketplace phenomenon, an organic connection among people who were experiencing a way of life together. The early days of the movement focused on simple teachings of Jesus, with particular attention to living lives of sacrifice and service to one another and to one’s neighbor. Even though the movement spread very rapidly among the slave populations and common people, it’s appeal transcended all cultural lines. The spiritual expression of Jesus followers was not characterized by a set of religious activities layered on top of other interests. Jesus invaded all areas of life. Church was not an event or a place; it was a way of life.⁴³

There have been seasons when the church has been actively engaged in God’s mission: The Jesuits, the Pietists, the Methodists, and most recently in the early 1900s the

⁴¹ Jon Ruthven, “The Foundational Gifts of Ephesians 2:20,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10, no. 2 (January 2002), 28-43.

⁴² Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 13.

⁴³ McNeal, 13, 14.

Azusa street outpouring, a Pentecostal experience that eventually led to conversations around missions.

Continuationist View

The missional church is viewed as an expression of God's mission and his heart to redeem humanity to Himself. It is His continuing missional commitment—as seen in the Old Testament, the New Testament and persisting through the present—of reconciliation to the world. At the top of the missional ecclesiology is the belief that it is God who is on mission and that we join him in it. The belief that the church is a continuation of God's redemptive mission means that the church has been equipped with the right leaders to lead this mission, and for the missional church those leaders are designated in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors/shepherd, and teachers. Those who hold to a cessationist view of the five-fold are challenged to review their ecclesiological hermeneutic given the current statistics of church decline. By its nature, as the missional church confronts Western culture and the traditional church, a deconstruction will likely manifest. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch clarify this implicit deconstruction:

The missional church, by its very nature, will be an anti-clone to the existing traditional model. Rather than being attractional, it will be incarnational. It will leave its own religious zones and live comfortably with non-church goers, seeping into the host culture like salt and light. It will be an infiltrating, transformational community. Second, rather than being dualistic, it will embrace a messianic spirituality. That is, a spirituality of engagement with culture and the world in the same mode of the Messiah himself. And third, the missional church will develop an apostolic form of leadership rather than the traditional hierarchical model.⁴⁴

After Christ ascends he gives five equipping gifts to move His church forward and to carry out His mission. As we already explored the traditional view insists that only

⁴⁴ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 30.

three of the five gifts have continued: evangelist, pastor and teacher. The missional view meets the cessationist halfway. The missional view agrees that the original Apostles and Prophets—those who were eyewitnesses to Christ, the twelve and the original prophets of the Old Testament no longer exist. The missional view separates in the area of succession. The missional view believes that though the original 12 Apostles and prophets no longer exist, the succession of apostles and prophets does exist. John Stott agrees,

(1) that the original apostles as eyewitnesses of the historic risen Jesus can in the nature of the case have no successors, and (2) that their authority is preserved today in the New Testament, which is the essential ‘apostolic succession’. Once we have insisted, however, that there are today no apostles of Christ with an authority comparable to that of the apostles Paul, Peter, and John, it is certainly possible to argue that there are people with apostolic ministries.⁴⁵

In addition to Stott’s comments on the APEST he further states,

The specific mention, first of all, that Christ gave *apostles* and *prophets* corresponds to the earlier references in 2:20 and 3:5 to their *foundational* role as the authoritative recipients and proclaimers of the mystery of Christ (note also their appearance first in Paul’s list of I Corinthians 12:28). Because of the mention of *evangelists*, *pastors*, and *teachers*, many modern commentators have concluded that the *apostles* and *prophets* had passed away from the scene by the time Ephesians was written and had been replaced by the second generation of ministers. But this conclusion is unnecessary.⁴⁶

A cessationist view of apostles and prophets is unnecessary, critics argue, because there are numerous accounts of apostles being mentioned throughout church history.

Jimmy Bayes discusses a historical overview integrating the roles of early church fathers to establish the succession of apostles and prophets from Clément’s First Epistle to the Corinthians:

⁴⁵ Stott, 161.

⁴⁶ Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester, England: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 298.

The New Testament even used *apostle* in a more general sense (Rom 16:7; 1 Thes 2:6). There is no evidence that an office of apostle existed outside of the designation of the twelve and Paul. However, the function of apostle (Biblical and extra-Biblical) existed before and after Paul's epistle and was likely to continue.⁴⁷

The pericope, Ephesians 4:11-16, is a dynamic movement that requires all five functions as important to moving the church forward on mission. The APEST is still needed as evidenced by the lack of maturity in the Western church. The Western church today is not maturing; it is easily swayed by false doctrine and does not grow up into the fullness of Christ. Continuationist argue that operating on the limited traditional view of only three offices keeps the church stagnant and gimpy. Hirsch and Catchim state:

The Charisms of APEST are given that the body of Christ might grow and mature, that we may live out the unity described in verses 1 to 6, that we might be equipped and to find our organic wholeness in Christ and each other, that we are to be the people Jesus intended us to be.⁴⁸ The logic of this text [Ephesians:12-16] is integrated and sound theologically. It makes clear that the church's capacity for reciprocity and maturity is based on orthodox understandings of God and church and the constitutional ministry expressed as APEST. A mature and healthy church lives out of its confession as well as into it; it is a self-reinforcing system. If we ignore the inner logic of the text, we should not expect to produce outcomes it foresees.⁴⁹

Based on the observations of Hirsch and Catchim interpret Paul's understanding of the APEST as a core essential for not only growing the body of Christ to maturity but also to defend against heresy and false doctrine. The APEST then moves the church from infant naivete to sound theological practitioners into unity of the faith.

The APEST, then, is essential for cultivating an incarnational (as opposed to attractional) movement. Each role within these equipping gifts serves to mature the body

⁴⁷ Jimmy D. Bayes, "Five-Fold Ministry: A Social and Cultural Texture Analysis of Ephesians 4:11-16," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2010), accessed August 22, 2017, <http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/>.

⁴⁸ Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 15.

⁴⁹ Hirsch and Catchim, 15, 16.

of Christ to participation in God's mission. Without these charisms the body remains infantile, being tossed to and fro from every wind of doctrine.

Hirsch and Catchim define the APEST:

The *apostle* is tasked with the overall vigor, as well as extension of Christianity as a whole, primarily through direct mission and church planting. As the name itself suggests, it is the quintessentially missional ministry, as "sentness" (Latin *mission*) is written into it (*apostello* = sent one).

The *prophet* is called to maintain faithfulness to God among the people of God. Essentially prophets are guardians of the covenant relationship.

The *evangelist* is the recruiter to the cause, the naturally infectious person who is able to enlist people into the movement by transmitting the gospel.

The *shepherd* is called to nurture spiritual development, maintain communal health, and engender loving community among the people of God.

The *teacher* mediates wisdom and understanding. This philosophical type brings comprehensive understanding of the revelation bequeathed to the church.⁵⁰

The Ephesians 4:11 equipping gifts where their primary callings are best suited within and without the church.

Niewold expounds on Apostles and Prophets:

Apostles who go abroad, plant churches, work deep in the world, scouting out groups of people, preaching, laying the groundwork, asking questions, and establishing teams of people who become new "centers. They are led by the Holy Spirit to people, places, and opportunities often unseen by others. They are entrepreneurs who seem to make something take form when before there was nothing there. Modern prophets are placed near the periphery of the congregation to indicate their ministry as being, when put missiologically, a cross-cultural one. Prophets are those who speak both to the church and to the world, the latter role encompassing an apologetic function.⁵¹

The five-fold ministry is a catalyst for reviving the church today. The missional church has much to offer. It will take a determination to commit to a unified theological

⁵⁰ Hirsch and Catchim, 8.

⁵¹ Niewold, 55-56.

vision and practice. It will take bold leaders – Ephesians 4:11 leaders. Most importantly, it will take the power of the Holy Spirit to stir our hearts to move beyond the promise and join the Promiser on mission.

The foundational view espoused by cessationist does not offer an ethos for movements such as Scripture illustrates during the first century church. What Church history does reveal is that when the five-fold ministry is embraced movements happen. The most powerful expression of New Testament movement is the expansion of the early church through church planting, specifically Paul’s missionary journeys as expounded upon in chapter 3.

Ruthven offers an argument to end this chapter:

The most unsettling premise of the ‘foundational’ argument is the notion employed of what ultimately is the ‘foundation’—the most important element or core value—of the Church. Some cessationists appear to be insisting that the ‘foundation’ is the established doctrine of the NT documents. As one committed to the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, I would never seek to minimize the central significance of the Bible for faith. Nevertheless, the Bible in general, and Ephesians in particular, does not identify itself as the foundational core of the Church. Rather, the disclosure experience of Christ, although within its biblical framework, is truly the foundation of the Church. St Paul was concerned that Christians’ faith rested not on words, but on ‘a demonstration of the Spirit’s power’ (I Cor. 2.14). This strongly suggests that normatively, a system of propositions, however true they may be, is not the basis for faith; rather it is Christ himself, through the activity of the Spirit of Christ, with a strong overtone of revelation, that characterizes this foundation.⁵²

New Testament Leadership Development

Mentoring as Paul’s Model for Leadership Development

When it comes to the practical application of developing five-fold ministry leaders Paul is a crowning protégé of Christ. Yet, Paul was not directly disciplined by Jesus. How then did Paul rise through the ranks to become one of the most influential

⁵² Ruthven.

apostolic leaders in the New Testament? What was the process for Paul's leadership development as an apostle? When researching Paul's process of leadership development, it is easy to come to the conclusion that Paul was not developed institutionally but relationally. Paul was mentored into his leadership role. But who mentored Paul? Mentoring can be defined as "a relational experience in which one person, the mentor, empowers another person, the mentoree, by sharing God-given resources"⁵³. This section will investigate Paul's leadership development and how he in turn developed other leaders by becoming their mentor.

Before Paul was an apostle he was Saul, the rabbinic teacher and persecutor of the church. But he became an apostle by the "will of God" (Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1). He was transformed on the road to Damascus from a persecutor of the church (Phil. 3:6) to a minister of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Romans 15:16) authoring 13 letters of the New Testament. An apostle named Barnabas affirmed Paul's calling and introduced him into the apostolic community (Acts 9:26-30).

Luke described Paul's meeting with the apostles in Jerusalem:

When [Paul] had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus (Acts 9:26-27).

Paul described his experience:

But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I did go up

⁵³ Robert Clinton, *1 and 2 Timothy: Apostolic Leadership—Picking Up the Mantle* (Pasadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 2006), 356.

to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; they only heard it said, The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me (Gal. 1:15-24).

Barnabas introduces Paul to the apostolic community but in Paul's description of his calling Barnabas is not mentioned. Paul is talking about his calling and who called him in the Galatians description, not who mentored him. Paul is called to be an apostle by Jesus Christ. Barnabas is referred to as not only an apostle but also a prophet and a teacher in the Book of Acts, and this after Christ's ascension.

The mentoring relationship between Barnabas and Paul began when Barnabas invited Paul to help him to teach new believers in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). It was Barnabas who guided, developed, and mentored Paul on a faith journey.

Although Barnabas introduced Paul to the other apostles, he had to flee Jerusalem before his ministry started because of death threats by Greek-speaking Jews who were enraged at Paul for boldly proclaiming the Gospel. Paul had to flee Jerusalem in a hurry because the Greek-speaking Jews were going to kill him for boldly proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 9:28-29). For three years Paul remained in Arabia (Galatians 1:17-18). Why Paul went to Arabia is unclear. Was it to learn more about Christianity? To seek refuge? To preach to non-Jews? Scripture doesn't state. What is clear is that Barnabas kept Paul in view and was confident that Paul needed this time away for a reason known only to him and Paul. After three years Barnabas went to Tarsus to invite Paul to join him on a missionary trip to Antioch to teach new believers for Paul's first year of hands-on training (Acts 11:25-26).

A pattern of apostolic leadership development emerges from the mentoring relationship between Barnabas and Paul: Christ-Upward, Servant-Inward, Service-Outward. Upward is the acknowledgement that these early church leaders were called by God as seen in Paul's opening line in his letters—he begins with “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Inward signifies the transference of experience, knowledge, and faith—character building (internal processing of faith and practice)—from one leader to the next for effective Kingdom ministry. Outward expresses the impact of a leader who has been trained, resourced, and equipped for Kingdom impact, often expressed through the word “sent.” Scripture unveils this concept of Upward, Inward and Outward throughout Acts. Here are several scenarios.

Scenario 1

Barnabas developed as an apostle. Barnabas supports Paul after his conversion from Judaism to Christianity (Acts 9:26-27). Upward, Barnabas receives a revelation from the Lord about Saul (Paul). Inward, Barnabas is obedient to introduce Saul, in spite of his reputation, that he was indeed converted to Christianity. Outward, because Barnabas was trusted, the apostles in Jerusalem accepted Saul. Barnabas was known to be an honest and giving man.

Scenario 2

Barnabas and Paul ministered in Antioch together (Acts 11:24-26). Upward, Barnabas, a good man and full of the Holy Spirit. Inward, encourages others. Outward, out of obedience Barnabas seeks out Paul to go to Antioch and many new believers were taught Scripture.

Scenario 3

Barnabas and Paul delivered famine relief to Christians in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). Upward, a message from a Spirit-filled prophet gives a warning about an impending global famine. Inward, Barnabas and Saul accept a mission. Outward, they deliver relief to Judah.

Scenario 4

Barnabas, with Paul, led the first missionary journey recorded in early church history (Acts 12:24-25; 13:1-3). Upward, the Word of God spreads, Barnabas and Saul are worshipping the Lord. Inward, they are fasting and praying. Outward, Barnabas and Paul are sent on the first missionary journey. Paul is released to continue the journey without Barnabas to mentor other leaders, plant churches, and transform culture.

In each of these mentoring scenes Barnabas knows when to lead in supporting Saul and calling Saul to go to Antioch. He knows when to lead alongside Paul as in the case of teaching the new believers in Antioch. He also knows when to let Saul stand-alone while Barnabas observes as in the case of Saul teaching others.

