

Purpose: To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

The Church Doctor® Report provides a quick read of strategic and influential information. This information is free to share as long as the source is respected: *The Church Doctor® Report*, www.churchdoctor.org. (To sign up: e-mail johnwargowsky@churchdoctor.org)

Quick-Fix Church Programs: Why They Don't Work

Andy and Ron are pastors of churches in neighboring communities. Let's drop in on their conversation over lunch. They are sharing congregational frustrations.

"You know, Andy, we bought into that new program that came out a couple of years ago," Ron shared as he poured ketchup on his french fries.

"You've got enough ketchup, Ron?" Andy joked. "Should I ask the waiter for another bottle?"

Ron just smiled. "Yeah, I like a few french fries with my ketchup." Then he got back on topic, "Yeah, we tried that at our church. At the beginning, there was a lot of fanfare. We showed the video clips in worship to promote it. We put the posters everywhere. I preached — well, I actually modified the sermon message they provided in the program. I practically begged people to get involved.

Andy interrupted: "Would you pass the ketchup? Is there any left?"

"Yeah," Ron replied, as he passed the ketchup. "We worked hard at it. At the end of the day, those involved were pretty much the same ones who are always involved."

Kent R. Hunter has served as a pastor, blogger, podcast teacher, international conference leader, author, radio commentator, church consultant, and conference speaker. As founder of Church Doctor Ministries, Kent's passion is helping the local church to become more effective for making disciples of Jesus Christ.



www.churchdoctor.org

E-mail: kenthunter@churchdoctor.org

MULTIPLYING MINISTRY

- ▶ The *Church Doctor® Report* is provided at no cost. Forward it to those in your network of influence and add value to their lives!
- ▶ Forward it to staff and leaders in your church, denomination, network, or fellowship.

“What about measurable results? Did it make any real change in your church?” asked Andy.

Ron paused and thought carefully. “You know, I think those involved learned some good stuff, but honestly? I don’t think it changed very much in their lives. I haven’t really seen any change in our church either. Oh, maybe just a little. I don’t know — no, not much.”

Programming Faith

Many church leaders jump at quick-fix programs to turn their church around from decline to growth. In fact, program development is a multi-million-dollar business for Christian suppliers.

Not every program is bad. Publishers produce great Vacation Bible School materials that a local church could never provide. There are also Sunday school materials that are somewhat programmatic, but do a good job at teaching children and adults. Christian authors write books to stimulate good thinking, new ideas, and good strategies for church leaders.

Yet, at the end of the day, there is no “quick-fix program” to reach people for Jesus and make disciples. There are good introductions to faith, like *Alpha*, the most popular and likely the most effective introduction to Christianity in the world. Yet, *Alpha*, really, if you do it right, is more like a movement than a program. There is really no fast and easy solution to move a church from decline to effective outreach.

Programs can add a few people to your church. They also wear out many Christians. Most programs show little measurable results. Why? Programs are usually developed with a top-down approach. The model is tempting for already tired, overworked church staff and Christian leaders. It’s tempting to grab a top-down mindset: “Let’s become a mission-oriented, effective church by using a program to energize our people.”

The program approach is “top-down” or *vertical*. Clearly, God did come down to Earth through Jesus. Jesus did ascend into Heaven. That is vertical! Yet, while on Earth, Jesus modeled a *horizontal* approach for Christians to reach the world. He gave the Holy Spirit, which could be described as a vertical insert. But that’s where it changes. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to the whole Christian team, called the church. *These gifts are vertically gifted, but horizontally used*. The priesthood of all believers concept in the New Testament is not a vertical hierarchy, but a team of people, each with a unique gift mix, working together.

There are leadership gifts. They include those with the gift of apostle, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These leaders, however, do not lead vertically, but horizontally. Their job is to multiply an army by “equipping God’s people for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12). Every Christian is a minister. This is how the movement multiplies.

The concept of staff *doing* ministry is vertical. However, without discipling (multiplying), it doesn’t become horizontal. This approach actually hinders the Christian Movement. What do some staffs do? They recruit, vertically, volunteers: from the pulpit, in announcements, through newsletters or bulletins. Some respond, but most don’t. The design is driven by the focus to “get the work of the church done,” rather than the multiplication of ministry through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In God’s horizontal approach, every believer is “an ambassador for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). This divine design gives traction to a movement, because all of God’s ambassadors have relationships with unchurched friends, relatives, neighbors, those at

work or school. The horizontal church has relationships with unbelievers the staff will never meet.

