

***“This is not theory,
and it’s not complicated.”***

MARK THRASH · PRESIDENT, NOVO



THE
THIRD WAY

A Gospel Movement of Everyday Disciples

JAMES PAUL

Foreword by ROY MORAN

THE THIRD WAY

*A Gospel Movement of Everyday
Disciples*

James Paul

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A note to the reader. Certain names, locations, and identifying details in this book have been changed to protect the safety of the workers, communities, and family members described. The stories themselves are true.

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What Others Are Saying

“When it comes to the completion of the Great Commission, James Paul has helped reset our paradigm. It is not the big organizations or the highly trained paid professionals but ordinary disciples who provide the driving force to accomplish the task. His premise is that the only way to disciple the billions who are now untouched by the gospel is for many to be working with a few instead of a few trying to work with many. It is the only way the math works.”

— **Harry Brown**, Founder and Chairman, New Generations

“What James lays out in this book has the potential to shape history. On accident, we’ve made disciple-making just for the professionals, and *The Third Way* gives the Great Commission back to every believer. This is also not theory and it’s not complicated. It’s simple, proven, accessible, and the fruit speaks for itself. James Paul’s voice is for such a time as this.”

— **Mark Thrash**, President of Novo

“James Paul has seen the power of deputizing ordinary believers to do the work of missions. Though he won’t advertise it, he and his team have planted thousands of churches. James has learned that the Great Commission can be completed in our lifetimes, just not by professional missionaries. The Third Way is essential reading for anyone who cares about loving a world on fire. There is a movement underway, largely invisible to many followers of Christ, that is doing more to spread God’s heart for people than any other strategy. Read it at your own risk. It may change your life.”

— Seth Barnes, Founder and Executive Director of Adventures in Missions, and founder of the World Race

“James echoes Jesus’s eternal call to everyone who would follow Him: listen to God, obey Him, and help others do the same. This is the Kingdom culture that conquers all.”

— Curtis Sergeant, disciple of Jesus

“The Third Way challenges conventional thinking: Who can be a disciple of Jesus? The life of a disciple is not the exclusive domain of pastors or evangelists; rather, it is a responsibility entrusted to every believer who is faithful to Jesus’ commandments. James Paul outlines four principles rooted in following Christ to help ordinary believers hear and obey the call to “make disciples of all nations.” This is a simple guide that anyone can follow!”

— Ying Kai, Founder, T4T Global

“The Third Way argues that gospel movements grow best when we stop overcomplicating them. A quick, story-rich read that hands ordinary believers permission, and a simple path, to make disciples without waiting for an official title, invitation, or formal program.”

— Randy Kennedy, Director of Grantmaking, The Maclellan Foundation

“I grew up inside the story this book tells. Before it was a book, it was just how we lived: listening to God, obeying the small thing, helping the person in front of us. I have seen it hold up in real homes and in hard places. My father finally wrote it down, and I am glad he did. Start with Book One, then go find your one person.”

— Simona Darshani, Executive Director, Global Covenant

“The thoughts laid out in this book clearly show us how much we have lost the first century model of Jesus’ ministry and His vision to fulfill the Great Commission. With good hearts and honest intention we have given ourselves to overcomplicate the gospel and therefore built heavy structures and confused those people that are in these systems. This book takes a truthful assessment of where we have been and what have been the results of those endeavors and shares a new paradigm which isn’t just theoretical but is already finding success around the world. My hope is that brave leaders will read this book and be awakened by how God is fulfilling the Great Commission before our eyes using first century strategies that still work today.”

— Chris Marshall, Director of Global Partners, Novo

“The Third Way by James Paul is an outstanding book for anyone who longs to see family, friends, and neighbors come to know God and become part of the movement Jesus started. At its heart, James presents a simple yet profound framework for understanding how gospel movements emerge and grow. He shows how ordinary disciples can learn to hear God’s voice through Scripture and the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit, respond in obedience, and then equip others to do the same. James brings this message to life through compelling stories from his own journey as Jesus led him to discover a Kingdom framework that has sparked a significant gospel movement across India and beyond. I was especially moved by his honest account of the personal cost of saying ‘yes’ to Jesus and the courage required to faithfully follow His leading. The Third Way is more than a book to be read, it is a book to be prayed over, put into practice, and shared with others.”

— Dr. Bill Randall, author of *The Life Jesus Made Possible*

“The Third Way makes a case that is disarmingly simple and, once absorbed, hard to unhear: the Great Commission was meant to run through everyone, since, as James Paul puts it, ‘only the many can reach the many.’ He grounds this in Scripture’s habit of calling the unqualified — from a boy with a sling to a persecutor who held the coats of stone-throwers — a well-worn observation given fresh weight by James’ account of a movement built by untrained people who simply read Scripture together, obey it, and leave room for God to act. My father, Dois Rosser, who is mentioned in this book, founded ICM (International Cooperating Ministries) in 1986 and we have had the blessing of partnering with James for many years with the shared goal of advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It has been my pleasure to get to know James and see the impact of his life.”

— Janice Rosser Allen, CEO and President, ICM (International Cooperating Ministries)

*For Paul and Diamond, my parents, who carried the Third Way
before I knew its name.*

*But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame
the wise; God chose what is weak in the world
to shame the strong; God chose what is low and
despised in the world, even things that are not, to
bring to nothing things that are.*

— 1 Corinthians 1:27-28

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Foreword

Roy Moran

Author of *Spent Matches* and founder of Mercy Alliance.

The Third Way Forward

Whether it is Zechariah (4:10) the Jewish prophet or Warren Buffett, history records that many life-altering experiences start small and seemingly insignificant. If you picked up this book and thought its size has any relation to what is about to change in your world, you should have heeded Zechariah's word to not despise small things.

James Paul has fused his story, gospel history, and the ordinary obedience of simple people to demonstrate how following Jesus can change you and your world. But don't miss his clear statement of who this is written for. James doesn't come to argue or even explain as much as coax you into trying something, maybe for the first time.

Don't fall prey to "*that will never work*" syndrome. It is simply evidence of your paradigm paralysis. When your educational philosophy is try, fail, learn, retry, you evidence a spirit of fail smarter, and learning happens fast.

This may not even be a book you read to the end. You might be captured by James's spirit of ready, fire, aim. When the

urge hits, stop reading and start doing. Write your own version of the Third Way. Knowing James, nothing would coax that million-dollar smile onto his face faster than hearing your story.

This book is not an instruction manual, not a playbook, but an attempt to catalyze action among ordinary people who have been robbed for almost two centuries by the clerification of Christianity. Simple individual attention to God's Word that spawns obedience rather than understanding, and the crucial piece, helping someone else do the same. That is simply James's point.

— *Roy Moran*

Introduction

In 1878, in Ongole, in the south of India, a community of low-caste people with no qualifications or distinctions met Jesus and could not keep Him to themselves. No platform. No budget. That is how the faith came into my family, and it is how I have watched it move across South Asia all my life.

That is what this book calls the Third Way, a gospel movement. Nothing more complicated than ordinary people recognizing Jesus for who He is, listening to and obeying Him, and helping others do the same.

Every time gospel work spreads like wildfire, though, specialists arrive. They arrive meaning well. People who love this work have tried to steward it, to discern real fruit from wishful counting, to keep from burning out the ones they have sent. So they build strategies and principles and frameworks and tiers and metrics, each piece meant to help. I have implemented many of these tools myself and have found several of them beneficial.

But stacked one on top of another, they became a tower. The ordinary believer looks up at that tower, decides the Great Commission must be for the trained and ordained, and feels intimidated. My worry was never that we built it. It is that we forgot to leave a door open at the bottom, where the average believer is standing.

For all of my ministry years, I have done one thing consistently: I have stripped down complicated tools and materials and handed them, in the simplest possible form, to people who are eager to run with them.

I know something about needing things explained simply. When I first came to America, a new fiancé from the other side of the world, I sat down to the first meal I had eaten outside my future in-laws' home, at the pastor's house. I tried to eat a taco the way I eat chapati back home, tearing pieces off the tortilla and using them to pinch and pick up the meat. Someone kindly showed me the correct way to build and eat the taco, and I've done it right ever since. I didn't need complicated material; I just needed the simplest of explanations, and I could get on with the task.

Overcomplication of gospel work occurs in the West as well as the East. The ordinary Western believer has access to excellent information, shelves of books, trainings, and podcasts, yet instead of feeling empowered, she feels unable to take the first step. She does not need more. She needs the information boiled down, so she can get started this week.

Simplify.

Simple is not the same as easy, and it is no way around the cross. But complicated has kept far more ordinary people out of the harvest than simple ever has.

This book is written to the everyday disciple. He or she (I will use he for simplicity here, but will alternate pronouns throughout the book) may be a business owner or a swim instructor, a middle school student or a retiree. He may have no ministry credentials, but he loves Jesus, and lately something has been stirring in him that he cannot quite name. He has begun to wonder whether the Christian life he was handed is the whole of it, and he notices the people at his

table and down his street with new attention now. This book is for him.

A second book is coming for the movement catalyst who has been at this for years and can no longer remember when obedience felt simple. But everyone starts here.

Read slowly. Ask the Lord what He is saying. Whatever the next obedient thing is, do that.

James Paul
Chinook, Montana
July 4, 2026

If somewhere in these pages you feel a pull to help others do what this book describes, there is a companion for that, *The Making of a Movement Catalyst*. For now, set it aside. This book is for you, right where you are today.

Prologue

The Dinner at Warren and Ruth's

I drove to a dinner in Pasadena on a Friday night in May 2026 carrying a question none of us had been able to answer all week. For most of the evening, the dinner made me forget I was holding it.

We turned off the freeway into Altadena, and on a quiet street one of my two friends slowed the car and pointed. That was the house. Jacquie and Alan's.

The lot was bare. The Eaton Fire had taken everything in January, and other chimneys still stood on the street where houses had been. The neighbor's house was scorched on one side. I had watched the fires on the news from Kansas City, but I had not realized one of them had been Jacquie's. We sat in the car a moment. The grass was new; everything else was destroyed. We drove the rest of the way without saying much.

Warren and Ruth had invited us. Warren had been to South Asia with us in November. He and Ruth had traveled village to village with me, even into remote, difficult-to-access places. Ruth uses a walker. They had still come.

This was my third visit to their home. The first time, something happened in the yard during a rainstorm that I

still cannot fully explain — lightning over the pool and a sense of the Lord's presence I did not have words for. They told me later that a friend of ours who sees angels had seen them in that house. Then I knew I had not been imagining it.

Warren met us at the door. A few minutes later Alan and Jacquie themselves arrived. I was moved that they joined us despite their difficult year.

The dinner was Lebanese food. Warren asked for an agenda. He wanted the evening to be more than warm food and easy talk, so he asked one of us to facilitate. My friend did it the way he does, without making it feel like he was running anything. The sharing went around the table.

Jacquie told us about the cohort (training group) she had carried for years, in their home and then at her church. Hundreds of everyday disciples had passed through it. Alan picked up where she left off. He had come alive to Discovery Group, and he asked his friend Karley, a natural gatherer from their church, to pray about starting one among the pickleball players she gathered on Friday nights. Karley made the ask, and ten of them said yes. It has been growing ever since, without a title or a program or anyone's name on it. (I will tell you the whole story later, because it is worth telling in full.)

Jon and Judy went next. They are business people, and they had been getting on video calls with friends in Africa, walking them into gospel movements from their own living room, half a world away, on a laptop.

Then Chris spoke. He and I had just come back from Africa together. He told the stories from there, the leaders emerging across the continent, the homes where the gospel was becoming the air people breathed, disciples making disciples all the way down the chain. I told the group what God had been doing across South Asia. A pastor's wife named

Sharon who had walked with Jesus for twenty-five years and seen little fruit. Then she began a Discovery Group with five friends and watched it grow past ninety disciples, four generations of study groups deep.

Warren spoke last. He spoke of believers who had come to Jesus through dreams and visions in places where they had always been hidden — not in big halls, but in kitchens and shops and houses. As he spoke, he pulled a book of their testimonies from his shelf and gave it to me.

Around the table, I had heard the same story from every corner of the world. Something settled in me that had been hovering all week.

It was not a new definition. The four ingredients I had been carrying for years had not changed. Everyday Disciples. Hearing God. Obeying God. Helping Others Do the Same. The word that arrived was not a new ingredient.

The word was *culture*.

We had been counting the fruit. The fruit was real and the counting was useful, but we had been focusing on the wrong thing. The real achievement to celebrate was not a number target of churches, groups, or generations of disciple makers, but a *culture* of everyday disciples living the four ingredients as their normal lifestyle. For everyone present at the dinner, it was considered basic Christianity. This is the true measure of success.

Everyone at the dinner table was living inside it. We weren't teaching on it. We were passing it around the room as the most natural subject in our lives. Some at that table were ordinary disciples with no ministry title — a woman who had carried a cohort in her home for years, a couple discipling friends in Africa from their living room over a laptop,

pickleball players who had begun reading the Bible together on a Friday night. The rest of us were professional ministers.

As the stories went around the room, there was no difference between us. We were all hearing God, obeying Him, and helping someone else do the same as the normal shape of our week. We were not describing a gospel movement from the outside. We were inside it, and it was inside us. The Third Way had become our normal Christianity. It was the air we were breathing without noticing. That was the culture.

Here is the sentence that landed in my lap that night, the one I have been repeating ever since.

*A gospel movement is everyday disciples hearing God,
obeying God, and helping others do the same, until
that becomes just normal Christianity.*

You will know it has become normal Christianity when you stop noticing it.

Now the question I had carried to the door.

All that week, before the dinner, I had been with a small circle of ministry leaders at our annual gathering on the California coast. My friend Norris Williams kept circling one question: “What is a gospel movement, really?” The technical definition we all knew by heart — disciples making disciples four generations deep, gathered in a hundred groups — could not answer it for him. He was not sure he was inside one. Every morning he raised it a different way, and none of us answered him clearly or simply enough. We ended Friday afternoon with the question still in the room, and I drove to Pasadena still holding it.

It was not the strategy room that answered Norris. It was Warren and Ruth’s table. A circle of us who lead this work for a living had spent a week unable to name the thing that

Jacquie and Alan and Jon and Judy were simply living. The word we could not find, an ordinary dinner handed to me between the Lebanese food and the book of testimonies.

I took an Uber to LAX and caught the eleven o'clock red-eye home. I watched the lights of Los Angeles fall away under us, and I knew I had a book to write. Not the book I had been carrying for ten years. This is a simpler book. Lately I have been calling it *The Third Way*.

Two strategies have carried most of the work of the Great Commission for the last two and a half centuries: the missionary society, and the local church planted by professionals. They are wonderful, and they are God's, but they are not enough. There has always been a third: everyday disciples, in the places they already live, with the people God has entrusted to them, doing the small thing in front of them until everyone around is breathing it. The first two ways exist to serve it. We have forgotten this. The book in your hands is one small attempt to remember.

Your life is one of those stories.

Chapter 1

Two Roads, and a Third That Was Always There

This past March I drove out to a small town in Kansas with my oldest daughter Simona to meet a nineteen-year-old.

Fourteen months earlier, my wife and I had gone up to my friend Cory McElvain's annual youth camp at God's Mountain Bible Camp in Rushville, Missouri. Cory runs a ministry called Zero Hour. He had asked me to teach one session. Ten minutes for my story. Twenty minutes to divide the students into groups of three or four and have them practice a Discovery Group on Luke 10. A half hour of slides and questions. That was it. One hour. (If you have never sat in one, chapter four walks through exactly what a Discovery Group is, the questions and all.)

Two days after the camp ended, the students went back to their group chat and started posting their "*I will*" commitments from the weekend. One stayed with me. A girl named Ava wrote that this one was hers: She would take what she had learned, pour into her friend, and start a Discovery Group when the time was right. She had already bought her friend a Bible.

She had bought her that Bible the day after the camp. Before her own *I Will* statement had been written down.

But the one I drove out to meet was Danny.

Danny was nineteen, from a small town in Kansas a half hour from where we live in Kansas City. He had been in the Luke 10 practice group during my session. He had gone home without a curriculum, without coaching, without asking anyone's permission. He had opened the Bible with the people in front of him and started a Discovery Group.

By the time I heard about it, three Discovery Groups were running. He had started a second and a third group on his own.

What made the story land harder for me was where Danny lived.

Two years before he ever went to camp, I had been invited into a home church in the same town to walk the congregation through Discovery Group one Sunday morning. The pastor of that home church is a faithful woman who has shepherded that congregation through every kind of season. One or two groups had started after that morning, but they faded.

A nineteen-year-old had come home from camp in Missouri and had three groups running.

The pastor heard about it, sent me a note, and asked if the four of us could meet.

Simona and I drove out to meet them. We sat with Danny and the pastor around a coffee shop table for an hour. I counseled them about the importance of an accountability team, so the three groups Danny had started would not fade the way the pastor's groups had.

Danny was confident and natural. He was not performing. The pastor's face was full of joy and quiet relief. For two years, she had lamented that the seeds she had planted in her hometown seemed to have died, and she was thrilled to hear Danny was seeing a harvest.

Why had it stuck for Danny and not for the pastor the first time? I have wondered about that ever since. She is not less faithful, and she is not less loved by the Lord. The honest answer I have come to is this: The pastor had been carrying the four ingredients as a tool to use, and Danny had been carrying them as a way to live. Same four ingredients, same town, held two different ways. It is not the pastor's fault. She was doing what she had been formed to do, and tools are what a busy pastor is trained to reach for. The boy had not yet been trained; he just did the four things.

A teenager from a Kansas town had picked up a tool a pastor had been given two years earlier. The pastor had watched it fade and could not revive it. The teenager started two more groups.

It turned out the institution had not been the one carrying it after all; the teenager had.

That is when the question that had been building in me for months settled hard in my chest.

Why is it sticking now?

I thought about it on the drive home and on many drives since. I have been living with the question for fifteen years, but the answer eluded me. The Kansas teenager finally helped it to land.

Before I name William Carey or Donald McGavran or anyone else you would already recognize, I want you to know who is writing this.

I grew up inside missions. Five generations of it. My grandfather ran an indigenous mission that had launched and supported a large orphanage and many churches by the time I was old enough to line up for meals alongside the orphanage children. My parents, Paul and Diamond, launched their own work when I was eleven and took the family to another city to live by faith. I spent my teenage summers on the rooftops of construction sites with Teen Missions International, building schools and orphanages in places I now cannot find on a map. By the time I was twenty, I had been to a large missions conference and had come home with what I can only describe as a transfusion of faith for the work.

The team I have been part of has spent decades planting churches in South Asia. My wife and I lived there for sixteen years to be near the work. We had children there. We buried friends there.

One more thing about who is telling you this. Almost everything written about gospel movements comes from the outside. A worker travels into a place or a people not their own, helps a movement catch, and then tells the story of how it sparked and how it spread from one willing local person to the next. That reporting is real, and I am grateful for it. But we almost never hear from the one on the inside, the son or daughter of that place who actually carried the movement forward after the visitor flew home. I have lived my life as that person, among my own people. This book is written from inside the thing most books can only describe from the outside.

I am not standing outside missions and church planting throwing stones at them. I have served in them. I am still serving in them.

And in 2011 I sat down one afternoon and noticed something I could not get past.

All the building had not awakened the everyday believer.

We had filled the churches, organized them, trained pastors, released worship music, and distributed songbooks. But the people walking through the doors on Sunday morning did not believe they were the carriers of the gospel. They believed I was the one, or their pastor, or my staff, or the visiting Americans were.

We had built the whole thing around professionals when only ordinary believers could carry it. A movement of professionals can do a lot of things, but it cannot reach the harvest a whole country full of ordinary people can reach.

Meeting Danny helped me answer the question I had struggled with for fifteen years.

For two and a half centuries, we have answered the Great Commission, mostly, in two ways, though as I said in the prologue, there have always been more than two.

The first was the **missionary society**. In 1792 an English cobbler named William Carey wrote a small book with one urgent argument: The Great Commission has not expired. Christians have a mandate to act. He picked up his pen at a bench in a Northamptonshire village. He founded a society later that same year. The next year he sailed for India. Notice what he was: a cobbler. A man who repaired shoes for a living. From that bench came the modern missionary movement — two centuries of societies that carried the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The second was **church growth and church planting**. In 1955 an American missiologist named Donald McGavran published a small book called *The Bridges of God*. He had grown up in India, the son of American missionaries. He had watched the local church multiply through farmers and weavers, daily laborers, and tribal and lower-caste people who

were considered untouchable by the society around them. The church was multiplying faster than the foreign agency could move. McGavran named what he had seen. He founded the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary. From Fuller came the Church Growth Movement. It reorganized large parts of the church around the planter, the way an earlier century had reorganized around the missionary.

Both of these are gifts. I am the fruit of them, and so are you and most of the church members you sit beside on Sunday morning. I love these two ways, and I have given my life to them.

But notice what they share.

Both started with ordinary people. Carey at his bench. A village church in India spread through people no one in power thought of as carriers. Most of us have never seen the first two ways in their original forms. We have inherited them as systems built around the professional.

The missionary society honored the missionary. The church-growth and church-planting movements honored the pastor and the planter. The everyday believer was honored as a *participant*, somebody who prays and gives and attends.

Rarely as the primary carrier of the mission of God.

Both ways still bear fruit, and I am grateful to be a part and product of them both. I honor them, and I celebrate what they have carried, the gospel taken across oceans and the church gathered and fed, even as I look past them to a third way the Scriptures reveal alongside them. But the systems alone will not finish the job. Most of us, pastors included, were formed inside a system that handed the Great Commission to the professional. The professional could only carry so much. Nobody told the believer in the pew.

And the math was never on the side of the few. We trained and sent professionals one at a time — carefully, slowly — and all the while, the world kept growing faster than any society or seminary could keep up. The number of people alive today who have never once heard the name of Jesus is larger than the whole population of the earth was when Carey set sail. That gap is not closing but widening, and a gap that is widening like that cannot be closed by adding a few more professionals to one side of it. Only the many can reach the many. Only ordinary people, carrying the gospel to the people already in front of them, have ever kept pace with a harvest God keeps growing. This is not a failure of the two ways; it is simply more than they were ever built to carry.

I am not writing as an outsider throwing stones. I am part of these two ways, and I owe the West more than I can repay. It trained me, believed a vision I had no means to reach, and became a partner in it. I have been married into a Western family for thirty years, I love them, and I am still an Eastern man in the way I see the world. So when I write about the West, I am not writing down at it. I am writing from inside the family, grateful and still a little foreign, the way you can only be about a home that has truly become your own.

The tower I helped build

Let me say one more thing plainly before I go further. The tower I am about to ask you to walk around and examine is one I helped build.

Across my years of ministry in South Asia I worked on the global movement community's frameworks with my team. I made my own simpler version with them. I still teach it. It is a useful tool for those catalyzing and coaching a movement.

But every time I gather with movement catalysts, the same thing happens. Each movement catalyst finds the piece

of the framework closest to his heart and builds an entire program around it. Prayer mobilization programs. Healing training schools. Person-of-peace curricula. Generational tracking systems. Stack it all up and you get a tall building. A movement catalyst walks into that tower and feels right at home, but an everyday disciple in our church takes one look at the same tower and turns around and goes the other way.

The tower is not just a problem for the everyday disciple looking up at it. It is a problem for the leader living inside it. When my calendar is ninety percent full of organizational activity, I have often effectively scheduled out the Holy Spirit. I cannot be a disciple among disciples in those weeks.

I am writing this book because I have started taking apart my own tower, stone by stone. What follows is what I have come to believe waits on the other side of a much lower door.