As Paul is mentored by Barnabas there is also a progression of ministry impartation. That also means that Paul would have submitted to Barnabas. This would not have been difficult for Paul since he had sat under Jewish rabbis for mentoring. Barnabas also mentors Paul in his gifting. He knows Paul is a gifted teacher; he had been through extensive rabbinic schooling, so Paul is given opportunities to teach. After a year of teaching new believers in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas serve together by distributing relief items in Judea. Later, Barnabas mentors Paul in the task of planting churches.

Eventually Paul would be released to plant many more churches while mentoring others in a process that is identical to that of his own mentoring.

One such mentoring relationship which stands out is between Paul and young Timothy. The mentoring between Paul and Timothy is intimately familial in nature. Paul refers to Timothy as a son in the faith when addressing the Corinthian church who he also refers to as his children.

I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. For this reason, I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church (1 Cor. 4:14-17).

It appears that Paul mentored young Timothy in the same way he was mentored by Barnabas. Upward, from Paul's intimate relationship with God the Father, Paul mentored Timothy as a spiritual father in the presence of God the Father. He refers to Timothy as "my true son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2). Paul first encounters Timothy in Lystra on his way to his second missionary journey (Acts 16). Timothy accompanies Paul as an assistant and young apostolic protégé. During this journey Paul grounds Timothy in the teachings of the faith and service to God and others. Inward, in Paul's second letter to Timothy, he tells him, "you know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance" (2 Tim. 3:10-11 NLT). Paul is giving a template for young Timothy as Paul prepares to release Timothy in ministry. In Romans 16:21 a shift occurs, "Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you his greetings." Timothy has been mentored from a son to a student and now a co-laborer.

Outward, Paul speaks into Timothy's life "You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other

trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others” (2 Tim. 2:2). In this verse Paul confirms Timothy’s calling and then challenges him to pass what he has been taught onto others. Timothy becomes part of a ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 15:19-20; 16:4).

There are several insights that can be gleaned from apostolic leadership development. In general, apostolic leaders acknowledge their calling from God and lead from the confidence of this calling upward. Apostolic leaders are called to mentor, train, and equip other leaders for the Kingdom impact inward. Apostolic leaders create movements and plant churches that transform culture by enabling the five-fold ministry as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers.

CHAPTER THREE CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF ACTS

The Western Church Responds

Much has changed in the past three decades. Key church growth experts such as George Barna and Pew Research, who study church trends in America, agree that Church attendance is down, especially among millennials due to an overarching distrust of institutions and organizations including the church. In addition, there is a “broader secularizing trend in American culture, and a growing antagonism toward faith claims, and these are uncertain times for the U.S. church.”¹

How did the Christian church lose its influence and impact? What are the perceptions of outsiders—the non-churched? Theologians, Christian culture thinkers, and Christian sociologists such as Gabe Lyons, George Barna, Sky Jethani, Kevin DeYoung, Christopher Wright, C. Peter Wagner, Ed Stetzer, give common reasons for why the Western church may struggle.

Institutionalization of the Church

The institutionalization of the church began under Constantine’s rule in his Edict of Toleration in 311 A.D. and was furthered by the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. The church was thriving under Diocletian persecution but when persecution was halted the church became legalized across the entire Roman Empire which recognized Christianity as the state religion. This accelerated the beginning of the church’s decline.

¹ George Barna, “The State of the Church 2016,” *State of the Church and Family Report*, <http://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016>.

American Patriotism over Biblical Inspiration

Since the founding of America, patriotism has celebrated the values espoused in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Christianity, sociologists argue, is viewed in a way that supports American patriotism. The Bible is a tool to be interpreted by these two documents and consequently has become a higher authority for spiritual life and practice. The term “American Christianity” overrides “Biblical Christianity.”

Shifting from an Objective Hermeneutic to a Subjective Relativistic Hermeneutic

Since believers are people of the Bible, truth is objectively discerned on Biblical facts over feelings. However, in the current state of Western culture, objective facts have been replaced by a “feeling” relativism. The Bible is open to one’s personal interpretation which could change based on how one feels at any given moment.

Trendy Churches over Gospel-Centered Communities

Trendy churches are those churches which believe that more traditional churches need to be replaced. The traditional church is seen as an outdated mode of Christian expression. The bride of Christ is concerned that the church remains relevant to culture as opposed to being counter-culture. This is seen in the way the church has adopted a theatre of entertainment environment with all the trappings of sound, lights, and action. Coupled with this is the influence of political correctness in trendy churches. Examples are ordaining same-sex couples in marriage and as clergy, embracing a woman’s right to choose abortion, and radical feminism as social justice versus women serving as a calling.

Eroding of the Family

The family of today struggles to stay connected. Kids are often left to endless hours of media entertainment as a babysitter. The public school system is no longer an educational institution but an indoctrination system that often bypasses parental rights. Single parenting is on the increase. Parents work full time thereby leaving little space to cultivate family relationships, much less attend a weekly church service.

Attractional Gimmick-Based Outreach above Relational and Incarnational Outreach

Evangelism is used to attract people, believers or non-believers, to a local church using gimmicks such as concerts, winning a vacation for two, popular speakers, drawings, comedy shows and the like. The goal is to grow the empire by filling seats and expanding capital, thereby giving the consumer what he or she wants. The relational and incarnational approach to outreach takes too long and costs too much in terms of emotional output and self-denial, both of which necessitate slow growth.

Contemporary Me-Centered Worship over Christ-Centered Worship

Worship in the modern church is filled with horizontal-oriented choruses that focus on “me” and “I” and feel good goosebumps. Whereas Christ-centered worship focuses on exalting Christ (vertical) in the context of community.

The resulting perspective of the “outsider” is a bloated church which has little to offer in way of experiencing the resurrected Christ. In addition, the church has become inward focused, thereby neglecting the missional call of God—to go and make disciples. Though there have been historical pockets of revival in the Western church from John Wesley, Johnathan Edwards, Azusa Street and several others in between, none have survived. The Western church needs a shift from seeing herself as a static religion to a

revolutionary movement. It will require a reimagining of the church's purpose, beliefs, practices, and ecclesiology.

While the church in America continues to be a powerful presence in culture, it continues to decline. A 2016 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 70.6 percent of Americans claim traditional Christian faith. However, this percentage is down when looking at the same Pew tracking on Religion and Public life in 2011 where the percentage is larger at 75.5 and even larger in 2008 at 78.4 percentage. These statistics further indicate a decline in the American church. While several reasons for the church's decline have been discussed above the primary reason is the church's neglect of evangelism.

Rick Warren at Saddleback Community Church has espoused and developed five purposes that he believes need to be fulfilled for a functioning church.² While a commendable attempt to be on "purpose" this model truncates God's mission in the world. Warrens' five purposes have been taught in Christian colleges and seminaries for years, have impacted Christian practice and have aided in a "doing" church mindset. The Church was never to be about doing community. It was to have been about "being" the church. The natural outflow of being in Christ is to "go and make disciples baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

The Purpose Driven Church model can produce mega structures of activity, but times are changing and so are the views of the "outsider." People do not want to be viewed as a number to achieve a church growth goal. Nor do they want to be consumed as a product in a reciprocal relationship where, in turn, the consumed will become a

² Richard Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

consumer of religious goods and services. The consumer or commodity culture that the church has engaged in over the past several decades is starting to feel more like spiritual exploitation of goods. Skye Jethani laments:

In a commodity culture we have been conditioned to believe nothing carries intrinsic value. Instead, value is found online in a thing's usefulness to us, and tragically this belief has been applied to people as well. Divorce rates have skyrocketed as we've come to see marriage as disposable. When a spouse is no longer useful he or she can be abandoned or traded. Abortion, the termination of "unwanted" pregnancy, is believed to be morally justifiable because an unborn child is not a person. Personhood is a legal status reserved for those who are deemed useful.³

Even the sacred has been impacted. Jethani further laments:

The reduction of even sacred things into commodities also explains why we exhibit too little reverence for God. In a consumer worldview he has no intrinsic value apart from His usefulness to us. He is a tool we employ, a force we control, and a resource we plunder. We ascribe value to him (the literal meaning of the word "worship") based not on who he is, but on what he can do for us.⁴

The church should shift from a consumer-driven church, a static religion, to a revolutionary movement. The message of the Gospel should go forward but it is important that we grasp what it means to be a Christian in the twenty first century, presenting the Gospel to people who are disillusioned with our religion.

This research suggests a theological and a practical shift. Instead of the church focusing on growth barriers, five purposes, or offering attractional venues to lure in people, the church needs to shift to a single purpose as its center—the mission of God.

Acts and the Missional Church

The missional church movement is relatively new in the modern age but can be traced back to the intentions of the first century church, specifically in the Book of Acts.

³ Jethani, 37.

⁴ Jethani, 37.

The term “missional” came into extensive use when a group of missiologists published *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* in 1998.⁵

The term quickly caught on igniting a flurry of investigations from other thinkers to contribute to the pool of knowledge. Most notably, Alan Hirsch summarizes the work of the missional movement in *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*.⁶

A missional church is a church that defines itself and organizes its life around its real purpose as an agent of God’s mission to the world. In other words, the church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. Therefore, when the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus.⁷

The theological intention shifts in the missional church from “come see” to “the sent people.”⁸ The mission of God is not to be placed in a category of church ministry, rather as the central calling. The mission of God is the why, what, who, of church life. It is why the church exists, it is what the church is call to do, it is who the church is.

Ed Stetzer states:

One of the most important considerations in breaking the [missional] code is to break from our own preferences. Simply put, being missional does not mean doing things the way we like them. It means to take the gospel into the context where we have been called. ... You cannot be missional and pick what you like at the same time.⁹

⁵ Guder and George R. Hunsberger, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998).

⁶ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006).

⁷ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 238.

⁸ Gruder, 4.

⁹ Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 50.

Missional thinker Reggie McNeal, in *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*, makes the observation that the church's motivation to evangelize is due largely to the "emergence of the altruism economy" which is found in every sector of American economy from Bill and Melinda Gates to Oprah Winfrey to the "nameless heroes who volunteer in soup kitchens, tutoring immigrant kids in English and Math, those who build houses for people who can't afford them and perform innumerable acts of kindness and generosity."¹⁰ McNeal expands the conversation,

The increased spirit of altruism is calling the church out to play. It beckons the church to move from being the recipient of a generous culture (religious causes garner the largest percentage of charitable dollars—about a third) to actually being generous to the culture. It challenges the church to move beyond its own programs and self-preoccupation. And it promises that once the church ventures into the street to engage human need, it will have many partners from all domains of culture to join with it in creating a better world.¹¹

The challenges given to the Western Church are familiar for one who has studied first century Christianity. The Book of Acts is a primary example that illuminates a generous spirit toward culture. In fact, the escalating growth in the early church was established on the very identity of Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated a profound generosity embedded in redemptive love. To understand missional theology for today one must first understand the early Church. Or as Alan J. Roxburgh summarizes, "The Church is, therefore, an *ecclesia*, a called out assembly whose public life is a sign, witness, foretaste and instrument to which God is inviting all creation in Jesus Christ. The Church, in its life together and witness in the world, proclaims the destiny and future of all creation."¹²

¹⁰ McNeal, 5.

¹¹ McNeal, 5.

¹² Alan Roxburgh, "The Missional Church," originally published in *Theology Matters* (September/October 2004), 3.

Acts and Missional Theology

Missional Theology has at its core identity Jesus' redemptive work. This means that to begin to understand a missional theology one first has to understand how Jesus saw his mission. And then ways in which he fulfilled his mission.

Old Testament scholar Christopher J.H. Wright makes this claim, “into the midst of people saturated with Scriptures, sustained by memory and hope, waiting for God—steps Jesus with a mission.”¹³ Jesus' mission as a servant was to reconcile the people of Israel to YHWH “and to be the agent of God's salvation reaching the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6).”¹⁴ Jesus fulfills this word “to rule over a redeemed Israel, according to the agenda of many prophetic texts, and also to receive the nations and the ends of the earth as his heritage (Ps. 2:8).”¹⁵ Wright sums up Jesus' mission:

Jesus' sense of mission—the aims, motivation and self-understanding behind his recorded words and actions—has been a matter of intense scholarly discussion. What seems very clear is that Jesus build his own agenda on what he perceived to be the agenda of his Father. Jesus' will was to do his Father's will, so he said. God's mission determined his mission. In Jesus the radically theocentric nature of biblical mission is most clearly focused and modeled. In the obedience of Jesus, even to death, the mission of God reached its climax. For “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Cor 5:19).¹⁶

The clear mission of Jesus, to reconcile peoples from every tribe, tongue, and nation as a servant and to participate in establishing the reign of God, was the model for the early church to imitate. God redeems a called out people, the ecclesia, to participate in Jesus' mission. Luke bears witness to Jesus' mandate in Acts 1:8, “You will be my

¹³ Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 65.

¹⁴ Wright, 65.

¹⁵ Wright, 65.

¹⁶ Wright, 65.

witnesses,” an echo from Isaiah 43:10-12. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commissions his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The disciples were to carry on the servant ministry of Jesus and to establish the authority of God’s reign through the power of the Holy Spirit as missionaries in a foreign land. They were to be witnesses who proclaimed that God’s Kingdom had come. Acts 2 describes the results of their proclamation: The church is established and filled with the Holy Spirit as evidenced by this young Christian community’s actions. Their witness was noted by how they loved one another, served the poor, broke bread daily, gathered themselves around the apostles’ teachings, prayed for one another and their greater community, and through manifestation of many signs and wonders. The church grew daily by thousands (Acts 2:42-47).

All of this demonstrates that a missional theology stems from God’s heart for His creation. Lois Barrett explains:

We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation. “Mission” means “sending,” and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history. God’s mission began with the call of Israel to receive God’s blessings in order to be a blessing to the nations. God’s mission unfolded in the history of God’s people across the centuries recorded in Scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God’s work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected. God’s mission continued then in the sending of the Spirit to call forth and empower the church as the witness to God’s good news in Jesus Christ. (John 20:21).¹⁷

A simplified theological vision statement would read something like this: The church of Jesus Christ is called to be an example of Christ’s redemptive love by serving,

¹⁷ Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 4, Kindle.

proclaiming, and establishing the reign of God in culture. The church of Jesus Christ is not a what but a who, a people on God's mission.

