TITLE: Moving Forward in Multiplication

DESCRIPTION: Our churches take their first steps toward biblical and fruitful disciple making and church planting when we begin to value sending more than seating and start acting like we believe Jesus’ words that the harvest truly is plentiful. In our time together, we will explore essential shifts needed for churches to embrace and begin to move forward in a multiplying mission.

Shift #1 From a diminishing view of the harvest to a plentiful view of the harvest

- Believe Jesus' description of the harvest
- Matthew 9:35-38 NIV
  - Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”
- John 4:35-38 NIV
  - Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”
- It’s plentiful even if it is not on our timetable

- The declining church narrative doesn’t work
  - Rick Richardson in You Found Me
    - “Jesus once said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers” (Lk 10:2). Jesus had a vibrant and contagious missional imagination. As I talk to church leaders around the country, I often feel like I hear the opposite message: “The harvest is sparse, the workers are many, and the competition for the few interested unchurched people is intense. People in our culture just don’t care about the gospel any more, and they don’t like the church.” Our team’s research findings don’t agree. I think Jesus’ assessment and prayer are still relevant for America today. Imagine if churches and leaders around the country started to radiate hope that the
message we have and the service we offer is needed, welcomed, and wanted by many, and can still affect the direction of the unchurched and the quality of life in our communities. Such a rooted and realistic hope could change a nation."

- 48% of Christians say that most non-Christians have no interest in hearing about Jesus. We have to pray and work to change this.

- We can't wait to reach people until we need them for our survival

**SHIFT #2 From prioritizing SEATING to prioritizing SENDING**

- New churches often move into preservation mode within two years after they begin
  - The biggest contributor for this is prioritizing the acquisition of a building over planting another church
  - Tim Crouch planting Faith Alliance Church in Exton, PA - "Our goal is not to build a building."

- Jesus refers to himself as "sent" 40 times in the book of John. At the end of the gospel Jesus says,
  - John 20:21 - "As the Father sent me, I am sending you."

- We need to pray that God would help us shift from a survival mentality to a sent mentality.
Shift #3 - From addition thinking to multiplication thinking.

- We must be more concerned about God's blessing flowing THROUGH us than we are about God's blessing coming TO us.
  - Genesis 12:3
    - The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.  
    2 “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.  
    3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.  
  - Hymn: "Make Me a Blessing"

  Make me a blessing, make me a blessing,
  
  Out of my life may Jesus shine;
  
  Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,
  
  Make me a blessing to someone today.

  - Instead of "Make me a blessing" the music playing in the minds of many Christians is "GIVE me a blessing"

  - Saying that we will start thinking about multiplication and church planting after our church has "enough" people is like telling God you will start giving to His kingdom work after you get enough money for yourself. It never happens. No pastor would ever give this advice to a believer in their congregation.

  - Why? Because we know Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 5:10 are true.
    - Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.  
  - NIV
Or to paraphrase for multiplication thinking: Whoever loves increasing attendance will never be satisfied with increasing attendance

- The first step in shifting from addition thinking to multiplication is focusing on multiplying disciples instead of adding members.

- If you aim for addition, you may hit it, but if you aim for multiplication you will likely hit both.

**Shift #4** From **complexity** in ministry to **simplicity** in ministry.

- Our ministries are complex because people are never satisfied.
  - We keep creating layers of ministry in our churches and it makes them harder and harder to reproduce.
  - Complex is hard to reproduce. We tend to think that to plant a church, it needs to have every program our current church has.
  - In reality, the only "programs" a church needs is gathered worship and some form of disciple making communities (small group)
    - Acts 5:42
      - *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.* NIV

**Shift #5** From **direct** impact to **indirect** impact

- "The fruit of my work grows on other people's trees." - Bob Buford

- Moses in Exodus 18
  - *That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.* NIV
Start thinking to the fourth generation

- John 17:20-21 NIV
  - “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

- 2 Timothy 2:2 NIV
  - And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

- Titus 1:5 NIV
  - The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

Shift #6  From an ABC perspective of the gospel to an A-Z perspective of the gospel

- As Tim Keller says, "the gospel is not just the ABCs of Christian life, it's the A-Z of Christian life."

- We have a fourfold gospel, not just a "ticket to heaven" gospel

- The gospel is our message, our mission and our motivation
  - The gospel is the message that saves us, and the truth that transforms us.

  - The gospel is our mission because it is a "fruit bearing seed" (Colossians 1:6). Our mission is to plant it in as many fields as we can.

  - The gospel is our also motivation. If we are not motivated to send our people into new harvest fields, perhaps we have forgotten that the Father graciously and mercifully sent Jesus to us
• Developing a gospel culture will produce fertile soil for multiplication

  ▪ Speaking the gospel inside your church will equip and motivate your people to carry it outside our church.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Recovering Missional imagination
From You Found Me by Rick Richardson

“Jesus once said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers” (Lk 10:2). Jesus had a vibrant and contagious missional imagination. As I talk to church leaders around the country, I often feel like I hear the opposite message: “The harvest is sparse, the workers are many, and the competition for the few interested unchurched people is intense. People in our culture just don’t care about the gospel any more, and they don’t like the church.” Our team’s research findings don’t agree. I think Jesus’ assessment and prayer are still relevant for America today. Imagine if churches and leaders around the country started to radiate hope that the message we have and the service we offer is needed, welcomed, and wanted by many, and can still affect the direction of the unchurched and the quality of life in our communities. Such a rooted and realistic hope could change a nation. That is the power of missional imagination. I want to offer a few keys that are foundational to recovering a missional imagination for the harvest in North America. These are the underlying assumptions for this book. If you don’t agree with them, you will at least know where I am starting from and why.

The three key foundations for recovering missional imagination are:

• becoming reenchanted by the power and beauty of the mission of Jesus
• recovering the reality of the receptivity of the unchurched people in our culture and the ripeness of the harvest
• recapturing a vision for the church and its potential for being brighter light and stronger salt in our world

“48 percent of Christians say that most non-Christians have no interest in hearing about Jesus.20 No wonder there aren’t more Christians sharing their faith. It’s difficult to offer good
news to people if we’re already convinced that they won’t think it’s good and that we will offend people and push them even further away if we are bold and direct about our faith. The sad truth is that the American church has fostered Chicken Little Syndrome for several decades, and we are now confronting the negative consequences. Some have withdrawn into separate enclaves, suspicious of outsiders. Our narrative has led to many people in churches becoming pessimistic about their witness and their future, which has given direction and legitimacy to their passivity. If this is going to change, we need to root out the mistaken myths that Christians tell ourselves about the state of the church, replacing them with truth that gets us on mission for the gospel in our communities.” - Rick Richardson