Before I take you to those people, I want to look at the One they were following, because the pattern was His first.

Jesus ministered among His own people, in His own country: Galilee, a little of Judea, a road through Samaria. He did not go to Rome, and He did not go to the ends of the earth Himself. He stayed close to home.

And close to home, He did everything we now think of as church. He taught the crowds on a hillside and from a boat. He preached to thousands in the open air. He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up and read the Scripture. He went up to the temple for the festivals. People brought Him the sick, and He prayed for them, and they were healed. The crowds pressed in on Him until there was no room left at the door. If you love the gathered church, the preaching and the reading of the Word, the feast day and the great congregation, you are like Jesus. He loved to minister in those ways.

He also did something quieter, off to the side of the crowd. He sat up late with one man, Nicodemus, and talked with him alone. He walked seven miles to Emmaus with two discouraged people and opened the Scriptures to them as they went. He invited Himself to Zacchaeus's house and sat down at his table. Three years, He poured Himself into twelve ordinary people, close enough to hand them everything He had. The crowd heard Him. The few were formed by Him.

He did both, and I am not pitting one against the other. The trouble is not that we have the crowd and the synagogue and the festival. Thank God we have them. Jesus had them too. What we have quietly let go of is the other thing He did, the small, personal, reproducing part, the handful He walked with until they could carry it themselves.

Of the many types of ministry Jesus models, this book focuses on the quieter disciple making that was central to His strategy for reaching the world. He focused on His own people, and the world was reached through the ones He disciplined and released. I have no issue with the pulpit or the mission field. I love both and have given my life to them, but here I want to attend to the part we tend to neglect, because when almost everyone who receives the gospel keeps it and almost no one passes it on among their own people, the math runs out. To reach a world this size, everyone who believes has to be part of the movement team.

There are everyday disciples in the New Testament I have not been able to get out of my head. None of them were professionals, none of them had three years of training, and none of them waited to be filled with anything except the surprise of grace. Each of them carried the gospel into their own world in a way the professionals around them could not.

A Samaritan woman at a well at noon. A man among the tombs of the Gerasenes who became the gospel's voice in

ten cities. A Philippian jailer baptized at two in the morning. Cornelius the Roman centurion. Lydia the cloth merchant in Philippi. Zacchaeus standing in his own house, returning fourfold what he had taken. The man born blind in John 9, whose testimony to the Sanhedrin was so simple no one could argue with it: *“One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”*

They are the pattern.

These are the people God uses to carry the gospel across the New Testament. None of them resemble the professionals the modern church has trained to do the work for them.

We have spent years training the woman at the well’s replacements, when she did not need replacements at all. What she needed was someone to believe she was the carrier.

This is the one we have most forgotten, the one I have come to call the **Third Way**. The everyday believer, in the place she already lives, with the people God has already given her, doing what she has heard Him ask her to do.

Look at the symbol on the front of this book. Three circles overlap, with a star where all three meet. The circles are three good works of God: the missionary sending agencies, the church, and the movement of everyday disciples. I had them drawn overlapping because they were never meant to compete. They are one work of God in three shapes.

The star marks the spot where the three overlap. It is the place where they work together instead of alone, and where the everyday disciple is handed the work and sent out, hearing God, doing what He says, and helping someone near her do the same.

For most of our history, the first two works gathered her, taught her, and sent trained people to reach her, and they did

it well. But they also gathered her on Sunday morning and sent her home on Sunday afternoon not sure what she was for. She was never meant only to sit and receive. When the other two stop working for her and start working around her, handing her the work instead of keeping it, she begins to reach the people only she can reach. For years she was the one being served. Now she serves others herself.

The Third Way is not a third structure to add to the two we already have. It is the original mandate, the everyday disciple the two were always meant to serve. We honor both, and thank God for their fruit, even as we ask them to serve her.

The work in front of us is not to build a third agency or plant another network. It is one word.

Activate.

Wake what God has been using since the woman at the well.

I do not have anything to ask you that I have not already asked myself.

What is your plan for the people God has already given you, not for the world and not for your country, but for the four people in your phone whom the Lord has put on your heart this week?

A young man has already begun in a town in Kansas. A pastor's wife named Sharon has already begun in South Asia. A widow has already begun in Idaho.

I want you to walk it too.

For Reflection

Are you carrying the four ingredients as a tool to use, or as a way to live? Which is honestly closer to you right now?

Is there any part of your religious busyness that has crowded out the Holy Spirit?

Who are the four people in your phone the Lord has put on your heart this week?

Chapter 2

The Anatomy of a Gospel Movement

I spent years describing this thing before I could simplify it.

When you grow up inside a movement, you absorb the patterns long before you can name them.

For most of the years I have been at this, I worked with frameworks. The Luke 10 pattern of going two by two. The discovery-obedience-multiplication DNA. All of them helpful and most of them right. Some were mine. Most were other people's, simplified for the way we worked. But a framework is a map, not the country it describes, and I kept meeting people who could recite the map and had never once walked the land.

A movement is defined by what people actually do without thinking about it. They may learn many concepts over the years, but they digest and are transformed by only a few.

So I have spent the last decade asking a foundational question: *“How can we boil everything down to the absolute essentials, so that if those few ingredients are present, the rest follows, and if even one is missing, everything falls apart?”*

I keep returning to four crucial elements.

Before I name the four, I want to explain what we mean by gospel movements.

First, what we mean by the gospel.

Jesus said it in John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

That sentence is the foundation. Everything else in this book is built on it. A gospel movement is not a movement of strategies or methods but a movement of people who have believed the good news that God so loved them that He gave His Son for them. Their lives are now hidden in Christ.

The Great Commission is not a new project the Father has given us to start; it is what He has been doing all along, drawing people to Christ since the cross and still today, and His work will not be done until everyone has heard. Our work is to notice what He is doing and join Him.

We do not build a gospel movement on our own strength; we join one the Father has been running since before we were born, and we carry the gospel only because we are in union with Christ.

Now, what kind of movement.

There is a pattern in the New Testament that has shaped how I think. Almost no one Jesus called was a professional. Of the Twelve, four were fishermen, one a tax collector, one a zealot. None were rabbis. A Pharisee named Saul became Paul, but he kept his hands on tentmaking. The apostles were ordinary people the Lord set apart for a season.

The early church was made of ordinary people too. The upper room had a hundred and twenty of them. The houses in the book of Acts were houses, not buildings. The deacons were

chosen out of the congregation by the congregation. The gospel was carried by farmers and weavers, soldiers and slaves, women and children. For two centuries, that was how the gospel moved.

It was also carried by the ordinary people we meet in the New Testament, who never became apostles and never had to. Some encountered Jesus Himself: the Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, the Gerasene demoniac. Others encountered Him through His apostles: Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailer. You will read each of their stories in full in the chapters ahead. None of them were commissioned as apostles. Every one of them went home with what they had received.

Then the professional class came. Bishops became a class and priests became a class, and theological education became a credential. The everyday disciple stayed in the pew while the professional carried what had once been carried by all of them.

Carey and McGavran did the same thing in our era, in a smaller way, with the best intentions.

Carey's missionary society in 1792 began at a cobbler's bench. Within a hundred years, his successors were credentialed missionaries with seminaries behind them. The cobbler's heart had become the missionary's profession.

McGavran founded the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary after decades of missionary work in India, where he studied the mass movements he later called People Movements. The school produced an entire generation of Church Growth practitioners and church planters with degrees and strategies.

We call this specialization. Specialization by itself is not the problem. It happens whenever ordinary people start doing something well. One person systematizes it, another

credentials it, and by the time the systematizing is finished, the ordinary person who started it has been eased out of the center of the work without anyone quite deciding to do it.

This book is about putting her back.

We are calling it a gospel movement to distinguish it from a church-planting movement, which is one shape of what God is doing in the world. We need both. But the church-planting movement, in its biblical form and its modern form, was always built on top of a gospel movement of ordinary people in their own places carrying the news to their own people. The everyday disciple is the soil. Everything else grows out of her.

A word for the pastor and the theologian. Our focus in this book is the Third Way. Elders, sacraments, and the pulpit are not what we are working on. They will happen. They already have in the Christian West. Groups grow into gatherings, and gatherings develop the practices they need because our culture has carried them for centuries. Our danger is a different one. The established church becomes stationary, settled in its building and its calendar, while the harvest field outside is still unreached. The four ingredients are how the everyday disciple steps back into that field. That is the Third Way. It is the work in front of us.

The name does not matter much. Some people call these everyday disciples movement catalysts. Some call them everyday disciple makers. Some just call them disciples. Pick whichever word lands for you. The category is what matters. They are not the apostles. They are the people the apostles are sent to release.

Now here are the four crucial ingredients that make and sustain a gospel movement:

- One. Everyday Disciples.
- Two. Hearing God.
- Three. Obeying God.
- Four. Helping Others Do the Same.

Each one is simple enough to share with a child, and you can spend a lifetime living them out. If any single one of them is missing, the movement breaks down, but where all four are present, it keeps going no matter what else is missing.

Let me set these words side by side, so none of them trip you up. The Third Way is a person. It is the everyday disciple, the ordinary believer carrying the gospel in the place she already lives, the one the first two ways were always meant to serve. The four ingredients are how she lives: she is an everyday disciple, she hears God, she obeys God, and she helps someone else do the same. A gospel movement is what forms when enough people live that way, the gospel passing from one ordinary life to the next without waiting on a professional. Culture, or simply normal Christianity, is the goal, the day those four ingredients become so ordinary that no one stops to name them anymore. And underneath all of it is a posture, the quiet trust that the Spirit will speak to any disciple who listens, so that our job is never to be the expert but to help one another hear and obey.

If you have spent time around these movements, you will recognize the older pattern inside them, the discovery and obedience and multiplication that Disciple Making Movements have carried for years, brought forward here in warmer, more relational language. Discovery becomes Hearing God, through Scripture and everything else the Lord uses. Obedience becomes Obeying God. Multiplication becomes Helping Others Do the Same. And placed ahead of all three is the everyday disciple, the ordinary believer who was always meant to carry it.

The movement world has at times produced lists of qualifications so complete and so demanding that even the people who teach them sometimes secretly feel like they are falling short of them. That is not what the four ingredients are. The four ingredients are a door to enter, not a bar to clear, and anyone at all can come in.

Let me go through them once here, plainly.

Everyday disciples

A gospel movement is made of everyday disciples.

These are everyday disciples living in the places they already are, among the people God has placed around them, not professionals and not clergy but ordinary believers who were never told that any of this belonged to them.

This is the first ingredient because everything else hangs on it. If the movement is built around professionals, what you end up with is church planting or missions, and both of those are worthy callings I have given years of my life to, but neither of them is a gospel movement, because a gospel movement is the culture that forms when everyday disciples start doing what only professionals have been allowed to do.

Lydia of Philippi, the businesswoman in Acts 16, is the kind of person I am pointing to. She is the cloth merchant who heard Paul at the river and opened her home to host the first church in Europe. You will read her story in full in chapter six. The pattern is the one this whole book is about. Not a priest, not a Roman official, but a working woman in the place she already lived, with the people God had set in her life.

We have spent years training Lydia's replacements when the replacements were never what we needed. She was the one we needed all along.

When I look at the disciple makers I have watched spread across South Asia, the ones our counting cannot keep up with, they are not pastors. They are masons and onion sellers, tailors and mothers and teenagers. They are the people Christ is calling and sending to their own relatives and neighbors. And the professionals who were supposed to equip them often did not believe they could carry it.

There is a reason the ordinary believer can carry this. Peter wrote to the churches, “*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.*” Under the old covenant, only one tribe could be priests, and they went into God’s presence on behalf of everyone else. When Jesus died, the temple curtain tore in two, and that arrangement ended. Now anyone who calls Him Lord comes into God’s presence directly, with no one in between. The everyday disciple was a priest all along.

This is not the first time the church has had to recover it. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther said it plainly: every baptized believer is already a priest, and he drew it from the same verse Peter did. The shoemaker at his bench stands as near to God as any bishop. Over the centuries since Luther, we have let it slip. It’s time once again to revive the message of the priesthood of believers for the sake of the work.

The first ingredient of a gospel movement is the recovery of belief that everyday disciples can carry it.

Hearing God

A gospel movement is made of discovery.

Discovery is not so much a teaching method as a posture, the one that says “*the Holy Spirit will speak to everyday disciples from the Scriptures, and our job is not to interpret for them but to ask the questions that put them in front of Him.*”

I used to call the Third Way a mindset, but I have come to use the word posture instead, because a mindset can stay up in your head while your hands go on doing what they always did, whereas a posture is something your whole body takes up.

Most of us have been trained on teaching. The pastor teaches, the Sunday school teaches, the conference teaches, and the book and the podcast teach the rest of us. There is a place for teaching, and I have benefited from a lifetime of it, but teaching by itself cannot make a movement.

Movements are made by a different posture, one that I first watched in the homes of villagers who could not read but could open a Bible story with their children and hear the Lord. The posture says *“I am not the expert. We will discover this together. The Spirit who inspired the words will explain them to anyone who asks.”*

The questions are only the scaffolding, and the posture is the thing we are really after, so that once it is there the scaffolding can come off and what was being held up goes on standing without it.

When that posture is present, a movement keeps moving on its own. When teaching replaces discovery, it slows and finally stops. That is, as much as anything, the reason Christianity goes silent in a place where it was once alive.

Obeying God

A gospel movement is made of obedience.

This is the ingredient most of us have lost.

The pattern of formation most of us have inherited is to teach a person what to believe, trusting that the right action will follow. The pattern of the Third Way is to ask a person what

the Lord is telling her to do this week and walk with her into doing it. The same passage produces both. The difference is simply what the meeting ends with, whether it ends with a page of notes or with someone actually deciding to do something that week.

I have watched obedience-based discipleship grow across South Asia since 2011, the year I first encountered it. I have watched learning-based discipleship hold congregations together for decades without producing one new disciple maker. The difference is not the people. The people I work with in South Asia are no more pious than the people I work with in Kansas City. The difference is the meeting.

A meeting that ends with a question (“*What will you do this week?*”) and a follow-up the next week (“*What did you do, and what happened?*”) is a meeting that makes disciples.

A meeting that ends with notes is a meeting that makes students.

Both are good, but only one of them makes a movement.

Obedience is the simple test that separates everything that follows. If you are honest, you will know within four meetings whether the group you are part of is heading toward a movement. The answer lies in whether anyone is doing anything that costs them.

Helping someone else do the same

A gospel movement happens when we are helping someone else do what we have learned to do, to hear and obey God.

Some teachers call this *multiplication*. I have used the word myself for years. Novo, the global movement family I am part of, names multiplication as a DNA value. In many Western

ministry conversations, though, multiplication has taken on a scarcity feel. It has become a metric to hit rather than a life to live. So in this book I use *helping others do the same*. The warmer phrase carries the same substance. A single everyday disciple, having tasted the first three ingredients, turns to the next person in his life and helps her do what he has just started to do.

That is the third beat, and without it the first two ingredients, while important, are not yet a movement, because nothing has been handed on to anyone else.

Every gospel movement in the New Testament has this beat. Each of the everyday disciples you met in chapter one took their own people with them — the ones who share their dinner table and their daily rhythms, the household and the friends and the neighbors God had already given them. The pattern is the same every time: *“Tell your own people what the Lord has done for you.”* That instruction is the heart of the movement.

If you remember nothing else from this book, remember that the heart of a gospel movement is not the gifted communicator who can speak to a thousand people. The heart is the everyday disciple who turns and helps one person do what she has just started to do.

There are four of them, and together they are the whole anatomy of a gospel movement.

Everyday Disciples. Hearing God. Obeying God. Helping Others Do the Same.

You can hold them in one hand, share them with your children, or write them on the back of a business card, and yet they are what a whole life is built on, and what a movement is built on, and you need all four of them together.

If any of them is missing, the movement is missing.

A movement built only with professionals is a missionary society or a church-planting network. It will plateau at the scale of the professional class.

Teaching without discovery gives you informed believers who cannot reproduce anything.

Knowledge without obedience leaves you with respected members whose lives change nothing.

And a disciple who never helps anyone else dies without leaving any descendants.

But where the four are present, the movement breathes. Everyday disciples in the places they already live raise up other everyday disciples until the air around them is changed. It happens slowly, and it does not need a building or anyone's permission; all it really needs is the four.

Before I send you on, a caution. I have seen many in this stream use disciple making movement principles as a stick to beat the church with, and that is not what I am handing you. Some people are angry with and critical of the church and think that moving to a home-based, small-group model will fix everything. It will not. The church's issues are human heart issues. Control and abuse infect megachurches and small groups alike. You cannot escape from people problems by changing the room.

I also do not intend for this book to give you a grid to grade others' performance inside the movement with. In practice, nobody carries all four ingredients cleanly. Most of our groups limp. Someone forgets the obedience question, or the helping falls away, or a season goes by where no one is hearing much. God uses these groups and seasons anyway. He does not need to wait for a group to get all four elements

perfect before He can use it. So let us all be patient with and extend grace to each other as we grow in the movement.

Plenty of people are living these four without the words we use for the ingredients. There is a network that originated in Wales called Local Houses of Prayer, gathered around a retreat center called Ffald y Brenin. They would never call what they do a Discovery Group, but when I sit in their prayer rooms, every one of the four ingredients is alive under other names.

Believers across the United States gather in what Novo calls Activating Prayer Cohorts. A group meets for a season to learn to pray, to listen, and to bless the place where they live. Most would never call it a gospel movement, but the same four things are alive in the room. Jacquie Aufhammer, whom you met at the dinner, has carried these cohorts for years and watched a church of hundreds come awake through them.

Someone can have every movement word by heart, all the talk and the books and the training, and not be living any of it. Someone else can be living all of it, the way those prayer rooms in Wales are, and never reach for one of our words. The language was never the test. So be slow to look at another believer's work and decide they are missing an ingredient. Keep all four ingredients alive in your own work but leave the grading of others' work to the Lord.

Somewhere along the way, we defined a gospel movement by a number: four generations of groups starting groups. A work that has not reached that fourth generation gets told it is not yet a movement. Counting has its place, and I do it, but it was never the substance. The substance is the four ingredients. Sometimes a chain of groups stops growing before it reaches that fourth generation, and we simply begin again with new people in the same place. Sometimes a whole area is reached not by one long chain but by many short ones.

Count the generations if it helps you, but never let the count be the thing that decides whether what you are seeing is a movement.

You can watch it in a single life. Novo tells of an athlete named Zach who went through one of these cohorts and was marked most by learning to listen. Praying about his work, he heard one thing, plain and clear: call Reggie. He obeyed. Reggie knew the man running an indoor game that month and got Zach into it. That game led to a tryout, and Zach was drafted by a professional team. At that tryout, he led two men to Christ. Once he was on the team, he prayed over his teammates before they took the field, and it moved the locker room. That is a cohort growing into a gospel movement, one person hearing God and helping the next do the same.

I do not expect you to leave this chapter with a new strategy. I want you to leave it with the four. If the four work themselves into you, the strategy will be the small obedience in front of you tomorrow morning, and the next one after that.

Before I go any further, I want to root all of this in one person. The four are not my idea. They are the way Jesus Himself lived. Jesus came as one of us, an ordinary man in a small town. He saw what His Father was doing and saying, and lived inside what He saw. He obeyed His Father all the way to a cross. And He always helped others to do the same. That is the four, the way of life He came to give us. We are not following a strategy. We are following Him.

There is something more foundational than the four ingredients themselves. Actually, it is Someone. The Holy Spirit is the one who carries the work. The Word is what He uses. The gospel itself, what God has done in Jesus Christ, is the starting point of everything. The four are the shape we have learned to recognize when the Spirit is moving through ordinary people who are listening to His Word. Without the

Spirit, the four are nothing. Without the gospel, the four are a hollow program. I am not handing you a method. I am pointing at what the Spirit does when He is given room in ordinary lives.

Everyday Disciples. Hearing God. Obeying God. Helping Others Do the Same. These are the names I use. They are not the only ones you can use. The specific terms are not the point. What matters is the substance. You can find your own words that fit your people. Some do not love the phrase *everyday disciples*. Lee Price, a friend of mine, calls them *everyday disciple makers* and shortens it to EDM. Some people prefer *discovery* in place of *hearing God*; use that if it makes more sense to you. A friend of mine, Tom Ruotolo, recently told me that, for many in the West, the word *obedience* is hard. If another word retains the meaning but lands more softly, use that; the meaning is what matters. For *helping someone else do the same*, some prefer *multiplication*. Use the words that fit your context. Make sure all four are present in your life.

Same with Discovery Group. Call it whatever you want to call it. Shape the questions however they fit the people you are reading with. Just make sure the four ingredients are present in the meeting. The form serves the substance.

God is sovereign. He can do all of this without any of these names, without any of these forms, without any of this. He is far too big to be boxed by them. He has chosen to work in the normal, ordinary way, through ordinary people whose lives are shaped like His Son's. The four are the names we are using for that shape.

Let's begin.

For Reflection

Which of the four ingredients is most alive in you right now, and which one is missing?

Do you hear the four as a door to walk through, or as one more standard you are failing to meet?

What is one small, clear thing you sense the Lord asking that you could act on this week?

Chapter 3

Everyday Disciples

The first ingredient is the one we have most often forgotten.

A gospel movement is made of everyday disciples, not professionals or staff, in the places they already live, with the people God has given them.

I distinguish a disciple from a believer in this way. A believer is someone who hears and accepts the truth about Jesus. A disciple has two connotations, and it is worth exploring them before we go further.

The common one is that disciples are saved individuals who are becoming grounded in the foundations of the faith and shaped in right belief. This is important, and it is biblical, but it is not what I mean by *everyday disciple*.

In a gospel movement, a disciple makes other disciples. This disciple making begins the moment a person starts hearing God, obeying Him, and helping someone else do the same. It does not wait for years of formation, and it does not wait for the right theological categories to be in place. It starts when the hearing and the obeying and the helping start.

This is why the Samaritan woman you are about to meet is not a pre-disciple. She is a disciple. She does not wait for any

training, infilling, or commissioning experience or to clean up her life. She hears Jesus at the well, obeys by running back to her town, and helps everyone she knows do the same, all in a single afternoon. Zacchaeus is the same, and so are Cornelius and Lydia and the Philippian jailer. The moment they hear and obey and turn to help someone else do the same, they are already carrying the four ingredients, and they are already disciples in the sense a gospel movement uses the word.

When we do not see them this way, we do a strange thing with the New Testament. We move the fruit of their stories away from them and onto the outside movement catalyst who brought the word. Peter gets the credit for Cornelius's household, and Paul gets the credit for Lydia's business, her home, and the church in Philippi. In that same way, when many of us daydream about God using us, we imagine ourselves becoming a Peter or a Paul. We imagine being the one who arrives from outside. But the movement in each of those stories does not run through the arriver. It runs through the insider, the person who was already in that home, in that town, in that trade.

The movement catalyst opens the door in a context other than her own, and the everyday disciple catalyzes from the inside. He reaches his own people, in his own context.

A believer who has passively occupied a church pew for thirty years can instantly become an everyday disciple. So can the person the town has written off as a sinner. Either one, the moment they encounter Jesus, hear Him, obey, and start helping someone in their life do the same, becomes an everyday disciple. The Lord may take a lifetime to develop them into what Peter or Paul grew into. That is His work and His timeline. But their mission does not wait for the developing. Their mission is the hearing and the obeying and the immediate turning to their family, their friends, and the people God has already put in their life.

That is why a gospel movement runs on them.

Here are a few of them.

A woman at a well

The woman at the well is a powerful example.

