

The

RISE

and

FALL

of

MOVE

MENTS

A ROADMAP
FOR LEADERS

STEVE ADDISON

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THE BEGINNING

Thirty years ago my wife, Michelle, and I planted our first church in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. We had a good sending church behind us and a strong team. The first Sunday, over one hundred people showed up. For the next eighteen months we added an average of one new family to the church every week.

I was a successful church planter—at least in my mind. Then we walked into the middle of a church fight. I was shaken to the core and began seeking God in prayer and in the Scriptures. It wasn't discipline; it was desperation. Early each day I would stoke up the wood burner in my garage, open my Bible and my heart. That garage became holy ground. Through that painful experience God got my attention. I had been caught up in *my* ministry and the growth of *my* church, but God wanted to work on my identity in Christ and to prepare me for a much greater challenge than planting just one church. I discovered for the first time that God had movements on his heart; movements of disciples and churches—everywhere.

I emerged from that experience a different person: I had found my calling, or rather, my calling had found me. God had reshaped my identity in the wilderness. I'm glad he didn't

tell me at the time that there would be many more wilderness experiences. I thought one was enough! It seems God is preoccupied with helping us discover our true identity in him.

Twelve months later, Michelle and I left the church plant in good hands and stepped out to plant again, this time by pioneering with just a small team in the inner city and just a few financial supporters. Half the week I was in the harvest, the other half I was pushing a wheelbarrow. I'm an introvert with no desire to meet new people, so every day I would dread the prospect of going out to share Christ. Yet I would return every time amazed that God had led us to prepared people.

Looking back, God was continuing to chip away at what I will describe later as my *Identity*. He was calling me to fuel multiplying movements with a small team, while working as a builder's laborer, raising a young family, and facing financial crises most weeks.

Throughout this time, I was a voracious reader of historical and contemporary movement case studies. I wanted to understand what made them tick. Why did they rise and fall? I read everything I could get my hands on: biblical material, church history, sociology, organizational dynamics, biographies. Through my research I began to identify recurring patterns and characteristics of movements throughout their lifecycle. I drafted two books, one on the characteristics of dynamic movements, which later became my first book, *Movements That Change the World*, and a second, which has become this book, on the rise and fall of movements.

So God was training my head, my heart, and my hands in movement dynamics.

Fast forward to 2008: I've been on this journey for twenty years, training church planters, coaching church planters, advising denominations on their church planting strategies. Churches are being planted, but we're not even close to multiplying movements. Most of my life I've faced recurring bouts of depression. Normally I managed, but this was the big one; my life ground to a halt for about six months and I could barely function. I felt like all my dreams had faded. I was sitting in my psychiatrist's office and told him, "I feel like my life is over. It has no purpose. I'll leave no legacy." He pulled out a Bible from his desk draw, opened it and began reading verses on the love of God. Then he looked me in the eye and said, "Who promised a legacy? Who promised that your dreams would be fulfilled? The only guarantee you have is the unconditional love of God!"

A week later I was walking beside the creek that runs by the end of our street. I thought, "I could wake up every day for the rest of my life feeling just like this. My hopes and dreams dashed without knowing why." Then I thought, "What do I have left? I have Jesus who died for me and rose from the dead. I have the unconditional love of God for all eternity." Then I thought, "Ok, if that's the deal I'll take it."

There was a diabolical side to this battle. God was at work, but so was Satan. He saw his opportunity to destroy my life, my ministry, my relationships. I discovered the greatest

weapon of all in the spiritual battle: I laid down my dreams and, broken, I entrusted my life to God (James 4:7). When I was at my weakest, God was shaping my Identity. In the desert, his Spirit was conforming me to the image of his Son. I feel like I died that day, and then God gave me my life back again—as a gift. He gave me back everything I felt I had lost, but now *he* mattered more to me than his gifts.

God had brought me back to the importance of Identity. After twenty years of research and practice, I was also clear about what I will describe later as movement *Strategy*. But there was still a missing piece to this puzzle. I'd taught hundreds of leaders around the world on the characteristics of movements, I'd trained church planters, pastors and denominational teams on implementation. Churches were planted but where was the fruit? We weren't seeing multiplying disciples and churches.

That's when I realized everyone I trained learned movement principles, but they didn't know what to do on Monday morning. The principles were right, but they have to be grounded in action, and action has to be informed by best practice. Enter Jeff Sundell, recently returned to the United States from ten years in India and Nepal. Jeff understood movements as a practitioner, trainer, and coach. He'd seen movements in South Asia and now he was applying the learning in a Western setting. As he met others on the same journey, a coalition formed which is now known as NoPlaceLeft. So I invited Jeff to come and train us in Australia.

