

# BOB MAYFIELD

# MISSIONAL PIVOT POINTS



*“A brilliant approach, and  
a direction we must pursue”*

— Dr. Anthony Jordan

Gaining Leverage for Meaningful Change

## Acknowledgements

When I first moved from Arizona to Oklahoma, the word *missional* was just being introduced into my circle of peers. I thought that I not only knew what it meant, but that I truly was a missional follower of Christ. Now, almost four years later, I realize how foolish my thinking was. These past years have been a time where God has refined my belief system and my calling. Because of this background, I have been very hesitant to write this short book.

I want to express my appreciation to some people who have greatly influenced my life and the writing of this book. My friend and team leader Scott Phillips challenged me to write the original ten articles that appeared as “Pivot Points” in our state convention paper. Scott then challenged me to produce them in book form and then had the audacity to give me a deadline. The executive director of our state convention, Dr. Anthony Jordan, has been ringing the missional bell for a long time and has created a climate in our state to venture out and impact lostness by engaging our communities as missionaries. I appreciate their support and example of missional leadership. Oklahoma Baptists have been a truly receptive group to this misplaced Texan!

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## Introduction

One day I was discussing the concept of "thought leader" with my boss at LifeWay, John Kramp, who made this keen observation, "I think a person is a thought leader if they are actually producing new thinking." My friend Bob Mayfield "are" one, especially when it comes to thinking about the impact of the "missional" movement on the Sunday School and small groups movements. As a recognized leader in those movements, Bob has the experience and credibility to challenge classes and small groups toward Great Commission thinking. The ten articles in this book, and the discussion questions that follow each one, will challenge you to think in new ways, too. It's more than a good read. It will motivate you to think—and act—more like the missionary God has called you to be.

David Francis  
National Sunday School Director  
LifeWay Christian Resources

## A New Formula for Church Growth

Our world is full of formulas. As a guy who cut his teeth on Sunday School, I am very familiar with five principles of Sunday School growth called “Flake’s Formula”. It is a formula based on five principles of growth. I have written my own formula for growing a church called PowerUP, a four step formula for growth. What I find is that these formulas are often based on mechanics. They focus on things like providing space and parking, and enlisting leaders.

I believe I may have found a new church growth principle. It is not mechanical in nature. To help you understand what this principle is, take this challenge. Ask your small group or Sunday School class to share their favorite Bible verse. By the way, “God helps those who help themselves” is *not* in the Bible! If your group is like most others, you are going to get an assortment of replies, but more than likely the verses you are going to hear will be positive and upbeat. John 3:16 will be on the list, along with Philippians 4:13, Jeremiah 29:11, John 10:10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and John 8:32. These verses all have a common theme. They are from the “fulfillment” side of the Christian life. Being fulfilled is the part of Christianity that we get tingly about.

On occasion, however, I find a person whose favorite verse of scripture has something to do with suffering or surrender. The Bible is clear that surrendering to Jesus as Lord is vital to living the lifestyle that Christ has called us to adopt. People who have surrendered to Christ have a different set of favorite scripture verses. They are passages about surrender, such as: Philippians 3:8-11; Matthew 20:26-28; and Luke 9:23-25.

Surrender! It sounds so contrary to victory. Isn’t surrender what a person does when he waves the white flag? But in the life of a follower of Jesus, surrendering oneself to the Lordship of his Savior is essential. “No one can have two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” As followers of Christ, we can not follow ourselves and Christ. We either surrender to Christ and make Him Lord, or we serve ourselves. Choosing both is not an option. The power of a surrendered life is a key principle for living a life that makes a difference. It is also essential to the health and viability of a local church in reaching its community with the gospel.

Have you ever seen two churches that are in the same community and are similar in size with pastors who are much alike but who have totally different results in reaching their community? Often, one church has surrendered itself to God and the other church has failed to give up control. One church is making an impact in its neighborhood, the other church does not. The issue of surrender is best seen in our preferences. Our preferences are why people sitting in our groups will not step forward and become teachers and leaders. Preferences are why our classes do not start new groups. Let’s face it; most classes do not mind the church starting new classes, as long as it does not involve *their* class. Preferences are why only 4 per cent of Southern Baptist churches will ever start a new church. Jesus is our model of how to surrender our preferences when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemene, “Not My will, but Thine be done.” Let’s put that verse on the walls of our Sunday Schools right by the nice picture of Jesus in brown tones! We might as well face it; our preferences are not bringing people to the cross.

Surrendering our preferences is the first step of becoming a missional Christian, and transformation is the second. Make no mistake about it; there is no transformation of the human soul without surrender. In my opinion, nothing sets a church afire like transformed hearts. Being in a small group of people that has surrendered its preferences to the Lordship of Jesus and experiencing the transformation that follows is one of the most awesome aspects of the Christian life. My Sunday School class recently conducted a mission project, and over the course of the past year we have watched the family that we helped become transformed by the gospel of Christ. The journey has not always been easy, but it has been fulfilling. We have watched this family move forward in faith. But that transformation was preceded by our class being willing to surrender time, money, work, and preferences in order make a difference in our community.

We could write a new formula for church growth: Surrender + transformation = fulfillment. It is biblical and it is true. Surrender is what we do. It is an act of humility and brokenness. Transformation is what God does. We can not transform the human heart; that is God's work. Fulfillment is the culmination of our surrender and God's transformation. This formula is true of an individual believer, a small group Bible study, a church, and even a denomination. If we really want to show that Jesus Christ offers the people around us fulfillment in this life and life to come, then we must surrender our preferences. The results will be transformed lives, small groups, churches, denominations, and ultimately... a transformed world.