It is John 4. Jesus has come to a town in Samaria called Sychar. He is tired and thirsty. It is the sixth hour, the hottest part of the day. He sits down at Jacob's well alone while His disciples go into town to buy food.

A woman comes to draw water at the hottest hour because she does not want to run into other women. She has had five husbands. The man she is living with now is not her husband. The town knows. She is a sinner from the wrong side of the tracks. Jesus asks her for a drink.

The conversation lasts maybe ten minutes. He asks her about her husband. She says she has none, and He tells her that He knows she has had five husbands, and that the man she is with now is not her husband. She changes the subject to worship, and He answers her, then tells her plainly He is the Messiah. She puts down her water jar and runs back to the town, and she says, *"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"*

The town comes out. They meet Him. Many believe because of her testimony. They ask Him to stay. He stays two days. John writes that many more believed because of His own words. The chapter closes with the townspeople saying to her, *"It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."*

Look at the four ingredients in this story before we look at anyone else's.

Ingredient one. Everyday disciple. She is not a leader. She has no platform. She is, in her own town's eyes, a woman with a reputation. She is also the person Jesus chose to talk to that day. He could have chosen the priest in the temple. He chose her.

Ingredient two. Hearing God. Jesus does not lecture her; He asks her questions and lets her hear who He is directly from Him, with no clergy translating and no expert interpreting, because the Lord met her at the well and she heard Him for herself.

Ingredient three. Obedience. She puts down her water jar. That setting down of the jar is the obedient action, because the jar was the very reason she had come to the well, and she left it there because the new thing she had just heard mattered more to her than the old thing she had come for.

Ingredient four. Helping someone else do the same. She goes back to her own town, to her own people, the ones God has already given her, and she tells them about Jesus, not in a stranger's town but in the one where she has always lived, bringing out the people who already know her. John tells us that many of them believed because of her testimony, and that many more believed because of His own words. The town that knew her did not stay where she had left it.

That is the shape of a gospel movement. Everyday disciple. Discovery. Obedience. Helping someone else do the same.

She was not a "Christian," and she did not even have a Bible, and the four ingredients carried her anyway.

The four ingredients are not a Christian invention. They are the way Jesus has been moving through towns since John 4.

Now let me show you a few people in our generation in whom I have watched the same four work.

A teenager and a faithful pastor

You know Danny from chapter one. He is the first ingredient walking around in a Kansas town. Nothing was wrong with the pastor's faithfulness. She is a home church pastor who has shepherded her people through every kind of season. She had been carrying the first two ways. The Third Way needs everyday disciples reaching their own towns. Danny did that, and the pastor cried with relief when she saw it happen.

The same ingredient is showing up everywhere I have eyes to look.

One woman who stayed

Across South Asia, I have watched the first ingredient most clearly in women who would never have called themselves ministers.

There is a pastor's wife named Sharon. She lives in a city in South Asia. She had pastored alongside her husband for twenty-five years in a small church on hard soil — faithful work that had never drawn a crowd.

Then she learned about Discovery Groups.

She gathered five women and opened the Gospel of Mark with them. They did not teach each other. They listened together, asked what the Lord was saying, decided what they would do that week, and came back the next week with what they had done.

After a few meetings, two of the five women left. They did not like the simplicity. They were used to being preached at. The discovery method felt like baby food.

Then two more left.

By the time the dust settled, she had one woman remaining.

The two kept going.

That one woman started her own Discovery Group with a small group of believers. Someone from that second group, in turn, started a third one with another family. The father of that family had a heart condition, and the doctors had scheduled emergency surgery. The Discovery Group prayed for him. By the time he reached the hospital, the doctors said no surgery was needed.

The whole family came to faith and were baptized. They started a new group with their relatives. That group passed it on to a second generation, and then a third.

The four women who had originally left came back. They asked her to walk them through the simple thing they had once rejected.

One of those returning women now leads four generations of Discovery Groups, including one with four- and five-year-old children. The kids take what they learn home to their own families. The families let them keep coming because, they say, the children are learning good things.

Sharon, who had pastored a small church for twenty-five years, now ministers to more than ninety people across multiple villages, up to four generations.

The price of that simplicity was four women leaving, and the gift of it, in the end, was something closer to a hundred coming in.

What she keeps coming back to is the simplest thing. Women can lead, and so can children, and so can teens. You do not have to sit for hours and listen to one preacher. You can learn and discuss together.

Diamond's Daughters

Sharon is not alone. She is part of a network we now call **Diamond's Daughters**. The name came from my mother, whose name meant *diamond* in English. My mom carried a hidden strength the way a diamond carries hidden light, and the women in this network take that same strength into towns and villages most of us cannot find on a map.

Diamond's Daughters has grown into a network of women across many parts of India and beyond. They are mostly in their twenties and thirties, leading Discovery Groups in the cities and villages where they already live, walking with sisters into third- and fourth-generation fruit. Some of them stay with a single group. Some range across many.

One of them, I will call her M, is a young sister in her twenties. Her husband introduced her to the concept of Discovery Groups as she rode with him on the back of his motorbike. He told her she would need to learn a language she did not yet know to do it for herself in that area. She did. She carries many groups across a region far from her hometown. The groups are real. The disciples are moving.

Another young sister, twenty-one years old, is one of the next generation. She has helped start several Discovery Groups and now coaches the everyday disciples who facilitate each one. The disciples she walks with understand the Scriptures

themselves, not because she teaches them but because she asks them. You will hear more from her in the next chapter.

And then there is Veena. She carries her share of the work and a small child along with it. Earlier this year, Veena had a motorbike accident on her way to one of the groups in a hill region. She and the child were not badly hurt. She got back on the bike. The roads where they serve are not the kind I would want my own daughters riding. They serve anyway, as a family, because the work is theirs.

A man at the counter

The men carry it the same plain way. A gas station attendant named Anil came from a family that had never followed Jesus, and he had never once opened a Bible. Someone invited him to sit in on a small group that was reading the Scripture together. He did not understand what they were doing. He just came and watched. A handful of them would read a story, tell it back, ask what God was saying, pray for one another, and then ask what they had done about last week's story. Anil kept coming. After a while, the man who had started the group saw something in him and asked whether he might open one of his own. He did. He went home and read the creation story with a neighbor who did not yet believe, and then with another family down the road. What drew them was not a teaching. It was the change they could see. Men who had been fighting and drinking grew gentle and began to forgive, and the neighbors wanted to know why. Anil's wife watched it happen and started a group of her own. Between the two of them, there are four groups now, and nearly everyone in them is the first in their family ever to follow Jesus.

The group did more than study. When one of them was in trouble, the others showed love. When Anil's wife fell

seriously ill, the doctors near them had no way to help her and said she would not live. The group prayed, and she recovered. They had prayed the same way years before, when Anil and his wife had no child, and a son was born. Not one of them was trained for any of this. They read the Scripture together, they did what it said, and they left room for God to do what only He could.

Anil has never left his job. He still pours the same hours into the gas station work and carries a movement on the side. You will meet him again before this book is done, blessing a room full of the nations.

The same ingredient, far from South Asia

The same pattern has been showing up in places far from South Asia. I have been watching it cross oceans for years.

It has been crossing them for centuries, and almost never through the people whose names we remember.

Three hundred years ago, in a German village called Herrnhut, a community of religious refugees began praying in shifts around the clock. They were tradespeople and laborers, not clergy. The prayer watch went on, hour after hour, for a hundred years. Out of that small village, they started sending missionaries to the ends of the earth, around three hundred of them by the end of the century, generations before anyone called it a missions movement.

A little later, in England, Methodists met every week in groups of about a dozen. A layman led each one, a shopkeeper or a servant, not a minister. They asked each other, “How is it with your soul?” and gave each other an honest account of how they were living. That habit of ordinary believers being accountable to one another is most of what a Discovery Group is now.

In Wales, in 1904, a young coal miner named Evan Roberts watched a revival run through his country. He was still in training for the ministry. In under a year, the revival brought something like a hundred thousand people to Christ, and it spread not through famous preachers but through villagers, carried from town to town, much of it by singing.

And in New York, in 1857, a cloth merchant named Jeremiah Lanphier put up a handbill for a noon prayer meeting on Fulton Street. He had closed his business and taken a job as a lay missionary. Six men came the first day. Within six months, ten thousand were meeting daily across the city. Before it was over, perhaps a million Americans had come to Christ, out of a prayer meeting one man thought to call.

It is still crossing oceans now, and it still lands on ordinary people.

I have known Greg for some time. He came through South Asia once and I heard his story long before I sat at Warren and Ruth's table. He lives in Minden, Nevada, and owns a machine shop. He rides motorcycles long distances. He started something called MotoNOVO, a small network of Christian dirtbike riders. His wife Jeannie makes a toffee she sells called Hallelujah Toffee. None of it looks like a movement from the outside, but that is exactly what it is.

Greg has watched the Discovery Group reproduce through more than a dozen groups in his rider network. Leather jackets and open roads as the venue for the Great Commission. None of the riders thought of themselves as missionaries. They were just men who had been riding together for years. Now they were riding, reading Scripture, and asking what the Lord was telling them to do.

Not long ago, Greg gathered the riders for a day they call Dirt Church. Seventy of them came. They broke into small

groups right there on the ground, seven of them, and opened the Bible together. In Greg's own group of seventeen, one of the men asked for prayer. He had just lost his son, seventeen years old, in a dirt bike accident. Greg asked the others to lay hands on him, any who were willing, and every man did. Bikers with their sleeves shoved up, their hands on the shoulders of a father who had buried his boy. They read the second chapter of Ephesians together, the part about being dead and then made alive. There was no one up front, and there was no sermon. A machine shop owner believed his riding friends could carry the gospel to each other, and they have. This is the Third Way in action.

Alan, the husband of one of Novo's board members, picked up Greg's example. The Friday I sat across from him at Warren and Ruth's table was the first time I had met him. He told us he had asked himself a simple question. "If Greg can do this with his motorcycle friends, can I do it with my pickleball friends?" He had. And what he had done was worth telling in full.

For a few years, a pickleball community had been forming around his home. A friend from his church in Eagle Rock, California, named Karley, an aggregator and an inviting disciple maker, had been gathering the group. Every Friday she pulled them together for margaritas, Mexican food, and pickleball. When Alan caught fire on Discovery Groups through Novo, he asked Karley if she would pray about starting one with the pickleball group. They had lunch. They prayed together. They prayed alone. Karley made the ask. Ten of the pickleball friends said yes.

The first Discovery Group met after the sun went down. They sat on park benches beside the courts under camp lights with the bugs biting. The passage was Jesus calming the waves. Nine Discovery Groups have followed, once a month over nine months, and the group has moved from the benches into

the home Alan and Jacquie found after the fire. Jacquie does not play pickleball. She cooks. She sets a table. There is wine and laughter and dinner, and then the group moves to the living room and opens the Bible. Jacquie has been getting to know the women one by one. They adore her. She and Alan are now walking with each of them personally alongside the monthly gathering.

Greg in his shop, Alan on his pickleball court, Jacquie in her kitchen, Karley opening the door. None of them paid and none of them credentialed, and every one of them carrying the gospel into the rooms they were already in.

A coffee shop in Idaho and a kitchen in the back of a restaurant

Tom Weasick lives in Idaho. Earlier this year, he told me two stories from his own week.

The first was a recently widowed woman who had begun a Discovery Group with three other women at a coffee shop in town. One of those three women now leads a Discovery Group every week with her own daughter.

The second was a young man named Michael, twenty-eight years old, a server at a Vietnamese restaurant Tom and his family were eating at. Michael pulled Tom aside and told him he needed to talk. They began meeting weekly in the back kitchen of the restaurant for a Discovery Group. After the fifth meeting, Tom invited him to pray to receive Jesus. He did.

A father and mother in Chinook

Sarah's parents, Brent and Nancy Schellin, are everyday disciples. They have been since long before I met them.

They live in Chinook, Montana, a town of about twelve hundred surrounded by wheat fields and big gray sky. When I first came to Chinook as Sarah's fiancé in November of 1995, Brent handed me a snow shovel and pointed at the driveway. I had grown up on the other side of the world and had never seen snow up close in my life. I stood shivering on that driveway in a heavy green coat, looking at the gray sky, wondering why any human being would choose to live inside a freezer for six months of the year. I was twenty-four years old, an underweight young man from the tropics, holding a piece of American labor equipment I had never seen before. That green coat almost never came off. I wore it inside the house and outside the house. I slept in it under an electric blanket. Brent enjoyed watching me from the porch as I fought with the snow. He was probably wondering how long I would last.

My own father came to Montana once, and he came the way he did everything: like the wind, in a carefree way no one could predict. In America, you are supposed to call ahead and put a visit on a calendar. My father bought a Greyhound bus ticket, rode it across the country, stepped off at a station near Chinook, and phoned to say he had arrived. Sarah's parents drove twenty miles to collect a man they had never met. And then, in that small Montana kitchen, my father cooked them fish curry. I still cannot get over it. I grew up in his house and never once saw him cook a thing. Two families from two ends of the earth, one that tries to plan ahead and one that plans nothing, bonding over a pot of curry in the middle of small-town Montana. They ended up becoming great friends.

Brent likes sports on television and plays golf when the ground is not frozen. He's been good to me, but he also knows how to give a guy a hard time. That is a Montana father-in-law's love language. He teased me about my large feet and joked about the hard-to-pronounce names of my

cousins. I learned to tease him back just as hard, although it took me some time to get to his level. Nancy held down a full-time job while raising their daughters. Neither of them has ever been a paid missionary. They have their own work. They have their own house. They have their own town.

Brent served for many years as chairman of the board of KXEL, the Christian radio station based in nearby Havre. He helped it grow from one small Hi-Line broadcast in 1983 into Your Network of Praise, a network now reaching across Montana, into Canada, and out to Salt Lake City. He has since handed off the chairmanship.

Day to day it was simple: They prayed for their community, and their home was always open. They led Bible studies and Vacation Bible Schools, prayed with and counseled struggling folks, baked and cleaned and were lights in their community. They sent money where they heard the Lord ask them to send it, and walked in their region as people listening for what God was doing nearby. They sent their daughters into the world with hearts of service. Sarah came to India twice as a teenager because that had been the air of her childhood.

They are still doing the same work today, still asking the Lord what He wants of them this week, still talking to neighbors about what they are hearing from Him.

Look at what they sent. In 1993, they put their seventeen-year-old daughter on a plane to India with a roofing team headed for my father's children's home. The next year they sent her again, on a gap year. Two years later they walked Sarah down the aisle of the Chinook Assembly of God church on January 5, 1996. She married a twenty-four-year-old Indian man they had only known for a few months. They had never visited my country or met anyone from my family other than my dad, but they trusted God and blessed it anyway.

When we launched our post-seminary missionary life together in 2000, Brent and Nancy stood behind us. They stood with their daughter through the seasons of our family life, and they prayed for the work when the work was small, and they prayed when the work scaled and the costs scaled with it. They still pray and track our location as we travel.

Ordinary Americans who watch sports on Sunday afternoon and play golf when the ground thaws and shovel their own driveways in November. They have never had a major platform. They have prayed for, loved, and been faithful examples to us and to the rest of their huge family.

They may not be apostles, but they are people the apostles were sent to release. They have been released for a long time.

What you already are

The first ingredient is not glamour or training or certification. It is who you already are.

Ingredient two, hearing God, is next.

For Reflection

You become an everyday disciple the moment you hear, obey, and help one person, not after years of training. So what has made you wait?

Where is the ordinary room the Lord has already placed you in, with people only you can reach?

Who are two or three people you could open the Bible with in the place you already live?

Chapter 4

Hearing God

The second ingredient is the one that is hardest for many of us to receive.

We have been trained for two centuries that the way disciples are made is by teaching. The pastor teaches the congregation, the seminary teaches the pastor, and the book and the podcast teach the rest of us. There is good in all of this, and I have spent a lifetime being shaped by it.

Teaching is biblical. But something is more biblical and more foundational. God speaks directly to every one of His people, and every one of them can hear from the Lord.

That is what discovery is: the recovery of the conviction that the Holy Spirit will speak to everyday disciples directly from the Scriptures, so that our job is no longer to interpret the Bible for them but simply to ask the questions that put them in front of Him and let Him do it.

There is nothing beginner about this. It is the oldest pattern there is, and Jesus Himself lived inside it. He said the Son can do nothing by Himself, that He does only what He sees His Father doing. He said He does not even speak on His own, that the Father who sent Him gave Him what to say and how

to say it. The eternal Son of God, walking the roads of Galilee, lived every day by listening. He healed what He saw the Father healing, and He said what He heard the Father saying. If the Son of God lived that way, then listening has always been the center of a life with God, for teacher and student alike.

Here is the part that matters most for the ordinary believer. On the night before He died, Jesus told His friends it was for their good that He was going away, because He would send the Spirit, and the Spirit would guide them into all truth. He handed on the listening life He had lived. The Spirit who spoke to the Son now speaks to the shopkeeper and the mother and the teenager. God is not saving His voice for the platform. He gave it to the Son, and through the Son He has given it to us, and He means for every one of us to hear Him for ourselves.

There are two sides to this hearing. When you hear God for your own life, you grow. He shows you the next thing to obey, and slowly you become the person He is making. When you hear God for someone else, you have stepped into the thing Jesus did all day long. It might be a word for the friend beside you, or a sense of what the Lord is doing in the person you are praying for. Jesus listened to the Father for the one in front of Him, and then He did what He heard. Hearing Him for yourself is how you grow. Hearing Him for others is how you begin to minister the way He did. The Third Way is a way of standing before the Lord alongside another person, not only a way of thinking about Him.

A centurion who heard before any apostle arrived

I want you to get to know another everyday disciple before we go further. His name is Cornelius. Acts 10.

Cornelius was a Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea. He was not a Jew but an officer in the Roman occupation of Palestine. He was a competent man with rank. To the Jews of his region, he was an outsider, uncircumcised and not part of the covenant people, the kind of man any rabbi of the day would have crossed the road to avoid.

Luke tells us he was devout. He prayed and gave generously to those in need. He had no Bible of his own, no rabbi, and no apostle to interpret for him; he was simply a man trying to know the God of Israel as best he could.

One afternoon, around three o'clock, an angel appeared to him in a vision. The angel told him his prayers and his generosity had been heard and seen. He should send for a man named Peter, thirty miles away in Joppa. The angel even told him the address: *"The house of Simon the tanner, by the sea."* That was the whole instruction. No theology. No commentary. *"Send for this man and listen to what he says."*

Cornelius did. He called two of his servants and a devout soldier and sent them on the road to Joppa that hour.

Peter came. Peter, who would not have entered a Gentile home a week earlier, walked into Cornelius's house and found a roomful of people Cornelius had already gathered. His relatives and his close friends. His household. The centurion had heard from God, and before Peter even arrived, he had gathered the people God had given him to hear with him.

Peter began to speak. He had barely started when the Holy Spirit fell on the whole room. The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the Spirit was given to Gentiles. Then Peter said, *"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"* They were baptized that day. Cornelius and his whole household.

I want you to see the four ingredients here.

Ingredient one. Everyday disciple. A career military man, with no footing in the religious establishment.

Ingredient two. Hearing God. An angel came to him in a vision, before any preacher arrived.

Ingredient three. Obedience. He moved on it right away.

Ingredient four. Helping someone else do the same. He brought his family and friends in with him.

The apostle Peter's role in the story is real, but it is secondary. The Lord could have given Peter the instruction first and sent him to Cornelius cold. He did the opposite. He spoke to Cornelius first. Peter's role was to confirm and explain what God had already begun.

The apostles are there to mobilize the everyday disciples, not to replace them.

The Lord has never stopped speaking the way He spoke to Cornelius. All over the world, but especially where it is hardest to reach people with the gospel, Jesus loves to visit people in dreams and visions. There is no church on the corner there, and no preacher within a hundred miles. He comes anyway, the way He came to a Roman soldier who had no Bible and no apostle yet. Countless men and women around the world will tell you they met a man in white in a dream before they ever met a Christian. They say it plainly, without drama. Then they go looking for Him. This is not some exotic edge of the faith, just the ordinary way God reaches the ones no missionary can get to.

And where the darkness is thick, He still sets people free. In one village, the people would not step outside their doors after dark. The place was known to be under something. A

few ordinary believers went in and prayed, week after week, until the fear lifted and the village came out into the evening again. There was no stage and no famous name, only a few disciples who believed the Lord was stronger than what held the place, and He was. The man among the graves, whom you will meet later in this book, was the first of a long line. No chain could hold him, but a single word from Jesus set him free, and he became the gospel's voice in ten cities.

The night the Bible glowed in the dark

I was twenty years old when I first felt the difference.

I had finished theology school in a major South Asian city, at a college affiliated with the university William Carey helped found. Top of my class, Greek in my head, the systems of doctrine memorized, all the apparatus of a trained Christian. None of it prepared me for a preacher from Little Rock, Arkansas, who did not want to check my transcript.

In November 1991, Pastor Robert Smith came to my father's ministry in our town. He was traveling with Brother David Franklin and Brother Joseph Irby. He was an apostle in the New Testament sense of the word. They were holding a conference nearby. I was translating their preaching from English into the local language for the people.

After the conference, Pastor Smith and his team were traveling on to a major city, then flying north. I was supposed to drop them at the train station and come home. Pastor Smith kept teaching me on the railway platform. He was speaking about identity in Christ, about being a new creation, about being seated in heavenly places. The categories I had learned in theology school as systematic propositions were arriving in me as truths I had not known I needed.

He said, "Let's go."

I bought a ticket and got on the train.

We rode all night. He kept opening the Bible. I cannot describe what I saw on that train. The closest I can come is this: the words were glowing in the dark of the compartment. The pages I had studied with a pencil in theology school were lit from inside. I was reading the same words a different way. I was not deciphering them. I was hearing them.

That was discovery. I was twenty years old, on an Indian train in the company of a preacher from Arkansas who knelt down every morning and asked the Holy Spirit to teach him from the Scriptures.

Most discoveries are not lit-up pages on a moving train. They happen in a half hour at a table with one passage and one friend asking what the Lord is saying and waiting for the answer. The shape is the same, even if the setting is different.

I had never seen anyone do that before. The international preachers who had come through my father's ministry over the years had taught, and taught well. This was different. Pastor Smith and the brothers opened the Bible and asked it to speak to them as if for the first time, and I watched them do it every day of the trip.

From that city, Pastor Smith and his team were flying on to their next conference in the north, and they put me on my first flight to go with them. On December 4, 1991, they laid their hands on my head and prayed. Something happened in me I still cannot put into words. For weeks after, I felt like a giant. The faith for India was poured into me on the train and confirmed at that conference center. That night, the Lord began to speak to me directly about His vision and His desires for the work, and as I listened, they became mine. I have lived inside that conversation ever since.

I came home with a posture, not new information.

The three questions and the three more

I first heard the difference between the two postures plainly from a young sister in South Asia who began leading Discovery Groups in her early twenties. She told me this: “When someone approaches a pastor or a leader, the pastor starts teaching everything, and the person understands nothing. But when we do this together, we do not teach anything. They understand it themselves.”

That captures the difference between the first two ways and the Third Way. In the first two ways, the pastor is the teacher, the believer is the student, and the relationship runs in one direction only. In the Third Way, the facilitator is more like a host and the believer a fellow listener, so that the relationship runs in both directions at once.

The Discovery Group is the small reproducible tool through which this posture has taken hold in our generation. It is one tool. It is not the only tool, but it is the one that has done the most to help carry and spread the posture among everyday disciples. It came up through the work of David Watson and his son Paul Watson, Jerry Trousdale, and others over the last forty years, in the stream now led by Harry Brown at New Generations and Final Command.

