



OUR ORGANIC GOSPEL AND KINGDOM. GOD INTENDS FOR US TO MULTIPLY



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This has never happened before. For the first time in our history we are giving over the entire theme section of *MF* to a single author, Kevin Greeson. We have done so because of the tremendous insights Kevin provides into understanding Jesus' Parable of the Sower and its implications for fostering movements. Kevin is well known for creating the CAMEL Method for effective outreach to Muslims. Can a parable of Jesus actually be applied as a field strategy to foster movements of discipleship and church planting in every people? Did Jesus actually model this field strategy with His disciples after presenting it in the parable? These questions and more will be answered in this special edition of *Mission Frontiers*. For those who are well steeped in movement methodology, prepare to have your paradigm adjusted by Greeson's article, "Fourth-Soil Person or Person of Peace" starting on page 16. You may never look at this topic the same way again.

Fostering and growing movements of discipleship in every people is a learning process and we are getting better at it all the time as insights are

shared among the field practitioners through networks like the 24:14 Coalition (see their update starting on page 46) and through the pages of *Mission Frontiers*. This issue is our opportunity to share with you some of these insights gained from Scripture and actual field experience. Study this issue carefully. Soak it all in. This is one of the rare places where these key insights are available. We have been waiting a long time for these biblical practices and book of Acts-like models of ministry to re-emerge into the Church's consciousness once again. Let's take every opportunity to put them into practice.

EXPONENTIAL ORGANIC GROWTH IS EVERYWHERE EXCEPT IN MOST CHURCHES

It should be obvious to everyone that we live in an organic world where every living thing—plants, animals and even bacteria and viruses—have a God-given means for reproducing themselves after their own kind. Rabbits reproduce rabbits and people reproduce more people. We naturally expect this reproductive process to continue without much thought. But we do become concerned, and

rightfully so, when these natural organic processes do not work as they should. When honeybee colonies begin dying off or the last male Northern White Rhino dies, it makes the news. We know instinctively, that this is not the way the world is suppose to work. Something is wrong and needs fixing. Yet we seem to take a different approach when it comes to the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For most people in the Church today, they do not expect the gospel to grow exponentially and organically the way rabbits and people naturally do. They seem to think that a different order exists for the gospel than for every other living organism in the world. Would God ordain that everything in the world would grow exponentially and organically except the most important thing in history, the gospel of the kingdom? Not likely, and certainly not biblically.

When it was time for the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, to become God incarnate, taking on human flesh, God honored the natural organic process for how humans come into being. Indeed, it

was so important that Jesus be part of a certain lineage that the gospels of Matthew and Luke each record a genealogy for Jesus, one descending from Abraham and one from Adam, each demonstrating that Jesus was a descendant of King David and therefore eligible to be the Messiah.

Throughout His short three-year ministry on Earth, Jesus continually spoke and taught in parables. Many of these had their basis in agriculture, which again is all about exponential organic processes. This was natural since the people He was speaking to depended upon the productiveness of these various organic processes—wheat, grapes, figs, sheep, etc. for their very lives. So Jesus used stories about these vitally important aspects of their lives to teach them what the kingdom of God was like and what the King expects from His servants.

As one reads through the various parables, two important aspects of the kingdom become very clear. First, God's kingdom is designed and intended to grow organically and exponentially from a small beginning to something very large. Secondly, God expects His servants to be fruitful and to multiply.

THE KINGDOM IS MEANT TO GROW ORGANICALLY

In the Parable of the Mustard Seed; Matt. 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19; Jesus starts out by asking the apparently rhetorical question: "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?" Jesus could have chosen just about any story to illustrate what the kingdom of God is like, but He specifically chose the Parable of the Mustard Seed because it illustrates the organic nature of the gospel and God's plan that it grow exponentially. The smallest of



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seeds grows into the largest of garden plants. There is no way to avoid the conclusion that Jesus is making a direct corollary between the growth of the mustard plant and the natural growth characteristic of the kingdom. If we do not see the kingdom of God growing like this, then something is wrong that needs to be corrected, just like the honeybees.

In the Parable of the Sower; Matt. 3:13-23, Mark 4:3-20, Luke 8:4-15; the "Fourth-Soil Person" produces a 30, 60 or 100-fold crop. As in the Parable of the Growing Seed in Mark 4:26-29, God uses people to sow the seed of the gospel and it grows organically from that seeding process to produce a great harvest. A man may sow the seed but it is God who causes it to grow. There is the expectation that the abundant sowing of seed will produce an exponential harvest.