Having worked toward establishing a broader, modern understanding of the missional church it is important to move to the narrower context of understanding its identity and purpose as missionaries. In addition, since the missional church in the first century seemed to be less focused on structures and systems and more organic, how did the vision of the early church remain intentional? This raises several questions. What does missional discipleship look like? What does missional leadership and church structure look like? What are the implications for planting missional churches and communities in the 21st century?

Acts and Missional Discipleship

The fact that discipleship has to have an adjective in front of it should be disturbing. It tells us how far Christianity has come from its intended meaning and process. Discipleship is more than saying "I'm saved and I serve in my local church." In the early church, discipleship was a way of life guided by consistent rhythms:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

To be discipled is to understand and express the eternal purposes of God by faith in Jesus Christ to the world, to mature in Christ and to be healed in Christ is to mature and heal others in Christ. To be discipled in the early church meant that life was about the Kingdom of God and making the God who reigns in that Kingdom known through the

redemptive work of Christ. The context for discipleship was the missional community. The discipleship was intended to help believers follow Jesus and see themselves as missionaries. This is contrary to how the modern church disciplines. Alan Hurst states, “For way too long discipleship has been limited to issues relating to our own personal morality and worked out in the context of the four walls of the church with its privatized religion. In doing this we have severely neglected the mandate to go and make disciples.”¹⁸

The mandate for missional discipleship is two-fold: to engage in mission and to be intentional about faithful discipleship (Matt. 28:19). In other words, missional discipleship removes the sacred-secular duality that most Christians embrace. The dichotomy that when a believer is at church he or she is spiritual versus when he or she is at work where the only things needed in that context are competencies and skills. Missional discipleship means to take on a missionary mindset that is 24/7, 365 days a year, where in every context the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed. Whether at church, home, work, market, or coffee shop, opportunities abound to let good deeds glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Acts and Missional Discipleship Practices

The content and the rhythms of discipleship in the Acts 2 community were daily: studying the apostle’s teachings, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. The content of the early church discipleship, embedded in relationships, was the energy behind their witnessing rhythms of generosity as they shared their goods, finances, and their life with others. While the context of missional discipleship is in missional communities, it is expressed most in culture. Jay Akkerman clarifies:

¹⁸ Alan Hirsch and Debra Hirsch, *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 29.

Missional discipleship hinges on practice more than upholding a particular body of ideas or propositions. People share meals, serve others, discuss issues of culture in relation to their Christian convictions, and pray without beginning with specific invitations to accept the gospel. In practical terms, evangelism in many circles has stressed belief before belonging: one must accept the gospel before becoming assimilated into the church. Missional engagement reverses the trend, stressing belonging first (often tempered by Christian practices), trusting that belief will follow.¹⁹

Akkerman's view on missional discipleship captures the example of Christ. Many scenes in the New Testament capture Christ serving, sharing meals, praying with others, and in conversations discussing his Father's business. Discipleship is seen as a journey of people embedded in the Gospel with the intent to make Him known. Akkerman furthers the inseparable connection between discipleship and living as a disciple:

The life of missional disciples is marked by their engagement in practicing discipleship in their everyday lives. Discipleship is a lifestyle that is deeply embedded in practicing faith. Missional discipleship often begins with simple acts of hospitality, inviting people to gather and engage in service as well as discussing broader social and cultural concerns. In order to be effective in reaching one's neighbors and engaging the culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ, missional Christians understand our essential need to engage in missional practices that are a witness of the good news of the gospel. Christian practices are a dynamic union with God's mission in the world.²⁰

The effectiveness of missional discipleship is the relational emphases. Maturing relationships, fellowship, prayer, Scripture study, and confession can expedite transformation. Michael Noel explains:

In the come-and-see church, effort is directed toward gathering the faithful often for worship, study, prayer, and administrative duties. Because of this tendency, those who would be the best witnesses for Jesus Christ are removed from the mission field. Conversely, missional disciples are encouraged to move outward, toward the community. The simplicity of missional discipleship frees the disciple

¹⁹ Jay Richard Akkerman, *Missional Discipleship: Partners in God's Redemptive Mission* (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 2013), 20-12, Kindle.

²⁰ Akkerman, 20-22.

to be active salt and light in the world. Therefore, missional disciples create margin in our lives for the other.²¹

Missional communities are key to discipling missionaries. In one city they may gather as Sunday missional communities (small groups) scattered throughout the city and meeting on different days of the week. They can also be centered in homes that focus on transforming neighborhoods. The potentials are abundant. The use of discipleship pathways lends more to an organic relational journey as opposed to the traditional sterile setting of the Sunday School classroom has become prominent in missional churches. This does not imply that the formal classroom setting is excluded; rather, the delivery systems are multiple possibilities depending on the vision or the indigenous need for that particular community. The context for most discipleship, including leadership development, is the missional community home groups.

Home groups are the context for discipling converts and developing leaders. For each model the curriculum includes prayer, fellowship, breaking of bread, and Scripture study. Ultimately, there is one goal in mind: to send believers into their neighborhoods or into the greater community in order to participate in the redemptive work of Christ. Involvement from each group or individuals includes making an impact whether it is working with outreaches such as immigrants, human trafficking, English as a Second Language, and homelessness. The pathways are guided by mature believers who themselves have been through the pathway and are now mentors to those engaging the journey to become missional. In the missional church Christ is at the center calling the

²¹ Michael Noel, "Missional Christianity: Church Beyond Boundaries" (Biblical Seminary, 2009), DVD (Hatfield, PA).

church to “go and make disciples.” This is the heartbeat of the missional movement. Individuals, marriages, families and entire organizations see themselves as missionaries.

Individuals do not become better people. They become better missionaries. Couples don’t develop better marriages just to have a better marriage alone. They become marital witness to the redemptive mission of God. Entire organizations don’t become more effective or merely larger. They become a movement that changes entire cities. Nor is missional discipleship oriented towards social action or social justice as the sign that one has been discipled effectively. Rather, “The Missional orientation does not dichotomize evangelism and social action, discipling and perfecting, but views God's mission holistically.”²² Missional thinkers Ed Stetzer and David Putnam sum up outcomes for missional discipleship. Table 1 illustrates the shift from a traditional to a missional ecclesiology:

Table 1. Shift from Traditional to Missional Ecclesiology²³

<i>Move from:</i>	<i>Move toward:</i>
Programs	Process
Demographics	Discernment
Models	Missional
Attractional	Incarnational
Uniformity	Diversity
Professional	Passionate

²² Gailyn Van Rheenen, “Contrasting Missional and Church Growth Perspectives” *Monthly Missiological Reflection* 34 (January 2016), 4.

²³ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 32.

<i>Move from:</i>	<i>Move toward:</i>
Decisions	Sending
Additional	Exponential
Monuments	Movements
Services	Serve
Ordained	Ordinary
Organizations	Organisms

If community is the context and structure for the missional church what role does leadership have? What does an organizational culture look like in the missional church which is not static but a movement? Missional churches require flexible and nimble structures that as a norm embrace transforming change. The emphasis is not on a “new structure, product, or service, it seeks a local approach to missional life that makes a habit of continual change from the edges of the organization... The overall process is embedded in a practical theology process of action-reflection.”²⁴ Leadership is key for cultivating an environment that has as a norm change. This is the role of the five-fold ministry.

Apostolic Ethos—Five-Fold Ministry

With the advent of the American missional movement there has been a need to understand what type of leadership propelled the first century church. Enter the apostolic ethos, a revolutionary idea that has its roots in the early church beginning with the original twelve apostles. At her inception, the church was revolutionary in scope and

²⁴ Mark Lau Branson, “A Missional Church Process: Post-Intervention,” *Research Journal of Religious Leadership* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014), 11.

practice as seen in Acts. Chapter 2 paints the picture of followers who understood and emulated the example of Christ. The church continued to grow and flourish until its missional movement was became institutionalized as a state religion under Constantine 313 A.D.

Now, in the 21st century, in a desire to awaken a declining American church, theologians, sociologists, missiologists, and cultural thinkers are rediscovering the ethos necessary to reestablish the revolutionary movement of the church. Alan Hirsch makes this claim:

In the West, the Christian church has recently witnessed a marked and rapid decline of its membership and vitality. To reengage with the Spirit's transforming power, Western Christians will need to make some fundamental changes in their Christology, ecclesiology, and ecclesial practices. These changes, however, do not involve the implementation of new, cutting-edge techniques or structures; rather, they require us to return to the forgotten ways of our deepest apostolic legacy. Recovering Jesus as our center is foremost in this realignment. But realignment also includes the recovery of discipleship as our core task, the development of an apostolic movement ethos and structure, and the re-embracing of an incarnational mission impulse.²⁵

In other words, the 21st century church needs to recover the church of the 1st century if the church of today is going to thrive. Hirsch sees the need for a “recalibration” in four significant areas: Recovery of the Centrality of Jesus in His Own Movement, Recovery of Discipleship as Our Core Task, Recovery of the Ethos/Structure of Apostolic Movements and, Recovery of a Missional-Incarnational Impulse.²⁶

Hirsch defines “apostolic movement ethos structure” as “the unique energy and force that imbues phenomenal Jesus movements.” In his book *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* he creates a path to the first century church to

²⁵ Alan Hirsch, “Reawakening a Potent Missional Ethos in the Twenty-First Century Church,” *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 1 (January 2010), 8.

²⁶ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 2.

reactivate the apostolic ethos which he refers to as apostolic genius. Below is a compilation of key terms and meanings that will aid in reactivating the phenomenal Jesus movement seen in early church history.

Apostolic Genius: “unique energy and force that imbues phenomenal Jesus movements in history “Movements in history where exponential growth and impact occurred.”

mDNA (missional DNA): What DNA does for biological systems mDNA does for ecclesial ones. What DNA does for biological systems mDNA does for ecclesial ones

Missional-Incarnational Impulse: It’s combining a missional movement, which is an “outgoing thrust” of a Jesus Movement and an incarnational process of living out the Gospel in one’s culture—to live out the Gospel in culture.

Apostolic Environment Creating: An environment that is made up of the apostolic mode. This environment has a certain energy, impulse, and genius, as well as a particular leadership model. The model consists of Apostles, then Prophets, then Evangelists, then Pastors, and then Teachers.

Disciple-making: The shaping of a convert toward maturity who continues to carry on the message.

Organic Systems: It’s not a mechanical, one-size-fits-all system, but rather a living, breathing organism. Not an institution, but a natural movement.

Communitas: A community that involves adventure and movement around a center mission. A maturing process done together that could be painful, even difficult, but always keeping the mission insight.²⁷

The key to diffusing this apostolic genius is the mDNA (m=missional). In other words, if the church is organic (the body of Christ) as opposed to institutional, the mDNA populates, distributes and informs the missional community on behavior, thoughts, and interaction as a body. Hirsch is not implying that all actions, thoughts, and interactions are the same; rather the mDNA releases the apostolic genius to each cell’s unique function within the missional community. Hirsch summarizes:

²⁷ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 75-81.

DNA is found in every living cell (except the simplest of viruses). It codes genetic information for the transmission of inherited traits beyond that of the initiating organism. It is self-replicating. It carries vital information for healthy reproduction.²⁸

To view the church as an organism requires a paradigm shift in the way most Christians see the church. The language offered by Hirsch is organic agreeing with the Apostle Paul's description in I Corinthians 12:27 that we are a body. To view the church as living tissue and not brick and mortar is liberating in that relationships become the focus and not growth barriers, building sizes, and budgets. This is Not to imply that these items are unimportant items, but they should not be the primary focus. Instead, Jesus becomes the focus and the apostolic genius fuels and transmits Jesus as a revolutionary movement daily into the church body.

Neil Cole offers an organic model that expresses the idea of a biological structure of the missional church. Cole says,

In organic church thinking, it is imperative that you create structure only when necessary. Life should dictate structure, not the other way around. We often say to church planters, "Do not organize 'it' until you have an 'it' to organize." In other words, do not begin with a structure and an organization. Begins with life and let the structure emerge naturally, driven by the needs and demands of life.²⁹

This shift in thinking is no doubt challenging for the Western church, which for centuries depended on a rigid hierarchal structure for containing and controlling outcomes. The organic structure releases and cultivates creativity and innovation due to the unique function of each cell operating in the intent in which is exist.

Cole distinguishes between an exoskeleton verses endoskeleton. The exoskeleton, according to Cole, "found in insects as well as crustaceans such as lobsters and crabs, is

²⁸ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 76.

²⁹ Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 126.

outside—hard, inflexible, established at the start. This structure becomes a limitation for growth and development as an organism.”³⁰ Whereas the endoskeleton is “*internal*—not immediately visible, more flexible, and growing with the life of the organism.”³¹ He compares the exoskeleton to the modern hierarchal church and the endoskeleton to the organic church.

While the apostolic genius concept provides a dramatic opportunity to recalibrate the Jesus movement in light of Christian history, the APEST model would completely lose relevance, impact and influence if it were not for the apostolic environment. Hirsch states, “In every manifestation of Apostolic Genius there is a powerful form of catalytic influence that weaves its way through the seemingly chaotic network of churches and believers. There is no substantial word for this catalytic social power other than to invoke the biblical language, *apostolic*.”³² The apostolic ministry is listed in Ephesians 4:11: And he [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers. As covered in chapter 2, the five-fold ministry, or in the case of Hirsch, APEST (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, Teachers) is given as gifts to the church for “equipping of the saints for the work of ministry and for maturing the body of Christ to maturity (Eph. 4:11-12).

Apostolic leadership is crucial for the missional church to remain revolutionary and move beyond the cessationist model of shepherd/teacher that has been guiding the church for centuries. Apostolic leaders understand how to release and harmonize the five-fold ministry in a way that teachers/shepherds cannot. Hirsch and Catchim affirm, “This

³⁰ Cole, 125.

³¹ Cole, 125.

