

A summary of Spent Matches: lighting a signal fire for the spiritually dissatisfied.

Our modern aversion to motivating by guilt keeps us from maturing in our skills at handling negative information and actions. Over reliance on optimism colors our understanding of the growth of the church and its impact and hinders us from developing the passion to question current strategies. We tend to focus on the data, small as it may be, that confirms the conclusions that we want to draw. Failing to allow information into your decision-making mechanisms can be lethal. Paradigm paralysis can be fatal! Paradigm paralysis begins when we refuse to put new data in our spreadsheet. A flexible, growing mind opens up another column on the spreadsheet for the new data, even if it is confusing or doesn't fit neatly. Keeping it in view stops the filtering process of accepting only data that confirms our beliefs.

Despite the hip, cool, culturally relevant methods that churches have employed, the fact remains that people who don't go to church don't like people who do. We've created a church culture that reeks of intolerance and self-righteousness. The truth seems to be that non-churchgoing people just don't like us. I believe Jesus wants to build His church, and He wants us to disciple the world. The reason we find ourselves in this predicament pertains to our ever-increasing desire to add complexity to the simplicity that Jesus left us with. It is clear throughout history that you don't always get disciples when you plant churches; but if you make disciple-making disciples, you always get the church as Jesus intended it.

Here's my agenda, plain and simple: there could be a different way of doing things. The current strategies in play today, evangelism and church planting, have been somewhat effective but are decreasing in their effectiveness. The mantra "Church planting is the best methodology of evangelism under the sun" still guides the minds of the leaders of the Christian movement. Despite the fact that we are seeing more and more people on a track to hell, we continue to plow money and people into ineffective strategies. What is currently called the church is not going to get the job done. Creating more churches like the ones we already have flies in the face of reason.

We need to feel this scene (Matthew 28:16-20): Jesus is about to entrust His mission to people who are not yet believers. In fact, reading ahead to the first chapter of the book of Acts indicates that they are still quite clueless as to what Jesus is up to. Despite the fact that worshipers and doubters were present, Jesus didn't separate the group into haves and have-nots, or even leaders and followers. He was banking on both groups being able to carry out His mission. There is a paradigm shift needed that many are incapable of making because of the theological box we've painted ourselves in. Jesus had been with, invested in, and spiritually challenged these folks. But Jesus' plan to deploy them wasn't gauged on their knowledge, redeemed state, or ability to trust.

No matter how you measure the practice of the church, multiplicative disciple-making (disciple-making that multiplies) has not been tried and found wanting; rather it has been tried, found difficult, and abandoned. The energies that have been piled into

disciple-making have, for the most part, involved a knowledge-based approach. I think Jesus would find foreign the concept of a person becoming a Christian but not becoming a disciple until later when he or she becomes more committed to faith. To be abundantly clear, Jesus asks us to make disciples—not converts, not confirmands, not church members, not pastors, not clergy—but disciples.

Becoming a disciple starts a life-transforming process of repeatedly ordering our world, both inner and outer, around the thoughts and wishes of our Father in heaven. Baptism signifies the start of a life of learning how to be identified as living a "with-Jesus" life, a life that is spiritually obvious. We've taught people to share their faith rather than their lives. Jesus commanded us to adopt a methodology that teaches people to order their lives around God's wisdom. Obeying Jesus leads to freedom, not legalism. Being a true disciple is a matter of learning to obey what Jesus said. So, to summarize, baptism focuses on the outward move toward Jesus, while obeying what Jesus said is the inward expression of a disciplined life. Jesus called me [us] to make disciple-making disciples. We've become worshipers of form and have not paid close attention to function. Yes, we have become worshipers of form—church. The biblical function of the mission, multiplicative disciple-making, provided the direction and the form of the churches that followed. They seemed to know that if you make disciple-making disciples, the result is always a biblically functioning community—Jesus' church. But if you plant churches, you don't always get disciple-making disciples. First, using the term church to refer to a building gives people the idea that there is a "First Church" that is above, beyond, or apart from them. Church is a movement of people, not an organization that lives in a box on the corner.