On average, from every kernel of wheat, eight stalks of grain will grow. In each of these heads of grain are 50 kernels of wheat. So from every kernel of wheat, around 400 more kernels are produced. That sure looks like exponential organic growth to me.

GOD EXPECTS HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE FRUITFUL IN GROWING HIS KINGDOM

Throughout the parables Jesus praises faithfulness and fruitfulness while condemning fruitlessness. God ordained that the world grow

organically and be fruitful. God's kingdom is no exception. It, too, is designed to grow organically and to produce spiritual fruit that remains. He expects His followers to faithfully and obediently participate in this organic process. This is what Jesus expects from those He calls his friends.

In John 14:21, Jesus says, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." In John 15:14-16, Jesus goes on to give the qualifications for being a friend of God.

¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

Jesus calls those who keep His commands His friends and He empowers them to go and bear fruit.

In John 15:5-10 Jesus says,

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are

picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

So let's summarize what we learn from this passage about being fruitful. 1. We must remain or abide in Jesus in order to bear much fruit. 2. God expects His followers to bear fruit and uses rather harsh imagery to describe what happens when we do not. 3. Bearing fruit glorifies God and verifies our status as His disciples. 4. We remain in the love of Jesus by obeying His commands just as Jesus remains in the Father's love by obeying the Father's commands. I think one can fairly say that this parable teaches that one aspect of remaining in Jesus and bearing fruit is obedience to what He has commanded. Without this obedience to God's Word or "remaining in Jesus," the potential for exponential organic growth of the kingdom is lost. The greater our obedience to Jesus, the greater the fruit we will bear.

FAITHFUL OR WICKED?

There are a number of parables where Jesus talks about wise versus wicked servants. The wise and good servants are those who are found being faithful stewards of what their master has entrusted to them when their master returns. The wicked and lazy servants are those who ignore the responsibilities entrusted to them.

One such parable is the story of the ten talents presented in Matthew 25:14–30. Jesus tells the story of a

rich man who goes away and entrusts his wealth to his three servants. From the context of the passage it is clear that the rich man expects his wealth to be invested wisely in order to gain an increase in wealth. Two of the servants double what was entrusted to them and are commended with the statement, "Well done good and faithful servant." The master expected a good return from what was entrusted to his servants and the first two did not disappoint him. The third servant refused to do anything with what had been entrusted to him and this lack of fruitfulness earned the harsh rebuke of, "You wicked, lazy servant!"

The unmistakable message of this and other parables like it is that Jesus expects His friends to be faithful and fruitful in carrying out the work of the kingdom that He has entrusted to us until He returns—and this involves fostering movements of multiplying disciples within all peoples.

MANKIND'S ROLE IN OUR ORGANIC WORLD AND GOD'S ORGANIC KINGDOM


The world is obviously organic by design and we have seen from the parables that God has ordained the gospel of the kingdom to be organic as well. In every organic process, there is the part that God plays—causing things to grow without any outside help. We see this in the Parable of the Growing Seed where the seed grows all by itself once the seed has been scattered. But there is also the part mankind plays—spreading the seed etc.

In the perfect world that God created before sin ever entered the picture, Adam and Eve were given the task of tending the garden and caring for the animals. Why would God give them this job if He causes everything to

grow? It's because the organic processes that God set up need mankind's help to be more productive and fruitful. It is a fact of life that cultivated land is far more productive than land that is left fallow. Mankind has the power to bless or curse the normal organic processes that God has established. The same is true for the gospel of the kingdom.

As we remain in Jesus and His love by obeying all that Jesus has commanded, we will aid the growth and flourishing of the exponential organic nature of God's kingdom. We can either act like the seed that fell on rocky ground and produce little or be like the seed that fell on the fourth soil, the good soil, and produce a 30, 60 or 100 fold crop. I want to be a Fourth-Soil Person. I trust that you would like to be so also. It will only come through obedience to God's word.

BECOME A MISSION FRONTIERS VISION CASTER

We are making progress! A growing number of *MF* readers are stepping forward and donations to *MF* are beginning to increase. But so much more is needed in order for us just to cover our costs, not to mention trying to move forward. *MF* exists to promote the vision of movements of discipleship in all peoples. If that is your vision as well, then please join with us financially in furthering this effort. 

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EDITORIAL