Jeff knew the principles, but he gave us the best practice *Methods* we needed to turn our theory into action. (We'll unpack *Methods* later.) He taught us the basics of how to connect with people, how to share the gospel, how to make disciples through Discovery Bible Studies, how to form discipleship groups that become churches, and how to multiply leaders. We now knew what to do on Monday morning. (You can read more about NoPlaceLeft current practice in chapter eight and in the appendix.) I learned that *Identity* and *Strategy* must be translated into action using best practice *Methods*. Without action, *Identity* and *Strategy* remain untested, abstract concepts.

Now the pieces fit together—Identity, Strategy, Methods. A thirty-year journey and I end up back where it began, with the ministry of Jesus, and the movement he started. It's the movement he continues to lead through his Word and the Holy Spirit, until his Mission is completed, and all things are surrendered to his rule when he hands over the kingdom to the Father, so that God is all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24–28).

We live in troubled times. Is there any age since the time of Christ when that statement was not true? I don't think so. Jesus promised his followers trouble. He promised persecution. He promised natural disasters and war. Not just at the very end of history but throughout it. We aren't home yet, and there's a job to do.

This is Luke's account of what happened when the risen Lord Jesus appeared to his fearful, doubting, troubled disciples.

Notice how Jesus' final instructions are built around his understanding of the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the Mission.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures [Word]. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem [Mission]. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high [Spirit]."

LUKE 24:45-49

Notice how clear this is. Realize this mandate was not just given to a select few but to *every disciple*.

We are no less fearful, doubting, or troubled than these first disciples. Yet God has chosen the despised and weak things of this world to shame the wise. He has chosen you as a partner in this great cause. The risen Lord has given you the authority to make disciples of the nations; he has equipped you for this Mission with his mighty Word and his Holy Spirit. He has promised to go with you.

This is a book for people who want to go on that journey with him.

INTRODUCTION

Never in so short a time has any ... set of ideas, religious, political, or economic, without the aid of physical force or of social or cultural prestige, achieved so commanding a position in such an important culture.

—Kenneth Scott Latourette

Jesus founded a missionary movement with a mandate to make disciples of the nations. As the risen Lord he still leads the way through his Word and the Holy Spirit. A movement is a group of people committed to a common cause. There is a difference between a ministry and a movement. A ministry is what you can achieve helped by others. The vision is limited to your sphere of control. A movement mobilizes people to act without your direct supervision. Once that happens, the movement is on its way to becoming a great-grandparent—trusting God to give generations of descendants.

For good or for ill, movements are the driving force of history, and history is the story of the rise and fall of movements. So how can a movement, founded by Jesus, not only rise but fall? And if it falls, what hope is there for new life? This

is a book about how movements rise and fall and how they are renewed. It is a roadmap for leaders to understand and appreciate the movement lifecycle and how they can navigate their way through it, leading others faithfully in the example Jesus set.

The story begins three centuries after the time of Christ with the movement he founded at the height of worldly success.

NICAEA, AD 325

The Emperor Constantine, robed in purple and adorned with jewels, entered and sat down on a chair of gold. Two hundred and fifty Christian leaders rose to their feet. As he looked out on the bishops he had assembled, Constantine saw empty eye sockets and mutilated limbs, grotesque reminders of the past. These men had been tortured by the empire he now represented. But after three centuries, Rome's fury was spent. Persecution had failed to crush the movement that began with Jesus.

This missionary movement—founded by a crucified criminal in an insignificant province—was everywhere. In an empire of sixty million people, one in ten called Jesus of Nazareth “Lord.” Christianity was the most tight-knit and widespread organization in the most powerful empire on earth. These leaders represented the churches of North Africa, Europe, and the East as far as Persia.

The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 was the first worldwide gathering of Christian leaders. This was Constantine's Council. He had summoned the participants. He had paid

their expenses. He enforced the Council's decisions, and any bishop who disagreed faced exile. An empire united under Constantine required a united faith.