During the past 25 years, we have experienced the church growth movement, which was followed by the church health movement. We are now entering the missional movement. Missional is a fairly new word. I bump into teachers sometimes who often argue that missional is not even a word. Yes, it has a squiggly line under it in your word processor. But even though Bill Gates has not recognized it yet does not mean it is not taking place. The following ten chapters are an expanded series of articles I wrote for the *Baptist Messenger*, the weekly paper of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. You might notice that they are a series of "From... To" titles. I am convinced that for the church to be relevant in our society, we must move *from* a 20<sup>th</sup> century mindset of "doing" church *to* a missional mindset of "being" church, which I consider to be more biblical in the first place.

## Definitions

**Missional** - The mindset and action of living as a missionary in your neighborhood.

**Evangelism** – Telling people about Jesus.

**Missions** – Seeking to understand a community of people in order to present the gospel in a culturally relevant way.

**Mission** – As in “sent”. Being on mission involves being sent, which is the root meaning of the word.

**Missionary** – One who is sent to speak on behalf of another person.

**Small Community** – Although I have tried to use both small groups and Sunday School together as much as possible, sometimes to shorten or simplify the concept I will use the term “small communities”. Although I hate to attach a number to it, ideally a small community is a group of 8-12 people committed to the principle of being a biblical witness in their community and world. I first ran across this term in Alan Hirsch’s book, *The Forgotten Ways*. I like it because it helps us move beyond the sometimes petty bickering between Sunday School and home group advocates. A small community is any group of believers who are committed to experiencing the life of Christ together as missional people. Their location in a classroom, office building, restaurant, or home is secondary to their mission.

**Pivot** – It was Archimedes who said, “Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand and I can move the earth”. A pivot is a change in direction by establishing a central point and turning. A pivot is also defined as a fulcrum that is used for leverage. For the purposes of being a missional Christian and church, we are using both definitions. Missional followers of Christ recognize that in order to engage our culture with the gospel, often there is a pivot of lifestyle and function that must take place. This pivot can also serve as a fulcrum in which we can maximize our impact on a lost culture.

*A missionary is someone who never gets used to the sound of pagan footsteps on their way to a Christless eternity.*

*Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter.  
Charles Spurgeon*

## Pivot Point #1 - From Mantras to Movements

1 Samuel 17 is a familiar passage to many of us. It is the story of David and Goliath. There is an interesting item of interest buried in that story that affects us today. As David approaches the Israelite army, he finds them "in battle array shouting the war cry". These soldiers are marching around, chanting about what they are going to do to those nasty Philistines. Of course, a solitary Philistine named Goliath steps up on the hill and yells, "Rawwwrrrr" and the entire Israelite army turns tail and runs. These guys could act pretty tough as long as they stayed in the camp, but as soon as adversity sprung up, they high-tailed it out of there.

As Southern Baptists, we have certainly had our share of denominational "war cries". Does anyone remember "Bold Mission Thrust"? How about "Here's Hope Now"? My favorite... "A Million More in '54". Previous generations responded well to these kinds of motivations. The Million More in 54 campaign coincided with one of the greatest salvation harvests in our denomination's history.

But for a mantra to be effective, it must be connected to a movement of some form. Movements often start small, usually with just one person or a small group of persons and then generate momentum that turns them into tsunamis. Our world is full of movements today, look at the impact of the environmental movement on our society, for example. Christianity is full of these kinds of movements. How about Augustine leading the early church in a movement against Pelagianism? Martin Luther and the Reformers started a movement 500 years ago that is still rocking our world today. The First and Second Great Awakenings were other movements that God has swept over the face of the earth to make His name known to all people groups.

A mantra certainly has its place. We all need a way to express our beliefs in a compelling way. But outside of a movement, a mantra has no power; it is just hollow words. Mantras are no substitute for action. "Remember the Alamo" does not motivate without the sacrifice of 182 Texans. Remove the experience of Selma from his life and "I have a Dream" by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. loses a lot of its impact. A key step of reaching our communities with the gospel of Christ is to be active in the movement of God across our planet. As the saying goes, "Actions speak louder than words".

The truly essential issue for the local church, and I would even go so far as to include the individual Bible study groups in our churches, is for us to realize that citing a mantra or Bible verse does not mean that our people have adopted it into their lifestyle. Movements are not born of mantras; they are born out of obedience. Obedience is what brings forth movements. Obedience is an indicator that a person understands what is involved, has counted the cost, and is ready to pay the price for advancing the movement.

A key element missing in much of what we do in our small communities is direction. A movement, by its very name, indicates something is happening; a direction has been established and now every person who is part of the movement is directing their life toward the accomplishment of the objective. Many of the groups of small communities in our churches have no direction. They are figuratively "treading water" from week to week. This lack of direction has sapped their strength. As a result, attendance wanes and groups begin chasing a variety of

methods in search of something invigorating. Deep inside, we want to be part of something that is bigger than ourselves and that is so profound and life-changing that it can not be explained on a t-shirt!

Movements start when small groups of people commit themselves to a cause that is greater than themselves. As Bonhoeffer wrote, "When God calls a man, He bids him come and die." You and your small group or Sunday School class can have a crucial impact on human history when you participate in the redemptive movement of God in human history.