A group of disciples gather. They are not required to be Christians. They begin by connecting: each person names one thing they are thankful for, one thing weighing on them, and how they did with what they set out to do last time. Then they open a passage of Scripture, often a story, read it aloud, and retell it in their own words to make sure they have it right. Then they discover together:

What does this passage show us about God and about people?

As you listen, what is the Lord saying or showing you, a word, a picture, a sense, a nudge?

What change will you make this week?

They take an obedience commitment. Then they send one another forward:

How can we help one another this week?

Who outside this room can we serve?

Who is the Lord putting on your heart to tell this story to?

You will notice that it is not really a teaching method: there is no lecture, no expert, and no commentary, just the passage, the people in the room, and the Holy Spirit.

This is uncomfortable for trained Christian leaders. I have watched many pastors try to lead a Discovery Group and slip back into teaching by the second meeting. They cannot help themselves. They have been formed to teach, and it is not easy to set that gift down.

And it is not only the pastors. Nearly all of us are built the same way. We are action people. The moment we care about someone, we want to hand them something: a lesson, a tool, a verse that fixed it for us. We reach for information, because somewhere underneath we believe the information is what does the work, that if we can only explain it well enough, the person will change.

Information does not change anyone. If it did, the person who knew the most Bible would be the most like Jesus. What changes people is watching someone live it. If you start a group, that someone is you. The boldness and authority people feel in you did not come from the books you have read, but from your humble obedience to God. As you lead a Discovery Group, let people see you hear God, obey the hard thing, and help others, until something in them says, I could

do that too. Modeling will do more to inspire change than any lecture could.

So do not get hung up on the method. Some people call it a Discovery Group. Others call it a Discovery Bible Study, or a cohort, or just reading the Bible with friends. The Local Houses of Prayer in Wales you read about earlier have a name all their own. Call it whatever puts people at ease. Move the questions around if better ones fit your people. What you should not change are the four ingredients. Keep the everyday disciple, the hearing, the obeying, and the helping someone else do the same. Start with your own people. And more than anything you say, model it, because people follow what they watch you live long before they follow what you tell them to do.

Many believers think Discovery Groups are only for introducing unreached people to the gospel, usually in far-off contexts, and so they never start one. They feel especially stuck if they know few unbelievers or are unable to gather the ones they know. But Discovery Groups are also great training tools for believers. The reading, the hearing, the small obedience, the reporting week after week: that is effective training. The same questions that open doors for unbelievers will awaken sleeping believers as well. They teach them to hear God for themselves and send them out to help others. Discovery Groups both reach the lost and build the worker.

This is the part the training world keeps getting backward, and I have done it myself. We tell people they need to get good at things before they can begin. They must learn to pray and hear God and share their faith, finish the course and watch the videos, and then, once they are equipped, go and start something. So they wait. And they are still waiting.

None of it is a prerequisite. Every one of those things grows inside the group, not in a classroom beforehand. You learn to

pray by praying for the friend across the circle whose mother is sick, not by taking a class on prayer. You learn to hear God by sitting in front of the same open passage week after week and asking what He is saying. You learn to tell your story by telling it to one friend, badly the first time and better the next. The Scripture, a few friends, and an ongoing week are the whole school. You begin first, and the growing comes after, and it never stops.

The accountability grows there too, and it needs no system bolted on. At the end of each meeting, the group already asks one another the plain questions. What did the Lord say to you. What will you do about it. How did last week go. Who did you tell. Two friends who keep asking each other those questions, week after week, are the whole of what the movement world calls accountability. One friend a step ahead who keeps asking is the whole of what it calls coaching. You already have both, the moment two of you sit down and refuse to let each other drift.

So do not wait until you are ready, because you will never feel ready, and readiness was never the requirement. Open the Scripture this week with one or two people the Lord has given you. You will learn the rest along the way.

A Discovery Group is not only a way to read the Bible. People bring their real lives into that group. They pray for one another, and God moves among them. In a village in South Asia, a handful of ordinary believers, none of them trained and none of them ordained, prayed week after week for a boy who had never walked. One day he stood up and walked. The whole village came asking about the God who had done it. In an American living room, a woman read the passage aloud, and partway through she turned to the friend beside her and said a thing the Lord had given her to say, about a thing she had no way of knowing. It spoke to a wound that the friend

had told no one about. I have watched this happen with no one up front and no one trained to make it happen.

This is not rare, and it is not held back for the gifted few. On the day the Spirit came, Peter stood up and quoted the old promise. *“I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.”* All of them. The healing, the wisdom, the sudden knowing, the things we long assumed only a pastor could carry, the Lord hands to ordinary people in an ordinary room, because the Spirit who does that work was given to all of them and not only to the professional. You do not have to reach for any of it. You open the Scripture with your friends, you pray for one another, and you leave room for God to be God among you. He does the rest, the way He always has.

A Discovery Group is not only a place to pray. It is also a place to help.

Jesus never split the two the way we have. He taught the crowds, and then He saw that they were hungry and fed them, five thousand of them, blessing the bread and breaking it and passing it down the rows until everyone had eaten. After He rose from the dead, the Lord of heaven walked down to a beach where a few tired men had fished all night and caught nothing. He had a fire already going with fish on it. He called out to them to come and have breakfast. The risen Christ cooked breakfast for His friends. That is the God we follow. He goes to where people are, and He feeds them, and He does it Himself.

We have learned to do our feeding at a distance. We build the hospital, we fund the school, we send the relief truck. All of that is good and needed, and the church should keep doing it. But a check can be written without ever knowing the name of the person it helps. There is a kind of help that costs you more than money, and it is the kind Jesus did most. You carry

the rice yourself, you sit with the widow, you show up when the baby is sick.

That is why, in the group, the question is not only what the Lord is saying, but also who around us is struggling, and what we will do about it this week. A group reads a story. Then someone remembers the family down the lane who has not eaten well since the father lost his work. By the next week, the group has done something about it, as neighbors and not as a project. The story sends them out with their hands and not only their words.

This is where the sweat is, and it is where the joy is too. You may not feel much when you sign a check, but you feel a great deal when you go with a friend to the house of her struggling cousin to pray for her. Now her name, face, and concerns are familiar to you too. That is the ministry Jesus did. He handed it to ordinary people, and it fits inside a Discovery Group as naturally as the reading does.

I want to be plain about something, because it is easy to hear only half of what I am saying. Some of us were handed the Bible and taught to be wary of anything we could not explain. Others went looking for experiences and let the Book slip out of their hands. The room where a Discovery Group happens holds both. You open the Scripture and take it as it is, and you also leave the door open for its Author to move while you read. The Book keeps us from making the Spirit into whatever we please, and the Spirit keeps the Book from going cold in our hands. An ordinary believer does not have to choose between the two. She reads, she listens, she obeys. And the same God who breathed out the page speaks from it and sometimes heals beside it. That is the whole inheritance, and it is hers as much as anyone's who ever stood behind a pulpit.

The voice that spoke three times

I have been a recipient of discovery in the simplest sense three times in my life that I cannot explain any other way. Three moments when I was alone, asking, and the same voice spoke.

The first was in Chinook, Montana, in 1996. I had been in America a few months. My wife and I had recently gotten married. We had used the honeymoon money to drive to half a dozen Bible schools across the country looking for where we should go to seminary together. We had come home to Chinook out of money, out of leads, out of certainty.

I knelt in the apartment. I asked the Lord where we should go.

“Oral Roberts University.”

It was the most expensive school we had visited. I could not afford it. We applied anyway. This is the kind of humor the Lord has. You ask Him for direction and He hands you the school you cannot pay for. Thankfully, my wife received a full four-year tuition scholarship. We packed everything we owned in the blue Lincoln station wagon her father had given us, and we drove to Tulsa.

The second was in Tulsa. We were in our apartment there. My wife was at school, and I was making the bed, anxious. We had just launched a plan to plant churches in every village of my home district. It involved millions of people, hundreds of villages, millions of dollars we needed and did not have. We had no organization and no donors. This is what a young Bible school student does. He announces a plan of that scale to nobody in particular while making the bed, and then has to hear back from the Lord because there is nobody else in the room who is going to answer him. I was making the bed and the voice came again.

“I will provide. I will take care of it.”

Within weeks, I picked up a copy of *Excellence*, the ORU magazine, in the prayer tower at the seminary and saw a man named Michael Orsillo on the cover. He was an Oral Roberts graduate, the founder of Engineering Ministries International. I called him. It turned out that he was planning a trip to ORU soon because his son was starting college there. I invited the man on the *Excellence* magazine cover to lunch at an Indian buffet. He came. I have since learned that the Lord uses buffets. We met at India Palace. I brought my friend Aby with me. When Michael met Aby, he recognized his name and said he had once stayed in Aby’s home in South Asia. That was where the Lord had given Michael the vision for a brick church building design for the mission field.

The Lord had given Michael the same vision in Aby’s living room, before Michael and I ever met. Engineering Ministries International became a partner. Then a foundation in Colorado Springs connected Michael with Dois Rosser, who led a global church-building ministry. Dois came to visit our team. He stayed in our home. That ministry became a partner. It has built thousands of churches around the world with many partners, and we have been one of them ever since.

When I asked Michael recently to sign off on this passage before print, he wrote back with more of the story than we had time for at India Palace. In his own words: “The vision in Aby’s living room was years before we met. But the design we used was only completed a week before we met. It was on my heart and in my mind for all those years and just when it was going to be needed God gave me the design. You may remember that I showed you both the rendering for the church. I had no idea that your ministry was the one I was designing that church for. God was my client. He knew that you needed it. But I had no idea who He had in mind.”

That was the second word paying out.

The third came on a train in the early 2000s. I had been diagnosed with hepatitis C in September 2003, which I will write about in a later chapter, the one on cost. The Lord drew my attention to an elderly woman in the corner of the train compartment. He spoke: *“James, don’t be afraid. Look at that elderly woman. You will also have a long life. Don’t worry about dying. With this sickness, I will heal you.”*

I held that word in my body for years, through interferon therapy and a relapse and combination therapy after that. And the Lord kept it. He healed me. I will tell you the day I finally heard the news in the chapter on provision.

The same voice, three times, to an ordinary man kneeling alone in an apartment or riding alone on a train.

But three is not the whole of it. The God who said those three sentences to me had been speaking to me long before that and has been speaking to me since. He speaks all the time, in small things and in big ones. He is the God who speaks, the God who opens the Scriptures to whoever asks, and who shows His heart to anyone who will sit still long enough to listen.

That is the heart of it. I have named each of these incidents to show that they are real, and that they are for ordinary people. You hear Him, you obey Him, you help someone else do the same, and you let Him do the part only He can do.

The way I lived, and the door that opened for everyone else

For the next twenty years after that train ride in 1991, I lived inside the experience of hearing the Lord. I lived inside it as a minister of the gospel, as the son of missionaries, as someone

who had dedicated his life. I assumed that was the worldview of any leader.

I wanted ordinary believers to hear God for themselves too, so I preached about it and I wrote about it. I told the people in our churches that the Holy Spirit would speak to them from the Scriptures the way He had spoken to me.

But the system most of us inherited makes the ordinary believer dependent on the man of God. The pastor hears for the congregation, the missionary hears for the field, and the trained leader hears for the people. There was no context for the ordinary believer to live what I was preaching about. They had been formed to receive what I heard, not to hear for themselves.

In 2011, that changed.

That was the year I first encountered what most of the world calls Disciple Making Movements. What landed in me was not the strategy or the scale of it but the three simple questions of a Discovery Group.

For the first time, I had a context I could put any ordinary person inside, and the Holy Spirit would meet him there. An ordinary believer would open the passage with one or two friends and read it aloud. He would ask what it said about God, what it said about people, what the Lord was asking him to do this week. Then he would hear from Him directly, share his heart, obey, and come back the next week with what had happened.

The posture I had lived inside as a minister for twenty years was now his, with no man of God in between.

That is what made me cry the first time I watched it work.

Kesbo, a daily laborer

I want to give you one picture before we move on.

In one of our regions, there is a man named Kesbo. He is forty-two years old. He works as a daily wage laborer. He has no theological training and would not have called himself a leader.

A few years ago, Kishore, a friend on our team who coaches, met a tired village pastor named Purna and sat with him over a Bible. No lecture, no slides. Just three questions. Purna gathered three ordinary men from his village to do the same.

Kesbo was one of those three.

After a few weeks of opening the Scriptures together, Kesbo had a dream about a nearby village. It was a dangerous village where Christians were persecuted. He would have avoided it if God had not spoken to him.

He had heard from God, so he went.

He made friends there. He started a small group with two of them. The two became six. Among the six was a woman named Shanti Lata, who took what she was learning home to her own village and started her own group.

Kesbo had no training, Shanti Lata had no platform, and Purna had no strategy. What each of them had was the same thing the woman at the well had on a hot afternoon in Samaria. Someone had asked them a question, they had heard from the Lord, and they went home and asked the next person.

That is what the second ingredient looks like when it has taken hold of an everyday disciple.

The Holy Spirit will speak to everyday disciples from the Scriptures, and our job is simply to ask the question that puts them in front of Him and then to get out of the way.

That is two.

Then the third: obeying God.

For Reflection

Do you really believe God will speak to you from the Scriptures as readily as He would to a pastor?

When did the Bible last feel like the Lord speaking straight to you?

This week, open one passage with a friend and ask, “What is the Lord saying to you, and what will you do about it?” Who could you ask?

Chapter 5

Obedying God

The Bible tells us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. That is the third ingredient in one line.

We agree easily on the first two. Everyday disciples matter, and hearing God matters. But a study group can run for years, everyone becoming smarter but not more godly or effective. A movement is made of people who act on what they have heard. It is the doing that brings fruit, in our own hearts and in our communities. It makes all the difference.

The third ingredient grows us

I have sat in both kinds of disciple-making meetings.

The first kind ends with notes. The participants have learned something. They feel encouraged. They go home. The next week they come back and discuss the next passage. They learn more.

After ten years of that meeting, they are well taught and they have not made one new disciple.

The second kind ends with a commitment. *“What is the Lord asking you to do this week? Tell the person beside you.”* The next

week begins with the question *“What did you do, and what happened?”*

After ten years of that meeting, the room is full of new people who have come because the people in the room have been doing what they said they would do.

The difference is not the teacher or the curriculum, but the obedience question at the end of the meeting and the reporting question at the beginning of the next one.

I have watched disciple makers try to adopt the Discovery Group and skip the obedience question. I do not blame them. The obedience question is uncomfortable. It puts the asker on the line as much as the answerer. It says, *“You and I are accountable to each other for what we said we would do.”*

We have been taught grace in a way that lets us confuse no consequences with no accountability. They are not the same. The third ingredient is the gentle recovery of the New Testament practice of asking each other what we are going to do about what we have heard.

I am not attacking the church here. Most of what we call traditional church is real. The presence of God in the room is real. The preaching is real. The people are not performers putting on a show. They are ordinary believers who meet the Lord on a Sunday morning. And there is nothing wrong with being moved. It is far better to sit in a church, carried along by the people of God, than to sit at home alone feeling more spiritual than everyone else. The church is where most of us started, and it is what we build up from.

But a person can be moved every week and never be asked to obey a thing. A service can stir you and send you home unchanged. A gathering in a living room can do the same, and so can a large meeting run outside the walls of a church. People come, worship, and leave, with no one asking what

they heard, what they will do about it, or who they will tell. Moving the meeting out of the building fixes nothing by itself. The point was never the location but the question, asked week after week: *“What did you do, and what happened?”* Without it, a home group and a cathedral may equally fail at holding people accountable and helping them grow.

Obedience is the shape of love

The word obedience makes many of us flinch. It sounds like a rule handed down by someone with power over us. Obey or else. That is not what this chapter means.

Jesus is our model, and Jesus obeyed His Father out of love. He said He could do nothing on His own, only what He saw the Father doing. In the garden He prayed, *“Not my will, but yours, be done,”* not as a servant cowering before a master, but as a Son who trusted His Father. And He told us our own obedience would grow the same way. *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”* Love first. The obeying follows as the shape of the love.

We do not carry it in our own strength. The Holy Spirit helps us, and grace covers the weeks we fall short, and we do fall short. Obedience is a lifelong walk and not a clean record. We drift the way a child drifts inside a family that still holds, and then we come back, and the Lord restores us and sets us going again.

Philip trusted and obeyed

Like Jesus, Philip went where he was sent and did what he was asked.

Obedience often begins with a nudge that makes no sense yet. In the book of Acts, a man named Philip was told by an angel to get up and go south, down a desert road toward Gaza. No

reason was given. He got up and went. On that road he came upon an Ethiopian official riding home in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud and not understanding it. The Spirit said, *“Go over and join this chariot.”* Philip ran to it. He did not plan a sermon. He asked one question, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”* The man said he could not unless someone showed him, and he invited Philip up beside him. Starting from that passage, Philip told him about Jesus. They came to some water, and the official asked what was to keep him from being baptized. Philip baptized him on the spot, and the man went on his way rejoicing, carrying what he had received home to his own country. Philip never saw the rest of the fruit. He heard, he went, and he left it with God.

Zacchaeus was moved to action

Before we move on to more modern examples, let us learn from a first-century tax collector who quickly acted when his heart was moved. Luke chapter nineteen.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector in Jericho. That meant he was rich. It also meant he was hated. He had built his wealth on the backs of his own people by collecting Roman taxes and adding what he could on top for himself. Every Jew in Jericho knew his face. None of them wanted to know him.

He was also short.

When Jesus came through Jericho that day, a crowd lined the road. Zacchaeus could not see over them. He ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree along the route. A grown man with money and rank climbed a tree because he wanted to see Jesus.

Jesus stopped under the tree. He looked up. He said, *“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”*

The whole crowd grumbled. Jesus was the guest of a sinner. Zacchaeus came down from the tree and welcomed Jesus into his home. Standing in his own house, he decided out loud. *“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”* Jesus looked at him and said, *“Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.”*

I want you to see the four ingredients in this story.

Ingredient one. Everyday disciple. A tax collector, not a priest or a rabbi or an apostle, a man with rank in his profession but no standing with God in the eyes of his town, and he is exactly the kind of person Jesus tended to reach for.

Ingredient two. Hearing God. Jesus does not lecture Zacchaeus; He simply calls him by name and invites Himself to dinner. The discovery is not a sermon but a face-to-face meeting at the man’s own table.

Ingredient three. Obedience. This is where this story turns. Zacchaeus does not say *let me think about it*. He stands in his own house and announces what he is going to do. Half of his possessions to the poor. Fourfold restitution to anyone he has cheated. The fourfold is striking. Jewish law typically asked for restitution plus a fifth. Zacchaeus has chosen a cost on himself that goes far beyond that. Real obedience usually does cost a person something specific like that.

Ingredient four. Helping someone else do the same. Notice what Jesus says: *“Salvation has come to this house.”* Not just to Zacchaeus. To his household. Everyone living under his roof, and the people in his town who would now see the tax collector returning what he had taken. The fourfold restitution is more than obedience; it is the kingdom moving right through a tax office. Other tax collectors would have heard of it within a day. The wronged people he repaid would

carry the story to their own homes. Zacchaeus's obedience pulled his household and his profession and his town into the kingdom with him.

The Third Way meeting ends with the same question. "*What is the Lord asking you to do this week?*" And the next meeting begins with the same question. "*What did you do, and what happened?*" When the answer is real, it costs the person something, and that cost is usually what moves the obedience beyond the person and into the lives of others.

The people God chose

By the late 1860s, John Clough and his wife Harriet were carrying the Telugu mission at Ongole, and the people coming to Christ in numbers were the Madigas, a leather-working community the caste system counted as outcastes. Every strategic instinct of the day said to build instead on the Brahmins and other higher castes, on the theory that if you won the respectable and the influential, the rest of society would follow. To receive the outcastes was to close that door for good. The higher castes would not stay in a church filling up with Madigas, and Harriet could see what it would cost the school and the work she had hoped to build.

They received the Madigas anyway. Clough had settled it on a single conviction, that they were bound to welcome everyone who truly believed in Jesus, whatever it cost them. But the opposition was open and personal. Out at the river, baptizing a group of Madigas, he had watched several hundred higher-caste people stand on the bank, in his words "with threatening looks expressing their contempt." There came a Sunday evening when he sat in his study under a weight on his soul he could barely carry, unable to go back and unwilling to go on. To divert his thoughts he went to a pile of new Bibles in the corner, picked one up, and let it fall

open at random. His eyes fell on Paul's words to Corinth, that God had chosen the foolish and the weak and the low and the despised things of the world to shame the wise and the strong. "It seemed like a voice from heaven," he said. The moment struck him the way the rooftop vision had once struck Peter. Harriet had carried the same burden through that whole year, and the two of them took it as one assurance from God that they were to keep going. So they obeyed. Clough set that evening down himself, years afterward, in *Social Christianity in the Orient*.

That obedience is what opened the door to one of the great harvests in modern missions. Clough held his nerve through the terrible famine of 1876 to 1878, putting thousands of starving people to work on the Buckingham Canal and refusing to baptize during the famine so that no one could say the poor had come for rice rather than for Christ. When the famine broke, the ingathering came. On July 3, 1878, remembered ever since as the Telugu Pentecost, two thousand two hundred and twenty-two people were baptized in a single day in the Gundlakamma River near Ongole, and over nine thousand more in the weeks that followed. Within a few years the Ongole church numbered in the tens of thousands, among the largest in the world, and the gospel moved as a people movement along the lines of family and community, carried by Madiga disciples themselves.

Had the Cloughs chosen the wise and the noble, they might have gathered a small, respectable congregation. Because they became convinced that God had chosen the despised, and obeyed, a whole people came into the kingdom. They were the very people, and the very soil, from which our own family's faith would grow.

Sharon and the one who stayed

Sharon, the woman from chapter three, is an excellent example of the third ingredient.

What makes her an example is not a technique. It is that she did not stop. The women left, first two and then two more, and the simple thing they were doing looked like it had failed. A pastor's wife who had already given twenty-five years to hard soil would have had every reason to fold the group and go back to what was familiar. She stayed. She kept meeting with the one woman who remained, and she kept walking the same small path week after week.

That is the shape of the third ingredient. Not a burst of effort but a refusal to quit, obedience carried past the point where most people let go. The movement she carries now, across multiple villages, did not come from a better method. It came from a woman who kept going when almost everyone had left.

She never became a teacher. She stayed a host, faithful to the same small practice long enough for it to grow.

Choosing the same direction

The Lord had told me on a train at twenty years old to give my life to mission work. My wife had felt the same call in a different way. We met. We married. We gave our careers to the obedience God had asked of both of us.

My wife grew up in Chinook, Montana. She was one of the sharp ones in her class. When we applied to Oral Roberts University in 1996, she received a full four-year tuition scholarship for an undergraduate degree in International Community Development. Room and board were part of the package too, but the campus had no married-couple housing, so we lived off campus and could not use it. For a young

couple with no money, the tuition covering all four years was huge, though.

We had our daughter Simona the day after our first anniversary. In the summer of 1997, we took her to India. A Tulsa church had given us about ten thousand dollars to build six church buildings on that trip. We came back to Tulsa for the fall semester. My wife drove Simona to the campus and handed her to me in the parking lot between her classes and mine. We spent the next two summers in India as well, as we worked on our degrees. I also went briefly during the winter break a few times.

After my December 1997 return from one of those trips, I saw a Golden Jubilee of Independence banner at the airport on my way home. The Lord spoke to my heart about the fiftieth year of restoration, and we launched the plan: a five-year effort to plant churches in every village of my home district.

