



**WHAT**

**JOINING THE MOVEMENT**

**JESUS**

**CHANGING THE WORLD**

**STARTED**

**Steve Addison**

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Simon Peter . . . fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

LUKE 5:8-10

## IN THE BEGINNING WAS JESUS

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Without Jesus there would be no Christian movement. Peter would never have stood before thousands on the day of Pentecost to proclaim that God had revealed himself in the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth. Communities of disciples would never have been formed in Damascus, in Syrian Antioch, in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome.<sup>1</sup>

Many theories seek to explain the astonishing rise of this new faith. Only one will do: Jesus is the founder and living Lord of the movement that bears his name.

The world had never seen anything like it. By A.D. 300, long before Christianity became a favored religion, Christians made up around 10 percent of the population throughout the Roman Empire—five to nine million followers of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

As first century Christianity was advancing west throughout Europe, thriving centers of faith also sprang up in North Africa, in the Middle East and in central Asia. Much of what we call the Islamic world today was once Christian. There is credible evidence that the apostle Thomas established churches in northwestern and southern India.<sup>3</sup> Courage and faith were all that the apostles and other missionaries needed to spread the gospel along the trade routes of the ancient world.<sup>4</sup>

A missionary movement was something totally new in human history. Outside of the faith of Israel, no one believed in one universal religion or one true God. There were no missionaries and no conversions. In a world over which many gods ruled, new gods didn't replace old ones; they were just added to them.

In contrast to the surrounding pagan nations, Judaism taught that there is one God who is the Creator and Lord of all. He chose Israel to be his witness to the world. Through Israel the nations would be drawn into God's salvation. In the "last days" or "end times" God would send his servant, the Messiah, to bring salvation to the nations. Individual Gentiles could be accepted into the people of God if they converted to worshipping Yahweh, submitted to circumcision and adopted the Mosaic Law. To convert, a Gentile had to become a Jew. Individual Gentiles did convert (or at least become "God-fearers") on the fringe of the synagogue. Yet

Judaism never became an expanding missionary movement. There was no organized, sustained attempt to convert Gentiles to Yahweh.<sup>5</sup>

The Christian movement was something new in human history. Jesus' first public act, recorded in three Gospels, was the calling of Simon, Andrew, James and John to leave their fishing nets and join his band of mobile missionaries. From then on, he told them, they would be fishing for people.

Jesus continues to lead the way. Every new generation of his disciples sits at the feet of Jesus and learns from his example as founder and living Lord of the movement. No movement that bears his name can rise above his example and his leadership. The mission of Jesus was universal. It knew no bounds. No one was excluded. There were no outsiders. There were no borders. The mission was to the ends of the earth and to the end of history. Jesus' early followers were convinced that forgiveness of sins was possible for Jews and non-Jews, for the educated and for the barbarians, for men and women, for rich and poor—through faith in Jesus, the Messiah and Lord.

Missionary movements communicate the truth about God and salvation to others. They teach followers a new way of life that accords with that truth. The purpose of a missionary movement is that people accept the message, begin to follow Jesus, share him with others, and form new communities of faith that become partners in the spread of the gospel.<sup>6</sup>

What does that look like? What do missionary movements do? These are the six activities we will refer to as we examine the ministry of Jesus as it began in the Gospels and as it continued through his followers in the book of Acts.

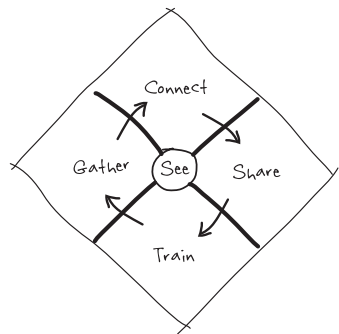
Six activities—simple enough and interconnected enough that you could sketch them out on a napkin, yet intricate and all-encompassing enough that they merit the full attention and devotion of all Jesus' followers throughout history.

1. **See the end.** Missionary movements obey God's call to join his mission. They submit to the leadership of Jesus through the Holy Spirit and the power of his living Word. They are moved with compassion for lost people and do not rest until the good news of salvation through Christ is proclaimed and communities of disciples are gathered throughout the inhabited world.
2. **Connect with people.** Movements cross boundaries (geographic, linguistic, cultural, social, economic) to establish contact with non-Christians. They seek out responsive people who have been prepared by God.



3. **Share the gospel.** Movements share the good news of Jesus the Messiah and Savior through proclamation, preaching, teaching and instruction. They equip new disciples to become the means by which the good news spreads throughout their communities.
4. **Train disciples.** Movements lead people to faith in Jesus Christ (conversion, baptism, gift of the Holy Spirit) and teach them to obey what Jesus has commanded, including the command to make disciples of others.
5. **Gather communities.** Movements form new believers into the local communities of the followers of Jesus (featuring the Lord's Supper, transformation of behavior, love, service and witness). Each community of disciples is responsible to reach its region in depth and to contribute money, prayer and workers who take the gospel to unreached regions.
6. **Multiply workers.** Missionary movements release mobile apostolic or missionary teams into new, unreached fields to advance the spread of the gospel.

Christianity did not thrive in the ancient world because the social, economic, religious and political conditions were right. There was nothing inevitable about the spread of the gospel. Christianity thrived because all authority was given to the risen Lord who commanded his followers to go into all the world and make disciples. Their mission thrived because Jesus is Lord. He still commands us to follow him, and he still promises to teach us to fish for people, make disciples and multiply communities of his followers—everywhere.




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**The six elements of the movement Jesus started: see the need; connect with people; share the gospel; train disciples; gather communities; multiply workers (represented by the X).**

## WHAT TO EXPECT

This is a book written for those who want to follow Jesus and to have him train them in his movement. There is a job for everyone to do. The movement Jesus founded advances because we are all called to connect with people who are far from God. We are all called to share our story and share Jesus' story, the gospel. We can all open the Scriptures and begin learning together

how to follow Jesus in loving obedience. We can all form communities of disciples that gather to worship, to learn, to love and to witness. We can all play our part in the multiplication of disciples and churches, both locally and throughout the world.

First we'll look at the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, and then at how as the risen Lord, he continued to pursue his mission through his followers—the Twelve and the early church, and then Paul and his coworkers. Along the way there are stories of how Jesus is at work through his people around the world today. Finally, we'll ask the most important question of all—how can we respond to the invitation to follow him and to let him teach us to fish for people?

Jesus' example alone is not enough. As the disciples learned, without his Spirit, none of us has the capacity to fulfill his command to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world who died and rose again—although now exalted to the right hand of God and later to return in glory to judge the world—is also present through the Holy Spirit, inviting us to share in the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

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