Note: Each chapter has 3-5 discussion ideas for you to consider personally and bring to your small group for discussion. These discussion topics will help you personalize what you are reading.

Discussion:

What are some mantras your church or denomination has used in the past?

Are these mantras effective now?

In your own words, define a movement of some kind.

Does your small community feel like it is involved in a movement?

Brainstorm some ideas that would help involve your group in an Acts 1:8 movement of God.

## Missional Pivot Point #2: From Class to Communitas.

I was flying recently and as I stood in line to get a quick lunch, two soldiers got in line behind me. After I nodded to them, I watched and listened as these two men who were from different units and different wars (one in Iraq, the other in Afghanistan) shared with each other. I recognized that here were two warriors who, although total strangers, had a common shared experience that knit them together like brothers. I listened as they got acquainted and I could sense the respect they had for each other and what they were doing in the military. As they left, it occurred to me that people who are on a mission are bound together like family. It is beyond learning, even beyond community. In his book *Exiles*, Michael Frost calls it *communitas*, that sense of being bound together by a common mission and shared experience.

I firmly believe that one of the missing ingredients in our churches today are small communities who truly understand their mission and are sharing life together in an effort to accomplish their purpose. These classes have gone beyond mere biblical knowledge and are putting what they learn in their group into practical, everyday life. Let's be clear: there is a difference between purpose and function. Bible study is an important function of a Bible study group, but it is not the group's purpose. The purpose of a Bible study group is to impact lostness by making disciples. A small group that knows its purpose and follows this Bible knowledge with sweat and effort is a group that is building communitas and changing its neighborhood with the gospel.

What is the difference between a class and a community? A class is something you attend; a community is something you experience. A class is a place where you go to learn; a community is where you go to share. Classes dispense information; communities dispense grace.

When it comes right down to it, community is really about belonging. People do not go to the "friendliest" church in town; they go where they feel like they belong. One of the key ingredients of effective small group evangelism is to provide a place where a person apart from Christ can belong and where they are safe to ask their questions about Christ and experience the Christian life with the group.

In his book, *Connect3*, David Francis states that Bible study groups operate on one of the three levels: as a class, a community, or a commission. When a group operates at the "class" level, they are meeting weekly for prayer and Bible study. There is little contact among members during the week and no form of mission adventure into the surrounding neighborhoods. A class operating on the "community" level has great fellowships and the members provide genuine personal care. But a group operating as a "commission" has moved to the next level of ministry. This group not only has great Bible study and wonderful inter-personal ministry among its members, it has stepped forward in becoming a missionary organization in its community. The key: this group has a purpose that is beyond itself. A group that has moved to the "commission" stage, as David states it, or to "communitas" is no longer selfishly enslaved to its own survival.

Because many of us have been involved in small groups or Sunday School for years, we may have forgotten the powerful impact that occurs when a person apart from Christ steps into our

circle. While the weekly experience of small group life may have been part of our lives for years, this is a new experience for a lost person. The simple exercise of prayer requests followed by prayer can be profoundly moving for someone who has never had this experience. Just consider: how many lost people have ever participated in a discussion of the Bible in a small group of people? The answer is very few. The opportunity small group Bible study offers someone to interact with God's Word makes it one of the most evangelistic ministries of the church!

But there is even more. This principle of belonging is deeply embedded in our soul. From the first pages of Scripture we learn that man was not meant to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Our time of togetherness in a class or home with other Christians was not meant to be the only time we are together. John 10:10 states that Jesus came to give us life – not just on Sunday mornings around coffee, but 24/7. The life of faith we live is meant to be experienced and shared with others.

So how does a church pivot from class to *communitas*? The class or small group must come to understand its mission as given to it by Jesus Christ Himself: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." I have discovered that one of the most effective methods to help move a small group into "*communitas*" is through action. The action of extending itself into the surrounding community will often help a small group put into action the Bible they have studied for years. A small group in a church today has two choices: refuse their mission and be a self-serving group, or accept their biblical mission and be missionaries in their neighborhoods.

## Discussion

Using David Francis' definitions of class, community, and commission; which of these best identifies your class?

Share an experience where you really felt like you belonged in a group of people.

Do you believe that your class is aware of its true purpose of making disciples, including discipling unreached people in the community? What evidence supports your answer?

### Missional Pivot Point #3 – From Talking Points to Theology

During the recent political season, I was watching a journalist interview a leader of a political party. As the journalist proceeded, it became obvious that the politician was not answering his questions, but kept moving the dialogue to topics he felt safe discussing. Finally, the journalist threw up his hands in frustration and told the politician, “Would you stop giving me your talking points and just answer my questions!”

Could it be that when we are discussing spiritual things with our unsaved friends, we are guilty of going through our evangelistic talking points instead of answering their questions? Now I am a big fan of FAITH, CWT, EE and other evangelistic programs. In every one of these strategies, however, we train our people to not answer questions that are not in our evangelistic outline. Instead, we steer the dialogue back to our plan. After watching the political interview mentioned above, I got a glimpse of how this kind of dialogue must appear to a person apart from Christ but who has sincere questions about our faith. We are going through our evangelism talking points and not answering his or her questions. Seriously, can you find a place in the Bible where Christ refused to answer a sincere question from someone who was searching for truth? He usually answered insincere questions, too!