In 2000, the year Sarah finished her undergraduate degree, we moved to India with Simona. My wife was twenty-four years old. We lived in a house on the edge of the town where I had grown up. The town had grown around the house in the years since. When we arrived, no other houses stood near it. It was outside the town. She was the only American for a long stretch. I worried every time I left. She stayed.

She used her degree to start what would become Sarah's Covenant Homes, a network of homes for children with neurological and other disabilities who had been abandoned. She built it over many years. None of it came easily. Again and again the Lord invited her to take big risks, to learn things she had never been trained to do, and to stretch her faith for provision, and each time she and her team said yes. She is in transition out of leadership now. The faithful staff she inspired are carrying the work.

A word here about how the four ingredients sustain themselves over a lifetime, since my wife has done this for many years. The ingredients go farthest when an everyday disciple is not walking alone. A small team of two or three around the table sustains what one person cannot hold alone. Sarah did not build Sarah's Covenant Homes by herself. South Asian sisters, staff, and a series of foreign volunteers walked with her every step. When one of them grew tired, another carried her. When she grew tired, they carried her. That is how together we can go further than any one of us can alone, and it was never really a strategy, just a friendship pointed in the same direction long enough to be called a team.

Obedience was not one decision but a thousand small ones that kept choosing the same direction.

The third ingredient is what that looks like.

What obedience costs

Obedience is the only thing I have ever seen produce fruit that lasts past one generation. But I will not pretend obedience is free. There is a cost that Jesus asks His disciples to count before they begin to follow Him. Obeying God has cost my family significantly, and I will tell you more about that in a later chapter. Here it is enough to say that obedience costs the comfort and the security and the timeline of the person who chooses it, and of the people who carry it with them. It is worth it, though.

For Reflection

What has your obedience cost you lately?

Zacchaeus stood in his own house and gave back four times what he had taken. Is there something specific the Lord has been asking you to make right that you keep putting off?

What is the Lord asking you to do this week, and will you do it?

Chapter 6

Helping Others Do the Same

The fourth ingredient is the heart. It is what turns a Christian life into a movement.

The fourth ingredient is the practice of helping someone else do what you have just started to do. It is taking what you have received and passing it to the next person in your life.

It tends to flow pretty naturally out of the other three. When you hear God and obey Him, He does not let your focus stay on yourself for long. He is always, in the end, turning our attention outward, toward the next person He has put in front of us.

The instruction: pass it on

Over and over, though the exact words differed, Jesus gave people the same instruction: tell others about what you have seen, heard, and learned.

He told the Gerasene man to go home and tell his people.

He sent the seventy-two out two by two, to stay in the homes that welcomed them and tell what He had taught them about God's kingdom.

The Samaritan woman did not even need the instruction. She went home to her town on her own. She had met Him, and she ran.

He gave the Great Commission on a mountain and the instruction was *make disciples*, not *make converts* — disciples who can make disciples, because the pattern is built right into the word.

In most cases, when Jesus had made a difference in a life, He gave the person this instruction: “Take what you have received and pass it on to the next person in your life.” Do it now, without waiting for professional training or a credential.

We have been trained to do almost the opposite. The pattern we have been formed in is *take what you have received and bring it back to the congregation, where the professional will know what to do with it*. That pattern produces church members, but it does not produce disciples who can make disciples.

The fourth ingredient is the recovery of the actual instruction.

Look closely at the instruction. He did not always tell people to preach. There is nothing wrong with preaching, and the New Testament is full of it. Peter preached and thousands came in a day. If the Lord has given you a pulpit or a street corner or a gift for laying the gospel out plainly, use it. But the thing Jesus most often asked was simpler than preaching. It was more along the lines of “*Go home and tell your people what happened to you.*”

There is a reason He sent them with a story and not a lecture. A stranger can argue with your doctrine, but he cannot argue with your life. When you sit across from a friend who knew you before and watched you change, she will find it harder to wave off when you tell her about the Lord. Your story, laid alongside God’s story, is where trust is born, and trust is

the soil the gospel grows in. The Samaritan woman did not explain the doctrine of the Messiah to her town. She said, *“Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.”* The man among the graves (more on him in chapter ten) did not preach a sermon in the ten cities. He told them what Jesus had done for him. The man born blind had no theology to give the men questioning him, only the assertion, *“I was blind, and now I see.”* Over and over, the ones who carried the most were the ones with the least training and the freshest story.

Here is where we believers often miss it. We tell these stories, but only in one room. A believer stands up in church and tells what God has done, and it is good, and it builds her faith and the faith of everyone listening. Then everyone goes home, and the story stays inside the four walls where only believers heard it. The friend at work, the cousin who gave up on church, the neighbor across the fence, the ones who most needed to hear it, never do. We have kept our best evidence locked in the one room where everyone already believes.

The Discovery Group is built to send it back out. One of the questions we ask every week is simply who you told. We do not ask who you preached to, only who you told your own story to. It is the gentlest beginning there is, and it is the one Jesus used. An ordinary believer who would never dream of preaching can always do it, because it is only the truth about your own life. You do not need permission or credentials or a strategy; you only need to know who the next person in your life is, and to take the next obedient step toward telling her what you have heard.

A businesswoman who opened her home

Acts chapter sixteen. Paul and his small team have crossed from Asia into Europe for the first time. They reach Philippi and look for a synagogue, but there is none in the city.

On the Sabbath, they go outside the city gate to the river. They find a small gathering of women. Paul sits down in the grass and begins to talk to them. Luke writes that the Lord opened the heart of one of them: a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from Thyatira. She listened, believed, and was baptized that day in the river. Her whole household was baptized with her. Then she said to Paul and his team, *"If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house."* Luke writes, *"She prevailed upon us."* Paul and his team moved in. The first church in Europe gathered in her house.

I want you to see the four ingredients in Lydia.

Ingredient one. Everyday disciple. A businesswoman from Asia Minor, not Jewish by birth and not a leader of anything. A merchant who had joined a small group of women praying by the river on the Sabbath because there was no synagogue in her town.

Ingredient two. Hearing God. Paul did not preach a sermon; he sat down in the grass and talked with a few women, and the Lord opened her heart so that she heard Him directly, without any need for a building or a lectern.

Ingredient three. Obedience. Two obediences, immediately. She was baptized that day in the river. Then she opened her home to four traveling Jewish men she had just met. That was not a safe or normal thing for a woman to do. She did it anyway.

Ingredient four. Helping someone else do the same. Her whole household was baptized with her and came into the kingdom on the same day, and then her home became the first church in Europe.

She had no training, and no one had given her permission. She did have a heart the Lord had opened and a home she was willing to share. Many of us have the same.

The fruit moved through people

When our little family finished school and moved to India in 2000, our work was in one district. By the end of 2001, we had set our sights on all twenty-three districts of the state.

We did not move twenty-three times, to all twenty-three districts. The fruit moved through people. Three of the men who had walked with me shared my mother tongue, and each went to a different region of the state. The language was theirs. The regions were not. They went into towns culturally distinct from the ones they had grown up in. People from one region do not always feel at home among people from another, so even this small step was a real cross-cultural move. They went because they had been disciplined in a culture where the next thing you do after hearing God is to help someone else do the same, even when *someone else* lives a day's travel from your home.

That is what the fourth ingredient looks like when it begins to move across a whole region. None of these three started as my staff. They became leaders because they were obedient, and then they helped someone else.

Amy Taylor is one of the strongest catalysts on our US team, leading in Austin, and her dear friend Gail Henderson leads Discovery Groups among people with disabilities in Texas and travels to the Middle East to do the same. The two of them first came to South Asia on a Diamond's Daughters trip. Amy was no beginner. She had been building real disciple-making work in Austin for years. What she found among the ordinary believers there did not teach her the work. It gave her clarity about it.

In her own words, "I had been trying to build this complicated structure in Austin, but it gave me a fresh perspective on how I could continue to do some of what I was doing but to simplify, as I can have a tendency to over-complicate." She

went home and simplified, building her work around the four things instead of around the structure.

We had been seeing the same thing in person after person. Almost everyone who spent real time with the work in South Asia came home clearer and more fruitful, and Mark and Chris decided to act on it. They gathered fifty US and Western practitioners for our South Asia Summit that January to put them in the same rooms, and Amy was one of the fifty.

The fruit was not far behind. A month later her team hosted fifty people in Austin for a vision-casting evening that was not a strategy meeting and not a curriculum launch, just the four things, and the Dallas team drove down to be in the same room. She opened her own home on a weeknight and called it Fire Night. Sixty young adults packed an ordinary living room until it was bursting at the seams, read the story of Gideon, and talked about who God says they are. She told me the hunger reminded her of the friends who tore open a roof to lower their friend down to Jesus. Six months later, Lee sent me a picture from her team, twenty-nine emerging catalysts across South Texas and, beneath them, one hundred and twelve groups meeting in ordinary rooms in ordinary weeks: seventy-five Bible discussion study groups, twenty house churches and microchurches, and seventeen Discovery Groups.

None of it ran on inspiration alone, and Amy would tell you that first. She did not come home and go it alone. Lee Price, the leader of our US gospel movement work, began weekly coaching with his team leaders the week he flew home from the Summit, and Amy was one of them. Every week someone asked her what the Lord had said and what she was doing about it, and that rhythm is what turns a good month into a lasting work.

And it kept traveling. Amy and Gail trained a couple dear to us, Jimmy and Mabel, who did the same with a brother named Abner in South Texas. Abner carried it across the border into Piedras Negras in Mexico, where a taxi ride became a conversation with the driver, a young man named Reymundo, who gave his life to Jesus that day and renounced the worship of Santa Muerte. That picture from Lee came before Abner's own work multiplied. Not long ago I sat down to breakfast with Jimmy and Mabel, who coach him, and they told me that Abner alone now leads more than two hundred groups. The same fourth ingredient, running south through Texas and across the border.

It travels through families

The fourth ingredient travels through families more often than through any other channel.

I told you in chapter three about Tom in Idaho and the widow at the coffee shop. One of the women who had joined her went home after the second meeting and started a Discovery Group with her grown daughter at her kitchen table. A mother passing on what she had just learned to the next person in her life.

In a town in South Asia, one of our team members shared the Discovery Group with a friend who came every day to his shop. The friend became a believer. He started a group. His mother started one. His mother-in-law was unwell, so they started one in her home. Four generations of groups from one ordinary shop conversation.

In my own home, we have walked through the Ten Stories of Hope set as a family with our twins, Jiana and James. James leads the family Discovery Group whenever we do. He is fourteen. Some nights it is hard. He might prefer to play video games. He does it anyway.

None of that looks heroic either. It looks like a mother sitting down with her grown daughter at her table in Idaho, or a son in South Asia whose mother and mother-in-law now have their own groups, or a fourteen-year-old in Kansas asking his mother and twin sister the three questions after finishing his video game.

A gospel movement that has worked itself in for a generation shows up at the dinner table.

Movements are led by insiders

The fourth ingredient can take patience and time to bear fruit. But sometimes, when conditions are right, it suddenly multiplies faster than we think possible.

Seventeen years ago my friend Phil Alessi had a spiritual conversation with a man named Donnie. Donnie became a follower of Jesus and, over the years, Phil's spiritual son. The two of them have stayed connected ever since.

On Father's Day 2026, Phil went to the Edinburgh Correctional Facility in Indiana, where Donnie had planned and led a seven-hour revival service. This was Donnie's work, not Phil's. A six-foot corrugated horse trough sat in the room, filled with water, ready for the men to declare their faith in Jesus Christ. Seventy were in attendance. Donnie and four guest speakers led the day, and Donnie introduced Phil to the room as his 'pops.' Phil wrote afterward, "Only one wasn't a felon, me. Movements are clearly led by insiders." Seventeen men were baptized at the end of the service, and sixty had been baptized in the services before it. All of it grew from that one conversation seventeen years earlier. Phil says prisons are like spiritual petri dishes for disciple-making movements.

Movement through generations

The fourth ingredient is reproducing across Western families in ways we do not yet see.

In January of 2026, our twins went with two children of the Bohlender family and another friend to Cory McElvain's Zero Hour Camp, the same camp where Danny had been a year earlier. Randy Bohlender pastors the church we attend, and his son Zion is married to our daughter Shayna. The teenagers came home with their own *I Will* statements. None of them have started a Discovery Group yet that I know of. But they came home as teenagers who understand themselves as carriers of the fourth ingredient.

Two grandmothers stand behind it. My mother-in-law in Chinook, Montana, who walked the four ingredients with her husband and passed them to their daughters. A grandmother on the Bohlender side, Delores, who raised Randy in the Christian faith. Shayna came from one of those homes, through her mother. Zion came from the other, through Randy. They married. Shayna and Zion now live with the fourth ingredient as their normal Christianity, in a household that carries it from both sides.

That is the slow shape of this thing: grandparents, then parents, then children who married into each other's families, and a next generation for whom the four ingredients will simply be normal Christianity from the start.

The fourth ingredient is the slowest of the four and the most invisible, and it is also the only one that really lasts.

The first conversation

I have been asked many times what to say to the first person. Here is the plain answer.

You do not need to evangelize or give a gospel presentation. You are not asking them to be converted. You are inviting one friend to join what you are already doing at home, or to start it in their space if they would rather.

You do not have to be worthy of this, and you do not have to have learned enough. You are not the teacher, and you are not above the person you invited. The two of you are simply doing this together.

None of that means a gospel presentation is a bad thing. It is good, it is biblical, and it takes a boldness most of us have to pray for. If the Lord gives you the words and the nerve to lay the gospel out plainly, do it, and do not apologize for it.

But most of us have also tried it cold. We have walked up to a stranger or given the whole presentation to a friend, and watched it bounce off. We came away sure we were no good at this. The Third Way usually goes another way. Instead of leading with an argument, you bring the group gently along. You do not begin where we usually begin, with sin and the cross and being born again. You might begin where the story sets (like those at the back of the book) do, at creation or at a story of hope, and let the person come to the cross slowly, on their own feet, until it means everything. Alongside the reading, you tell them what the Lord has been doing in your own life, the change they can see with their own eyes, and that does more than any argument you could win.

Start with the Ten Stories of Hope set at the back of this book. Meet for thirty minutes weekly or every other week. Two or three people is enough, and even one friend on FaceTime is enough. Read one story together, ask the three Discovery Group questions, and go home. Come back the next week and open the next story the same way. Meeting after meeting is the same Discovery Group practice.

Try to complete all ten stories together, though not everyone will; some will drop out and one will keep going, and that one is enough to begin with.

The whole practice is modeling and discovering together, which is a different thing from witnessing or presenting or teaching at someone.

The whole of it is gathered on a single page at the end of this book, so it is there when you are ready to begin.

When your group multiplies

This week, after your Discovery Group, invite someone the Lord shows you to come to the next one. When he has been there for a few weeks, help him start his own with his own friends and his own family.

When someone in your group is ready to start a new one, be his encourager. Between meetings, check in one on one. Ask how he is doing. Ask what the Lord has been saying to him. Ask what he is doing about it. These are simple IGROW-style coaching questions, and they are different from the Discovery Group questions. The Discovery Group questions are what you use in the meeting. The IGROW questions are a way to strengthen friendships and help keep the movement moving in between. More information on the IGROW tool for coaching is coming in Book Two.

Expect to see God's power

I got a message from Tom in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, a few weeks after he had come home from a visit to South Asia. Tom hosts a Discovery Group in his home. He watches the Lord move on his street. He had seen something in South Asia he had not seen at home. In the villages there, ordinary believers had prayed for the sick and the sick had been healed.

Deaf ears had opened. Bodies had straightened. Nobody had brought a curriculum. They had brought their obedience and their expectation, and the Lord had done what the Lord does.

Tom's message was plain. He said the word himself. He wanted to see the same *power* here. The same praise and prayer, the same healings, the same room where the Word is read and the Spirit moves and a neighbor's story is changed inside an hour. Not overseas, but in Coeur d'Alene, in his own living room, on his street.

I wrote back and told him what I have told anyone who asks the same question. You do not need to add a healing service or a prayer program on top of your Discovery Group. Let it happen right inside the study, where the group already thanks God together and prays for one another's real needs. Keep it simple and light. The Word is the source, obedience is the practice, and prayer is the room the Spirit fills, and then you simply watch what He does. The Lord does not save the healings for some other country; He gives them in the room where the four ingredients are already at work.

That is what it looks like when this catches on in the West. Not excitement at a conference, but an ordinary man in Idaho who is tired of watching from a distance and wants to see God move in his own living room the way he saw Him move in a village on the other side of the world.

The culture is forming in the West as well

The culture is also forming in the West, and it is beginning to carry us now.

You do not have to go overseas to see it. Novo tells the story of a high schooler named Anna in the MacArthur Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. She had been baptized in spite of pushback, and the Lord had begun meeting her in

powerful ways. One day she had a vision of her aunt, who had advanced diabetes and could no longer walk. Anna prayed. She felt heat radiating out of her hands, and she told her aunt that Jesus was healing her. The aunt knew it was true. That one healing, Novo says, opened the door for her aunt and uncle and cousins to come into the freedom of Jesus.

The man I walk with most closely on the Western side of this work is Lee Price. Lee leads Novo Gospel Movements in the United States. He and I talk almost every week, and he keeps inviting me to coach the US teams across his network, city after city. One of the key leaders on Lee's team is Ruth Happ in southern Idaho. Ruth trained a group of small group leaders to lead Discovery Groups. She wrote afterward that the church had adopted it as their primary model for small groups, after the fruit from the first mothers' groups. In Amarillo, a young man prayed for two years for an open door at his workplace and now runs ten Discovery Groups on the job. Lee says he has been watching the air change for the last year. I have been watching it with him.

In Greenville, Illinois, on our way home from a trip, we stopped to see two friends named Bill and Terri Thomas. Bill had recently come back from a South Asia vision trip and had started reading the Scripture with seven men in his living room every other Tuesday. He had begun a Discovery Group in his church too. For the last year, he had been visiting the federal prison down the road, and what he had seen on that vision trip was now shaping the way he carried himself in there.

My friend Mark Thrash leads Novo. After he came home from one of our trips to South Asia, he invited twenty men he already knew to read Scripture with him every Sunday morning at seven for four weeks. The condition of joining was that each man would also start a Discovery Group at home with his own family. Seven said yes and six stuck, and

eight Discovery Groups were meeting in his city that had not existed before he flew home. The man who leads Novo is applying the same four ingredients in his own living room.

The same pattern is showing up in smaller rooms across the country. A quiet high schooler named David in northern Idaho took two of his Christian friends to a coffee shop after school, and a month later started a second group with his sophomore friends. A couple in Anaheim, Patrick and Andrea Ganahl, host their neighbors over Scripture in their home. Patrick texted me one Friday with a “last minute request,” asking me to pray for a new Discovery Group he was launching among new contacts, about to start in fifteen minutes. A movement catalyst named Marcus Constantine in Wisconsin huddles everyday practitioners across all seventy-two counties of his state on a video call every third Wednesday. A woman in Birmingham, Alabama, started a Discovery Group with ladies between seventy-five and ninety-five, and she wrote afterward, “They are loving it. These ladies are already making I Will statements.”

Some of what came out of our South Asia Summit earlier this year is just getting started in Europe. Our friend Adam Penketh from Glasgow came to the Summit with us. Months later, he made a short video he called *Preparing Europe for a Fresh Move of God*. He described one moment in particular at the Summit that changed him. The South Asia team called all the Europeans in the room up to the front and prayed over them. In his words, they handed us the spiritual baton and said, “Go and run and see what we’re doing, and even more in Europe.” He went home with the baton in his hand.

When I asked Adam recently to sign off on this passage before print, he wrote back with more of what he had taken out of that room. In his own words: “Novo Europe was literally birthed during our time in India. That time was the catalyst for us European workers coming together and asking the

question, what will it take for us in Europe to align with God and see the same explosion of movement over on our continent?" Alongside the baton picture, he wrote, he also carried "a sense that the Lord was saying that He is going to do an accelerating work in Europe over the next 5 years too."

Adam now leads Novo's Europe Division, catalyzing regionally.

Something else came out of that same Summit week. A friend of mine named Jackie Maker, who serves on our Global Partners team and is from the United States, had a dream. She saw a map, and on it red threads were pinned, running back and forth between our part of the world and the cities of Europe her team had been praying for. Not in one direction. Back and forth. Months later, she had the picture drawn so her team could see it the way she had. Adam carried a baton home, and Jackie saw the threads. Two people, one Summit, and the same thing said in two forms. The Lord has His eye on something between these two ends of the world.

Another friend of mine carrying this same work in Europe walks with movement catalysts across several countries. He and his wife lead a small community in their own city. A young man in his twenties has been part of that community for seven months. Recently, he sat in their living room and said he is planning to start two Discovery Groups with non-Christian friends this summer. "I could not imagine myself doing any of this seven months ago," he said. One young man at the edge of one European city, and the same thing beginning to change there too.

In an English village, a man named Philip Crocker felt the same stirring for a Discovery Group among the people around him. A room had just come open in his local pub. It was called the Upper Room. He and a few others decided to pray it in for three months, to ready the ground, before they ever opened a Bible there.

These are not isolated. I have walked with gospel movement teams in California, Idaho, Amarillo, Dallas, Austin, Kansas City, Wisconsin, Greenville in Illinois, and on through Glasgow, Edinburgh, Wales, and cities across England. Every week stories arrive on my phone of small obediences in places I have been and places I have not: a widow in a coffee shop, a pickleball game that turned into a Bible study, a pastor who stopped preaching at his people and started asking them questions, a Congolese man driving an Uber in Kansas City. It is a seed the Lord is watering, and it is not something still on its way but something already here.

Take the one in the back of the Uber. Last spring a man drove me home across Kansas City. Somewhere in the ride it came out that he was from Congo and pastored a church of fifty people on the side. Before he pulled up to my house, we had a short coaching conversation, the same few questions I would ask anyone. I showed him the simple way to read Scripture with his own people. I gave him my number. His name was David. I am still waiting to hear back, and maybe I never will. But it cost neither of us anything, and the door had been right there in that car on a Tuesday night.

What is already here is the culture. Ordinary people are beginning to hear the Lord, obey Him, and hand it on, until that life becomes their normal Christianity. Some in the West are already seeing generations multiply, and I celebrate every one of them. What I am still waiting for is the day this becomes ordinary here, the four-generation harvest as common in the West as it has become in South Asia. I believe that day is coming, because everywhere else the counting has followed the culture and never the other way around. The culture is already in the ground, and that is where every harvest starts.

At our South Asia Summit earlier this year, we ended one evening with a man named Anil praying a blessing over the

room. Anil is a friend from a gas station back home, and he has none of what the established church would call credentials. He prayed that what God was doing among the ordinary disciples there would happen in every single nation represented in the room. A few months later, Tom Weasick, a movement catalyst I first met at the Summit this January, posted his own version of that same prayer in our team's group chat. The rest of us read it together. He wrote, "Jesus, do here in the USA what you are doing there. Make us busy by making it about other people." The man at the gas station blessing the room, the movement catalyst in the West praying in agreement, and the Spirit who inspired it moving in response.

Let me sit with one more picture before we close this chapter, because it is a picture that has been growing in me. Every global mission organization in the West has a mailing list. Thirty thousand names. Forty thousand. Fifty thousand. Faithful supporters who love the Lord, love the work, and pray and give month after month. They are already committed.

What would it look like if every one of those organizations wrote to their thirty or forty or fifty thousand and asked them, plainly, would you be willing to start a simple Discovery Group in your own home with your friends, your family, your neighbors? Would you be willing to trust that the same God who is doing what He is doing among the nations you have been supporting will also do something on your own street?