Having a multiplicative disciple-making strategy in place should be the first priority in our church-planting strategy. Every healthy organism moves from simplicity to complexity in a chaordic fashion. It takes discipline to see the complexity you add and evaluate whether you are contributing to heaviness or improving functionality. Jesus wanted leadership that leads from behind, the quiet powerful influence of men and women who are catalysts. They live to grow things beyond them. Learning to use the discovery process to take spiritually interested people to a relationship with God allows us to put our energy into connecting people with God rather than with ourselves. Our form-fixed methods are in the way of the hope that we possess. We don't have to give up on the idea of a biblically functioning community; we just need to reorder our understanding of the last command of Jesus. Our job is to make disciple-making disciples by embedding the biblical DNA of obedience and reproduction into them. Jesus will build His church from His obedient followers.

Shifts in thinking come in two ways: rapid and radical. When radical shifts occur, depending on old ways of thinking can be lethal. It is not possible to do what we used to do better; we have to do it differently. The definition of discipleship has, for the most part, become an acquisition of knowledge, hoping that it will then spur holy action in the physical world. With an affection for the world of ideas, modern Christians pursue "knowing" over "doing." Because our attempts at sharing the gospel hover around getting people to believe in Jesus' death on the cross, we fail to help people understand

that this is not about adding another belief to your life—analysis. This is about exchanging the organizing principle you currently have for God who came in the flesh—synthesis.

This new way of leading is a discovery process that has disciple-making disciples being facilitators to help people find God and His will by reading the Bible. I like a new definition of teaching: helping people make meaning. This moves me from a lecturer to a learning-environment designer. Humans, and especially adults, place a high degree of value on equilibrium. To see people change, grow, and rethink life, we need to disturb that equilibrium. If we are going to regain momentum toward the Great Commission, we are in desperate need of repentance from the overconfidence we have in ourselves as teachers. First, start where the learner is, not where you are; second, let them drive the agenda; and third, allow them to be the author, not you. Because the average person accepts his own conclusions much more readily and deeper than conclusions given to him, efficiency in the learning process demands we create situations where he comes to his own conclusions.

When you create dependencies on people or institutions for spiritual growth, you make the gospel heavy and unable to move swiftly. Since our thinking causes us to start where those who don't have a family relationship with God are, we use their music and their life issues as a starting point. We navigate back to the biblical truth from there. It is our hope that Sundays will start a discussion, not deliver a conclusion.

In the discipling process, if I were going to make disciple-making disciples, that is, obey the Great Commission, I needed to choose methods that were simple and repeatable by people with different personalities and types of giftedness. I was responsible for baptizing disciples and teaching them to obey with methods that they could use to continue making disciple-making disciples. In an attempt to find people ready to obey the Great Commission we discovered people who had a holy dissatisfaction. We focused on high-value targets: men and women who already had a demonstrated love and concern for their lost friends and relatives. These people had already exhausted conventional strategies by repeatedly extending invitations to their relational network. The repeated nature of these invitations over time was bordering on irritating, so they were ripe for a new and different way of reaching out.

Enter Disciple-Making Movements (DMM). In brief, DMM turns average followers of Christ into event planners, rather than salesmen for Jesus, so that they can invite their friends, neighbors, and workmates into small groups designed to hear from God through reading the Bible, obeying what He says, and sharing it with their social networks. A passion for the lost then formed in us a desire to grow a church that focuses on people far from God. We had to be willing to build Jesus' kingdom on earth even if it meant not growing our church's Sunday attendance. We discovered that it is more effective to look around the edges for disenfranchised, even dissatisfied people.

These conversations led to many mini-training sessions about how to lead a discovery group, followed by many counterintuitive principles that allow movements to happen.

And we soon came upon our fourth value: failure is the path to success. Not only did we learn that we needed to fail faster, but we also needed to fail smarter. We took every opportunity to make each failure a learning experience. To care for and create this learning environment, we discovered that the casual exchange of learning was helpful but not sufficient. TTR-train, train and re-Train has become a mantra for us. Our greatest enemy is not what we know but what we don't know that we don't know. Beware of the attitude, "I got this," because chances are they haven't! Observe, coach, and train with a vengeance.

The way we've been promoting the teachings of Jesus may not be the most efficient. If you learn to share your life rather than a set of facts that you believe in, they [people] will engage. We discovered that people in our world were still interested in Jesus, God, and the Bible; just not in church, and especially not church people telling them they didn't believe in the right things. Facilitators are equipped to ask the question, "Where does it say that in this passage?" We have discovered that when you have people who are inexperienced in the Bible, staying in one simple passage makes their initial experiences comfortable rather than making them feel dumb. We also want our facilitators to understand that this is a process of discovery. People buy into, believe, and act on their own conclusions far more than the conclusions given to them by other people. The group is designed for people to hear from God themselves.