³² Hirsch, 151.

formulation cannot provide the impetus for the kind of movement that is needed now—the kind of movement we were meant to be in the first place.”³³

An apostolic ethos, which includes the five-fold equipping ministry, apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher, not only equips the saints for the work of ministry and maturing of the body but also creates movements that expand the Kingdom of God. The apostolic movement of the early church was a burgeoning movement of a “highly dynamic ministry that included holistic collaboration of ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers.

The effectiveness of using the APEST model depends on the apostolic function which serves as the visionary catalyst for the entire model. Hirsch elaborates, “From apostolic ministry, the mDNA is embedded and distributed among the various other ministries that form the five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4—what I call APEPT (apostles, prophet, evangelist, pastoral, and teaching/didactic). The founding and developing of the APEPT is therefore a natural extension of the custodial nature of the apostolic ministry.”³⁴

The apostolic ministry is essential in cultivating a Jesus movement. All five are equally important and an apostolic ethos could not exist with all five functioning. The apostolic gifts cultivate the equipping environment for the saints, maturing the body, and creating a Jesus movement, and for this paper, the movement in focus is church planting.

³³ Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 37-38.

³⁴ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 158.

Summary and Conclusion

The expansion of the early church, as understood in the Book of Acts, has been woven into this discussion and research on missional discipleship and missional leadership—APEST. Looking ahead, the missional church in the 21st century has an amazing opportunity to “be the church” by being a consistent Spirit-filled presence in the world. The missional church has much to offer: a high view of Scripture, a relational and transformational ecclesiology and bold leadership. The challenge for the missional church and its leaders are to see the Kingdom of God as the highest pursuit. If the Apostolic Genius is to function in such a way as to generate fresh Jesus movements springing forward we must shed the “my church and my stage” mentality. Additionally, the missional church will need to redefine her intentions by clarifying a unified theological vision that fulfills the Great Commandment.

CHAPTER FOUR PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHOD

Research and Data Collection

The research purposed to addresses a lack of unified theological vision among missional church planting organizations, namely, Converge Worldwide, NAMB, ARC and Acts 29. From the researcher's perspective and experience, church planters are disciplined and resourced to plant missional churches with a mixed bag of tools. These tools include curriculum, models and experiences that are pulled from several different theological visions (seeker sensitive, traditional, contemporary) for church practice and belief. Consequently, missional church planters struggle to create movements or plant churches which, in turn, plant more churches and, instead, become a mega church that create satellite venues, not authentically missional. To be a missional church is to be part of a movement of church planting that results in greater Kingdom impact. In other words, to be sending agents of transformation in neighborhoods, cities, states, the nation, and ultimately the world.

The researcher approached the problem utilizing a Grounded Theory Method (GTM) to design the research inquiry. GTM was selected because of its ability to zoom in on the process and development and lend understanding to the experiences of those who participated in this study. “Grounded theory focuses on a process related to a particular topic—including peoples’ actions and interactions—with the ultimate goal of developing

a theory about that process.”¹ Eight questions were developed by the researcher to ask four key leaders in an interview process within ARC, Converge Worldwide, NAMB, and Acts 29. All leaders were asked the same eight questions in order to gain insight into methods and resources utilized in developing missional church planters. Table 2 provides a list of the eight questions asked of each participant.

Table 2. Church Planting Leadership Questionnaire

1.	What is your understanding of missional discipleship?
2.	What is your understanding of missional church planting?
3.	What is your understanding of missional leadership development? Curriculum used?
4.	What are the vision and mission statements of your organization?
5.	How many church plants does your organization undertake a year? What is the percentage that succeed after 5 years? 10 years?
6.	What are the common factors of those that succeed? What are the common factors of those that failed?
7.	What are key biblical passages vital to your understanding of missional church planting?
8.	What is your understanding of Ephesians 4:11 as it applies to missional church planting?

Leadership Interviews

Participants

The objective for the phone and face-to-face interviews was to interview four leaders from four key church planting organizations. Four participated. Participants were not interviewed by the researcher. By utilizing this method, participants were given the

¹ Paul D. Leady and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005), 146.

opportunity to be more spontaneous in the interview as opposed to a more structured response. Participants are long-term church planters and/or church planter resource specialists for church planters. The four leaders interviewed have been in ministry seven years or more and currently serve as leading authorities within their prospective movements. The interviews were completed by phone or in person.

The first interview was conducted with Glenn Herschberger from Converge Worldwide Church Planting. Herschberger has served as the Executive Director of Church Planting for the Converge Great Lakes region for the past two years and has planted churches for 13 years prior for a total of 15 years in church planting. This interview was completed on October 5, 2018 and lasted two hours. The method used to record the phone conversation was note taking in a Word document as Glenn answered each of the eight questions.

The second interview was conducted with Daniel Yang of NAMB. Daniel is the director of the Send Institute, a church planting and resourcing think tank for church planters at Wheaton College and works alongside long-time church planter, researcher and prolific author, Ed Stetzer. He has directed the Send Institute for the past seven years and prior to directing the Institute planted a church in Toronto where he also helped recruit, assess, and train church planters through the Send Network and the Release Initiative. Daniel has served on various church staffs, including Northwood Church, led by Bob Roberts Jr., where he was trained as a church planter and involved in global and multi-faith engagement. The interview lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. The method used to record the phone conversation was note taking on a Word document as Daniel responded to the eight questions.

The third interview was conducted with Clay Carden and Michael Smith. Clay has served ARC as the Launch Team leader for the past four years by helping and resourcing church planters from the point of entry to the actual launch date of planting a church. Michael Smith served ARC as Director of ARC Global, giving oversight to ARC church planting both domestically and internationally. Michael was interviewed on October 19, 2018 for a total of one hour. He has served in this position for the past twelve years. Prior to that he was on staff at Bethany Church in Baton Rouge for thirteen years. And prior to that he was a church planter and pastored that church for three years for a total of 28 years in ministry.

The fourth interview was with Steve Hart, Lead Pastor for Soma Church in Spokane, WA. Steve is a part of Acts 29 church planting network with central offices located in Sheffield, England. Key leaders for the Acts 29 church planting network were unable to take the interview call and referred me to their website to look up a church planter near me in Spokane, WA. The search led me to Steve who planted Soma Church in 2004 with a launch team of 20 people. He is also the area lead for the Inland North West and Washington areas consisting of 10 churches. The interview was conducted on October 31, 2018 face-to-face and lasted for one hour and ten minutes. Steve responded to the eight questions as the researcher recorded his responses on a Word doc.

Data Analysis

The leadership interview questionnaire was processed using Grounded Theory. The researcher transcribed the four interviews. The data was then coded utilizing the four-step process, (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, (3) selective coding, and, (4) development of a theory, offered from Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of*

*Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*² for understanding the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Open coding offered the researcher a way to divide the information from the interviews into smaller bits to discover and understand the themes that emerged. “In general, open coding is a process of reducing the data to smaller sets of themes that appear to describe the phenomenon under investigation.”³ Axial coding further clarified the relationships and connections between the data. Leedy and Ormrod clarify,

Here [axial coding] the focus is on determining more about each category in terms of (1) the conditions that give rise to it, (2) the context which it is embedded, (3) the strategies people use to manage or carry it out, and (4) the consequences of those strategies.⁴

Patterns emerged that created a path to selective coding. “Selective coding: The categories and the interrelationship are combined to create a story line that describes, ‘what happens’ in the phenomenon being studied.”⁵ The findings from the data analysis are reported in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 is process step 4, development of a theory.

The theory depicts the evolving nature of the phenomenon and describes how certain conditions lead to certain actions or interactions, how those actions or interactions lead to other actions and so on, with the typical sequence of events being laid out. No matter what form the theory takes, it is based entirely on the data collected.⁶

² Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedure for Developing Grounded Theory*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2015).

³ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005), 146.

⁴ Leedy and Ormrod, 147.

⁵ Leedy and Ormrod, 147.

⁶ Leedy and Ormrod, 147.

The last chapter, Chapter 7 are the offerings and framework for contributing to the pool of knowledge in the missional conversation discovered and presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER FIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this research was to identify the presenting challenges to a unified theological vision within the missional church planting movement. The researcher created a questionnaire consisting of eight questions to identify barriers that persist in the missional movement. He interviewed four key leaders within Converge Worldwide, NAMB, ARC, and Acts 29 church planting organizations. The data collected from the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed to identify emerging themes that would clarify the barriers that persist between these leading movements and the first century church.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect data from each of the four participants. The questions were qualitative in order to gain understanding in the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of this research project from the participants. The insights gained from the findings were assessed in order to develop a theory in Chapter 6. The questionnaire was also qualitative in design to cultivate a spontaneous as opposed to rigidly structured conversation between the researcher and the participants.

Interviews and Analysis

The interviews conducted in this research project asked the participants the same eight questions. The questions were analyzed based on the responses from the four

participants to each question. The researcher created a chart listing the themes that emerged from the responses. The findings were then discussed.

Questionnaire Findings

Questions 1,2 Responses: Descriptions of Missional Discipleship and Missional Church Planting

Questions 1-2: Converge Worldwide

Converge Worldwide leader, Glenn Herschberger says “the 122 churches are divided into areas throughout the region and each is assigned a LEAD team focusing on planting missional communities.” The goal is to create a “Farm System” where a “LEAD team can offer training and experiences to young players in hopes that they would “level up” by planting new churches. However, “not all 122 churches are engaged in their respective LEAD teams. And not all church plants are doing Missional communities. But, we have a majority of the 122 working to plant new churches.”¹ Herschberger says that currently “1/3 of the 122 are growing, 1/3 are plateauing, and 1/3 are declining.” He sees the problem as people struggle as an “intimacy issue that usually comes with meeting in homes.”

Herschberger defined missional discipleship as “missional communities [working toward] making disciples, via studies, and gatherings, there is a high cost to discipleship.” Obedient to Christ, practicing discipleship, producing fruit.” Herschberger believes that “missional church planting is planting churches that plant more churches.” To be effective in planting missional churches requires leaders who are willing to be risk-takers who see beyond “my church” to seeing the Kingdom of God. He states, “Some of our leaders struggle with seeing God as provisionary and therefore leaders do not feel secure

¹ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005), 146.

in their calling to be missional. There is a need for Kingdom minded leaders.” In other words, missional discipleship must be embedded in the Kingdom as opposed to discipling church focused leaders. Table 3 below list the themes that emerged from Herschberger’s interview regarding missional discipleship and church planting.

Table 3. Converge Missional Discipleship and Church Planting Themes

Missional Discipleship	Missional Church Planting	Challenges to Being Missional
Use various studies	Churches that plant more churches	Seeing God as provisionary (financially, covering health possible family medical care, providing necessary human resources for growing the church)
Disciple individuals in the context of missional community	Kingdom Impact beyond the local church	Leadership insecurities
Risk-takers	Requires healthy leaders willing to take risks	Relational intimacy in community
Sees the Kingdom of God as Greater than the local church	Being Kingdom minded as opposed to “my church” or territorial in perspective	Commitment to see one’s life as a missionary participating in the mission of God
Relational (Share life together)	Being an equipping organization, equipping leaders to cultivate a sending ethos	Evangelistic passion needs to be cultivated
Produces Fruit	Collaborative vs hierarchal in structure	Funding for missional church planting

Questions 1-2: NAMB

NAMB leader, Daniel Yang, is the Director of the Send Institute doing ministry alongside noted church planter Ed Stetzer for the past two years. Send Institute is a ministry of NAMB located in Wheaton, Illinois. Previously, for the past five years, Yang worked in local churches fulfilling various staff pastoral roles.

Yang sees missional discipleship as “to train and equip believers to see themselves as missionaries reaching out to their indigenous community.” Indigenous

community can be defined as one's daily life flow whether it is in a frequented neighborhood coffee shop, school, work space, home, wherever one's daily life is lived. The intent is to build relationships with those people, believers and nonbelievers, under the "missionaries sphere of influence with the ultimate goal of equipping, discipling, and sending others out to do the same—to participate in the mission of God in the world.

Curriculum and materials used for discipling people "into mission as opposed to the pew" is life shared together. Discipling people into the "mission of God" is a relational approach, people connecting with people who are seeking to connect with God to participate in the mission of God. Yang says that NAMB "wants to be a supplemental resource for local churches who want to plant churches and does not want to be merely a church planting organization, but a resource. This resource is to help church planters or local churches disciple people into mission as opposed to the pew."

Yang sees that the environment or the context of discipling people as missionaries stems from raising up and resourcing local church leaders and church planters to see themselves as missionaries. Yang uses an extensive process called the Multiplication Pipeline. Simply put, "The Multiplication Pipeline helps you identify and train missional leaders, potential church planters and church planting team members from within your congregation." This process will be discussed in further detail in the following interview question number 3 but for now Table 4 lists the three-year leadership trajectory for equipping and resourcing leaders as missionaries.

Table 4. NAMB Missional Discipleship and Church Planting Pipeline²

Year/Level 1	Year/Level 2	Year/Level 3
Spiritual disciplines are developed	Theological leadership developed	Discerning the call to church planting

Church planting according to Yang is an organic outcome of one who has been discipled, equipped, and assessed for the purpose of church planting. The outcome is embedded in a “missional ecclesiology” where the church, led by trained and equipped missional leaders, “comes out of mission as opposed to church doing mission.” This view according to Yang, “responds to the evangelism crisis happening in the Western evangelical church, the decline of new and vibrant members. If church leaders and laity see themselves as “coming from mission” then they understand their identity as missionaries which in turn calls the believer to a practical missional ecclesiology. Yang gives an example of a young church leader who began a church using his natural talents and abilities by starting his church in a collegiate CrossFit gym. By Anton reaching out and connecting people to a felt need, fitness, he connected them to relationship, ultimately to Christ and later established a church made up mostly of new conversions in Portland, Oregon. In other words, it is not “starting a church to do evangelism rather it is starting a church through evangelism.” Table 5 below lists the themes that emerged from his interview in responses to questions 1 and 2.

² <http://www.namb.net/pipeline>.