I believe that one of the major reasons we are uncomfortable dialoguing with a non-believer is that we do not know much about theology and the questions we are being asked are theological. As a result, we resort to talking points – or even worse – we just don’t talk to our friends about Christ at all. We have become so theologically shallow that a recent Barna survey reports that half of evangelical Christians believe that there are other paths to God besides through His Son.

As believers, we often believe that doctrine is something for our pastors. We must realize how critical it is for every believer to know theology. Doctrine is simply what we believe and why we believe it. Our society is inundated with unbiblical beliefs about God and about His Son, Jesus Christ. Oprah Winfrey routinely has guests on her show that teach that the power of salvation lies within each of us. Acts 4:12 clearly states that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ. Oprah and her guests present very appealing arguments and often take a Bible verse or two out of context to justify their beliefs. Ephesians 4:14 tells us to learn doctrine so that we will not be tossed about by the waves of human craftiness. The responsibility of our Sunday Schools and small groups is to study the Bible so that we not only know what we believe, but why we believe it!

For us to be salt and light in our communities, we must learn theology. Theology must be preached from our pulpits. It must be taught in our Bible study groups. Theology should be a topic of discussion when we eat our meals together, or sit as a family in our living rooms. As a result, instead of ignoring the questions our lost friends have of our faith, we can engage them and help them in their spiritual journey to Christ. The post-modern world that we live in has no tolerance for “Christianity-lite”, and neither should we.

Pastors, a biblical and theological survey that you can give to your members is available to download at [www.bgco.org/sundayschool](http://www.bgco.org/sundayschool).

## Discussion

Do you agree with the statement that doctrine is what we believe and why we believe it? Improve on this definition.

Share a time where you felt like you were either hearing or sharing Christian “talking points”.

The literature used in your small community is important. Analyze your curriculum. Does your curriculum teach solid doctrine in an applicable manner?

With your small community, make a list of basic Christian beliefs. Beside them, write scripture references that support these beliefs. Discuss why it is important to know both *what* you believe and *why* you believe it.

## Missional Pivot Point #4 – Biblical and Relevant

You have heard their slogan and perhaps wondered if it is possibly true. It is the motto of the fastest growing and most watched cable news program on the planet – FOX News. Their slogan: “Fair and Balanced”. For anyone who has even a shred of cynicism, you have to wonder, “Can this really be true?” This channel anchors one of its primetime news hours with both a conservative and liberal. Research from the recent political campaign revealed that FOX News actually was the most fair and balanced network in covering both of the presidential candidates.

Churches can learn much from FOX News. No, I don’t mean that we need to include pagan rituals in this Sunday’s worship. But we do need to learn how to balance our commitment to biblical truth along with our society’s need for social ministry. The desire of the missional church is “Biblical and Relevant”. In other words, we must maintain biblical integrity while at the same time understanding the culture in which we minister. Our temptation is to emphasize one at the expense of the other.

First, we must hold a high view of God’s Word. Although this is always an imperative for our churches, it is doubly so now. The younger generation of adults has grown up with a plethora of faiths. As a church, in our worship and in our small groups we must be biblically faithful to teach the whole counsel of God’s Word. People today not only need to learn good doctrine, research reports that they crave it. However, focusing only on Bible teaching without proper application results in the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees. Outsiders begin to view God’s people as judgmental and uncaring.

Second, we must realize that our society needs the soft touch of social ministry, too. Look at the example of Jesus. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and fed the multitudes. Quite often Jesus would combine social ministry with evangelism (ex: Mark 2 and John 9). The old saying still holds true, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”. Joined with this, did you know that there are over 1,000 verses in the Bible dealing with social injustice? The entire book of Jeremiah is ripe with God’s anger at the social injustices of Judah. But focusing on social injustice alone leads liberalism and unconverted souls.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is known as the Prince of Preachers. Spurgeon is greatly respected for his outstanding preaching abilities and his commitment to preach the Word of God in season and out of season. But Spurgeon’s church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was highly engaged in social ministry. The “Met Tab’s” robust social ministry balanced its powerful preaching ministry. The Met had an orphanage and a school. The church fed the homeless daily and provided a clothing closet. At its height, the Met Tab had over 100 social ministries. It is no wonder that this church was respected all over London. It was biblical and relevant.

Our world is desperate for people to rise up whose actions match their beliefs. A world where the truth that is preached on the inside of the stained glass is lived out by its people in the shattered glass of the streets. Your church and small group must strive for this balance of biblical integrity and social justice. One of the reasons I particularly like class mission projects is they help our Bible study groups practice their biblical knowledge in their community.

## Discussion

Discuss the tension between being biblical and being relevant with your small community.

Which way does your group lean? Toward being biblical or being relevant?

Discuss the dangers of being unbalanced.

What are some examples of social injustice in your community? Discuss a source of action your group can take.

Discuss the importance of knowing and understanding the Bible today, especially in terms of society's religious tolerance.

## Missional Pivot Point #5 – From Incremental to Exponential

A church sign recently caught my attention; “Reaching people one life at a time”. As I continued driving and reflecting on that sign, I thought: Do we have time to really do that? I’m not talking about 24 hours in a day kind of time; I mean *time*, as in time to change a community with the gospel kind of time before it totally drops off the deep end! Can an entire church really afford to reach its community at such a slow pace?