I do not know how many would say yes. I know some would. I know a movement in the West does not require all of them. It requires the ones who are ready. But the ones on those mailing lists are the ones the Lord has been preparing for years. Every dollar they have given has been a small yes to what He is doing. The next yes is the one that carries it home.

If a fraction of the faithful supporters of Western mission organizations were asked, and said yes, and started a Discovery Group at their own tables this week, the West would look different inside a decade.

That is four.

What it looks like

You have the four ingredients now. I do not want to close this part of the book with a diagram of them. Let me show you what they look like in an ordinary room instead. They are plainer in a room than they have ever been on a page.

Picture a father and mother and their two teenagers. These days, the four of them read the Bible at their own table, one story at a time. The fourteen-year-old boy leads it, not the father. He opens a story, the prodigal son, or the shepherd who left the ninety-nine, and he asks his own parents a question and waits.

Do not picture anything holy. Picture one kid staring at the ceiling, and a father sneaking a look at the phone in his lap. Nobody in that room wants to be lectured, and nobody has to be, and that is the whole reason it is done this way.

One night it was the prodigal son. They each said the true thing first, the way they always started. One thing they were thankful for, one thing weighing on them. Then the boy read it and asked his sister to tell it back. She told it with the church varnish scraped off. A boy who wished his father dead. He took the money, wasted it, got hungry enough to envy the pigs. He came home to be a servant, and a father saw him a long way off and ran.

Then the questions, the same few every time. What does this show us about God. What does it show us about people. What

is God saying to you. This is the part no one at the table could manufacture. Somewhere in those few minutes the Lord says a thing to someone in the room that no one taught them. You watch it land on a face. A lecture can only hand you what the person at the front already knows, but this hands you over to the One who was already speaking before anyone sat down.

Before they got up, the last question. What will you do about it this week, and who will you tell. They each named one, a real thing and a real person. The next week they began by asking how it went.

Some nights the boy would rather have been playing a video game. Some nights it fell flat. They did it anyway, and it was still the realest half hour of their week. If your own first table looks like that, half working and a little forced, you are in good company. Most of the real ones look like that.

That table is the first thing. Here is the second, the thing that keeps a single group from quietly dying by the third month.

A group like that can start well and still fade, and most of them fade for one plain reason. No one is walking with the person who started it. The study itself is the training. What keeps her going is a friend a step ahead who keeps asking how it is going. There is a name for that asking, and I will give it to you before the chapter is over. Hear the conversation first. The name matters less than the sound of it.

Say a woman in your church started reading the Bible this way with her sister and a neighbor a few months back. I will call her Rosa. Another woman, Grace, started her own group a year earlier. Grace calls Rosa for half an hour most weeks. She has no training and no title. She is one step ahead of Rosa, and at this level that is all it takes.

Grace does not open with the lesson. She opens the way you would with a friend, asking how the week has been and how

the family is. Then she prays a sentence or two, asking the Lord into the conversation. She is not the one who will do the real work in it. Then she circles back to the one thing Rosa said last week she would do.

What follows is not a transcript. It is stitched from the way these conversations go.

“How did it go with your neighbor?” Grace asked. “You were going to ask her to read the next story with you.”

“She said yes,” Rosa said. “She’s never opened a Bible in her life. She said yes, and now I’m afraid I won’t know what to do.”

“What’s the Lord been saying to you this week?”

“That He’s not asking me to be a teacher. I read the part where He sends the ordinary ones out, the ones with no training. I felt Him say He wasn’t waiting for me to be ready. He was asking me to go with what I had.”

“Where are you with that, honestly? What’s helping, and what’s getting in the way?”

“The reading isn’t hard. We just talk about the story. What gets in the way is the voice that says, ‘Who am I to lead this? My neighbor’s been to church more years than I have.’”

“If that voice weren’t there, what would you do?”

“I’d just start. I’d pick the first story and read it with her, and let the Lord do the rest.”

“What could the first story be?”

“The one about the paralyzed man his friends carried in. She told me last month she feels stuck. I think she’d see herself in it.”

“When could you do it, and what would you need to get ready?”

“Thursday, while our kids are at school. I’d read it myself first and write out the questions.”

“What might get in the way, and what’ll you do if it does?”

“She might cancel. If she does, I won’t take it as a no. I’ll just ask her for another day.”

“So what’ll you do this week?”

“I’ll read Mark two on Wednesday and write out the questions. I’ll meet her Thursday morning. And I’ll pray for her by name every day until then.”

“I’ll write that down,” Grace said, “and I’ll pray for her too. Let me pray for you before we hang up.”

That is the whole of it. It looks more like friendship than training. Grace did not tell Rosa what to do a single time. She asked, and she waited, and she let the Lord give the answer.

Everything Grace did in that half hour has a shape, and the shape has a name. It is called IGROW, a coaching pattern a friend of mine simplified years ago. She invited the Lord in. She asked what He was saying, the goal. She asked where Rosa honestly stood, the reality, and what she could do, the options, and what she would do, the will. Invite, goal, reality, options, will. Five plain questions and thirty minutes. Nothing in it needs a degree or a title.

At its simplest, when there is no half hour and no call, it comes down to two questions Rosa can ask anyone. How did you obey what the Lord showed you last time. Who did you tell. Two questions, kind and firm, and in time they are what turn a nice talk into a movement.

The everyday disciple does not need a title. She does not need to wait until she has it all together. She needs one friend a step ahead who keeps asking her the real questions, and she needs to be that friend for one other person. That is what keeps the fourth ingredient going for a lifetime instead of a good month.

That is what a gospel movement looks like on the ground. It is a table where a fourteen-year-old leads his parents through a story, and a phone call where one friend asks another what the Lord has been saying and what she will do about it. There is nothing up on a stage in either one, and nothing in either one you could not do this week.

That is the whole of the four. An everyday disciple hearing God, obeying God, and helping one more person do the same.

What is left in this book is not more to learn but what it costs to live the lifestyle of an everyday disciple. I mean to be honest about it.

For Reflection

Whose face comes to mind when you picture telling one person what the Lord has done for you?

We keep our best story locked in the one room where everyone already believes it. Who outside your church walls most needs to hear it?

This week, invite one person into what you are already doing: “Would you read a short story with me and talk about it?”
Who will you invite?

Chapter 7

What This Costs

I want to show you what generations of costly obedience can produce and what culture looks like when it has been working for one hundred and forty-eight years.

By 1878, in what is now coastal Andhra Pradesh, India, a movement had broken open around a Telugu man named Yerraguntla Peraiah. He was a buffalo-skin buyer from the Madiga caste. He was not a missionary, not a pastor, not a preacher. He was the Samaritan woman of his own community, with no platform but kinship. When the gospel reached him, he carried it back along the same lines that had carried every other story of his life. His people were his caste. His Jerusalem was the village he came from. He started where he already was, with the people God had already given him.

For four years after his own conversion, Peraiah walked from Madiga hamlet to Madiga hamlet telling his own people what he had heard, in the language they had always trusted. Four years of walking, one believer at a time, with no campaign and no platform, just an everyday disciple who would not stop telling his own people.

On July 3, 1878, the day Telugu Baptists still remember as their Pentecost, two thousand two hundred and twenty-two

believers were baptized in the Gundlakamma River near Ongole, and over nine thousand in the weeks that followed. My own family was one household among many thousands in that wave. We are not the only line. We are one of the lines that has kept walking. The faith spread, not by pulling people out of their families but by settling down into them. Whole families came together and entire communities became carriers, not through any campaign but as a people movement borne on the back of one everyday disciple who cared about his people and kept sharing with them.

The wave that swept through the region in that year touched my own great-great-grandparents. They were among the families whose lives had been changed by the famine relief and the baptisms, and they were ordinary in every visible way. What they had was the gospel, and they taught it to their children. Their children taught it to theirs.

By the 1950s, their descendants had made an explicit, multi-generational covenant. They would give their lives to the work of the gospel in their region. My grandparents were among them. My mother was the oldest of twelve children born into that covenant household.

My grandfather went on to lead an indigenous mission with a network of many churches. My parents launched their own work in the next generation. I am the fifth generation in that line, though I did nothing to earn a place in it. I was born into it, and I have only tried to keep walking.

What is moving through five generations of my family is not a method but a culture.

The first generation in 1878 did not have the phrase *Discovery Group*, but they had the posture, and they had everyday disciples, and they had obedience along with the practice of telling the next person what they had heard.

One hundred and forty-eight years later, the fifth generation finally had a word for the substance of what had been carrying their family.

It is a culture, and it is normal Christianity, and it is what happens when the four ingredients become the ordinary shape of a family's life over a long enough time.

That is what results from five generations of costly obedience.

Jesus and the wildernesses He faced

Jesus went into the wilderness before He launched His ministry. For forty days, He said no to bread and to power and to the spectacular, and He came out into Galilee ready for what was in front of Him. The wilderness had not been a punishment at all; it had been the thing that got Him ready.

But we sometimes read this as though the wilderness is a chapter that closes: Jesus was tempted, He won, the devil left. The gospels keep going, though, and the warfare came back for three more years: demons in people who needed deliverance, religious leaders who tried to trap Him with their rules, powerful people who used authority and money to silence Him, and in the end the same crowds He had been feeding and healing, who turned and shouted, "*Crucify Him!*"

The pattern is the same for any of us He sends. Just as it was for Jesus, our wilderness is not a forty-day chapter that closes but the context we live inside, and the cost is an everyday thing.

The cost of advancement

I have never entered a season of expansion of what God has for me without also experiencing a time of intense pain, suffering, and testing alongside it. When that happens, the

suffering is not a sign that the sequence has broken; it is part of the sequence itself.

I have lived this life long enough to realize that most of us were not told much about the costs. Much of the disciple-making writing in our generation has not been honest about it. It has talked about the fruit, and the fruit is real, but the fruit is also bought at a price.

This way of living costs everyone something. It costs the people living it and the people around them. It costs the institution they are inside, the missionary society that has formed them, the pastor who is trying to make room for it, and the family who is being asked to live differently. Whether you are a movement catalyst or an everyday disciple, you will pay a real price. The price generally follows the shape of your life and calling.

As a leader in ministry, I have paid a price, so have Sarah and our children. I will tell you about some of the costs we have faced and how the Lord continually brings us through. The Father does not stop speaking His belovedness over us in those wilderness seasons, and the Spirit does not stop ministering to us through them. I know He does the same for you in yours.

The season that broke me

Let me tell you the day that broke me.

September 17, 2003.

We had moved from our home district to a larger city about two years earlier. The plan had scaled to every district of the state, millions of people, thousands of villages. The scope had become terrifying, and I was struggling with an anxiety

I did not yet know how to name. Sarah was eight and a half months pregnant with our third daughter, Amira.

Our bright, creative firstborn, Simona, was six and our cute, silly toddler Shayna was seventeen months old. Both girls were home.

I was on the rooftop of our house when I heard a scream from inside.

I ran down to find my wife rushing Shayna into the bathroom to run cool water over her. Shayna had walked into the kitchen and pulled a pot of boiling chicken soup off the counter onto herself. Our domestic helper had set it there a moment before. Little Shayna was badly burned. We covered her with a clean sheet and rushed her to the hospital.

I do not remember the drive. In the burn ward, Sarah stayed at Shayna's side and nursed her for weeks while the doctors fought to keep her alive.

A few days in, a staph infection set into Shayna's wounds and she needed blood. I share her blood type, so the doctor asked me to donate. I gave a sample, but when it came back, he told me my blood was unusable.

"Why?"

"Hepatitis C."

I did not know what hepatitis C was. I went out to a computer in the hospital lobby and looked it up. I learned that it could be transmitted through dirty needles, and I thought back to a series of rabies shots I had had to get as a child. In those days, needles were simply rinsed under the tap and reused. I may have had hepatitis C for most of my life, silently causing harm. I read on to learn how it could be cured. When I read the words "no cure available," I felt the floor go out under me.

I came back to the burn ward where my seventeen-month-old was wrapped in dressings and my pregnant wife was sitting beside her bed. I had to tell her that I had been carrying a disease for years that I had passed to no one but still might. (Here I want to acknowledge our close relative Sandhya Rani who came to our rescue, traveling by overnight bus to give blood for Shayna.)

Our older daughter, Simona, was six, and Shayna was the light of her life. Unable to visit Shayna, Simona tried to ease her sister's pain and suffering by reciting nursery rhymes to her over the phone, and she made origami figures and colored pictures to decorate the hospital room. In those weeks her mother was at the hospital with Shayna, and I was emotionally overwhelmed. Simona carried a lot of grief and fear for her sister in that lonely season that affected her deeply for years.

Then, in the middle of it, God gave us gold. On October 6, 2003, nineteen days in, Sarah left Shayna's side for a few hours to give birth to our third daughter, Amira. Her arrival was not one more weight to carry. Baby Amira was God's mercy in the middle of the wilderness. She was a living sign that the Lord gives those He loves beauty and victory in the midst of struggle and pain.

Newborn Amira could not be brought into the burn ward where her older sister was fighting sepsis. The infection protocols would not allow it. Sarah's mother had arrived to help, and for the next week they took turns, Shayna at the hospital and Amira and Simona at home, Sarah nursing both little ones and pumping for Amira when she had to be away. (I was in a kind of shock and could not help them much.)

That month, as soon as Shayna could travel for further treatment, Sarah took all three girls to America: Simona, Shayna, and newborn Amira. I stayed back in India alone, in

a smaller apartment, because I had an irrational fear that I would contaminate them. I started interferon therapy, and I started an anti-anxiety medication the doctor had given me. I did not know it was addictive, and I kept taking it. Within months, I was hallucinating and speaking in a way that frightened the helper with me. He called my brother, and my brother and the family came and took me back to my parents' home. I was not in my right mind for some weeks.

All around me in India, because Sarah was in America caring for the girls without me, the gossip began to spread. I heard it from friends who heard it from other friends. "James must have done something to deserve what happened to his daughter. Sarah has probably left him. The marriage is over." None of it was true, but the lie was spreading.

Sarah did not leave. After my treatment was over, I flew to America to be with the family. When I arrived in Montana sickly and weak, she drove me through Glacier National Park with the children in the back of the car so I could see something beautiful.

The people who walked with us

We did not walk that year alone.

Sarah told me the truth through all of it. She was kind, and she did not soften the hard things, and she told me what I needed to do.

Sarah's family in Chinook took her and the children in for the year while I stayed in India getting treatment. My parents' home was always open to me. My father and mother carried me in prayer, and my mother kept hearing promises from the Lord that she would tell me when I came home. Friends prayed for us and supported us, and some of them rented us

an apartment on the beach for several weeks so we could rest and recover.

The kingdom connection that opened the next season was the Vineyard. I sat in the back row of Mike Hudgins's church in California for weeks and did not speak to anyone. He noticed. He told me later he had been watching, surprised that I had not come asking him for anything. "Indian ministers usually come and bother you for ministry connections. This guy is coming to church and not even coming to talk to me." It was the first time anyone had seen me as a man instead of a ministry leader in quite a while.

That friendship became the door into the next season. Global ministry leaders the Lord sent us, Randy Clark among them, came and prayed with our teams. They called us forward into what God had next.

The two warfares

That September brought two types of warfare together.

The outside warfare was the gossip in our home district, the accusations that I had deserved what had happened. I had been hearing some version of it for years before September 2003. Some traditional pastors and mission leaders in our region had been saying behind my back that we were ordaining the wrong people, sending everyday tradespeople out as church planters, and they wrote letters to my donors to say so.

The inside warfare was the anti-anxiety medication, the hallucinations, the speaking that frightened the helper, the weeks I was not in my right mind. It did not start that month. I had not begun this work with strong nerves. I had begun with a vision downloaded into me on a train at twenty years old and a set of anxieties I had carried from my

sickly childhood years, and the work itself produced more anxieties on top of those. The scale of trying to reach every village of a whole state with ordinary people I had personally disciplined gave me sleepless nights I cannot describe to you. I was paranoid about thieves, paranoid about being attacked, paranoid about the work failing.

That is the warfare that comes from inside.

Both ran simultaneously for years before September 2003, and for years after.

In the middle of both, the work was growing. Hundreds of churches were being planted, and thousands of disciples were being made. The Lord was building what He had said He would build, and He was also letting both warfares run.

I have come to believe the two warfares are part of the cost. They are the price most of us have not been told about, and they are what stops most movement catalysts from ever beginning. Every movement catalyst I know who has begun has paid both prices. The ones who never began were usually afraid of one or the other.

You will pay both. I want you to know that going in.

Years of harvest

In December 2004, a tsunami hit the coast where we were working. We flew back to India together.

The five years that followed were the most fruitful of my ministry life. Large pastors' conferences, gatherings with thousands, the worship school we had wanted to build, Sarah's Covenant Homes, all of them launched in that stretch, and the plan kept moving across districts.

Many of the disciples reading this book in South Asia were born during those years.

September 17, 2003, was not the end of us, and though the wilderness was real, it did not turn out to be the last word, because the Lord brought us out and used the years between the burn ward and the next round of cost for some of the most fruitful work of our lives. I did not see that coming when I was on the floor of the hospital computer room after looking up *hepatitis C*.

That was the cost, and what came after it: one afternoon broke us, recovery took years, and so did the harvest that followed.

Then the cost came back. This time to my wife.

My wife's illness

I want to tell you what obedience cost the person I love most in the world.

In 2014 and 2015, in the years of the work, my wife became very ill for a long stretch. She was hospitalized for nine days at one point, and she wondered if she would die. I was afraid she might. She still carries the marks of it.

I will not pretend in this book that the rest of our story has been clean. It has not. There have been seasons in our marriage that I have not made easy on my wife, and seasons she has carried that have not been easy on me.

The cost of the Third Way includes a marriage that has had to learn to keep walking together when both of you are exhausted and one or the other of you has been ill for years.

If you walk this, your marriage will be tested, too. We are still here, and we will be, but we are here only by grace.

Children with their own scars

Each of our children has paid their own version of the cost. The shape has been different for each. The details belong to them, not to me.

The cost is not only the burn. While I was in that small Indian apartment, Sarah was alone with the children in Montana. Simona was seven and being homeschooled. Shayna was two and in burn scar treatment. Amira was a newborn. I did not see Amira for almost a year. She had been a newborn when she left, and she was walking when I met her again. Sarah carried our children through that whole season without me. They are grown now, and they hopefully have forgiven me for not being there.

We have asked them whether the challenges our family has faced were worth it. Sometimes they talk as though they were, but they admit that things were very hard at times, and they hope that life is less stressful for their own children.

The cost of carrying a Third Way is paid by the children as much as by the carriers themselves. If you are a mother or father wondering whether to take this seriously, take it seriously with your eyes open. Your children will walk through their own cost.

Pruning

I have walked alongside many people over the years, people I thought would stay with me for the rest of my life. Not all of them stayed. There have been multiple seasons of pruning, and these seasons have been uncomfortably frequent.

You have probably experienced a version of this — the relative who goes quiet on you, the friend who drifts away when your life begins to change.

My pruning seasons have been so painful. People I had raised up and walked with for years left, and some did not leave empty-handed. One season ended when a door closed on work I had given years to. We had come to see things differently, and it closed before anyone sat across from me to ask why. Each ending took away people I loved and pieces of the work I had built. I started again from the ground.

The Lord used every one of those endings to show me what needed to change in me. He revealed insecurities, fear, and pride in me that had to be cut before the next season could begin. I went into every pruning sure that someone else was the problem. I came out of every pruning carrying my own list of things I had to bring to the Lord.

The pain, the rejection, the shame that comes from feeling disrespected do not move on the way I do. I keep taking them back to the Lord. Some seasons more than once a day. And I keep bringing my own flesh back too. The pruning has cost me a great deal, but it has cost me less than the pride it has cut out of me.

What I have seen is that the Lord does not waste the losses. He prunes on purpose, grieving with us as He does it. He does not undo the loss, but He gives the next season anyway. Within two years of the most painful of those endings, our daughter Simona had stepped into leading our family's work, and the baton had passed to her.

The Lord closed doors so He could open windows, but the closing took months of grief and confusion, and the opening only came after the grief had been lived all the way through.

Jesus said pruning is how the Father makes the vine fruitful. I had read it for years before it was true in my body. Living a Third Way will involve pruning, and it will cost you people, but the new growth on the other side will be more abundant

than what you had before, and the loss and the new growth are both real at the same time.

If you walk this, expect it.

The wilderness has not closed

The anxiety did not end then. It came back in 2017 when I was considering quitting ministry to learn information technology. That season ended a few years later with Dave Barry's check at the guest house. (I will describe this in a later section.) It has come back in seasons I am still inside of. As recently as April of this year, I was working through a book my friend Andrea Ganahl wrote called *Victory Over Anxiety*, learning the difference between an anxiety that comes from the prefrontal cortex and one that comes from the amygdala. I have come to believe most of mine is the first kind. The early pages of that book put Isaiah 41:10 in front of me. "*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*" That has been my verse for most of my adult life. It was a kind word from the Lord that the man writing chapter seven is still inside what chapter seven describes. The cost did not stop, and neither did the help.

Western wilderness

I am not the only one walking through this as I write. The Western movement catalysts I am closest to are walking through their own wilderness.

They tell me the same thing in private conversation after private conversation. The multiplication that has become common in South Asia and parts of Africa has not yet broken through in the West the way they had hoped. Western groups start, and many bear good fruit, but many do not last, and

most hit a ceiling at the second generation. The friends I am closest to are honest about it, and they are asking the Lord why.

This is the counting I told you about earlier. The culture is already here. The counting is what has not caught up yet, and that is what the early years of every movement have always looked like, the culture going first and the numbers coming along behind.

A thoughtful reader will ask a fair question here, and I do not want to answer it with a slogan. If the four ingredients really do produce movements, why have I not yet watched them multiply in the West the way I have in the East all my life? The four ingredients are not a technique that belongs to one culture. They are the pattern of the gospel itself, and I have watched them carry across castes, languages, and centuries that had nothing else in common. The West is not exempt from the gospel. It is early. The first two ways took generations to bear their fruit here too, and the everyday-disciple way is younger than either. And I have learned not to trust my own timeline. I argued with the Lord for twenty years about my own field before I stepped into it, and it grew the moment I stopped arguing.

None of this is beyond testing, though, and the test is not how many generations deep a chain of groups runs. A chain that stops at the second generation is fine, as long as ordinary believers keep starting new groups, reaching more people and more homes until an area is saturated. That is the fruit I am watching for. If a generation passes and that is not happening in the West, if ordinary believers are not starting group after group and carrying the gospel to the people around them, then I will have been wrong about the soil, and I will say so. I do not believe that is what we are seeing. I believe we are seeing the early years. But I would rather you hold me to the fruit than take my word for it.

The wilderness the West carries has real shape.

Cory McElvain, who runs Zero Hour and has been sending teenagers home from summer camp to start Discovery Groups for years now, has named three from where he is sitting. The pushback from the churches and parents his team tries to partner with, who tell him what he is doing is out of control or that it will not work. The sheer number of students his team has to walk with to see the little fruit that comes. And the constant turnover of staff, volunteers, and students who move out of state for college and land in other ministries that do not value or implement disciple making. Cory has been at this longer than most of the Western camp ministries I know. He is a father to the teenagers he sends home. The cost he carries is the specific shape of running a movement-friendly youth work in a country where the surrounding ministry landscape does not yet know what to do with it.

The wilderness in the West has a different shape than mine in South Asia. Western leaders may not be facing dengue fever or hepatitis C, and there is no village gossip and no accusation about making the wrong people into church planters. What there is instead is the structural weight of a landscape that cannot yet recognize what movement work looks like: an elder board that pulls back, eighteen dry months when no group multiplies past the first generation, a pastor who has tried for two years and watched as the seed appeared to die.