Table 5. NAMB Missional Discipleship and Church Planting Themes

Missional Discipleship	Missional Church Planting	Challenges to Being Missional
Organic and relational	Churches planted by leaders who have been equipped and trained to be relational and organic	People seeing themselves as missionaries (outside of the traditional view of leaving home country for a foreign country).
Embedded in a missional ecclesiology. Disciples lives are fluid as opposed to categorized from one place to the next.	Embedded in missional ecclesiology. Comes from mission, not starting a church to do mission.	People struggle with commitment to a missional ecclesiology where evangelism is not a category but a way of life.
Curriculum equips people to be indigenous missionaries	They are indigenous to the community in which they are planted.	“Another study!”
Context for maturing believers is the church and the world simultaneously	They are actively involved in the community in which they are planted.	People are too busy.
Is evangelistically motivated to be the Gospel to all peoples in their sphere of influence.	They are not always started in a specific building for a specific purpose. They can be started in any environment: Gyms, work-place, home, coffee house...	Tension for people of certain age groups to meet in unique places other than the traditional space on Sunday morning.

Questions 1,2: ARC

ARC leader, Michael Smith says, “You can almost say that ARC doesn’t plant churches but we plant church planters. We don’t really send anyone. Our goal is to come alongside their dream not them come alongside ARC’s dream.” For Smith missional discipleship is a simple statement, “love God, love people.” The focus on discipleship is two-fold. Firstly, “discipleship is academic.” Disciples need to be taught the Word of God. Secondly, “it is helping people find out what they are good at.” Knowing what people are good at helps them to be passionate about serving and evangelizing people with the Gospel. However, the context for effective discipleship is relationships.

Smith sees their role as equipping church leaders to do the task of the ministry by discipling people in their congregations and their surrounding neighborhoods and communities. The curriculum for discipleship from church to church may vary but Smith encourages church leaders to use material that is “missionally minded.”

Missional Church planting according to Smith is “not about planting a building but planting a leader with a group of people called a launch team.” The leader and launch team are discipled using a process developed by Smith’s leadership team with the goal to plant a “life giving church to reach your city.” The four step process for discipling church planters and launch teams could be summed up as,

1. *Discover*: Get to know more about ARC and ARC can get to know more about you: application and assessment leading up to a review that includes feedback and next steps from ARC team. Following this assessment essential videos on church planting are to be viewed.
2. *Train*: A series of online training and an additional along with an in-person, event that you and your spouse will attend as a couple. The Launch training videos will be connected to assignments that when completed give you a comprehensive plan for your launch. The launch intensive is a three-day event where you will be connected with a coach to go over your launch plan while you receive additional training. This is done at a round table setting where you will have plenty of opportunity to discuss every aspect of your plan.
3. *Coach*: As you progress you will continue to work with your coach and complete milestones that lead to the launch of a healthy church. You will also receive

specialized training through ARC’s online coaching videos intentionally designed to help you in this stage of your church launch.

4. Launch: Time to put the plan into action. ARC will continuously make sure that you are equipped through launch day and beyond to lead a thriving church (follow link for further details <https://www.arcchurches.com/launch>).

Smith believes that launching new church plants large, about 200, is ideal for long-term sustainability both financially and for high morale. It should also be noted that Smith places high value in their discipleship to create not only healthy leaders but also healthy marriages and families. Table 6 lists the emerging themes from Smith interview questions 1 and 2.

Table 6. ARC Missional Discipleship and Church Planting Themes

Missional Discipleship	Missional Church Planting	Challenges to Being Missional
Relationship provide the context for effective discipleship	Churches planted by leaders who have been equipped and trained to be relational and organic.	Not being able to launch large
Is both academic and gift based.	Is not about planting buildings but planting leaders who plant churches	Unhealthy leaders
Is oriented in the mission of God and is expressed by serving and witnessing the Gospel in every sphere of discipler’s life	They are indigenous to the community in which they are planted.	Planting in the wrong area/demographics
Is life giving.	They are actively involved in the community in which they are planted.	Pride of young leaders can get in the way

Questions 1,2: Acts 29-Soma

Acts 29 Network leader, Steve Hart, has been disciplined by the Acts 29 church planting network with central offices located in Sheffield. Hart currently serves as one of five district leads in the United States for the Acts 29 church planting endeavors. Hart gives oversight to the North West and Washington ten churches. In addition to his Acts 29 leadership position, Hart has been a lead pastor of Soma Communities in Spokane since 2008, a church that he and a launch team of about 20 planted eight years ago. Soma Spokane has planted one church in 2017. Soma Spokane is a part of a larger community of churches in Tacoma that started in 2004.

When Hart was asked to define missional discipleship he unhesitatingly mentioned Tim Keller's book *The Center Church* as a discipleship resource. Hart finds Keller's book helpful for church practice. It informs believers how to effectively reach their cities with the Gospel. He specifically list several areas of discipleship conflict that Keller's book mentions which must be confronted in the life of the disciple: idolatry in the heart, having Christian ideas but not living them, practicing hospitality, seeing the significance of Jesus, and grasping the Gospel of authenticity. This takes time.

“Discipleship is a slow turn toward a genuine desire for community and love, a process that typically takes about three years. Deep community and not a shallow intent but actually sharing life together. A turn towards rearranging their lives around sharing the Gospel. People are disciplined from an old paradigm of the church into new discovery of the Gospel.”

Authentic discipleship requires the practice of engaging the messiness of people. For example, “Hospitality is a real struggle for most people knowing that when one opens his home drinks spill, food choices issues (gluten free? Is gluten ok?) conflict happens

and so on.” Another challenge to discipleship is “we all have unreached areas of our heart that need evangelism.” Missional discipleship then is the intent to teach, love, and equip people to live their lives sharing the gospel, a process that requires graceful time. Hart has blue-printed a discipleship process from the Acts 29 network which encourages believers to live their lives sharing the Gospel through a three step process: Transformed by the Gospel, Living in Community, and Empowered for Mission (for a detailed description of each step follow this link www.somaspokane.org/soma-priorities). The diffusion of Soma’s three priorities of discipleship are further clarified in missional community home groups as well as an online 10-week course called Gospel Basics (link here for further details www.somaspokane.org/gospel-basics).

Church planting, according to Hart, is a natural expression of healthy missional communities. “Healthy missional churches reproduce more healthy churches.” Each missional church is then called to be a minister of the Gospel to its local community in way of serving and loving their cities with the Gospel. Table 7 lists the emerging themes from M4 responses to questions 1,2.

Table 7. Acts 29 Network/Soma Missional Discipleship and Church Planting Themes

Missional Discipleship	Missional Church Planting	Challenges to Being Missional
Happens best in authentic relationship in community	Natural expression of healthy missional communities	Relationship barriers to being “real”
Confronts sin lovingly (idolatry in the heart needs evangelized)	Serves and loves the city in which they are planted	People don’t like spiritual accountability
Takes time (3 years to move the disciple from an old paradigm to a missional paradigm)	Is grounded in the Word of God	Instant gratification

Missional Discipleship	Missional Church Planting	Challenges to Being Missional
Discipleship and outreach are not mutually exclusive but flow one from the other (fluid as opposed to being categorical)	Great Commission (Matt 28) oriented: Outreach and discipleship are inseparable	Commitment to be missional
Requires informal (embracing the messiness of life, i.e. Missional community small groups) and formal discipleship (i.e. Class room setting)	Community above form. Embracing the messiness of life is more important than conformity.	Hospitality is a challenge for most because it's messy

Responses to Question 3: Missional Leadership Development and Curriculum Used

Question 3: Converge Worldwide

Herschberger sees missional leaders as leaders “who are willing to see the Kingdom of God, this requires healthy leaders.” In the course of the interview Herschberger wanted to make it clear that the local church is significant and should be viewed as such. However, leaders who see only “their church” to the neglect of the Kingdom are using an outdated model. Herschberger believes that Scripture, “talks more about a Kingdom of God model” than a local church model. Missional leadership development is the process of discipleship that shapes the leader to see the Kingdom of God.

Curriculum used to shape and inform missional leaders in Converge Worldwide, according to Herschberger, is a two-step process: First Steps 101, followed by Second Steps 201. Herschberger also included Mike Breen’s model of missional leadership development because of his focus on “What fits your model?” Breen’s approach, according to Herschberger, allows leaders to create missional models that allow church cultures to be authentically indigenous to the demographics in which she is located.

Overall Herschberger is satisfied with the two-step process for developing missional leaders for the district in which he serves, the Great Lakes District in Wisconsin (for a full description of leadership development used by www.churchsmart.com/ProductDetails).

Herschberger clarified that this two-step process does not happen overnight and to make sure that “when setting up your structure for leadership development, the structure should be patient.” He gives the example that “you shouldn’t have elders for about five years” after planting a church. “Being clear on discipleship is a necessity.” He also states that when doing missional leadership, it must be done in relationship for example “Relationships is the grounding distinctive for Converge and Converge in over 150 years has never had a schism.”

Question 3: NAMB

Yang’s understanding of missional leadership development is seen as the need to,

(1) Develop church planters to think like missionaries and (2) to think like community developers. God is already at work in the community therefore how do you connect to what God is doing in community, (3) Gathering principle—creating a team of leaders to become disciple makers.

Missional leadership development is an inward, upward, and outward approach.

Develop leaders to see themselves as missionaries to the communities they are sent to serve. Inward development in which the leader has to process his or her thoughts and emotions of what it means to think and feel like to be a missionary. Upward in that God is already at work and the leader is called first to God’s vision to find out how he or she partners with what God is already doing in the city. Outward because the leaders are called to assemble a team of disciple makers who themselves have been disciple to fulfill

the great commission witnessing and discipling others (follow link to see details listing the five-year process for developing missional leaders www.namb.net/planter-pathway).

This five-year process includes a plethora of books, online material, and human resources according to Yang. While many of the resources are selected as a staple, they can change depending on the needs of the church planter and his or her demographic area. However, the five-year process is a consistent template for developing missional leaders.

Question 3: ARC

Smith sees missional leadership development of “becoming healthy leaders” who seek God’s will for the churches they plant and the communities in which they serve. Smith sees themselves as a resource and equipping ministry that sends “church planters as opposed to church planting.” It is important to note that ARC places their focus on the end result, the launch date of the church planter’s dream, the church. They offer a four-step integrative approach for discipling and equipping church planters (see <http://www.arcchurches.com/wpcontent/uploads>). While books and online interaction are also prescribed for ARC leadership development, most of the leadership development for Smith takes place around table settings with instructors.

Question 3: ACTS 29 Network/Soma

Hart leader did not give a clear definition as to what the organization or he himself defines as missional leadership development. However, Hart did say that the leadership for Soma consists of both centralized and decentralized leadership. His centralized in the sense that the life of the community is centered on the Gospel led by a lead leadership team; and decentralized in the sense that “everyone has a function and not

one person's gifts are more important than another's." For example, "the pastoral function is not more important than the usher it is a different function each with their own calling and authority that operates in the order of the Gospel." In terms of missional leadership development Hart referred me to a website called Saturate with a focus on Soma Sending. "Soma Sending is carried out in three interwoven components, to provide unified, quality training, that's customized to each planter and his context (link here for further details wearesoma.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Sending).

Table 8 lists the themes that emerged from each of the four movements missional leadership development and curriculum used.

Table 8. Emerging Themes: Missional Leadership and Curriculum Used for all Four Movements

Movement	Missional Leadership Development Themes	Curriculum Themes
Converge	Development that shapes leaders to see the Kingdom of God as opposed to "my church"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational • Church planting Basics • Missional • Patient
NAMB	Development that shapes leaders to think and act like missionaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and informational • Church planting basics • Missional • Relational
ARC	Development that shapes healthy leaders that plant churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum not mentioned

Movement	Missional Leadership Development Themes	Curriculum Themes
Acts 29/Soma	Development that shapes Gospel Centered leaders that impact Culture Focus on Gospel Saturation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High engagement • Church planting Basics • Missional • Relational • Focused on outreach

Responses to Question 4: Vision and Mission Statements

The researcher asked each of the four participants to share their organization's vision and mission statements. This question was important due to the "participation in the mission of God" focus found in Matthew 28:19-20, "to go and make disciples." Each vision and mission statement listed uses language that "come from mission" as opposed to mission as one of many purposes of the church. Below are the responses from the four interviewees.

Question 4: Converge Worldwide

Vision in four parts: *Open the front door:* We pray God will allow the Converge movement to expand through church planting, multi-siting and churches joining our movement. We pray our missionary force will double, with special focus on the unengaged, unreached people of the world. We pray the majority of the increased attendance in our churches will result in conversion experiences and baptisms.

Close the back door: We pray God will allow us to develop healthier growing churches by focusing on developing healthy, growing leaders. Developing the health of our pastors and missionaries through improved assessment, coaching, training, collaboration and care will result in our congregants and churches growing toward maturity and mission.

Tear down the walls: We pray God will help us become a movement strengthened by and known for our cultural diversity. We will address potential spiritual, cultural and racial barriers and challenge our congregations to courageously expand gospel living by extending hands of understanding, honor, friendship and partnership across these divides for the advancement of the gospel.

Build the house We pray God will provide the resources needed to support our mission. This includes things such as branding, data, communication and funding initiatives and plans. Already our team has moved toward developing one database, one brand and a unified communication strategy. We have also begun to develop a \$10 million church plant funding strategy. We believe the result of this emphasis will be more followers of Jesus, more focused on the mission of Jesus. We humbly seek God's will and leading for our personal involvement in this next season. God has blessed us. He designed us to live for something bigger than ourselves. We are better together. The best is yet to come.

Mission Statement: In Converge we talk often about being "Better Together." Throughout our history we have seen generations of churches, leaders and missionaries join forces through God's power to accomplish the impossible. The command of Christ to "go and make disciples" resonates in our hearts and resounds from our pulpits. It is evidenced in the ministries of our congregations and our mission fields.

What brings us together for all this activity is much greater than our compelling mission. What brings us together is the cross. The completed work of Christ on the cross resulted in the removal of guilt and the forgiveness of sin. On the cross, Christ accomplished our redemption and reconciliation and restored our right relationship with God. The cross is a reminder of the good news that Christ has risen and that Satan, sin and the grave have been defeated. As a result, we have been given the overwhelming privilege of telling the world about the love and power of God.³

Question 4: NAMB

Vision: Partnering with churches to plant healthy, multiplying churches

Mission: Discover, develop and deploy church planting teams from within your own church.