My team leader showed me a video produced by Sony that shows just how fast things are moving in our world. For instance, it took radio 38 years to reach a market of 50 million people and television took 13 years. The iPod had 50 million users in three years, and Facebook reached that number in two years! My grandfather was a letter writer back in the day. I got our mobile phone bill on the day of this writing – my daughter sent 2,464 text messages last month alone.

Ed Stetzer states that if the 50’s ever come back again Southern Baptists will be in great shape – because most of our churches are already there. Unfortunately, we have thought that changing to keep up with the culture meant having contemporary worship and home groups. Our culture blew by those issues two decades ago. Our unit for measuring the growth of our churches is incremental; our culture measures growth exponentially. The church uses single digits for growth; the world we live in measures growth in gigabytes! We rejoice when World Magazine reports that on an average day last year 79,000 people worldwide converted to Christ as Savior. Then we see that the world’s net growth rate per day is almost 300,000 people. Exponential!

How serious is this issue of incrementalism? Averaged over the past 50 years, it takes 400 Southern Baptists a full year to enroll just one person in Bible study! Are you still sure that you want to reach your community one person at a time?

Christianity has not always been this way. Instead of lagging the culture, Christianity has often led it. Christians were at the forefront of one of the most informational inventions of all time – the printing press! Gutenberg’s first printing was the Bible, and John Wycliffe and the early reformers used the printing press to make the gospel available to millions of people in a short period of time. The Reformation and the First Great Awakening soon followed. They were leading the culture and they were exponential in their approach.

Glimpses of hope are appearing. Chisholm Heights Baptist Church in Mustang, Oklahoma and Sun Valley Community Church in Gilbert, Arizona have formed groups on Facebook. They not only stay in touch with their members, but also use it as an avenue for their members to direct their friends to the church’s Facebook group where they can begin interacting with the gospel.

If you are interested in networking with others about being missional, you might consider joining the “Missional Ministry Group” on Facebook. This group has many members whose passion is being missional and it has links, resources, and discussions about missional Christianity.

Discussion

Take an honest look at your small community. How many new people have joined your group this past year?

How many unchurched people joined your group?

Is your group or church growing exponentially? What are some preconceived attitudes that may be preventing exponential growth in your group?

## Missional Pivot Point #6 – From Members to Missionaries

For years American Express has advertised its card as the best for a consumer to have. Its reason: “Membership has its privileges”. It has the best rewards, the best travel deals, the best partners, and the best investment services. Famous people, including Dennis Hopper, Tiger Woods, and Tina Turner promote their memberships. Of course, you can also have different membership levels. Although American Express memberships may be great for consumers, one thing is certain; “Membership has its privileges” does not belong in the missional church!

As Christians, our membership privileges in God’s eternal kingdom make those of American Express pale by comparison. First Corinthians 9:24-27 tells us that we will have a celestial crown that will not fade and never needs renewing. However, until that day we wear an earthly membership in God’s kingdom.

Over the years, unfortunately, many of us have the mistaken idea that our church membership has some type of earthly rewards program attached to it. As a minister, I have heard many comments from church members expressing their membership privileges. We want to vote on the color of the carpet and whether or not the church can start a second Sunday School. Members insist upon their own style of music in church and if the youth group should charter a bus for the ski trip. The mindset that causes many consumers to shop credit cards looking for the best airline miles and lowest interest rates has spilled over into church members who shop churches looking for trendy programs and stylish buildings.

We even transfer this membership concept to the church, where there are levels of church members: regular church members, ministers, and then the ultimate – missionaries! But missionaries do not insist on their rights as members. They are more concerned with the lost condition of the people in their community than they are their privileges. Missionaries who travel to foreign countries yield their rights as citizens and serve at the whim of their host nation. Missionaries must learn and adopt the language, dress, and culture of their communities. They live among the people they are trying to reach with the gospel in order to connect with them and to communicate the message of Christ in such a way that their host community can best understand it and receive it.

My friend Ed Stetzer humorously suggests that Southern Baptists have a patron saint and her name is Lottie Moon. Years ago, Miss Lottie left the comforts of her home to live in China. Lottie revamped the way Southern Baptists did missions in other countries. Instead of living in the missionary compound, Lottie lived among the Chinese people. She dressed similarly to her new friends. She ate their food, learned their language, and adopted their culture. When famine and war gripped China, she starved alongside her Chinese friends. Lottie Moon had a dramatic impact on her community with the gospel because she chose to forfeit her rights as a church member and let the gospel live through her as a missionary. The saddest part of Lottie Moon’s story is that while she was dying of hunger in China, she wrote letters to churches in the states urging them to pry open their wallets and be missionaries instead of members.

For the church to have a powerful impact upon our culture, we must adopt the attitude of missionaries instead of members. Missionaries understand the value of starting new churches and

new Bible study classes. A “missionary” is not the equivalent of a platinum church membership status attainable only by a few. Instead, we are all clearly called to be missionaries in our neighborhoods. And just imagine how wonderful “church” will be when we have all forfeited our rights and have adopted the model of Christ, who came “not to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many”.

Some biblical reading about living as missionaries can be found in: Philippians 2:3-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Mark 10:45; John 20:21.

## Discussion

Discuss in your group the attitudes of members and missionaries.

Discuss the statement, “Membership has its privileges does not belong in the local church”.

Share how a missionary mindset is essential to the Christian life.