Discovery Groups are encouraged to start on the turf of the spiritually interested or at least on neutral ground. Our facilitators are facilitator coaches. Facilitators are coached to be catalytic so that their greatest joy is watching things move away from them. Since the members of a Discovery Group have preexisting relationships, you can jump right into the questions. The seven questions represent biblical DNA, the genetic code of the spiritual life that Jesus left behind. The questions are the method by which the Spirit will transfer the genetic code into the lives of those being discipled. Groups need to multiply, not grow. When a friend asks to join, a facilitator can suggest that, instead of adding to this group, which will further create time issues, start another group.

Instead of starting with traditional evangelism, we begin by showing people how they can invite their friends, neighbors, and workmates to participate in a group that reads the Bible together and discovers what God has to say about life. In effect they start to make disciple-making disciples of pre-Christians. The groups gather around the Bible as the authority, endeavor to do what God says, and then share it with their friends. The amazing power of starting people on a God-dependent spiritual journey rather than one that relies on an individual or institution provides the platform for a culture that replicates. Synergy occurs between how someone begins to follow Jesus and the path they follow through life.

The first journey is moving from earner to heir. It takes a lifetime to eradicate that earner mentality. Our work is to deepen people's relationship with God. Beginning to read the Bible for themselves helps them move from a Creator/ Creature relationship to a Father/Child relationship. Everyone is on a spiritual journey because we are spiritual people. Jesus calls for an exchange of my personal style of relating for a biblical style of

relating. God desires a face-to-face relationship with each of us, one that grows from being me-centered to being God-centered as we read the Bible and obey what He says. We begin to live our lives "out loud," expressing to those in our relational circles the change that God is making in our lives. Life was made to be lived together. Life change happens best in authentic accountable relationships. Life is not found in the collection of comfort, conveniences, or cash but by finding our places to serve in God's mission on this earth. Our spiritual journey is vitally connected to the way we handle the resources God entrusts to us. The further you move on this journey, the more you realize your role in God's work is not about you, but about others.

One of the gravest mistakes you can make is to implement a new strategy in old ways. Culture building takes time. Language needs to be developed, mind shifts need to be experienced, and skills need to be learned. Adherents need to understand the whys of the words they are learning. There are old ways of thinking to tear down and new ways to be explored. To build a culture that fosters multiplicative disciple-making, you have to think differently. The whys of thinking differently take time and repeated discussion to get through to people. Starting at the fringes rather than the front sets you up for the best possible long-term success. Involve your coconspirators in practicing the discovery process and rehearsing the principle of movement-thinking. You will need a coach and a mentor. A coach will help you with the skills you need to develop, and a mentor will help you process the internal turmoil that will develop. Success comes from starting small, at the fringes, and following God's leading. When I say small, I mean somewhere between six and twenty people split up into groups of no more than five who are regularly practicing the discovery process and meeting to pray, learn, and strategize about seeing the gospel move.

Failure is not your enemy; it is your mentor. Every attempt at anything—from starting a group, multiplying a group, making spiritual statements to friends, or attempting to coach someone—needs a postmortem. Ask some basic questions of every experience to make sure that failure is accompanied by learning. A last responsibility in regards to learning from failure is learning to capture and communicate the lessons [learned from the postmortems].

Counterintuitive moves are not always popular. In fact, most people don't even see them as reasonable but they are often necessary for survival. We must be willing to challenge our paradigms. Disciple-making disciples are God's intended strategy to take His good news to the ends of the earth. Movement-ready people shed all manmade heaviness to the good news and trust that God the Spirit is in control as ordinary people create small communities of obedience spreading the good news of God's reclaiming love to those who haven't a Father/child relationship with their Creator.

(A Book Summary prepared by Thomas L. Law, III of *Spent Matches: Igniting the Signal Fire for the Spiritually Dissatisfied* by Roy Moran, published by Thomas Nelson, 2015.) Go to this [link](#) and create an account and find a summary of *Spent Matches* and many other books.