Those costs are not any less real than mine, only shaped differently.

What this looks like for you

The costs I have walked you through are mine and the ones my closest friends are carrying. They are the costs of people who took the four ingredients into the largest scale our lives

could hold. You may not be a movement catalyst. Most of the readers of this book will not be.

You will pay your own costs.

Yours will fit your own life: a friend who pulls back when you start a Discovery Group, a spouse who is too busy or children who do not share your enthusiasm about starting a regular family Discovery Group, or the loneliness of being the only one doing this for a year or two before anyone else starts.

Most of us have not been told the truth about this. The disciple-making literature of our era has often promised the growth without the warning. The growth is real, but so is the cost.

If you take the four ingredients and begin to walk them with the people the Lord has put in your life, you will be uncomfortable, and people you respect will be uncomfortable with you. Your own anxieties will get louder than you remember, and the cost will show on the faces of the people you love most.

You will also see the fruit. The fruit is real, and it lasts beyond one generation. The walk will cost you, and it is worth every bit of what it costs.

The cost is the wilderness. Jesus went through wilderness seasons again and again, not just once before the launch, and you will go through yours the same way. He does not take you around the wilderness. He walks you through it, and He does not leave you alone.

For Reflection

Suffering can be part of the sequence, not a sign that something has broken. How does that reframe a hard season you are in now?

What fear of the cost has been keeping you from beginning?

Your own cost might be a friend who pulls back, a spouse too busy, or a year or two of being the only one. Which of these do you most fear, and can you bring it honestly to the Lord?

Chapter 8

How the Lord Provides

I have lived under the provision of God for a long time. I want to tell you what it has looked like.

Two thousand dollars from a Singaporean grandma

I told you about our arriving at Oral Roberts University in 1996 with no money. The story I did not tell you is the moment we found out we had to pay a deposit we couldn't afford for Simona's birth.

My wife was five months pregnant when we arrived. Tulsa was new to us. We lived in a small, sparse one-bedroom flat in the Red River apartment complex. I was working in the prayer tower and in the Holy Spirit Room library. My wife was working in childcare for a church. We did not know until late in the pregnancy that the Hillcrest Hospital where she would deliver required us to pay our deductible up front. Our bank account was empty. We felt panicked; it was hard to have faith.

In the first weeks of school, Sarah had become close friends with a young woman from Singapore named Janice Tham. A few months later, Janice's husband Chris's grandma gave him

a large financial gift. The couple wanted to give God a portion of what they had received as a thank offering. She prayed and felt led to give it to my wife. She did not know our need. God did.

Two thousand dollars.

It was exactly what we needed.

After Janice gave Sarah that gift, her husband Chris received his own miracle. The next day, the school informed him that they were awarding him a two-thousand-dollar one-time scholarship for his GMAT score.

I have told that story many times since. The grandmother never met us. Janice and Chris, newly married themselves, passed on the firstfruits of a gift they had not anticipated. Their gift meant so much to a young, struggling Indian-American seminary couple about to have their first child. Through the Tham family's obedience, God demonstrated to us and to them that He was taking care of us all.

The check that said “Do not quit”

It began in 2017. My father died back home that year, we were facing financial challenges, and I started thinking about leaving ministry to learn information technology and look for a job.

I had no community I could go to. I loved the worship at the church we then attended, but the doctrine was not a good fit. The day-to-day of our mission work had become harder than I knew how to carry. I was tired.

By 2021, the year I turned fifty, I really wanted to quit. My mother had passed away just a few months before, and I was exhausted and grieving. It was then that our dear friend

Dave Barry asked to come visit us in Kansas City with his wife Jocelyn. I met them at a Baskin-Robbins ice cream shop. It was a one-hour meeting. I told them what we were doing, and what it was costing us to carry it. I did not ask Dave for any money. I told him about the work.

He went back to the guest house where he was staying. The next morning he called and asked me to come over. He handed me a check.

The amount of the check was meaningful to me because the number eleven was in it. The number eleven has been the Lord's confirming signature over my life for as long as I can remember, the way He says "*I see you. I am here. I am providing.*" Dave did not know any of that. He had only written the number the Lord told him to write.

I sat at the guest house dining table and wept.

The Lord was saying, in a sentence the size of a check, "*I am your provider. I will take care of it. Do not quit.*"

I did not quit.

That check was a door the Lord opened when I had run out of my own road. But the gift was never the number; it was the leading. He was ordering my steps and telling me to keep walking, to keep doing the work He had put in my hands.

December 4, 2022

I was invited to a church to share what the Lord was doing in South Asia. I came early, before most of the congregation had arrived, and a woman I had never met, Patricia Martin, walked up from the back of the sanctuary. She did not know me or why I was there, only that she had seen in the Spirit that the Lord was going to provide for me, and she felt she

had to say it. I thanked her and laughed, and told her that was exactly why I had come.

Her words landed on an old promise. Years before, in a small apartment in Tulsa, I had been young and afraid of the size of the vision the Lord had given me, and He had promised to provide for it. That promise had been echoing in me ever since, and here it was again, from a stranger.

When the pastor called me up, I shared the vision I had been carrying, a twenty-year vision. As I spoke, Patricia sat praying. She told me afterward that she had asked the Lord whether He could do it faster, maybe in seven years, and that she felt Him impress five years on her heart. When I came down, she handed me a check for five hundred dollars and a word: the Lord would do in five years what we had been believing for in twenty. Even the amount was a five, and I have wondered since whether the Lord meant something by it. When I asked the pastor about her, he told me she was a credible prophetic voice he paid attention to.

The check was dated December 4. She did not know it, but December 4 has been an anchor date in my life since 1991, the day Pastor Robert Smith and a small circle of intercessors laid their hands on me and prayed me into the calling.

I wrote the word down and held on to it, though honestly I did not have much faith for five years.

Since then, the Lord has done more than we planned. Friends and partners who had walked with us for years stayed, new ones came alongside, and the work spread out of one state into many. What we thought would take until 2040, He has been doing in a handful of years. December of 2027 will mark five years from Patricia's word, and looking at where we are today, it truly does look like He could do it in five, just as she

felt He would. I did not believe it when she handed me that check, and it is happening anyway.

That, too, is provision.

A call in the Tucson airport

On that train I told you about, the Lord promised me a long life and told me He would heal me from hepatitis C. I did not finish the story there.

After a relapse and a second, longer, and more intense round of therapy in India, the virus was undetectable again. But I had to test two years later to know whether it could be considered unlikely to recur.

In the meantime, my mother was praying. She wrote in her own journal that the Lord had told her that her son would be healed. I read it later.

When the two-year mark came, I visited a gastroenterologist. They drew a blood sample and said the results would come in a few days.

I had been in Tucson speaking at Pastor Bob Sawvelle's Passion Church. Bob had come to visit our work and was a friend. I was sitting in the Tucson airport waiting at the gate to fly home when the gastroenterologist's office called.

The voice on the phone said, "Not detected."

I called my wife. I called her crying.

I have been tested every year since. Twenty years, and not detectable.

The voice on the train in the early 2000s, promising healing, was the same voice that had spoken to me before, in a

Chinook apartment soon after I came to America, and again in Tulsa a year or two later.

The Lord has spoken to me more times in my life than I can count, and I have shared some of them with you in these chapters. The ones I have shared were very short, just a single sentence or a few, spoken to an ordinary man in ordinary places. Each promise came true — some within weeks and some only after decades, but God was faithful.

That is what provision has looked like for me.

A check that covered the overdraft

In June 2026, our family drove out to Holly, Colorado, for my niece's wedding. The host pastor asked me to preach on Sunday morning. I did not have a word from the Lord by Saturday night. I had not had time to meditate or prepare. I went to sleep.

In the night, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I woke up thinking it was my wife. She was asleep. I went back to sleep. It happened a second time. Then a third. All three were physical touches.

I lay there and felt the Lord saying that He had something to give America through our family, and He was inviting all of us into it. Almost all of our South Asian relatives who now live in the United States are pastors or missionaries to America, carrying the gospel somewhere on this continent. I was at the wedding looking at them, and the Lord was saying that something He had been forming over generations was about to be released.

The preaching went well on Sunday. The word was about reaching America.

When we got home, our bank account was overdrawn. An unexpected charge had come in. We had stopped using credit cards. Travel that month had cost more than we had budgeted. I checked the amount. Then I looked at the check the church in Holly had given me for the Sunday preaching.

It was almost exactly the amount of the overdraft.

God gave the word, and He woke me up to hear it. He showed me, in part, His vision for our family, and He covered the bank balance that same Sunday.

A community that became a family

The provision that answered our family's cost did not come in one moment; it came as a community slowly gathered around us, year by year.

We are thankful for the larger Novo community we now belong to. I have a shepherd I meet with once a month, one person whose only job in my life is to ask how I am, to listen, and to pray. I am part of a team. I am no longer carrying it alone the way I did for too many years. We keep healthier rhythms now than we did in the 2000s. Novo provides health insurance for its leaders. We have learned and grown in many ways inside that community. We really needed this type of community in the hardest seasons: the years following the burn, the diagnosis, the gossip, our family's international move back to America, and other challenging times. We have that support now. It is a kind of provision I did not know how to ask for.

The community also tells me the truth about small things. For years, I selected the cheapest possible flights Priceline could offer me, no matter how inconvenient the route or timing. Mark Thrash finally told me I was too old for that, in a tone that suggested he was not going to keep watching me

leave at eleven at night to arrive somewhere at nine the next morning. He was right. Now I book the daytime flight, direct when I can get it, and arrive with enough sleep to be good for something the next morning instead of stumbling in worn out.

Within two years of the most painful of the pruning losses, our daughter Simona stepped in as Executive Director of Global Covenant. She had been serving alongside us for years and has been Executive Director for one year now. She did not plan it. She has said so in her own words: “I was planning to get my Master’s in Fine Arts. But I couldn’t miss out on what God was doing in my own family, in our heritage.”

Her undergrad thesis work, *A Third Culture Kid’s Quest for Belonging: Ephemeral, Eternal, and the Space In Between*, explored the in-between space that the multicultural person inhabits. The temporary shelters we build while we wait, neither fully arrived nor fully at home. Growing up among worlds has been both a cost and a gift for her. She and her siblings are fully Indian and fully American, undefinable by neat categories. Her art pieces like *Shelter 1: A Stranger in a Foreign Country*, *Hiding Place*, and *Sanctuary* were already naming that tension before she knew she would give her youth to a movement whose churches meet in exactly those kinds of small shelters. I asked her. She said yes.

The weight of a family in ministry is not a small thing to bear. The vision was massive. A whole field, given as an inheritance to a family. She wondered where an artist would fit inside a vision that size. She did not know. For a season, she carried that question alone. Then one night she sat with a map of South Asia. She drew in the outlines of all the districts. She labeled each of them and colored in the ones in which we had active work happening. And she saw it. A blanket of glory descending over the mission field. The way Habakkuk says the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters

cover the sea. She has no other name for what came with it. A spiritual FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). She could not miss out on what God was doing in her own family, in her own heritage.

This season is for South Asia. To see movement culture take root in every district. For that, she laid aside her own dream of graduate school. For now. She trusted that God would release her again, in a season still to come, to make physical art with her hands. For the first time, she felt faith that God would fulfill His promise for South Asia. He was in it with them. They did not have to make it happen on their own strength.

I have not had to check on her once. On May 21, 2026, the week of Pentecost, she signed her name to the next season of the work, the part I will not be writing, and left the length of it to the Lord. *Simona Darshani, Executive Director*. Fourth-generation movement catalyst. Sixth-generation follower of Christ. The Lord gave back through my own house what He had let me lose. The chain that began in Ongole reached her hands.

We have watched two of our children start their own marriages now. Simona was the first, in 2016. She married Josiah Wiig. Josiah's parents Peter and Mercy are missionaries too, and his grandparents came from North America and left a long legacy of mission work in India. Two more carrying lines joined in that marriage. Our second daughter Shayna married Zion Bohlender on Friday, March 8, 2024, in Kansas City. The son of Randy and Kelsey Bohlender, pastors of the church we had begun to call ours. They have ministered for over three decades to vulnerable children and families. Two families on two continents had come to that aisle by very different roads, and that week our house in Kansas City held all of them at once. Family and dear friends had flown in from across the ocean. Others drove in from Texas and from

Montana. Sarah's parents Brent and Nancy sat with us the whole week, with her sisters and the large group of cousins our children have grown up with.

That week we held the Nalugu, our family's pre-wedding blessing, at a friend's home. I made the mutton pulao myself. The next afternoon Shayna sat for her beauty appointment and her sisters took her out. The child we had rushed to the hospital in 2003 walked down the aisle on a Friday afternoon in March, International Women's Day 2024. The Lord married the two lines. I do not have words for what I felt.

These are the family provisions. They do not arrive in one day in an envelope, but over years, through a community that slowly becomes a family.

Provision from more than one hand

A gospel movement is carried by three things: people, finances, and the wisdom of God, and the bigger the vision, the more all three of them are needed. The Lord is more active in this work than any of us are, and people are given the freedom either to join hands with us or to walk away, and both of those are real.

A large amount was donated in response to Simona's presentation of the vision she had laid out. She had walked in trust. She had asked the Lord. The donor had responded generously. Complications came in afterward, the kind that had nothing to do with the vision. The gift had to be returned. Simona bore that season well. She kept walking.

What I have learned in seasons like that one is that when one hand pulls back, the Lord already has other hands prepared. In this case, it was not one donor to replace the one we lost. It was a group of people. Several friends came in together to fill

the gap that one had left. The Lord had been preparing them long before we knew we would need them.

God is good.

There are seasons in which He lets us walk in lack so we will grow. At other times He shows His extravagance, and His provision goes ahead of us. The work is His.

Miracle and the ordinary way

We can also lean too hard on the miraculous, saying “The Lord will provide” while pretending we have George Müller’s faith without any of the fruit George Müller actually had. Müller, who cared for thousands of orphans in nineteenth-century Bristol, believed he was never to ask anyone for money, only to pray and let the Lord move people to give.

While the Lord led Müller that way, and Müller exercised great faith accordingly, that is not the typical way the Lord seems to work. He generally provides the way He does everything else, through people. He gives someone a need, another person hears of it, and the Lord moves their heart to help.

God definitely still does miracles, sovereignly dropping resources out of heaven or speaking to a donor in a dream. In one of our South Asian villages, a young farmer had drilled a well six hundred feet down and hit nothing, and his crop and his family were in danger. He and the believers around him cried out to God, and the water came in, enough to save the farm.

Our own family has seen plenty of miracles too. My own father was an atheist for the first half of his life. He was saved at three in the afternoon while taking a nap. My mother was praying beside the bed. He woke up shouting and

trembling, because he had seen Jesus and a field of harvest in a vision. That single dream made him a follower of Jesus and eventually a minister of the gospel. He took the Christian name Paul, reminiscent of New Testament Saul, who met Jesus in a vision and was known as Paul afterward.

Faith for miracles is in the line I inherited. My grandfather pastored out of it, and my father Paul pastored out of it after his vision. I am ministering out of it now, and Simona is carrying it forward.

The miraculous way is real, but it is not the standard way God chooses to operate.

The standard way, the way Jesus Himself generally operated, is to work through people who share with other people. The Father draws people, the Spirit awakens people, and Jesus commissioned people to work alongside Him. That is how salvation comes, and how provision comes too.

What you can expect

If you are reading this book and you walk the Third Way, here is what you can expect by way of provision.

You will not always get the check on time, or the healing on the timeline you wanted, or the voice in the season you most need to hear it. You will get enough. It will more often than not arrive through a friendship you did not strategize and a small unexpected gift from an everyday disciple.

What I have learned over the years is that *enough* is the form provision usually takes. Not abundance or lavishness, and not absence either. Just *enough*: the check that covers the overdraft, the meaningful number that says, “Do not quit,” the friends who generously share their grandma’s gift — just what you need to pay the hospital, just in time.

If you are walking the Third Way, you will receive enough.

Then comes the family that walks it with you.

For Reflection

Provision often comes as just enough, right on time. Where have you seen God give you exactly enough, and did you notice it at the time?

Where are you tired and tempted to quit, and needing to hear that the Lord is your provider?

Is there someone the Lord is nudging you to give to or bless this week?

Chapter 9

Family to Walk It With

The family is where it all has to land.

The family is the smallest unit of a culture, and if the four ingredients are working in the family, then the wider culture becomes possible, but if they are not, then what we call culture out there is really only performance.

I have my own family. They are the answer to the question I have most often been asked.

I want to introduce you to them.

My wife

Here is who she is.

She first came to India in 1993 as a seventeen-year-old high school student, with a team that was putting a roof on my father's children's home. She had grown up in Chinook, Montana, a town of about twelve hundred people surrounded by wheat fields and big sky. Her parents Brent and Nancy have quietly served that community for decades. She grew up in a home that was ordinary in the very best sense. Steady, faithful, present. In the way small-town Montana can be.

Brent has never been a paid pastor. He grew up in his father's construction business, ran the Chinook golf course through his twenties, farmed with his brother BJ through his thirties, sold insurance for a season, and worked in oil and gas in Williston for a while. He served on the boards of the Alliance Church, the Assembly of God, and other local churches, and for decades chaired the KXEI Christian radio station. Under his oversight, KXEI grew from one small Hi-Line broadcast into Your Network of Praise, now reaching across Montana and beyond. In every one of those seats, he has looked for one more young person to walk with. A young man he had coached came up to him at a wedding years later and said, "I finally want to thank you for being my golf coach for all those years." Brent teased him, saying with a wink, "Well, if you had listened to me the first year, you'd have learned it all then!" That is how he operates: do your job well. Share the gospel through it. Share your story. That is how you get to people. In his seventies now, he still tells everyone who is not sure they have eternal life how the Lord settled that question for him.

Brent's wife Nancy and his sister Nellie Jo share a quieter ministry alongside him. For years the three of them have volunteered as the US backbone of Sarah's Covenant Homes, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit our family began to serve children with disabilities in South Asia. Brent puts it plainly: "Nancy did most of the work. Nellie Jo helped her quite a bit." Between them they have carried the paperwork, the prayers, and the long friendships that hold a small nonprofit upright. Many children with disabilities have been adopted through their practical support of the work. That is disciple making at the scale of one small Montana kitchen table.

Sarah and I met when she came to India for the second time, in 1994, as an eighteen-year-old gap-year missionary. She loved the children. The two of us barely spoke at first. I was twenty-three and busy. She was shy.

Something changed between us over the next year. We knew we were each other's person.

We married on January 5, 1996, in Chinook in the Assembly of God church. My parents could not come. The American consulates back home had closed that month over budget problems, so no one from my family could get a visa, and none of the friends I had made in the United States came either. I was twenty-four years old and lonely on my own wedding day.

She has been my partner every year since.

She has paid every cost I have paid and many that I have not, and she has walked every year of it with me. She stayed because she wanted to. She built an organization that has rescued over two hundred children with disabilities from institutions where many of them would not have survived. She has also given birth to and loved our six children. The household, the work, the kids, and I have all been carried on her shoulders, and she has carried herself when nobody else could.

I have not always made it easier on her. I have written about that too. She is still here, and so am I, and so is the work.

You cannot walk a Third Way without a family. The family does not have to be a marriage; the disciples in the New Testament were a family in the broader sense, but mine has been a marriage, and Sarah has been the first home of the four ingredients in my life.

Our six children, named for seasons

My wife and I have had six children of our own. Each of them is named for what God was doing in our lives when they came.

Simona Darshani. *Simona* means *one who hears*, and *Darshani* means *one who has vision*. She came into a season when we were learning to see what the Lord was showing us. She is now Executive Director of Global Covenant. She married Josiah in 2016 and now goes by Simona Darshani.

Shayna Aradhana. Born around the time we were learning to lead worship and intercession together. *Aradhana* is the word for *worship* in our language. *Shayna* means *beautiful* in Yiddish. *Beautiful Worship*. Shayna has a degree in ministry with a worship emphasis, and her husband Zion Bohlender also graduated from a worship school.

Amira Jaya. Born in a wilderness season for our family. *Amira* means *princess*, and she has always had a graceful, regal bearing. We changed her middle name from *Satya*, meaning *truth*, to *Jaya*, meaning *victory*, as a statement of faith, a confession of victory in a painful time. But *Satya* has been prophetic as well, as she has worked in apologetics for the past few years.

Jiana Dhanya and James Rohan, twins. *Dhanya* means *blessed and thankful*. *Rohan* means *ascending*. They were born on a very meaningful date close to Thanksgiving, in a season of acceleration in the work.

Joel Jahan. *Jahan* means *global* in Persian. Joel came into our family last summer through embryo adoption. He came into a season when our work was expanding from our region into other parts of the world.

Six children, six names, six seasons of God's work in our family. Joel, our youngest, is approaching a year old as I write this.

The family is where the four ingredients have to land. Hearing God. Obeying Him. Helping each other do the same. We are not perfect at any of it. We are trying to serve the Lord

together as a family, one day and one ordinary obedience at a time.

The dinner table

In Kansas City, my wife and I, the twins, and Joel try to gather for a Discovery Group as a family. The truth is, we struggle with the schedule. We miss more weeks than we keep, and when we do sit down together it is usually after some wrestling to make the time. I want to be real about that.

What I can also tell you is that the four ingredients are no longer a weekly practice for me. They have become a lifestyle. Hearing God, obeying Him, helping someone else do the same. They are inside me daily. At airports, in the prayers over my children, in the meals I share with strangers, in the way I read the Scripture by myself before anyone else is awake. The family Discovery Group is one expression of that lifestyle. It is not the whole of it.

Let me tell you about a night in Ongole, my hometown, at a gathering for our youngest son. About fifty of my relatives were in the room. I am the one who wrote a whole book about handing the four ingredients back simple, so I decided we would not have a sermon that night. We would do a Discovery Group, and I asked my daughter Simona to lead it. We set up ten tables around the room, gave everyone Genesis 45, where Joseph finally tells his brothers who he is, and asked them to open the Scripture together.

Only three or four tables actually did it. The rest looked at us, or at each other, or at their phones. I stood there watching my own method not work, in my own hometown, in front of my own family. When I saw what was happening, I did the only thing I could. I improvised. I picked up the microphone, pulled everyone back into one group, and started asking

the questions out loud myself. Despite the newness and awkwardness initially, it was well received.

I tell you that because the four ingredients are not magic, and I am not an expert at them. They fail in our hands too. The night was still good, but good the way real things are good, a little messy, half working, saved by a scramble. If your first group looks like that, you are in good company. You are in my family.

Recently, Sarah and the twins and I walked through what we call the Ten Stories of Hope set. A simple Discovery Group series of ten stories from Scripture. We did them in our living room, and sometimes in the car on the way to the grocery store, or around the table at dinner.

We finished all ten.

The twins take turns facilitating the family Discovery Group. They are fourteen. They ask the three questions of the rest of us, and we answer, and we ask the Lord what we will do this week, and the next week we ask each other what we did.

That is what a Third Way looks like in one Kansas City home in 2026, small enough that anyone not paying attention would miss it, and still the whole thing.

The wider family

The family of the Third Way is wider than my marriage and my children.

Most of you reading this are not the fifth generation in a line like mine. You are starting where you are, and that is fine. Kesbo started where he was, and so did Greg in Minden, and so did Danny in his town.

The five generations have to start somewhere, and they can start with you.

A jailer's household filled with joy

Acts 16, a few paragraphs after Lydia.