Question 4: ARC

Vision: ARC exists to help couples with a dream in their heart to reach their city with the hope of Jesus.

Mission: Launching, Connecting, and Equipping the Local Church

Question 4: Acts 29 Network/Soma

Vision: A family of churches around the world who are committed to making disciples who make disciples to the glory of God. Soma believes this will lead to a

³ Accessed December 3, 2018, <https://converge.org/about/mission>.

gospel saturation movement where every man, woman, and child will have a daily encounter with Jesus in word and deed.

Mission: The church is the missionary people of God sent into all of life to accomplish his purposes. Soma helps fledgling churches grow into mature, multiplying churches who reach their region with the gospel through communities on mission in the everyday stuff of life. Soma partners with churches across the United States as well as in countries like India, Australia, Japan, Czech Republic, Canada, and many more.

Responses to Question 5: How Many Church Plants Does Your Organization Undertake a Year? What Is the Percentage That Succeed after 5 Years? 10 Years?

Question 5: Converge Worldwide

Herschberger recently attended a Converge Worldwide Church Planting think tank that met in May. The leadership decided to commit for the year 2019 that each of the Converge 11 districts in the United States to plant 60 churches; each district would work toward planting 10 new churches. According to Herschberger Converge started in 1852 as the Swedish Baptist Convention and later changed to the General Baptist. However, about 10 years ago they changed the name to the present, Converge World-wide. Converge is made up of almost 1400 churches in 46 states. Herschberger believes the “best way to reach the world for Christ is by planting new churches.” The type of church that Herschberger seeks to plant is “missionally-minded in every people group and community.” It’s important to note that their focus on planting missional churches is on “churches that start churches,” a missional expectation. Herschberger says that though “according to Ed Stetzer 3500 church plants close each year about 4000 new churches are started each year giving a net gain of 500 new churches, and only 42% will make it the first year.” Herschberger church planting endeavors “are unique or stands out above the rest” because nine out of ten churches planted make it past the five-year mark. When Herschberger was asked about the 10 year mark he “wasn’t sure” about that statistic.

Question 5: NAMB

Yang says that NAMB's biggest year planting churches was in 2015 for a total of 900. Most of these "plants were the Southern Baptist because NAMB is under the supervision of Southern Baptist." Currently the Southern Baptist Convention, with the help of NAMB, is planting about 600 churches a year between the United States and Canada. Yang gives a similar stat from M1 interview regarding number of churches closing per year. Yang says that "according to Lifeway church research, about 4000 churches are planted each year in the United States from evangelical endeavors, however, 3700 close every year for a net gain of 300." He goes on to add, "we need about 1900 sustaining church plants a year to keep up with population growth." In terms of how many churches within the Southern Baptist succeed after five and ten years he wasn't sure.

Question 5: ARC

ARC current goal is "to plant 60–100 churches a year." Smith says that in 2017 "ARC assisted in planting or was part of helping resource 107 churches in the United States." According to Smith there is a "93% success rate after the first 5 years." Smith was not sure how many succeed after ten years.

Question 5: Acts 29 Network/Soma

Acts 29/Soma leader says that the movement in which he helps lead, Soma, headquartered in Tacoma, WA, has set a goal to plant at least three churches a year. This number will grow as the movement continues to grow from year to year. In terms of the local Soma church, Spokane, WA, that he pastors he believes that they are on target to plant one additional church besides the one that was planted by his congregation two

years ago. Hart also has a goal, along with the leadership and Soma Spokane, WA community wants to see 15 to 20 missional community small groups added to his current number. Hart did wasn't sure how many churches within Soma succeed or fail after five or ten years.

Responses to Question 6: What Are Common Factors of Those That Succeed? What Are the Common Factors of Those That Failed?

Each of the four interviewees when asked question 6 from the questionnaire responded succinctly. Some of the responses were more detailed while others made few comments. Table 9 below list the responses from each leader interviewed.

Table 9. Common Factors of Successful and Failed Church Plants

Movement	Successful Factors	Failing Factors
Converge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentum—launch churches with as many people as possible. Launch large church planting model • Clear vision—clear on what you're doing and who you're reaching. Don't look for transfer growth • Evangelistic culture • Sound doctrine • Powerful preaching (effective communication) • Prayer retreats • Pastor taking sabbaticals (at least three per year for a week at a time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How close are you to family when you move on sight? • Educational level (are you working toward theological training) • Are you teachable and coachable with coach? • Moral failures (affairs, plagiarism, addictions...) • Lack of accountability • Husband and wife issues. Wives may not be bought into church and may sabotage. • Pastoral burn out

<p>NAMB: The researcher was directed to an article written by Ed Stetzer for factors that help church plants succeed.</p>	<p>Factors Associated with Church Plant Survivability</p> <p>The following factors associated with church plant survivability were determined by factor analysis using logistic regression methodology. Analysis was adjusted to match the actual survival rates for church plants surveyed. Factors not listed were found to be statistically insignificant. More than 100 factors were tested for church plant survivability.</p> <p>Significant Factors</p> <p>CHURCH PLANT EXPECTATIONS</p> <p>If, for the church planter, the expectations of the church plant meet the reality of the church planting experience, the chance of survivability <i>increases</i> by over 400 percent. Of those who said their expectations were realized, 87 percent of their churches survived compared to only 61 percent of church plants survived among those who did not have their expectations met.</p> <p>CHURCH MEMBER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>If the church planter provides leadership development training for new church members, the odds of survivability <i>increase</i> by over 250 percent. Of those church</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotally: Planters that struggle to understand the culture that they are planting in, they find church planting difficult, and evangelism difficult. • Planter plants a church, gets it off the ground, leaves to go somewhere else to start another church by year 3 and the church slowly declines because not enough leaders to carry the church forward. It takes about 7 or 8 years to get a team of elders developed.
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	<p>planters who provided leadership training to church members, 79 percent of their churches survived compared to only 59 percent of church plants survived among those who did not provide leadership training.</p> <p>CHURCH PLANTER PEER GROUP</p> <p>The church planter meeting with a group of church planting peers at least monthly <i>increases</i> the odds of survivability by 135 percent. We found that out of those church planters who were part of a peer group, 83 percent of their churches survived whereas only 67 percent of church plants among those who did not have a peer group survived.</p> <p>STEWARDSHIP PLAN</p> <p>The church plant having a proactive stewardship development plan enabling the church to be financially self-sufficient <i>increases</i> the odds of survivability by over 178 percent. Of those church plants who had a stewardship development plan, 81 percent of churches survived whereas only 68 percent of church plants survived among those who did not have a stewardship plan.⁴</p>	
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⁴ Accessed December 6, 2018, <https://pcamna.org/churchplanting/documents/CPMainReport.pdf>.

ARC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching large model is very important (goal is to launch with 250), meets goals of money and people to help reach success rate. • 100 plus is much easier to get the church plant to self-sustain—to get over that hurdle of 5 years’ success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being able to launch large • Leaders that fall into immorality • Bad church management Launched in wrong area demographically • Family problems such as family member gets sick, or marriage issues • Financial challenges
Acts 29/Soma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel centered leaders • Committed launch team • Evangelistic culture • Clear vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False expectations • There needs to be a risk taking self-awareness • Have idolatry checked. Heart in the wrong place • Emotionally Unhealthy leader/s

Responses to Question 7: What Are Key Biblical Passages That Are Vital to Your Understanding of Missional Church Planting?

When it was time for the discussion regarding question 7 the conversation with each interviewee were filled with pauses. Each participant struggled to offer key verses used by their movement that guide the movement theologically, while with the questions pertaining to church planting the responses flowed with ease. Either the interviewees could not remember their movement’s key verses that guides their movement, or they simply were unaware of such vital verses. Table 10 lists the responses from each participant.

Table 10. Key Verses Important to Missional Church Planting

Movement	Key Verses	Commentary
Converge	2 Corinthians 5:11-21 Matthew 28:19-20 Acts 1:8 Luke 14:7-14	<p>These verses speak to the importance of the church being a place for the ministry of reconciliation.</p> <p>The Luke story is important because of its emphases on the wedding banquet as a place where all are welcome.</p>
NAMB	John 20:21, Jeremiah 29:7 2 Cor. 5: 11-21	<p>Ministry of reconciliation Resurgence of ministry of reconciliation. (namb.net/undivided) How does the church struggle with culture and how does the church respond? Strategy of missional church planting for the southern Baptist is a practical response to decline of the network...more a practical response...not necessarily a theological... Southern Baptist resources are focused in the South. Yet, most of the need is outside the South.</p>
ARC	Matthew 18:12	Leave the 99 to go after the one

Movement	Key Verses	Commentary
Acts 29/Soma	Habakkuk 2:14 Ephesians 2 Ephesians 3: 14-19	As the waters cover the sea...to the saturation point...that everyone encounters the gospel to the point of saturation church Jesus has been given to the church which fills all in all.

Responses to Question 8: What Is Your Understanding of Ephesians 4:11 in Relation to Missional Church Planting?

This question was one of the most significant questions to the researcher's thesis question: What are barriers to creating a unified theological vision amongst missional church planting organizations? Yet, the responses from the four leaders representing movements were vague. Not one of them gave a full explanation of the five-fold equipping ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. The researcher tried to press in a bit deeper by asking each interviewee to give definitions and functions of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers. Again, the responses were vague and generalized. Table 11 lists each brief "understanding" of Ephesians 4:11 and how these equipping gifts are important to missional church movement.

Table 11. Understanding of Ephesians 4:11 Passage

Movement	Comments on Ephesians 4:11
Converge	M1 agrees with five-fold ministry. The five-fold is important for creating an organization that equips leaders to cultivate a sending ethos. This is the kind of language spoken around converge.

Movement	Comments on Ephesians 4:11
NAMB	<p>Five-fold ministry— (SEND network) there is a renewed interest in this passage for the NAMB.</p> <p>They struggle with Apostolic and Prophet— NAMB frames these two gifts as an overall function of the church—a shared gifting. Avoid the term of apostles and prophet as offices but as a function of the local church for the building up of the body for ministry. Embrace a continual fleshing out of what this looks like in the Baptist church...See JD Payne's book Apostolic Church Planting: Birthing New Churches from New Believers</p>
ARC	<p>Ephesians 4:11 There is a need to help people discover what they are hardwired to do. ARC does not use the labels but certainly have leaders that function in those equipping the saints of the body</p>
Acts 29/Soma	<p>Acts 29/ Soma do not see the Ephesians 4:11 passage as the same as Allen Hirsch does. God has given gifts to equip the church. Church staff needs to be equipping with the five-fold ministry, but not necessarily designated</p>

Overview and Analysis

In this section the researcher explained why each of the eight questions was important to this project. This project is seeking answers to the research question: what are the barriers or challenges to creating a unified theological vision for the missional movement? Following an explanation of the eight questions the researcher briefly gives feedback from the interviewees responses listing strengths and weakness based on Chapters 2—Biblical and Theological foundations and Chapter 3—Relevant literature review on the missional movement and missional church planting.

Questions 1 and 2: What is Your Understanding of Missional Discipleship? What Is Your Understanding of Missional Church Planting?

Questions 1 and 2 were grouped together as if asking one question with two parts. But for the sake of keeping a clear distinction the researcher felt the need to keep a clear distinction for the purpose of categorizing the responses. In the missional movement discipleship and sending is not viewed as two separate functions, rather as one movement with phases. The missional movement is a discipling and sending movement. The sending does not necessarily focus on specifically raising up church planters but could also be, based on gift, natural abilities, and calling, disciplined and sent to be a missionary into the marketplace, schools, homes, and neighborhoods. The missional movement sees people as the church, not a building containing a storehouse of spiritual gifts and experiences for the purpose of consumption (Chapter 3). But for the purpose of this project the focus was on missional church planting.

Questions 1 and 2 were important to this research project in order to gain insights on how four major church planting movements, represented by four key leaders, understand the theological foundations of the missional movement expressed most boldly in the Book of Acts Chapter 2 (see Chapter 2 of this project). If missional discipleship is discipling believers to be sent back into their spheres of influence, then the organic expression is to see more church plants and more conversions. Yet the statistics are not affirming this (Chapter 3).

All four Movements mentioned give a well thought out and articulate solid missional understanding on missional discipleship and church planting. Common words and themes such as relational, commitment, accountability, community, hospitality, reaching out, missionaries, and seeing the Kingdom as opposed to “my church” are all

missional language. The challenges to discipling authentically missionally minded disciples, based on the responses from the interviewees, were lack of commitment to think and act missionally, people are too busy (including the pastors of missional churches).

This analysis based on the conversations with each participant, is that while these movements appear to have a solid understanding of missional discipleship and church planting, the researcher sees cognitive dissonance between the knowledge and the praxis of the leaders. If missional church planters are focused on the ever constant task of implementing discipleship for the sake of offering discipleship to cultivate an ethos of sending, then commitment to living missionally on behalf of both the planter and the laity is questionable. Someone has to show a way before the people will go a way—into their spheres of influence and be witnesses, discipling others and sending them out to do the same. Church planting pastors need to remember that they, too, are being disciplined by those they lead. Example matters (See Chapter 2).

*Question 3: What Is Your Understanding
of Missional Leadership Development? Curriculum Used?*

Question 3 sought to clarify what it is to be disciplined as a missional leader. Missional church leaders are responsible to ensure discipleship is a vibrant and centering experience within the community. Discipleship, according to the early church (chapter 2) was a relationally shared experience daily. The early church members met daily praying, eating, walking together, being taught or teaching the Apostles, teachings it was Gospel fluency without boundaries. People matured in their Christian walk in such an environment and the early church grew daily.