## Missional Pivot Point #7 – From Protecting to Planting

One of the most joyous moments in life is the birth of a child. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, older sibling or a friend, the birth of child is something we rejoice over. Through all the issues of pregnancy and the pain of childbirth come a tremendously joyful moment and the realization that here is a new life. This life will have dreams, gifts, and abilities that have been given by God. Imagine what would happen, however, if 96 per cent of the women in America refused to bear children. Society as we know it would end!

In his book *Organic Church*, Neil Cole states: “Southern Baptist research indicates that only 4% of the churches in America will ever plant another church.” The statistics indicate that most of our churches have become so protective of the church that they are unwilling to begin new churches. In order for a church to truly become missional, a church must transition from an attitude of protection to an attitude of planting.

This planting attitude must become more than just something the missions committee recommends once every decade or two. Planting must become part of the very culture of the church. Planting must include not only the planting of new churches, but also the planting of new Sunday School classes or small groups.

Planting is necessary for a number of reasons, but the main reason is planting helps God’s people live by faith. Whether it is starting a new class or a new church, stepping out in faith that God will provide leaders and resources is a vital part of our growth as a Christian. The reason many churches are so protective is: they lack faith. Churches that choose to live as protectors have replaced God as their provider. These churches are communicating they are unsure that God is big enough or rich enough to provide for their needs. So, they end up doing it themselves. What a contrast to Philippians 4:19 which states, “And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” When we choose to live by faith, we are able to tap into God’s treasure chest instead of protecting our church assets.

But planting does even more. Just like a newborn baby brings life and vitality to a family, new churches or new groups bring fresh focus to the church. We remember who we are and why we are here. We plant so that we can reach new people. Generally, we do not plant churches for people who are already here. We plant churches and start new classes in order to make disciples of people we have yet to reach.

For too long, our promotion of new classes and new churches has been linked to numbers. But we plant new starts because it is an incredibly effective way to transform our world. When a family has a newborn baby, the entire family is transformed. New starts transform lives. New leaders emerge and are transformed. People who are reached by the gospel are transformed. Ultimately, as the new plants emerge throughout the city, entire communities are transformed.

I am often asked a question by Bible study teachers about when they should start a new class or group. How long should the group be together before a new one is started? How big should the group be before planting a new class? Where do we find the additional space? There are all sorts of formulas about when to start a new group that are based on the size and age of the class. But

my response, after years of not only starting new classes myself and but also equipping other leaders about how to start new groups is: start new groups as soon as you can! To use a construction metaphor, the concrete starts to harden as soon as a new group is formed. The longer the group or a church waits, the harder the concrete becomes.

There is another reason why you should plant churches and groups as soon as you can. We begin these new plants because of the need that people in our communities have to come to Christ. Beginning new churches and new classes makes room for unreached people to discover Christ and begin a relationship with Him. When we wait, we are delaying the opportunity of dozens, if not hundreds of people to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Procrastinating (and that is what much of the wait is about) further delays the opportunity to involve more of our church members in leadership and put their spiritual gifts to work. As 2 Corinthians 6:2 encourages us, “Now is the day of salvation.”

Again, beginning new churches and groups is an act of faith. Most of our churches do not have enough leaders, do not have enough space, and do not have enough resources to plant new churches or classes. Plant them anyway! Planting early and planting often prevents us from relying on our own resources and ingenuity, and to trust God to provide the leaders, space, and resources for us to reach out to the community around us with good news of Jesus Christ.

The psalmist states that like arrows in the hands of a warrior are the children which we bring into the world. However, ultimately an arrow is not meant to remain in a quiver. Arrows are meant to be aimed and shot. The dream of every parent is of the day that their child has become a responsible, contributing member of society. Our goal as a church is not for us to keep our people protected in a quiver, but to release them into the world. Planting new churches and starting new small communities is one of the most effective ways we have to transform our society. If we truly want to see Jesus Christ exalted in our communities then we must release the arrows in our quivers and begin starting new works.

## Discussion

Ask your small community to express their thoughts about starting new groups or new churches.

Dialogue how planting helps God’s people live by faith and not by sight.

Ask the class how long someone should have to wait before space was made for them to study God’s Word in a small group.

Discuss with your group how soon they think that they could start a new group. Put the date in a visible place in the room and leave it there as a reminder.

List some people your group knows who could be invited to a new group.

## Missional Pivot Point #8 – From Attractional to Incarnational Evangelism

It is one of the most crucial verses in all of scripture. John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory...” It is called the incarnation. Jesus Christ taking on human form. The incarnation is also the key element of living life as a missional Christian.

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the church used an attractional strategy to reach its community. The key was to attract people into the church’s facilities through a program driven approach. Toward the end of that century, many churches perfected this approach with impressive facilities and outstanding programs. But as the new century has begun, the attractional model of evangelism is having fewer results.

In his book, *The Forgotten Ways*, Alan Hirsch states that only 12 per cent of the population can be reached through come and see programs by the local church. LifeWay Research has the figure closer to 20 per cent. Regardless of which number is more accurate, the fact is that American society has changed. Programs and events attract fewer lost people. At least eighty per cent of Americans are unlikely to be reached through attractional events. But research does indicate that they can be reached, and reached effectively, through what is called “incarnational” evangelism.