Relational Influence

When church members reach out horizontally, they have the advantage of *relational influence*. If the staff or an “evangelism team” is the chief outreach mechanism of your church, the approach is top-down, dictatorial, and programmatic. However, relationships have power!

The church is not a corporate enterprise of top-down hierarchy. It is a flat organization. It is not a “spider” that dies when you cut its head off. It’s a starfish. If you cut a piece off a starfish, the piece grows back. And the piece that is cut off becomes another starfish! This is the way Christianity multiplies.

The corporate enterprise approach depends too much on the head, like the spider. It’s more vulnerable to disruption. (This is the challenge when a pastor retires or a key staff person moves on.) Jesus designed His church for relational multiplication. When the Apostle Paul died, the church kept growing. Why? He multiplied churches that multiplied others. Those churches multiplied believers who multiplied others. This is a movement approach. It is horizontal.

The church is a living organism, reflected by every metaphor describing the church in Scripture. The head of the body, Jesus, is also the Good Shepherd. But shepherds don’t multiply sheep. Sheep reproduce sheep. Jesus is the “high priest,” but every church member is part of the “priesthood of believers” (1 Peter 2:9).

What Is a Horizontal Movement?

Your church is not simply a location, building, or organization. It is a collection of believers. The believers have relationships with unbelievers. Yet most Christians focus on programs to attract unbelievers to the church building, programs, and events — even worship. In that scenario, the church *creeps* forward. It is through the relationships of equipped church members (disciples) that the church explodes. *The movement moves through relationships*. At work, at school, in the neighborhood, by phone, on Facebook, at a football game, at a restaurant, in a bar. The

10 WAYS THAT WORK TO FIX YOUR CHURCH

1. Recognize there is no quick-fix program to make your church more effective.
2. Commit your efforts to measurable results.
3. Follow Jesus’ approach: Nurture the Christian movement with patience, just like raising kids.
4. Confess that preaching alone does not produce transformation in your church.
5. Focus on Romans 12:1-2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by a renewal of your mind,” the way you think.
6. As a leader, don’t even try to move the whole congregation to mission renewal at once. It doesn’t work that way.
7. Identify early adopters. Start transformation with them.
8. Allow early adopters to *relationally* influence middle adopters, then middle adopters to influence late adopters, then late adopters to influence never adopters.
9. Focus on beliefs, values, attitudes, priorities, and worldviews: a biblical culture of outreach.
10. Move the Christian movement horizontally through relationships, not vertically by leadership, boards, preaching, or quick-fix programs.

movement moves horizontally through the power of the Gospel and the platform of relationships. The movement multiplies!

Igniting a Movement

How does this begin in a church? It doesn't begin with a vertical download of preaching, teaching, or recruiting. It spreads horizontally, like the flu — a holy flu! People catch it from one another.

First, you find those who are “contagious.” They “get it.” They are tired of “business as usual” in the church. They are “enthusiastic” — a word that, from the Greek, means, “in God” — with God, on fire for God. You disciple them. They are equipped to share their contagious life with Jesus. That is not a quick fix. It takes time. Jesus spent three years with the disciples! But this is what Jesus did: He offered them invitation and challenge. Invitation: “Come follow me.” Challenge: “Go make disciples.”

Being “disciples” implies that you not only have Good News to share, but you know how to share it. *As you share it*, you disciple another Christian — one who is contagious. How do you identify contagious people ready to move the movement? They are afflicted with “holy discontent” and “spiritual restlessness.” (At Church Doctor Ministries, we have developed surveys that identify them.)

Holy discontent: They have been imprinted by the Holy Spirit and can no longer stand to watch their church fumble through the mediocre growth of God's Kingdom. This holy discontent is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual restlessness: They are people who are tired of church “business as usual.” They are hungry for breakthrough. They are eager for your church to break out with spiritual renewal and growth.