When viewing the curriculum mentioned by the four leaders it gives a clear indication of how they are discipling others and more than likely how they themselves have been disciplined. Again each leader, representing one of the four movements, gave clear definitions of missional leadership, yet there seems to be a disconnect in praxis. Though the curriculums offer relational training such as conflict resolution, dealing with pain and so on, the curriculum are taught in the context of books, classrooms, and conferences. Based on all four interviews, very little, if any, is actually practiced in relationship. Creating a unified theological vision for missional living can only be done in the context of messiness, living out one's daily life with others. While the discipleship information appears to be theologically solid it must also be lived. While all the leaders interviewed said that they believe that missional community small groups are where "living in community" happens, the focus continues to be on curriculum as opposed to relationships. In the early church it was a daily affair of using modern vernacular, calling, meeting up for coffee, running errands, participating in MOPS groups, or praying for each other in one or more of these experiences daily. The early church exemplifies living in the messiness of each other's lives. Missional leadership is indeed first and above all authentically relational and the curriculum used for discipling church leaders should reflect relationship oriented practices.

Question 4: What Are the Vision and Mission Statements of Your Organization?

Question 4 was pivotal in trying to understand what unifies theologically the missional movement as much as identifying barriers to creating a unified theological vision for greater Kingdom impact. Without exception the vision and mission statement indicates a bold and clear calling for believers to fulfill the Great Commission. The

challenge to actually living out the vision and mission of each movement seems to be in the discipleship process itself. Again, the curriculum guiding discipleship process is curriculum heavy with little call to living missionally.

Question 5: How Many Church Plants Does Your Organization Undertake a Year? What Is the Percentage That Succeed after 5 Years? 10 Years?

Question 5 was important to this research project for gaining insights into the effectiveness of each movement's missional fruit bearing. In other words, how many new churches are being planted from your movement a year? While every movement interviewed is seeing fruit by either actually planting churches or discipling and equipping church planters to plant churches, the net gain of actual churches planted and sustain long-term, based on the feedback from the interviewees, is short lived. If M2 is correct in quoting Ed Stezter's research that between 3500 to 3700 churches are closing a year in the United States and the combined total of evangelical churches planted a year is 4000 that leaves a net gain of either 500 or 300 churches that make it a year. According to M2, 42% of the net yearly gain of new churches planted will not make it past the first five years. Yet, we need 1900 sustainable new church plants a year to keep up with current US population growth. Even more is the need for the missional movement develop a unified theological vision that will motivate the movement into a revivalist fervor of transforming culture for the expansion of God's Kingdom.

Question 6: What Are Common Factors of Those That Succeed? What Are the Common Factors of Those That Failed?

Question 6 was important for this research project to gain insights into reasons as to why some missional church plants thrive and why some fail. While there were several reasons why new church plants thrive such as launching big, Gospel centered leadership,

a committed team, or being evangelistic more reasons were given as to why new church plants fail. Again, there are several reasons as to why new church plants fail, but the number one reason they fail was in direct relation to the leadership. All four interviewees mentioned burn-out in leadership, loneliness, addictions, and being too busy etc. This question confirms the gap between actual leadership living missionally in community and merely doing church for the sake of movement expectations of starting a church and making it grow. The leadership is expected to do church while the community or congregation are expected to be the church. Examples matter. A robust living missional theological vision is needed to promote not conformity but Gospel centered relationships in community.

Question 7: What Are Key Biblical Passages That Are Vital to Your Understanding of Missional Church Planting?

Question 7 was important for gaining insights into the theological understanding of church planting by four major either equipping or church planting movements. When the participants were asked this question each one took awhile to think about verses rather than proclaiming with confident knowledge the movement's key verses that shape their prospective movement. While each one did offer a few verses, they were all over the place and only one offered verses from the Book of Acts 1:8. Texts about the church were offered from the books of Ephesians, Luke, Corinthians, Jeremiah and few epistles. While the Scriptures offered are excellent, books prophesying or instructing the early church, the Book of Acts is pivotal in how relationally organic the early church movement lived. Yet none of the key passages in Acts were mentioned by any of the four participants. However, each verse mentioned challenged the listeners to "do something" for the Kingdom. Verses matter when developing a missional theological vision.

*Question 8 What Is Your Understanding of
Ephesians 4:11 in Relation to Missional Church Planting?*

This question was significant in that it answers the question what gifts equip people to be missional? Of all the gifts mentioned in the chart below only the Ephesians 4:11 gifts are referred to as the equipping gifts for acts of service. The other first three columns, see Table 12, of gifts are for the purpose of performing the acts of service not equipping for acts of service.

Table 12. List of Biblical Gifts

Scripture	Romans 12:6–8	1 Corinthians 12:8–10	1 Corinthians 12:28	Ephesians 4:11
Gifts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prophecy 2. Serving 3. Teaching 4. Exhortation 5. Giving 6. Leadership 7. Mercy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Word of wisdom 2. Word of knowledge 3. Faith 4. Gifts of healings 5. Miracles 6. Prophecy 7. Distinguishing between spirits 8. Tongues 9. Interpretation of tongues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apostle 2. Prophet 3. Teacher 4. Miracles 5. Kinds of healings 6. Helps 7. Administration 8. Tongues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apostle 2. Prophet 3. Evangelist 4. Pastor 5. Teacher

When each of the four participants were asked how they understand Ephesians 4:11 as an important role in equipping their congregations for acts of missional service, their responses were uncertain and short. While a couple responded with “I believe in the five-fold ministry” and others responded with “we believe in the five-fold gifts just not like the APEST model offered by Alan Hirsch.” Three movements did not believe that the Apostle and Prophet were actual personal gifts that individuals operate in, but rather it was a generalized ethos kicked off by the original 12 and past prophets. Some even

struggled with the idea of the evangelist as an actual gift operating in the church today. In Chapters 2 and 3 the researcher laid out a compelling argument as to the need and indeed the active participation of the five-fold ministry in real time, today. The five-fold ministry offers an ethos that can only be realized by embracing the belief that these gifts operate in individuals for continuing the revolution that was stalled during the Constantine reign and the church became institutionalized.

CHAPTER SIX
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A UNIFIED THEOLOGICAL
VISION FOR MISSIONAL CHURCH PLANTING

Review

The problem this thesis addressed was the lack of a unified theological vision for shaping and equipping leaders for missional church planting. The first sub-problem was to search the Scriptures and discover what the Bible had to say about the early church's church planting endeavors both theologically and practically. Scripture exhibited a vibrant Christian community growing daily and planting churches all over the then-known world who were led by capable and equipped Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors Teachers, and their disciples. The purpose of the local church was to propagate the gospel through equipping people to be sent out into the world to be witnesses of Jesus Christ.

The second sub-problem was to discover related literature and through a biblical review of relevant literature regarding current missional church theology and practice. The review was related to expansion of the early church, church planting, discipleship, leadership development, and the five-fold ministry described in Ephesians 4:11. The literature review covered C. Peter Wagner's view on the missional church planting movement. Wagoner's view, along with Reggie McNeal, J.D. Payne, Mike Breen, and many of the early church fathers, holds that the early church was a powerful revolution because of the apostolic ethos inherent and was the catalyst of church growth. They further believed that there needs to be a "new apostolic reformation" to awaken the

apostolic ethos for today. In addition to several other missional thinkers the research drew heavily from prolific contributors to the missional movement, Alan Hirsch. Hirsch offers a compelling historical overview as to why it is necessary to recover the Ephesians 4:11 equipping ministries for today's church. He believes that if the church is going to move beyond the decline of Christendom in the West, the APEST model of the early church is crucial for effective missional church planting and a revival of Christendom in the West.

The third sub-problem was to interview four missional movements in order to gain insights and identify persisting barriers within the missional movement for a unified theological vision. The barriers were discovered using a questionnaire with eight questions posed either on the phone or in person. The questionnaire looked at missional church planting from the perspective of leadership and leadership development, discipleship and curriculum, success and failures of missional church plants, and Ephesians 4:11 equipping gifts as it relates to missional church planting. The emerging themes were then clarified and analyzed in Chapter 5.

The fourth sub-problem offered recommendations based on the data collected from the four interviews. The recommendations are offered as a starting point for the missional church planting movement to begin a dialogue that would move it toward a unified theological vision for greater Kingdom Impact. In no way is the researcher asking for conformity; rather, he is proposing organic discovery of ways in which the missional movement can be consistent on core beliefs essential for greater impact. The researcher will go first. Closing Chapter 6 a framework is offered in the beginnings of a working format laying out a framework that seeks to navigate and align his community with this research.

*Recommendation 1: Missional Church Planters Need to
“Be” Fully Engaged, Relationally, in the Life of the Community*

This research presented a biblical look at Jesus as a shepherd, a discipler, and a sending agent to impact the world with the Good News. The research also looked at the Apostles Paul and Peter and illustrated that they replicated Jesus’ teachings and practices. Jesus, the head of the church and lead Shepherd, led his disciples relationally. For example, there are word pictures of Jesus sitting on a hill teaching his disciples the Word and how to apply it to daily life. There are snapshots of Jesus at wedding parties, having dinner with sinners and outcasts, walking dusty roads side-by-side with disciples, sitting at a well with a woman proclaiming the Good News. There are many more snapshots like these. Jesus lived in the midst of peoples’ everyday living. He was fully engaged in the lives of people more than working toward implementing curriculum. Jesus, was the curriculum. He is the Way the Truth and the Life. Jesus is an exemplary missional church planter. He invested in building people and equipping them with relational authority to be witnesses of His Kingdom and sending them to do what He taught them. He taught them how to implement the Gospel through loving others by serving them, inviting them to know Jesus, and then walking a similar journey with them, discipling them and sending them.

Therefore, based on the four interviews, the first recommendation is for Missional church planters to be relationally equipped by a more intimate model of leadership development. While all four leaders agreed that cultivating healthy relationships within the communities they lead and are a part of, they are not seeing them developed (Chapter 5). The goal is to cultivate a robust incarnational intention in the life of the church planter. Curriculum must focus on mentoring and relational approaches. Instead of

equipping taking place in large groups, missional church planters have a key leader mentor and equip missional church planters in small groups of perhaps 12 or less long-term. There needs to be a process of missional church planters to evaluate their motives as to whether they are implementing the Gospel through discipleship venues within their communities or implementing the Gospel by being the Gospel along-side others in their community and neighborhoods. That is to say, that curriculum is not disregarded as insignificant; rather it is to say that the curriculum of discipling others needs to be focused on connecting and building healthy Gospel centered relationships as the primary context. Relationships are challenging and messy yet incredibly rewarding. It is important and healthy for missional church planters be discipled in the ways of Jesus relationally as opposed to the newest church growth trend.

Recommendation 2: Greater Focus Is on the Kingdom of God

The local church is an important and significant expression of the body of Christ indigenously to the local community in which a church exists. And within each demographic area there are usually more than a few churches in that specific area that can be networked for greater Kingdom impact. Missional church planting is a collaborative movement that sees the local church as important, yet she is only a small part of the cosmological larger picture, the Kingdom of God.

Missional church planting needs leaders who are discipled into the Kingdom as opposed to the church. All four leaders interviewed mentioned the need for a Kingdom oriented discipleship training that helps the emerging leader see the Kingdom as the greater impact as opposed to seeing “my church”. The local church then becomes a platform with many engaging dynamics that focus on how to have a greater Kingdom

impact within the communities, cities, state, nation, and the world by cultivating and inviting other local churches, business, para ministries onto the platform to collaborate for greater impact.

Recommendation 3: Key Missional Verses and the Spiritual Gifts

In much of their literature the missional movement confirms they are a Spirit-filled movement that depends heavily on the leading of the Spirit. Yet, none of the key verses mentioned by the four interviewees who responded to question 7 from questionnaire with verses include the Gifts of the Spirit listed in Table 12. If the missional movement is going to make a Kingdom impact that is transformational, the Spirit's gifts are necessary. There are many spiritual gifts assessments that can be utilized in not only helping missional church planters discover their unique gifting sets but also how to practice them. One such tool is *Discover Your God-Given Gifts* by Don and Katie Fortune. Adding key verses that focus the missional movement on the Spirit's gifts will take less focus and pressure off dependence on natural abilities which, consequently leads to leadership burn out. By making key passages that focus on spiritual gifts the missional movement not only unifies theologically but will make a difference in the areas that they serve spiritually impactful.

Acts 2:42-47 is another major passage of Scripture that is vital for the missional church, yet not one interviewed mentioned this passage. This passage lists the spiritual disciplines that were practiced daily in Christian community (see Chapter 2). Without these daily practices this young community would have struggled to stay connected to the work of the Spirit and over time would have dissolved. No one is capable of doing a supernatural work in the flesh. It requires leaders who are embedded in his/her

community where the theological vision for the Kingdom is living and moving in the Spirit. Missional church planters, as part of their equipping, would do well to school first with understanding that they too are being disciplined in community by the people they serve, love, and disciple. They are more than mere implementers of a process; they are a part, not the engine, of the community.

Recommendation 4: Ephesians 4:11 Is Relevant for Today

Ephesians 4:11 gifts, apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher were a vital part of the early church life. These gifts were the synergy to create the greatest equipping and transforming movement ever in history. When Jesus ascended he sent the Holy Spirit with gifts that would be necessary for releasing an apostolic revolution that would carry on the work he began. Despite waves of revival throughout history, the church never fully recovered the powerful revolution began by Jesus. Today the missional church has an incredible opportunity to recover that revolution. The missional movement has inherent within her the capacity to integrate and indeed awaken the five-fold gifts. If the missional movement is a movement embedded in the Spirit, but the gifts of the Spirit were not mentioned in the interviews, very little conversation surrounded the power of the Holy Spirit as the leaders' operational source, but there was much conversation surrounding natural gifts and abilities. This researcher, based on a historical, scriptural, study of the gifts believes that Ephesians 4:11 is vital for the missional church's theological vision for unifying us. Having a form of Godliness but denying the very power that Christ ascend for, to send the church gifts, is to deny the reason the church exists—to make disciples and send them out. This is a spiritual work that requires an ethos that only the five-fold ministry can release. The five-fold equipping gift set should be studied in depth by every

major missional movement and implemented as part of leadership training and development. C. Peter Wagner, Robert Clinton, Mike Breen, J. D. Payne, and many others offer excellent theological resources for equipping and understanding, from a Biblical perspective, the role and function of modern day apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Ephesians 4:11 is perhaps the most important passage to creating a unified theological vision for the missional church.