Simply put, incarnational evangelism is recognizing that the church is comprised of people and wherever God’s people are, the church is there as well. Incarnational evangelism frees the church from the mystique of the church being a building. A church is God’s people living life as a missionary in their culture. Biblically, wherever a follower of Christ may find his or her self, they are an extension of Jesus Christ ministering to the community through them. There are at least four key reasons why God’s people need to recognize the importance of incarnational ministry and evangelism.

First, it is the example of Christ Himself. In spite of the creation and all of God’s handiwork, mankind does not recognize his Creator. Romans 1:19-23 explains that although God has plainly revealed Himself, the human race does not acknowledge Him. Christ Himself is our model of incarnational ministry in Philippians 2:3-11, where He left the comfort of heaven and took on the form of a man and lived among us. Jesus did not do the bulk of His ministry on earth from the safe confines of the Temple, but by living and moving among the people. He ate and ministered among the ordinary folk of His day. After dining with Zacchaeus the tax collector, He states, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). When our ministry focus is on our facilities, we tend to lose the seeking part of the gospel. Buildings do not seek, people do!

Second, incarnational ministry is biblical. All of the Great Commission texts of Scripture clearly teach God’s people to go into the fallen world with the message of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, John 20:21, Acts 1:8). In fact, the word “mission” actually means “sent”. Our concept of being sent by God is critical to our understanding and practice of evangelism. Not one of these texts say “come and see”. In his book, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, Andreas Kostenberger uses the example of centrifugal motion to illustrate the New Testament principle of reaching the nations with the gospel. An object can only remain in motion when it is moving as far away from the center as possible. Once it quits moving outward, it loses

its force and becomes motionless. For a church to remain in motion with God, it must constantly be moving outward.

Third, incarnational evangelism was the pattern of the early church, which had no buildings and no programs for 300 years. The mission trips of Paul and Barnabas, the ministry of Philip the Evangelist, and the spread of the gospel through the Roman Empire clearly indicate an incarnational approach to evangelism. When persecution drove many of the early believers out of Jerusalem, the gospel spread even faster; Antioch, Berea, Samaria, and Caesarea are just a few examples.

Finally, living incarnationally helps deepen and personalize our faith. Living our everyday lives as the hands and feet of Jesus in our communities encourages us not to trust in our buildings and programs, but to trust in Christ alone. People do not ask questions of faith to our facilities; they look to God's people for those answers. We begin to recognize the many things that we rely upon instead of our faith. Buildings and programs are nothing more than tools that we use to help us share the gospel, but they should never become a replacement of our faith in our Savior.

We began this article with some rather discouraging information. But on a positive note, LifeWay Research has discovered that although many unbelieving Americans are skeptical of the institutional church, 88 per cent would like to have a meaningful conversation with a Christian about Jesus Christ. As followers of Christ, our personal testimony takes on a new perspective when we share our beliefs with an unreached person.

## Discussion

How was the early church so effective in reaching the known world when they had no facilities or programs to speak of?

Discuss the statement that only "20 per cent of Americans are receptive to attractional evangelism".

What would incarnational evangelism look like in your neighborhood?

What could your group do in the way of incarnational evangelism?

Who is a person you can have a meaningful conversation with about Jesus Christ?

## Missional Pivot Point #9 – From Assembly Line to Customized

Henry Ford changed America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when he invented the assembly line. Ford Motors rolled Model T's off that assembly line and made automobiles affordable to the American public. When asked about the availability of colors in the Model T, Ford's response is now a classic American line: "You can have any color you want, as long as it is black".

Compare how Henry Ford made automobiles to how Dell makes computers. You can either call Dell or go online and tell the representative what you want on your computer and how you are going to use it. You can tell Dell what color of computer you desire. Dell will customize it just for you and ship it – the next day!

This customized approach is everywhere in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We customize our mobile phones with special ringtones for certain people. We can set our phone's wallpaper with pictures of our family. McDonald's makes it your way; right away!

This change from assembly line to customization is a cultural phenomenon that we must understand in the local church and in our denominations. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American churches have used an assembly line approach to developing followers of Christ. Our Sunday Schools used the same curriculum. Our discipleship process was similar. For the most part, a person could relocate to just about any region of the country and find Southern Baptist churches in their new home that used a similar approach and resources. This approach was very effective until our nation began a cultural shift about 25 years ago. Today however, our country is a more diverse nation with a variety of cultures and languages. A "one size fits all" approach to ministry, evangelism, and missions is no longer appropriate for the world in which we live.

Any missionary that relocates to Kenya would be foolish not to study the Kenyan culture and present the gospel in a culturally sensitive context to that nation. Our churches must transition to a missional approach to evangelizing our culture and growing disciples of Jesus Christ. When a church looks at its surrounding community the way missionaries look at their new country, it is becoming missional. When a body of believers engages their community with the gospel in a way that is biblically sound and culturally relevant – they ARE missional.

We still have church study course plans that were the backbone of the Southern Baptist discipleship process. These plans were an outstanding way for previous generations to equip their members. But in the era of customization, a new approach is needed. Personal spiritual growth plans are emerging that enables a disciple of Christ to be equipped in a way that best fits their spiritual gifting and cultural context.

An additional advantage of customizing your message to your community is that it inspires creativity. Many of our youngest and brightest leaders have left our denominations today because the assembly line approach to evangelism and missions does not inspire them. Assembly lines may reduce costs, but they are not very personal. God did not create His church to be automatons, but to be individuals who are inspired by their Creator to display His greatness through creative and personal expressions of faith.