Constantine's quest for power began twenty years before, when he was a pagan worshipper of the Unconquered Sun. At his father's death, Constantine's troops had proclaimed him emperor. Constantine then pursued and defeated each of his rivals for power. Before his last major battle outside Rome, Constantine had a vision of the Christian cross, superimposed upon the sun. Above the cross he saw the words, "In this sign you will conquer." Inspired by the vision, Constantine ordered his troops to mark their shields with the sign of the cross. When his enemy Maxentius led his army out from behind Rome's walls, Constantine's troops drove them into the Tiber River, drowning both men and horses. Convinced that the Christian God had given him victory, Constantine determined to serve this God. He put an end to the persecution of Christians and gave Christianity full legal recognition and preference over the pagan gods of Rome.

Under Constantine, Christian values shaped society. The gladiatorial games were no longer funded by the state, and criminals were no longer condemned to die in the arena. Constantine outlawed the branding of prisoners on the face, based on the principle that God made man in his image. Churches became places where slaves could be legally freed. Money flowed from the emperor, through his bishops, to aid the sick, the old, and the destitute. Unwanted babies could

not be abandoned to die in the wild. Adultery was outlawed. Sunday became a day of rest.¹ Instead of building pagan temples, Constantine built magnificent churches. The original St. Peter's Basilica in Rome was modeled on an imperial throne hall. The emperor gave the Bishop of Rome an imperial residence and the church received large land holdings.²

But Constantine's conversion proved to be a mixed blessing for the Christian movement. Imperial favor transformed the church into "an elite organization, lavishly funded by the state bestowing wealth and power on the clergy."³ Constantine exempted the clergy from taxation and military service, and he gave bishops judicial power. The rich sons of the aristocracy rushed to fill the growing ranks of the priesthood. With enough money and influence, anyone could buy his way to becoming a bishop. The emperor ruled over the life of the church. The sword of state protected the true faith from heretics, whose writings were destroyed and their church property confiscated. A missionary movement became a state religion at peace with the world.

What a stark contrast to the movement Jesus founded. His followers, energized by the Holy Spirit, took the message of salvation to the world, as Christianity spread through ties of family and friends. Apostolic pioneers linked the networks of congregations which were run by local volunteers.⁴ The new faith spread along the trade routes that connected major cities and then into the countryside. The world's first missionary movement knew no bounds of geography, race, or class. Despite

violent opposition, by AD 300, the movement had around six million followers.⁵ Christianity triumphed before the rise of Constantine. Therefore, whoever wanted to be the Roman emperor had to make peace with this upstart movement.⁶

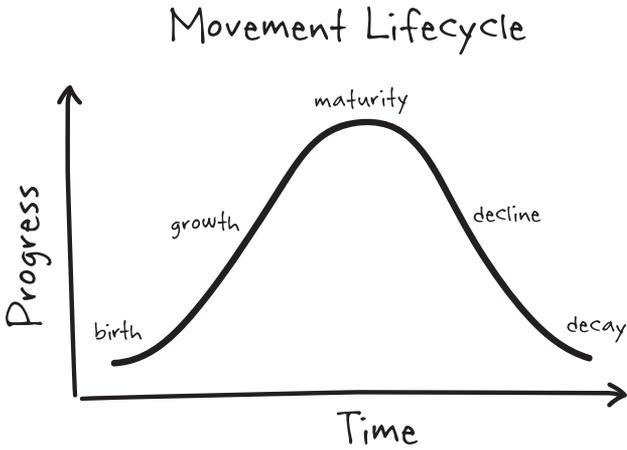
“Success” changed Christianity. It ceased to be a missionary movement. The church lost interest in evangelizing the barbarians beyond the borders of civilization. Within the empire, coercion replaced persuasion as the method of evangelism. Now the church grew dramatically because of its favored position in society. By the end of the fourth century, the vast majority of people within the empire identified as Christian. Pagan shrines were abolished, and bishops took over government functions. Empire and church were one. The persecuted church became the church of power.

Meanwhile, in the desert caves of Egypt, God was up to something new—a rebirth of the Christian faith in a fresh movement. As Christians in the cities of the Roman Empire lost their fervency, individuals retreated into the desert to seek God alone. While the Council of Nicaea met, a former soldier named Pachomius was organizing isolated desert monks into monastic communities. The monastic movement was born and became the driving force of Christian missions for the next 1500 years.

LEADING THROUGH THE LIFECYCLE

Here is the pattern of church history. Movements are born, and those that survive infancy become growing adolescents. They

reach adulthood and survey their achievements. They become complacent and settle down. Some find the will to return to their youthful zeal. Most play it safe and decline. Declining institutions can linger for generations, slowly decaying. Meanwhile, always on the fringe, a new movement is born.