Reproducible Takeaways

In spite of the presenting gaps discussed in the above analysis of the 8 questions from the interview questionnaire there are some that are reproducible. These reproducible can be leveraged in developing a unified theological vision for the missional movement. Below is a descriptive list of the reproducible take-a-ways.

Reproducible 1

The heart beat to be missional is necessary if the Kingdom of God is to advance. The leaders interviewed have such a heart. The missional movement needs to reproduce emerging leaders with like heart and passion.

Reproducible 2

There is a clarion call mentioned by each participant to raise up healthy leaders. This means leaders living in community as opposed to the detached implementer.

Reproducible 3

Missional discipleship always produces disciples who live as missionaries. All four leaders offer a consistent intent when it comes to missional discipleship.

Reproducible 4

Missional church planters are disciplined to “see the Kingdom” as greater than “my church.” Missional church planters are disciplined to be collaborative to work toward a common goal with other local churches and movements to expand the Kingdom of God. The local church is important but it is a small part of God’s greater plan in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Reproducible 5

Relationships, not a building, are the context for maturing and producing mature disciples. It is life shared together.

Reproducible 6

Planting missional churches requires a committed group of believers to be risk takers.

Reproducible 7

Missional church planting does not mean starting first with a launch team in a designated building. Missional church planting can be started in a gym, a home, a business, it’s wherever God calls a leader to plant. “Don’t plant from a building, plant from mission.”

Narratives Church: A Missional Framework

Narratives Church, a missional community, pastored by the researcher, began moving from a traditional model of doing church four years ago. However, based on this research project Narratives has begun the process of aligning this community with the findings. Narratives will need to cultivate a community of believers who has a passion for the lost, a discipleship process that is focused on the Kingdom while seeing the

importance of the local church, cultivating missional home groups that are able to embrace the messiness of personal relationships, and focus not on church growth, but on building and equipping people as the more worthy pursuit. Narratives has a long way to go as they work toward aligning themselves with a more robust theological statement that reflects authentically who they envision to be as a community of Christ followers. In fact, the framework listed below will offer few details, such as a list of curriculum, but rather will offer broader paint strokes of where they are now. It is an ongoing process as they continue to work toward creating an apostolic ethos that release the gifts of the Spirit to equip this body for acts of service, to be sent out to reach our spheres of influence. Narratives does not profess to be THE example, only a starting point. Each missional community is indigenously unique to its community in which each one serves.

Narratives' missional framework is built on three key scripture passages: Matthew 28:16-20 (Great Commission), Acts 2:42-47 (Early Christian Community), Ephesians 4:11 (the five-fold equipping gifts). Narratives has several other supplementary Scriptures that lend support to her framework for belief and practices. Narratives' key verses are not separated into different purposes or categories; rather, they are fluent and integrated as one movement that is to be practiced daily as disciples who are discipling others. These key verses are summed up in her vision and mission statements which are her framework for thinking missionally and practically. Vision: **Live. Love. Share.**

Live—Our ministries are designed to be transformational. We want our people to develop a well-rounded theology of boots—a theology that shapes their own story into practical, ministry-centered living. This serves to Equip.

Love- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the ultimate expression of God's love toward humanity. We stress discipleship as a means to help our people mature and grow in the knowledge of Christ in order to love God and help other discover the power of His story. This serves to Save.

Share- The ultimate outcome for those who call Narratives home is to share the Gospel with their lives. Ideally, that transpires in the normal ebbs and flows of their daily lives, which we call rhythms. By rhythms we mean the core values that keep out intentions to be intentional. They are: Absolute Christ, Responsibility, Worship as a way of life, Telling your story, Generosity, Beauty, Leadership, Authentic community, and Confessional. This serves to Send.

The vision and mission looks like this: Narratives Church Discipleship Pathway:

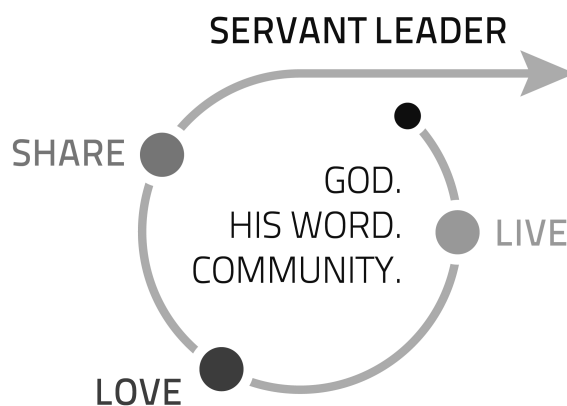


Figure 1. Narratives Church Discipleship Pathway

Mission: We are a band of REDEEMED liars, cheaters and thieves, gluttons, adulterers and idol worshipers...who desire to abandon ourselves wildly to God, love passionately, serve generously, narrate Jesus conversationally and lead others to live the same way.

A large part of Narratives' experience is cultivating an apostolic ethos that works toward equipping every believer with an understanding and application of the equipping gift whether it be as an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, or Teacher. Narratives does not focus on calling each other Apostle so and so or Evangelist so and so. Rather Narratives' focus is to help each person to understand how God has hard wired him or her to serve His church to become servants. It is not about position but about servanthood. Though most of her equipping is not done in a classroom setting but in missional small groups (each missional community has to adapt a cause in the city to be ministers of

reconciliation), Narratives’ does offer a formal process of equipping for those who feel called to plant churches or start ministries in the marketplace or in other unique venues such as street outreaches such as homeless, called Apostolos. Its logo and definitions are listed below.



Figure 2. Apostolos School of Leadership and Church Planting

Our Name

The choice of “Apostolos School of Leadership and Church Planting” was intentionally selected to reflect the heart of our program.

Apostolos

Apostolos is Greek for “one sent with a message,” and is derived from the word *apostellein*, which is where we get the word *apostle*. As we see throughout the New Testament, the word *apostle* was used of Christ’s 12 disciples and was used as a symbol of their own commitment to spreading the Christian message. This concept is at the core of our vision to develop Christian leaders and church planters through an organic and academically accredited pathway. In doing so, we are committed to raising up courageous leaders for kingdom impact, equipping both men and women to missional lifestyles that are intentional in influencing their homes, workplaces and culture.

School

While the word “school” can seem pedestrian and—well—elementary, Apostolos is much more than an academic institution. It is a movement of like-minded Christians committed to fulfilling the Great Commission together through church planting. Unlike traditional college environments where students drift from class to class in relative isolation, the Apostolos model stresses community as much as individualized academic achievement. By building relationships and fostering community, through a cohort model students are given practical experience that will serve as a foundation for future church planting. Students will earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Christian Leadership and will have the option of choosing one of four concentrations: Bible and Theology, Pastoral Ministry, Discipleship and Formation and Church Planting. A certificate program in Leadership is also available. A master’s program in church planting is also planned.

Leadership

“But I’ve been called to serve, not lead.” It’s a common cry of many Christians who eagerly minister in their areas of gifting but who are otherwise intimidated with the notion of being a leader. Leadership does not have to be in front of a Fortune 500 company, on a community stage or trying to corral people without a shared vision. Look at the apostles. One was a tax collector, but most of them were either fishermen or somehow tied to the industry. As tradesmen, they likely worked alone or in small groups. Yet, with little training, these 12, under the guidance of Jesus, and later the Holy Spirit, were able to transform the entire world, creating a movement that numbers more than 2.2 billion worldwide. After Jesus’ ascension, much of their early work was dedicated to serving the poor. A true mark of leadership is one who has the ability to influence,

whether that's a barista or the board room of a multi-national conglomerate. In the words of J.B. Miller: "There have been meetings of only a moment which have left impressions for life ...for eternity. No one can understand that mysterious thing we call 'influence' ...yet every one of us continually exerts influence, either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison, to stain other lives."

Church Planting

Research shows that proper preparation for church planting increases the success rate of new church plants by almost 800 percent. This is critical because 7,000 churches in America are closing each year. In addition, a study by the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board found that fewer than 4 percent of its churches are engaged as primary sponsors of church planting. Church growth expert Ed Stetzer notes that leadership development is critical for sustained growth and reproduction in the church. Church planting is the manifestation—or practical application—of leadership development. We recognized that what we do at Apostolos is like a drop that causes a ripple across a pond. Like all movements it starts locally, moves regionally, and spreads globally to the ends of the earth. Sound familiar? "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."— Acts 1:8. We will accomplish that by training the next generation of Christian leaders in the church and the workplace.

The Logo

What does a lion have to do with church growth? The lion signifies our bold approach in growing leaders and planting churches. God did not call His people to a timid

lifestyle. Modern culture often likes to paint Jesus as a gentle lamb who is more suited to hanging out around a campfire singing Kumbaya. Scripture, however, paints another picture; that of a majestic creature who is worthy of his role as King of the Kingdom, a creature whose roar (and message) cuts through the din. Like Jesus, we are called to be bold in our commitment to the faith and, consequently, in our obedience to Christ's clear mandate in the Great Commission. The symbolism of the logo, though, doesn't end with the lion. The upward motion of the lines, emerging from a center point (representing ancient paths), forms the lion. While using a circular motion, it stops short of a fully contained circle, conveying movement that ends with a spot signifying the ultimate goal: an actual physical church plant.

The curriculum used for Narratives' discipleship is embedded in the context of "being the church" a key for thinking missional. It is the belief and practice that Christianity is not categorically separated by places and times but rather the body is the church of Jesus Christ twenty-four hours a day 365 days a year no matter where each person is. This is different from going to church in a location such as a Sunday morning worship service in a designated building. Narratives is currently undergoing a massive transition as they are considering changing their entire arsenal of missional tools. Most of not all of the text books used were not congruent with their vision, desires or intentions. Their rubric for selecting new materials is simple. Does it support Narratives' key verses? Are they grounded in Scripture? Does it equip people in relationships? Does it focus on living Gospel fluency in every sphere of life?

Again, Narratives has a long way to go to become who they envision themselves to be as a community. They continue to strive toward that goal with much prayer and

belief that this is a work of God. It is their hope that their contribution will ignite a missional conversation that facilitates a unified theological vision for Kingdom Impact.

CHAPTER SEVEN PROJECT EVALUATION

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

Project Strengths

A strength of this project is the qualitative approach. The researcher searched for quantitative data for the purpose of using statistics to support the project's direction of creating a unified theological vision for the missional church. Since the subject under research did not present research in way of dissertations, journal articles, or books, the researcher was led to discover that the project is somewhat new territory. The qualitative approach was pivotal in the discovery process by gaining insights by interviewing four key missional church planting movements: ARC, Converge Worldwide, NAMB, and Acts 29. That data was collected, categorized and analyzed illustrating the need for further research and investigation in the research topic.

Secondly, a strength of this project was the revelation that even among practitioners there is a disconnect between theology and practice. All four participants revealed that there is a need to cultivate more intimate communities consisting of people who embrace the messiness of relationships, yet the leaders interviewed are somewhat detached from being more intimately involved. Furthermore, the leaders see themselves as program implementers more than relationship disciplers. Chapters 2 and 3 of this research illustrates the theological and practical importance of pastoral and church leadership's first commitment is to people, not to be viewed as church growth numbers

important to breaking church growth barriers, but rather as people who are in relationship which produces fruit that remains.

Thirdly, this research revealed little evidence of APEST in practice. As Chapters 2 and 3 reveal, the five-fold ministry or APEST, mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 is significant for the missional church planting movement. All four interviewed make mention of APEST but with very little awareness of how it is implemented within their own movements.

Lastly, the research project offers contributions toward a framework for aligning the missional movement with a more robust intention for Kingdom impact. The framework includes conversation pieces surrounding a biblical theological outline to include aligning with key Scriptures: Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:42-27, and Ephesians 4:11. The framework also offers a conversation on how these key missional Scriptures would inform the missional movement's ecclesiology or the practice of thinking missionally. The research does not seek conformity from one indigenous community to the next, but seeks a theological ecclesiology that unites the missional movement to see the Kingdom of God expanded.

Project Weaknesses

A weakness of this research is the sparsity of resources and original material to this study. The researcher found material relating to the missional church growth and leadership as it relates to APEST. However, most of the material relating to discipleship and church planting was extracted from church growth models as opposed to a distinct relational missional approach (Chapter 5). Because of the limited quantitative research material, which could have greatly strengthened this project, it was difficult to say with

certainty that many of the ideas this project proposes are not being implemented elsewhere in the United States or in other parts of the world.

Another weakness of this research was the use of only one method. The researcher used an interview process. The questionnaire was emailed ahead of time before the set phone or in-person interview date. The researcher did not ask them to fill it out and then send their typed responses back to the researcher and then interviewed them based on their responses. It would have benefited the research had there been an additional method used to gather the data as opposed to one.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A unified theological vision in the missional church planting movement is vital for recovering a movement that began in Acts Chapter 2. Based on this research project all four participants do not engage, in a robust manner, key essentials in creating an apostolic ethos necessary for a movement based on Scriptural findings (Chapter 2) and literature review (Chapter 3). It is therefore imperative that missional church planting organizations and their leaders engage in a sober study and conversation surrounding Ephesians 4:11, Acts 2:42-47, and Matthew 28: 16-20 as core verses that shape and inform their theology and ecclesiology. Furthermore, it is important that these movements and their leaders commit to personal and prayerful leadership development aligning to the findings from engaging this theological conversation for the sake of authenticity.

Suggestions for Further Study

A broader study is needed not only qualitatively but quantitatively. It would be helpful for a broader research scope on this topic. For example, churches that are having

incredible Kingdom growth and impact in other parts of the world, do they embrace the APEST? How do they interpret and practice the Acts 2:42-47 passage?

Secondly, a possible study that could emerge from this project is the practice of the APEST. It would be helpful to know if Scripture verifies or denies that every single believer has been given an equipping gift listed in the APEST or Ephesians 4:11 passage. If this is the case, then it would make a huge difference in the way that the church cultivates and undergoes discipleship not to mention the way we practice the Christian life.

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