They can be called “early adopters,” terminology developed by Everett Rogers in his book *Diffusion of Innovation*. How do you cultivate early adopters? In Matthew 13:1-10, Jesus was

speaking to a crowd that kept growing. Jesus was by the sea, so he got into a boat and used it as a speaking platform. This allowed more people to gather on the beach. Jesus told the story about

KEY RESOURCES

Addison, Steve. *Movements That Change the World: Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011.

Addison, Steve. *The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders*. 100Movement Publishing, 2019.

Alpha. www.alphausa.org.

Brafman, Ori, and Rod A. Beckstrom. *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*. London, UK: Portfolio, 2006.

DeYoung, Kevin, and Ted Kluck. *Why We're Not Emergent by Two Guys Who Should Be*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008.

Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016.

Hunter, Kent R. *The Jesus Enterprise: Engaging Culture to Reach the Unchurched*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004.

Hunter, Kent R., and Tracee J. Swank. *Who Broke My Church? 7 Proven Strategies for Renewal and Revival*. New York, NY: Hachette/FaithWords, 2017.

Rogers, Everett M. *Diffusion of Innovation*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 2003.

The SEND Movement.
www.thesendmovement.com.

Woodward, J. R. *The Church as Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016.

the farmer who scattered seed. Some of it fell on the road, some on gravel, some among weeds. Some of the seeds landed on good earth and produced a huge harvest. (Early adopters in church, as well as people ready to become Christians, are “good earth” — they are receptive.)

Later, after Jesus finished speaking with the crowd, the disciples asked him, “Why do you tell so many stories?” Jesus said something like, “You guys have been with me a long time, and you have learned a lot. So, I can teach you and get right to the point. However, these people aren’t there yet. Therefore, I tell stories to develop *receptive insight*.”

What’s the point? If you want to find “early adopters” in your church, tell stories about how God has used you to impact the lives of others. Include information about how you have told your “God stories,” from your life, and how they touched lives. Those in your church who show “receptive insight” are probably “early adopters,” ready to be discipled to tell their God stories about how God has worked in their lives. They are eager to share those stories with others.

Early adopters are entirely the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. They are not manipulated or recruited. *However, they are receptive*. You simply invite early adopters to join you in ministry the way Jesus did: “Come follow me.” You invite them to come along as you share God stories with those in your social network. As they watch, they begin to think about their own God stories and how they can share them in their social networks. As they become efficient, you turn them loose. As they share their God stories, they should be discipling another early adopter. Think horizontal movement!

Move from Vertical to Horizontal Change

If you want to start a movement in your church, if you want to impact your community through your church, don’t do it top-down. It will never happen at the level Jesus wants simply by preaching at people, teaching a class, or dropping a quick-fix program on your congregation.

Think and respond horizontally, not vertically. Think momentum. Focus on those who have holy discontent. Disciple them to reach out to their social networks of unchurched people to share their own God stories. As they do, they should always have an early adopter with them they are discipling, by modeling.

As a movement, here is what happens. There are only so many early adopters in a church: maybe 7-10 percent. Others are middle adopters. Beyond the middle adopters are what are called “late adopters.” Beyond the late adopters are a few “never adopters,” probably less than 10 percent. The largest groups are middle adopters and late adopters in most congregations. It just depends on how much the leaders, as “farmers,” have been cultivating the ground!

If you become a movement leader and think like Jesus, this is how it works. As a leader, you can’t influence many beyond the early adopters. However, some early adopters will have *relationships* with middle adopters, and they will move the movement among those middle adopters. (Remember relational influence?) In turn, some of the middle adopters will have relationships in your church with some of those who are late adopters, and they will influence them. Even some late adopters, by God’s miracle, will have influence on some of those who are never adopters. When that occurs, they will no longer be never adopters! At Church Doctor Ministries, we have developed the *SEND Movement* for congregations. We know this works! It’s God’s design.

This is the movement mentality. This is what Jesus did. It’s not a quick-fix program. No focus on instant results. It takes time and persistence. However, soon, a movement appears. Then, momentum builds. Your church is changed. When churches are changed, cities are changed. When more cities are changed, nations are changed. When nations are changed, the world is changed. This movement can begin with you. It’s not a program — it never has been.