Customization is also the future of training leaders in our churches. In the past, my denomination focused on sending its lay leaders to one of our two national conference centers in Ridgecrest, North Carolina or Glorieta, near Santa Fe, New Mexico. But as our communities have changed, those large meetings were changed to regional conferences. For the past two decades, associational clinics have been the backbone for much of our lay leader training. But with the technology available in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the new context that postmodernism has brought, churches want to equip their leadership with customized training.

The Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma is designing resources to train lay leaders to become missional leaders. Called the “One Day Initiative”, a multitude of training modules and videos are being developed so that a local church of any size can customize its training and host its own training event. For more information, visit [www.bgco.org/oneday](http://www.bgco.org/oneday).

## Discussion

How does customization inspire creativity?

What can your group do to have a more personal ministry in your church?

If you were to draft your own personal spiritual growth plan, what would it look like?

## Missional Pivot Point #10 – From Institutional to Individual

I have had the opportunity to observe some original works of art in my day. As I look upon what an artist has painted on a canvas, my own mind draws a picture of the artist creating his masterpiece. The artist's care, his or her attention to detail, their ability to carefully and expertly transfer the colors from their brush to the bare canvas and bring it to life creates a masterpiece that speaks to our soul.

By comparison, the word “institutional” does not have this kind of effect on most people. Institutional food is code word for tasteless. Institutional ideas come across as uncreative. Maintaining the institution does not really capture the idea of originality, does it? But it goes further. Institutionalism drains our humanity. A look at chapters 2 and 3 in the book of Genesis reveals that we were created as individuals. In these two chapters, the phrases “the man” and “the woman” are used 24 times. God did not create “a man”. He created “the man”. We were not mass produced on an assembly line. Instead, He created us individually. He labored over each of us. God spends our first nine months creating a work of art. We have a fingerprint that is ours alone. Each of us has a retina that is unique. His own Spirit breathes life into us. It is an intensely personal creative act. Ephesians 2:10 even states: “For we are His workmanship” (Greek: *poema* – work of art). This is why institutional feels so cold and impersonal.

Our attempt to organize ourselves often lends itself to institutionalism. There is nothing wrong with organization, it is often a more effective and efficient method to get a lot of work done. The tipping point however, occurs when the survival of the organization overshadows its cause and the people who belong to it. At this point, the institution is more concerned with itself than its mission.

For much of the past 50 years, the church has become increasingly institutional in its approach to missions and evangelism. In many churches, members are asked to sacrifice through attendance, finances, or commitment to help the church “grow”. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these three areas of life, when we are asked to make these sacrifices just to maintain an organization for the organization's sake, we have lost our way. Church growth is generally measured in attendance. Honestly, is attendance the best measure of spiritual growth?

For the church to re-establish itself around mission and people, a different dynamic must be applied. Scripture clearly teaches that the church consists of God's people. God uses organic words like vine and branches, body, people, and new creation. Buildings and budgets are not the church; believers are. When individual believers are growing, then the church is growing. Our appeals to growing our church should not be centered around institutionalism, but on the individual. In other words, we want people to come to small group Bible study, not so that the church can keep its numbers up, but because it is an effective way to grow a deeper follower of Christ.

Furthermore, a key aspect of the missional movement in America is not only for individuals within the church to discover their own calling, but also for individual churches to discover their unique opportunity to be a beacon of gospel light in their communities. We are emerging from almost three decades of cookie-cutter church growth programs. When a church implements

programs instead of principles, they sacrifice their own unique ministry in their city. There is nothing wrong with learning from other churches, but all too often we have replaced learning with mimicry. God never meant for His local church to be a carbon copy of others. He meant for us to be originals. Learn the principles that missional churches are using, but apply those principles to your local church with the brush of an artist, not the hum of a copying machine.

In Mark 5, we find Jesus surrounded by a crowd of people, all of whom are touching Him and calling His name. But it was not the crowd that got Jesus' attention, it was one person. It was an individual. It was someone who needed healing and cleansing. Ultimately it was an individual, a woman who had an issue of blood that caused Jesus to stop in His tracks and provide ministry. Our churches will impact lives when our attention turns from the appeal and allure of the crowd and we focus on the individuals in our midst who need personal attention and a touch from God.

## Discussion

What does the word “institutional” mean to you?

Is there a difference between organization and institution? What is it?

How could seeing the church as a body of individuals help us be more effective in impacting our communities with the gospel?

Now that you have finished reading this book, in the space below, define the word *missional* and write some steps that you as an individual are going to take to be a missionary in your neighborhood.

Define *missional* –

What can your small community do to be missional?

Actions I will take to become a missionary in my neighborhood –

Actions my small community will take to be missional –

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## **About the Author**



Bob Mayfield joined the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma in September 2005. He serves as Sunday School and Adult Discipleship Specialist. Prior to coming to Oklahoma, he was the Church Ministries Facilitator with the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention. Bob has been an education minister and a youth minister in churches in Texas and Arizona. He is currently the president of a national organization called the State Sunday School Directors Association. Bob has written and produced three Bible study resources known as “PowerUP” and is currently writing a new resource called the “One Day Initiative”, which is designed to help produce missional disciples of Christ. He has also written a devotional journal and has written and produced several videos for worship. He and his wife Tracy have been married for 22 years and have two children, Zachary (21) and Mary Kathryn (19). He is a member at North Pointe Baptist Church in Edmond.