

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.

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The Power of Movement: Jesus' Plan for Your Church

After I spoke to the pastors' and leaders' conference, one pastor came to me and said, "Our church is stalled." I thought of an airplane at a thousand feet when the engine quits. The imagery in my mind was vivid: crash and burn.

"What do you mean, it's stalled?" I asked, wondering what I might say to give encouragement to him. (I was also thinking, "Most pastors desperately need some encouragement.")

"Well, every year we take in a few people but lose a few," he said. "Beyond that, we're an older congregation — I mean, the age of the people — we have a number of funerals, and in the coming years, that will probably increase, based on the age of our congregation."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said, and thought, "Should I tell him 90 percent of the churches in America are plateaued or declining, or growing at a pace slower than their communities?" (That might actually have encouraged this pastor. You know, "misery loves company" as the saying goes!)

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pastors in a dozen countries. His latest book, written with Tracee J. Swank, is *Who Broke My Church? 7 Proven Strategies for Renewal and Revival*, available 09/12/2017 or by pre-order now on Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble.

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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.

Can you relate this to your church, to some degree?

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“Hey, Brian, great to see you,” I greeted one of my favorite pastor-friends. “How’s it going?” I asked.

“Pretty good,” he replied, “except — oh — my denomination!” he continued. “We just had our national gathering. The leaders kept boasting: ‘We’re still one of the largest denominations in the country.’ But I *know* we lost 44,000 members last year — net. And they focused on how large we still are! I know a lot of churches of all kinds are declining, but why would they boast that, even though we are hemorrhaging, we’re still ‘one of the largest’? It’s like a guy with terminal cancer: ‘I may be dying, but I still weigh 270 pounds.’ Ridiculous!”

Is There Hope for Your Church?

Absolutely! We have completed a 15-year study of tracking a number of churches. They have experienced *renewal* for *revival*. This is documented in the soon-to-be-released book *Who Broke My Church? 7 Proven Strategies for Renewal and Revival*.

Move the Movement

Catch the Culture

If 25 percent of those in your church have a commitment to grow spiritually, God will turn your church around. At the risk of oversimplifying, what Christians need most is to *move the movement* and *catch the culture*.

Practical Strategy

In this issue, we will focus on the movement. In the next issue (September/October 2017), we will look at Kingdom culture. Consider inviting all your members to read these two issues of the *Church Doctor Report*. Then invite anyone who found it interesting and helpful to attend a one-hour discussion about your church. You will have some idea of what percentage of your active worshippers are ready for God to use them to increase the effectiveness of your church. Ask them to consider reading *Who Broke My Church?*

The Rollercoaster of Church Vitality

If you diagnose nine out of 10 churches in North America, you would move beyond the hundreds of overwhelming symptoms (which is the focus of most Christians) and get to the causative issues. Here are two: movement drift and culture drift. In this issue, we focus on movement drift.

The history of God’s work over the last 20 centuries is an up and down rollercoaster. Right now, the rollercoaster in Africa is up in many places, especially Nigeria, Ethiopia,

Kenya, and some other hot spots. In South Korea and the underground church in China, the rollercoaster is up. In England, it's on the way up. In North America, it's at bottom, with increasing signs of just beginning to go up. Want to jump on?

If you want to experience more of the upswing of the spiritual rollercoaster, get on. Take your first step: recapturing Christianity as a movement. Like any movement put in the hands of people, the church, over time, moves toward: (1) bureaucracy, (2) hierarchy, (3) high control, (4) being staff-centered, and (5) addition, rather than multiplication.

You *can* repent. That is, turn around. It is a somewhat long, slow, careful process. It takes three years of a replacement movement. Rush it, and you'll blow up your church. As people leave, you'll hear them say, "We've never done it that way." However, among God's people (perhaps in the early days of your church) or your grandfather's church, that movement was there. So, for those people who say "We've never done it that way," you can respond, "Oh, yes we have! Or we wouldn't be here." Somewhere in your congregation's ancestry, maybe all the way back to the New Testament church, we Christians did operate as a movement. We all did!

Multiplication

A movement moves. It is people in motion. Jesus discipled the 12 who became 120, who grew to 3,000, who exploded to 5,000 — and then, without calculators or accountants, they couldn't count anymore. So, the Scripture reports: "multitudes." This didn't take centuries, but more like a few decades. Even without websites!

The key to multiplication is what Jesus *made*. He made disciples. You don't just teach disciples. You grow disciples. They don't just learn what you know. They

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become who you are. They become what you are. Jesus was a multiplier: He didn't build a building or start a school. They didn't have a headquarters. Movements move. People *become* movement people: not by joining the institution but by being transformed into someone different.