The lifecycle of movements can be broken into five stages—Birth, Growth, Maturity, Decline, and Decay. This process is not inevitable. There is a sixth possibility—the hope of Rebirth during Maturity or Decline. Rebirth interrupts the aging process and turns the movement back towards Growth. In a fallen world Maturity and Decline are predictable; Rebirth goes against the grain. The movement lifecycle is a pattern that shows up over long periods of time. Most movements don't make it past Birth; some movements experience exponential growth for just a few years, others for decades. The lifecycle is a

model, and therefore is an abstraction of reality. Models aren't perfect but they do help us navigate complexity.

This book will help you navigate the movement lifecycle. What are the unique challenges and perils at each stage? What kind of leadership is required? You may be pioneering on the edge. You may be riding a wave of expansion. You may be at the peak of success, tempted to play it safe. You may be stuck in suffocating decline, wondering how to turn things around. You need to know where you are on the lifecycle and align yourself with God's purposes revealed in Jesus Christ. We know how Jesus founded and led an expanding missionary movement. We know how he dealt with declining and decaying religious institutions. We know how the risen Lord in Acts intervened and brought correction when that movement stalled. We know how, throughout the biblical story, God renews his people in Mission through his Word and the Holy Spirit.

WHAT'S DRIVING THE RISE AND FALL?

Once we've identified the stages in the movement lifecycle, we need to understand what is driving the process. Why do movements rise and fall? How do we add momentum to the rise, and turn the decline around?

A movement is defined by its Identity: Strategy and Methods are an expression of that Identity. As we look at the ministry of Jesus and other case studies, we'll see how that Identity is the key to the rise and fall of movements.

The Rise and Fall of Movements

METHODS:

- Vary with context

STRATEGY:

- Pioneering Leaders
- Contagious Relationships
- Rapid Mobilization
- Adaptive Methods

IDENTITY:

- Word
- Spirit
- Mission



1. Identity—Why?

When I was first drawn to the study of movements, I watched what they did, I discovered characteristics, and I observed Strategies and Methods. Years later I realized I was missing the most important thing: beneath the surface of observable activity is the *why*—Identity. In the next chapter we will see how Jesus lived and ministered out of his Identity as the much-loved Son—obedient to his Father’s *Word*, dependent on the *Holy Spirit*, pursuing his *Mission*. Jesus knew *why* he did what he did. His actions sprang from who he was.⁷ When Jesus walked out of the wilderness and returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, he knew who he was, and he knew what he had come to do.

2. Strategy—How?

Jesus didn’t remain alone in the wilderness. He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit to launch a missionary movement. He expressed his Identity in strategic action. Strategy

is *how* a movement operates. Strategy applies principles in pursuit of the mission. We will learn in chapter one that Jesus' strategy had four recurring aspects: Pioneering Leaders, Contagious Relationships, Rapid Mobilization, and Adaptive Methods. Multiplying movements typically display these patterns.

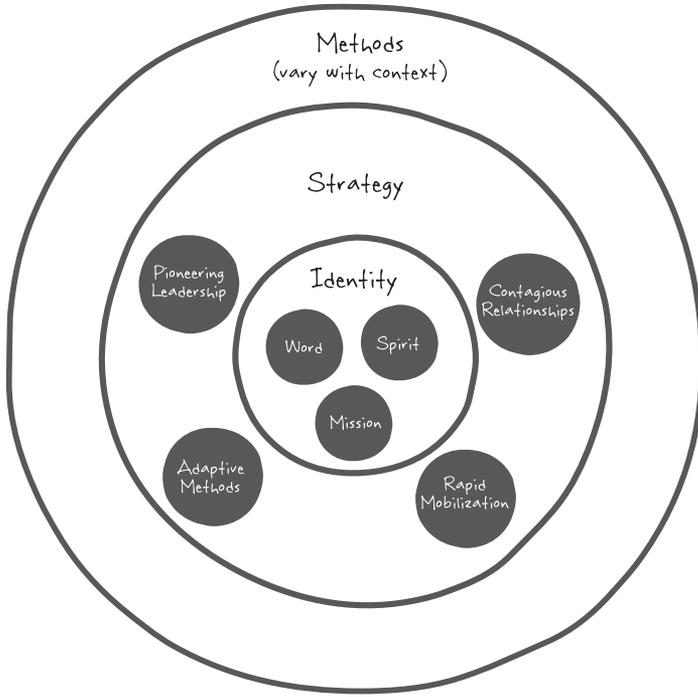
Strategy must be grounded in Identity—our *how* must serve our *why*. It is possible to miss the importance of Identity (Word, Spirit, Mission) and view Strategy as the determining factor in movements. We apply the principles to get the results. We build the Tower of Babel to reach the heavens. But God has a way of tearing down our constructions and confusing our efforts to bring us back to the question of Identity.