Paul and Silas, the same team that had stayed in Lydia's home, are now in trouble. They have driven a spirit out of a slave girl who was making money for her owners. The owners drag Paul and Silas before the magistrates. The magistrates have them stripped, beaten, and thrown into the inner cell of the city jail. Their feet are fastened in stocks.

Around midnight, Paul and Silas are praying and singing hymns. The other prisoners are listening. A violent earthquake shakes the prison, every door opens, and every chain falls off.

The jailer wakes, sees the doors standing open, and assumes the prisoners have all escaped. Under Roman law, a jailer who lost his prisoners would lose his life. He draws his sword to kill himself.

Paul shouts from the dark, *"Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."*

The jailer calls for lights and runs into the cell trembling. He falls down before Paul and Silas. He brings them out. He asks the question he had been carrying for a long time without knowing he was carrying it: *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

They answer plainly. *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

The jailer takes them to his house at that hour of the night. He washes their wounds. They share the Word with him and with everyone in his house. They baptize him and all his

family at two in the morning. Then he sets a meal in front of them. Luke writes that he and his whole household were *filled with joy because they had come to believe in God*.

I want you to see the four ingredients in this story.

Ingredient one. Everyday disciple. A jailer, a working-class Roman official in a provincial city, not Jewish, not religious, not credentialed in any tradition, just a man with a sword and a job and a family.

Ingredient two. Hearing God. Discovery in this story comes through an earthquake and a shout. The jailer is met by the Lord through two prisoners who would not run. The discovery is fast. We see the moment he understands who is standing in front of him. He is on his face in the dirt.

Ingredient three. Obedience. His obedience is immediate: he takes them home that very night, washes the wounds his own system had inflicted, is baptized in his house at two in the morning, and sets a meal in front of them. There was no waiting for morning and no priest consulted; he simply did what he had heard.

Ingredient four. Helping someone else do the same. This is the household at its sharpest. He does not believe alone. His whole household is baptized with him at the same dark hour. Paul and Silas do not give him a strategy for sharing his new faith with his family later. They share the Word *with everyone in his house* that night. His salvation pulls his household in with him that same night. The jailer is not filled with joy alone; his whole household is filled with it right along with him.

That is a household at its biblical edge: a man, his wife, his children, his whole household, pulled into the kingdom in one night because one man heard and obeyed.

We do not always get the earthquake, and we do not always get the same-night baptism, but we do get the principle, which is that the gospel moves through your people before it moves through anything else.

Your family, your people

I have to be honest with you about that first field, because it is the one nobody warns you about. Your own people are often the hardest people you will ever try to reach.

A stranger meets you fresh. But your brother remembers who you were at fifteen. Your father has heard you talk before. Your oldest friend has watched you fail. None of them is quick to believe the Lord would say anything worth hearing through you. The gospel travels easily down a road of trust, and with our own families the trust is tangled up with years of history. You still start with them. You just go in knowing it will be hard.

Jesus felt it. He went back to Nazareth, the town He grew up in, and taught in the synagogue. The people who had watched Him grow up said, is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary? They took offense at Him. He said, *“A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and among his own relatives and in his own home.”* Mark tells us Jesus could do no mighty work there. His own brothers did not believe in Him until after He rose from the dead. If the Son of God found His hometown to be hard soil, yours is allowed to be hard soil too.

So start there anyway, and start slow. You watched my fifty relatives look at their phones while my daughter tried to lead them. That is what it can look like, and you are in good company when it does. Carrying the Lord back to the people who knew you before He ever got hold of you is the hardest work there is, and often the most fruitful. Some of them will come slowly. One of them may come this year. And the

evening your brother or your mother finally sits down and opens the Scripture with you is worth every hard try it took to get there.

Your family may not look like mine.

It may not be a marriage at all. It may be the friends you eat dinner with on a weeknight, or the small circle the Lord has gathered around you in this season, or the people you have chosen to do life with.

The New Testament shows this pattern everywhere. You have already met three of these people in this book: Cornelius, Lydia, and the Philippian jailer, and each one came to Jesus with his or her own people around them.

This is where the Great Commission starts. Acts 1:8. *“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* It begins in Jerusalem first, which is to say your own people, your own block, your own table.

Luke 10 is the next level out. The seventy-two go two by two into towns they do not yet know, to find a Person of Peace, someone God has already opened to the gospel, and stay in his home. But Luke 10 only works after you have begun with your own people. The two who go are people who have already learned what the four ingredients look like in their own house first.

Start where you already are, with your own people first, and then move further out from there.

If you're a Westerner, you may have thought as you read this, “We are individualistic in the West. We do not have a strong family the way Cornelius did. This whole thing does not work here.” I have heard that line many times. My answer is that your people are not just your blood. It may be your spouse and children at one table, or your parents and siblings

scattered across three states, or the friends you have learned to call your chosen family. Sometimes they will gather around a table. Sometimes on a screen. Your people are defined by who the Lord has given you.

You may be single, estranged from your relatives, or without children, but the four ingredients still have a home with you and with the people the Lord has put nearby.

The four ingredients have to land somewhere, and wherever you are, with whoever happens to be there with you, that is where they land and those are your people.

A blessing for your family

If you have read this far, I want to send you home with a blessing for your family.

You are not asked to be heroic, only to be everyday in the way Christ has redefined that word.

You are asked to listen to the Lord at the table with the people you already love. To obey the small thing He tells you to do this week. To help one person in your life do what you have just started to do.

If you do those three things this week, you are already part of a gospel movement. You may not see it yet. The movement is the soil being prepared. The fruit will come.

I have watched the fruit come for many years now, through mothers and teenagers, through widows and motorcycle riders and pickleball players, through Vietnamese restaurant servers and onion sellers and auto-rickshaw drivers. None of them special, and every one of them carrying the gospel into the room the Lord had already given them.

You are one of them.

For Reflection

The four ingredients have to land in your own family first. Who are the people the Lord has actually given you to start with?

About fifty of my own relatives filled the room, and most looked at each other or their phones instead of opening the Scripture I handed out. Does that kind of messiness free you to begin even when it might not go smoothly?

When this week could your household sit down and open one story together?

Chapter 10

Where You Stand Now

I do not have a strategy for you.

I have a question: “What is the next obedient thing that is in front of you to do?”

Not a how-to

There are good curricula in the world. The Discovery Group has many iterations. The Ten Stories of Hope set and the Creation to Christ series both exist. A fuller resource list for movement catalysts is coming in Book Two.

But you do not need to find the perfect curriculum to walk this.

The Samaritan woman did not wait for a curriculum; she simply went home. Sharon, who had five friends and a Bible, didn’t wait, and neither did Danny, who came home from a one-hour camp session and opened the Bible with the people in front of him.

You do not need a curriculum. Just go ahead and get started.

A man among the graves

You have already met him in passing. Before I send you out, I want to give you his whole story. Mark 5.

Jesus crosses the lake into the region of the Gerasenes. Gentile territory, ten cities, an area where a Jewish rabbi did not usually go. A man comes out to meet Him. This wild man has been living among the tombs. He has been chained many times, but in fits of demonic rage, he has torn those chains apart. Night and day he screams and cuts himself with stones, and the townspeople have labeled him.

Jesus drives the demons out, and the local people come running. They find the man sitting at Jesus's feet, calm and clothed and in his right mind. They are afraid, and they ask Jesus to leave.

The man asks if he can go with Jesus.

Jesus says no.

Jesus says, *"Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."*

The man goes. Mark gives us one line: *"And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled."*

Decapolis means *ten cities*. The gospel reached ten cities through one man who one week earlier had been screaming in a graveyard.

He had no resume but his own story, no platform but his own region, no theology but his obedience to *go and tell*. And the Lord used him to reach ten cities.

The man among the graves was not an exception. He was the pattern. The Lord has always chosen weak people. Look at them. Moses had killed a man and run for his life, and when the Lord called him he argued that he was slow of speech. David was a boy with a sling, and later a man who took another man's wife and had her husband killed. He is still called a man after God's own heart. Gideon was hiding in a winepress, threshing his wheat in secret because he was afraid. The angel of the Lord looked at him and called him a mighty warrior while he was still hiding. Peter denied that he ever knew Jesus, to the face of a servant girl, and Jesus made him the rock the church was built on. Paul held the coats while they stoned Stephen, and became the apostle who carried the gospel to the nations. Not one of them was qualified. The Lord called every one of them anyway, and that pattern runs the length of the Bible. He does not wait until you are strong. He says, "*I will be with you,*" and that is the whole of your qualification.

The last instruction Jesus gave him is the last instruction I want to leave you with. *Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you.*

The voice you may already be hearing

If you have read this far, the Lord has probably already been speaking to you.

I will ask you the question I learned to ask myself years ago. *Have you heard a voice this week that you have not yet obeyed?*

If you have, the rest of this book is the encouragement to obey it.

If you have not, the prayer of this book is that the Lord would speak to you this week through a passage of Scripture you read at a table somewhere with one other person.

You do not have to wait for the voice to begin. You can begin, and the voice will meet you.

That has been my experience over the years.

The promise that has carried me

I want to send you out of this book with the same promise that has carried me.

The Lord told me in 2002, on the fifth anniversary of the beginning of our work in our home district, that He had given a much larger mission field to me as my inheritance.

I did not believe Him at first. But believing Him turned out to be the easy part. Walking all the way into what He had shown me took me the better part of twenty years. I kept the vision at arm's length, working near it but not all the way inside it, because I was thinking practically, which is a respectable way of saying that I was afraid. I did not step fully in until 2021. That is a long time to argue with the Lord about a thing He has already settled.

When I finally began, the work grew beyond what I could measure.

The Lord has spoken to you too. He does not play favorites, and He is not waiting for you to be special or ready; He is only waiting for you to begin.

The Third Way is not a project you take on but simply your normal Christianity.

If you give yourself to it, before long it is simply the way you live.

The small place where it begins

I am writing these last pages from a bedroom in Sarah's parents' house in Chinook, Montana.

My wife is in the next room with her sisters and mom. Brent and Nancy have lived in the same house for forty-six years. Now they are on a waiting list for a unit in a senior living apartment complex. We came for a wedding and to help them sort through things to be ready to move, should they decide to do so, when an apartment opens up.

Joel is on the bed beside me. He is almost a year old. He is crawling over my notebook, laughing.

Outside the window there is a field and a road I have known since 1995. I look down the street and see cars parked but no people on the roads. It's nothing like the crowded streets in South Asia. It is so quiet here.

None of what I have written to you began in a large place. It began at a kitchen table with a Bible open and one other person listening.

Yours will likely begin somewhere just as small.

Maybe it will start in a commuter train on a weekday morning. Maybe with a coworker in the corner of a break room. Maybe on your phone, with that text the Lord has been prompting you to send. Or on your sister's sofa with the nephew who has so many questions about the Bible.

I do not know where your small place is. The Lord does. He has probably already shown it to you once or twice this week, and you have probably already looked past it once or twice, the way I looked past India for years.

Look again.

Before you close this book, write down three lines, one name, one story from the back of this book, and one time this week to sit down together.

That is where it begins.

I want to leave you with the sentence I came home with from a Pasadena dinner table on a Friday night in May 2026.

*A gospel movement is everyday disciples hearing God,
obeying God, and helping others do the same, until
that becomes just normal Christianity.*

You are one of those everyday disciples.

If you are hearing Jesus and obeying Jesus and helping someone else do the same, you are already inside the story. You do not have to wait to be part of it.

And if you are not yet, come on in. There is room.

Just begin.

START THIS WEEK

You are not the teacher; the Spirit is. You do not need a plan or a title or permission, only one name and thirty minutes.

One. Begin where you already are. Start one in your own home, at your own table, with the people already close to you. Or begin with one person the Lord has put in your life, a friend, a neighbor. One is enough. Even one friend on a phone screen is enough. If you are inviting someone new, keep it simple, something like, “I’m reading a book that suggested reading a short story with a friend and talking about it. Would you do that with me?”

Two. Turn to the Ten Stories of Hope at the back of this book. Read the first one aloud together, then have someone tell it

back in their own words. You can go first, so it never feels like a quiz. The retelling makes the story theirs, not your lecture.

Three. Ask three questions. What does this story show us about God and about people? And what is the Lord saying to you? If someone says “I don’t know,” that is fine. Just wait.

Four. Before you go, ask one more question, and write down what each person says. What will you do about it this week, and who will you tell this story to?

Five. Meet again next week. Begin where you left off. “*What did you do, and what happened?*” Then open the next story.

That is a Discovery Group. When one of them is ready, help them begin the same thing in their own home, with their own people. You do not have to call it a movement. It is how every movement in this book began — one name, one story, one week at a time.

For Reflection

The man among the graves reached ten cities with no resume but his own story and his obedience to go and tell. What has the Lord done for you that you could simply go and tell?

Is there something the Lord has asked of you this week that you have not yet obeyed?

Write down three lines now: one name, one story from the back of the book, and one time this week to sit down together.

A Blessing

May the Lord who spoke to a Samaritan woman at a well speak to you this week. May He meet you where you already are. May He ask you to do one small obedient thing. Do it.

Tell one person what He has told you. They might ask you to tell them more.

May the four ingredients work themselves into the air of your home and your block and your town, and may they become so much a part of you that you forget you are doing them.

The cost will come, and the provision with it. The people you love will walk it with you.

May we remember what we have forgotten. May the Third Way become normal Christianity in your generation.

I am asking this for you because I have asked it for myself, and the Lord has been faithful. He will be faithful to you as well.

You will need others walking with you. Find a gospel movement team, coach with someone, and be coached by someone. The walk is not meant to be done alone.

And if, somewhere along the way, you sense the Lord asking you to carry more than your own people—to serve the everyday disciples He is putting around you, to become a

small covenant team at an ordinary kitchen table for a whole city—do not go reaching for it before He asks. When He asks, you will know. The road there is the same road you are on now.

So begin.

James Paul

If you feel a pull to help others go

You have reached the end of this book. Many of you are ready to close it and get on with the ordinary, faithful work of telling the people you already know. If that is you, go with God.

But some of you are feeling something else by now. A quiet tug toward the few people around you who are just starting out. Not to run anything. Just a sense that you might gather them, walk with them a while, and then let them go on without you. If that is stirring in you, there is a second book, and it was written for you.

It is called *The Making of a Movement Catalyst*, Book Two of *The Third Way*. It does not pile on another system to master. It hands the simplicity back. There are two roles in this whole work, not five. You are loved before you are ever sent. The book takes the method seriously, and it takes your tired soul just as seriously, because this work is slow and shared and honest about its cost.

You do not have to decide tonight. If the pull is real, it will still be there tomorrow. You do not need the second book to be faithful. It is only here if you want to go further. Either way, set this one down with a clear heart. What you have already received is enough.

The Discovery Group

The Questions

A few friends, an open Bible, and these questions. Keep it simple, and shape the wording to fit the people you are with. What cannot change is the four ingredients: an everyday disciple, hearing God, obeying God, and helping someone else do the same.

Connect. Go around the room. “What are you thankful for this week? What is weighing on you? And how did you do with what you said you would do last time?” Then still yourselves for a moment and ask the Lord to speak, because He will.

Discover. Read the passage aloud. Have at least one person, and ideally each person if you have time, retell it in their own words, so the story becomes each member’s own and not a lecture. Then ask together, “What does this passage show us about God and about people? And as you listen, what is the Lord saying or showing you right now, a word, a picture, a sense, a nudge?” Say it plainly, and let the group weigh it. Then, “What change will you make this week?”

Send. “How can we help one another this week, and who outside this room can we serve? And who is the Lord putting on your heart?” Name the one you will tell this story to, and send each other out to go and do it.

Some of you come from a stream that waits on the Lord and listens for His voice. Some of you come from a stream that goes out and sends. This little tool was built to hold both, because the listening feeds the sending, and the sending gives the listening somewhere to land.

A word of credit for the two tools in this book. The Discovery Group here is the Global Covenant version, shaped by Simona Darshani and the everyday disciples of Global Covenant, who have carried it across South Asia for years. The wider discovery method has many fathers, named earlier in this book. The story sets that follow were compiled by Phil Alessi of Novo. All of it is given here freely, to use and to pass on.

Discovery Story Sets

Below are four Discovery story sets to get you started: three story sets from Phil Alessi and the Creation to Christ set. Read one story a week and ask the Discovery questions.

The Ten Stories of Hope

Ten stories of Jesus meeting people in moments of need. Good for new groups that are not yet sure who Jesus is.

- Jesus Heals (Mark 2:1-12)
- Jesus Teaches Nicodemus (John 3:1-17)
- Transformed Life (Mark 5:1-20)
- Memorable Act (Luke 7:37-50)
- Lost Son Returns (Luke 15:11-32)
- Thank You (Luke 17:11-19)
- What God Sees (Luke 18:9-14)
- Coming to Your House (Luke 19:1-10)
- Hungry for God (John 4)
- Hearing God (Mark 4:1-20)

The Twelve Stories of Love

- He left Heaven (John 1:1-18)
- He was born in a stable (Luke 2:1-20)

- He experienced temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)
- He guides us (Matthew 5:1-16)
- He endured hardship (Luke 9:57-62)
- He prayed for us (John 17:1-26)
- He was arrested and tried (Mark 14:43-65)
- He died for us (Mark 15:22-47)
- He came back to life (John 20:1-23)
- He commissions us (Matthew 28:16-20)
- He is coming back for us (Acts 1:1-11)
- He invites us to follow him (Luke 5:1-11)

The Ten Stories of Faith

- Believe (John 3:1-17)
- Declare (Acts 16:16-34)
- Gather (Acts 2:37-46)
- Love (John 15:9-27)
- Give (Mark 12:41-44)
- Forgive (Luke 7:37-50)
- Pray (Matthew 6:5-15)
- Witness (Acts 1:1-11)
- Serve (Mark 10:35-45)
- Multiply (Mark 4:1-20)

Creation to Christ

The whole story from the first pages of the Bible to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. A good starting place for a group that does not yet know the story of God.

The Creation Story

- Creation of the World (Genesis 1:1-25)

- Creation of Man (Genesis 2:4-24)

The Fall

- The First Sin (Genesis 3:1-13)
- The Judgment (Genesis 3:14-24)
- The Flood (Genesis 6:1-9:17)

Redemption in the Old Testament

- The Promise to Abram (Genesis 12:1-8, 15:1-6)
- Isaac as a Sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-19)
- The Promise of Passover (Exodus 12:1-28)
- The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21)
- The Sacrificial System (Leviticus 4:1-35)
- Isaiah Foreshadows the Promise (Isaiah 53)

Redemption in the New Testament

- Jesus's Birth (Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20)
- Jesus's Baptism (Matthew 3, John 1:29-34)
- Christ's Temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)
- Nicodemus's Visit (John 3:1-21)
- The Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-26, 39-42)
- Jesus's Healing (Luke 5:17-26)
- Calming the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- Casting Out Spirits (Mark 5:1-20)
- Lazarus Raised (John 11:1-44)
- The Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-30)
- Betrayal and Condemnation (John 18:1-19:16)
- Jesus's Crucifixion (Luke 23:32-56)
- Jesus's Resurrection (Luke 24:1-35)
- Jesus's Ascension (Luke 24:36-53)
- The Salvation Choice (John 3:1-21)

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Roy Moran, you wrote the foreword to this book, and long before that you gave me the courage to start.

Simona, my daughter, you took what we learned from others and made it simple enough for any everyday disciple to use, the Discovery Group and the coaching this book hands on. You lead Global Covenant now, and I am at peace about who carries it.

To the pastors who first sent me out in 1991, to the mentors who kept shaping me since, and to the friends and partners whose prayers and giving have quietly funded this work for decades, you sent, you sustained, and none of this exists without you. Thank you.

And to the everyday disciples in every country whose obedience never makes a headline, thank you. That is what gives me hope. And to Peraiah, whose people are my people, thank you for not waiting for a credential.

Recommended Reading

If this book stirred something in you, here is where to go next. Start with the first one. You already have everything you need to begin.

The Bible. Read it to obey it, not only to know it. Gather a few friends, open the Scriptures, and do what they say. Everything in this book grows from that.

Roy Moran, *Spent Matches* — a pastor's turn to Discovery Bible Study to reach the spiritually dissatisfied.

Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements* — how disciple-making movements are reaching Muslims and the unreached.

Curtis Sergeant, *The Only One* — living fully in, by, and for God, the love that fuels the work.

Dr. Bill Randall, *The Life Jesus Made Possible* — embracing the kingdom life Jesus put within reach.

David and Paul Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making* — the practical framework behind the Discovery Group.

About the Author

Almost everything written about gospel movements comes from the outside, from visitors who helped one begin and then flew home to tell the story. James Paul writes from the inside. These are his own people, and this is his own life.

He is a fifth-generation follower of Christ and a third-generation movement catalyst from South Asia. He grew up watching ordinary people, farmers, mothers, shopkeepers, carry the gospel from one home to the next, and he learned the work from his own parents before he had words for it. For thirty years he has carried it, and watched it spread from a handful of families to more homes and villages than he ever set out to count.

In time he set down the conferences and the model he had spent years building, because he had come to believe something simpler: that the Great Commission was never meant to rest on the professionals alone, but to be carried by every believer. He came to call it the Third Way, alongside the missionary and the local church, the everyday disciple taking the gospel to the next person, right where she already lives. What he found is that ordinary people, once they are set free to go, carry the gospel further than he ever imagined.

He has handed the work to his daughter Simona, who now leads Global Covenant. James serves as a Global Catalyst with

Novo, walking with movement catalysts and their teams around the world. He and his wife, Sarah, live in Kansas City with their six children and return to South Asia several times a year.

This book is what he learned from the ordinary people who carried it. It is an invitation to become one of them.

Learn more at thethirdway.global.

The Third Way is for the everyday disciple, and for the one called to walk with her. He hopes it finds you at whatever age you are reading.

“When it comes to the completion of the Great Commission, James Paul has helped reset our paradigm... It is the only way the math works.”

HARRY BROWN, FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, NEW GENERATIONS

“James echoes Jesus’s eternal call to everyone who would follow Him: listen to God, obey Him, and help others do the same. This is the Kingdom culture that conquers all.”

CURTIS SERGEANT, DISCIPLE OF JESUS · FORMER VP, IMB

“There is a movement underway, largely invisible to many followers of Christ, that is doing more to spread God’s heart for people than any other strategy. Read it at your own risk. It may change your life.”

SETH BARNES, FOUNDER OF AIM AND THE WORLD RACE

ONE FAMILY FIVE GENERATIONS A THIRD WAY

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In 1878, a wave of the gospel swept through Ongole, India, and caught up James Paul’s great-great-grandparents. Ordinary believers carrying the good news through their own homes and towns have quietly formed thousands of churches across South Asia since. Today the same Spirit is moving across the West, at kitchen tables and in ordinary living rooms.

There is a way to follow Jesus that runs alongside the missionary who is sent and the church that gathers: the everyday disciple, carrying the gospel to the very next person, right where she already lives. This is the Third Way, and it asks no title and no permission. It starts at the door where you already stand.

“A call to action, not a condemnation. It leads you to a conclusion that feels doable.”

JULIE TERRY, AN EVERYDAY DISCIPLE

• • •

JAMES PAUL

James Paul writes from the inside. He is a fifth-generation follower of Christ and a third-generation movement catalyst from South Asia, where he grew up watching ordinary people carry the gospel from one home to the next. Over thirty years he has seen it spread from a handful of families to more villages than he set out to count. He has since handed the work to his daughter Simona, who now leads Global Covenant, and serves as a Global Catalyst with Novo, walking with teams around the world. He and his wife, Sarah, live in Kansas City with their six children and return to South Asia several times a year.