In the world of the New Testament, they were called to witness. They self-identified as disciples, and witness they did! Not because Jesus engineered a witness program, but because they were so infected, they went everywhere telling everyone. Why wouldn't they tell? This was Good News!

The spontaneous expansion of the faith occurred because they were changed, not because they signed up for a program or became church members. It wasn't really what they did. It was who they became: they were contagious with the Jesus epidemic. They weren't quarantined in a building, where everything "spiritual" was supposed to occur. Jesus, the street evangelist, modeled for them. He was not a CEO of an organization.

10 MARKERS OF A CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

1. Every Christian in your church becomes a missionary by lifestyle.
2. Those in your church operate in their dominant and subordinate gifts. They never do ministry alone. They always engage others in the nine steps listed in this article.
3. They are constantly discipling someone else.
4. Eighty percent of church activities occur outside the building.
5. Christians live the practice of sharing their "God stories" with others. They know this is what it means to "witness." They share what God has done and is doing in their lives.
6. Christians identify unbelievers in their social network as their primary mission field.
7. Those in your church regularly pray for unchurched people in their social networks.
8. Volunteerism does not exist. Everyone knows their spiritual gifts, and they look at their area of involvement as a ministry calling.
9. Preaching and teaching focuses the congregation outward, identifying the church building as a launchpad, not a destination.
10. Ninety-five percent of the people live with the understanding that the primary purpose of the church is to go, make disciples, of all people.

Organic Chaos

The New Testament movement was out of control, humanly speaking. It was under the control of the Holy Spirit, Who blows like the wind — all over the place. These people were told they were privileged to be ambassadors of the King, the King of the universe.

Jesus described His Kingdom as soils, planting seeds, growing and pruning vines. He talked about a ripe harvest. This is organic talk. Organic is bottom up, yet not wild. It was low control: no pope, no denominational leaders, not even seminary-trained pastors.

Movement has to be free to move, yet it is balanced by *high accountability*. If someone offends you, you go to that person. You speak the truth in love. Churches flourish with low control and high accountability. Ultimately, the whole Mediterranean world was turned right-side up. Eventually, the nasty, corrupt Roman Empire was overtaken and demolished by: love, peace, patience, kindness, joy. A movement doesn't push; it pulls, with a magnetic attraction toward people who have become attractive. They have been changed from the inside out. Right! Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." It is not like anything "normal" in this world.

The movement moved, not by incremental addition but by geometric progression. Two became four, who became 16, who became 256, and the 256 in this Jesus epidemic became 65,536. That is the power of exponential multiplication.

Pastors are equippers and facilitators. The people drive the engine, all the time, everywhere they go, with everyone they meet. It wasn't an assignment they were given. It was who they were and who they became. Christianity became a 24/7 lifestyle. They were more like missionaries than members.

The Leaders' Role

Everyone who is in leadership in the Christian movement has a clear position description. Who is a leader? Anyone who influences others: parents who teach their children, friends influence friends, neighbors influence neighbors, workers influence fellow workers, and students influence other students. In short, the position description is: Multiply yourself. Another way to say it: Make disciples.

How does that work? You might say, "Everyone knows that!" Not so fast. I've worked with a number of pastors who had never gotten it. Here is the way Jesus taught His followers to multiply themselves — to lead the Jesus way: (1) Start with the premise that the most important parts of life are caught more than taught. People do what people see the leader doing. (2) Pray and look for, until you find, someone who might be "ready." (3) Test their receptivity. Jesus never advocated blind recruitment or "pushy," bulldozer leadership. Instead, He talked about the harvest — when it is ripe. Don't be offended if someone isn't ready. You're not the Lord of the harvest. You can't make a person ready, so don't try. But when they show openness, interest, readiness — then move onto the next step. (4) Invite them: "Follow me." You might just say, "Want to come along with me?" or "Would you consider spending time with me?" (5) You take an active approach in doing and teaching, in the context of a relationship (not a class!). They watch. Ask questions. You dialogue. (6) You invite them to get involved in some smaller part of the conversation, of the effort. (7) They do some leading in conversation, in doing ministry, in reflecting early levels of faith. You watch, listen, and help when needed. (8) They do it all, they teach, they lead another. You watch in a passive role, ready to help — like a safety net. (9) In the process, you multiply yourself, and much more. This is the key: You multiply a multiplier. You disciple a discipler. That is the beginning of a movement.

Yet, the movement doesn't take off until the atmosphere changes. That atmosphere is Kingdom culture, the subject of the next issue of the *Church Doctor Report*.