3. Methods—What?

Strategy is a movement's overarching *how*. Methods are what we do. Methods apply Strategy and they vary according to the context. They are the specific tools, systems, and processes we use to implement Strategy.

Our Methods put flesh on Identity and Strategy, but in the real world they are not always effective. We must continually evaluate our Methods, just as we need to make sure that our Methods align with the other elements of Identity and Strategy.

This is not just a book about better Methods, although we'll discover some along the way. This is a book about aligning who we are (Identity) with the most effective ways (Strategy) to multiply faithful, loving, obedient disciples, and healthy reproducing churches everywhere.



A DIFFERENT WAY OF SEEING THE WORLD

Do we really want to fill this world with the knowledge of Christ? Movements are the only way to achieve that goal. You alone, your church alone, will never fulfill the Great Commission. It takes movements, and movements require a different way of seeing the world.

Think about your church—it may be twenty-five people or 5,000 people. It wouldn't exist without the people and churches that helped get it started. Your church is the fruit

of other people and churches whose names may have been long forgotten. Has your church started other churches, or did history stop with you? The Christian faith is a movement that is greater than any one church or ministry. Churches and ministries must serve a greater cause than themselves. One church alone can't fully reach its own community, let alone its city or nation or the nations. A ministry mindset focuses on what we're doing (*our* worship services, *our* youth ministry, *our* online presence, *our* community ministry), whereas a movement mindset is all about releasing authority and responsibility to the newest disciples who make disciples. A church with a ministry mindset finds it hard to see beyond its own achievements; a church with a movement mindset is not impressed with the numbers in the auditorium, but with generations of new disciples, new workers, new churches.

The mission of Jesus became a missionary movement. The church Jesus founded was a missionary church: its existence and activities were an expression of its missionary calling, its members were fearlessly determined to win others to faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah. Their mission field began at home in Jerusalem and Judea, and it extended to the ends of the earth. The goal and purpose of their missionary work was the making of disciples and the creation of communities of disciples—people who turned from their old way of life, put their trust in Jesus, and obeyed his teaching.⁸

The central premise of this book is that at every stage of the movement lifecycle the way forward begins with returning

to Jesus, the apostle and pioneer of our faith. His example is foundational. His leadership was centered on obedience to the living Word, dependence on the Holy Spirit, and faithfulness to his Mission. The life of Christ in us is the key to leadership at every stage of the lifecycle. Remaining in him is the key to the rise of movements. Abandoning him is the key to the fall of movements.

The movements lifecycle will become clearer as we examine each stage and their respective case studies: Birth (Franciscans), Growth (Methodists), Maturity (Quakers), Decline (pre-Reformation Catholicism), Decay (Student Christian Movement). These stories will provide lessons and warnings to us as we navigate the movement lifecycle. My prayer is that we will learn from these case studies and come to see the world through movement eyes. Finally, we'll examine a contemporary movement in transition from Birth to Growth: NoPlaceLeft is one of hundreds of movements popping up around the world that are pressing forward to fulfill the Great Commission in this generation.

That's where this book is headed. To begin the journey we first need to go back to the day it all began ...

I. WHY MOVEMENTS RISE AND FALL

Jesus' baptism and wilderness sojourn are not merely the first acts of Jesus' public appearance. They are equally the foundation of his whole ministry. Through them the stage of the ensuing drama is set.

—Ulrich Mauser

There came a day when Jesus walked away from his carpenter's shop and his life in Nazareth. Descending from the Galilean hill country, he joined the crowds and headed into the Judean wilderness.¹ Jews were coming to confess their sins and to be baptized by John, the prophet, who warned them to turn back to God or face God's wrath. Religious leaders, tax collectors, soldiers, and common people came, no longer secure in their identity as descendants of Abraham. By being in their midst, Jesus was identifying with rebellious Israel. In choosing to submit himself in baptism, he showed himself to be the Servant of God, prophesied by Isaiah, who would give his life as a ransom

A ministry is what you can do with the help of others.

A movement is what God can do when you let go of control and multiply disciples and churches.

Drawing on the life and ministry of Jesus, and with reflections on past and present movements, Steve Addison provides a roadmap for leaders who want to multiply disciples and churches to the ends of the earth. Whether pioneering on the edge, riding a wave of expansion, or stuck in suffocating decline, *The Rise and Fall of Movements* addresses each phase in the movement lifecycle, helping leaders identify their stage and align themselves with God's purposes.

“Remarkable...discover what it takes to sustain movements and why they matter.”

DAVE FERGUSON, author of *Hero Maker*

“Steve Addison is a blast of fresh air.”

RALPH MOORE, church multiplication catalyzer, Exponential

“Steve’s best yet—I underlined something on every page.”

ANTHONY DELANEY, director, NewThing, Europe

“Many people talk about movements.

Steve Addison is one of the few who understands them.”

J. D. PAYNE, missiologist and author

STEVE ADDISON is a catalyst for movements that multiply disciple and churches, everywhere. He is an author, speaker, podcaster, and mentor to movement pioneers. Visit Steve at movements.net



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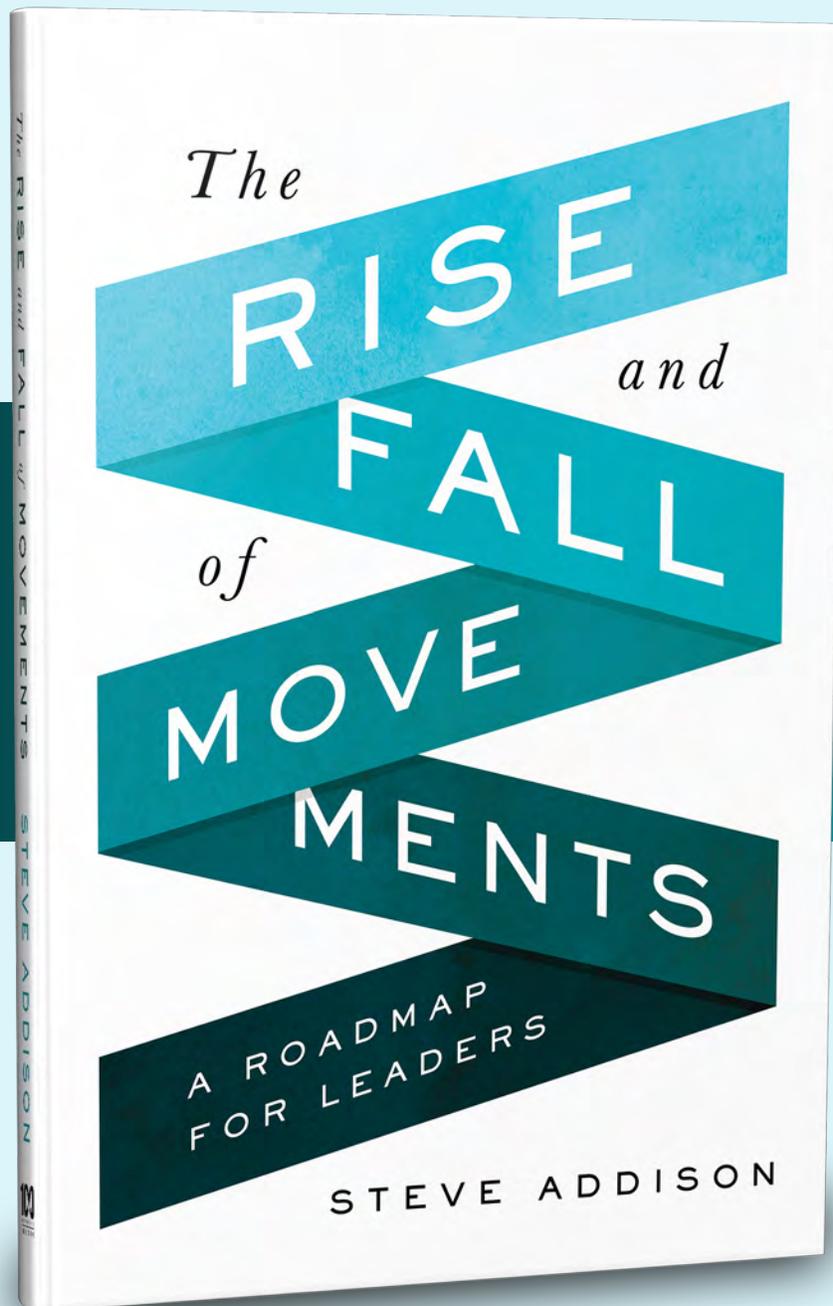


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“Remarkable.” — DAVE FERGUSON