

SECTION 1

Participant Pages

Readings for Huddle Participants



SouthBrook
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SECTION 1:

The Below Ground Movement

The Man from India

In October 2013, Prasad and I sat on the couches next to the SouthBrook Bookstore. Starting in 2004, Prasad had planted seven churches in his home country of India. I was excited to hear what it was like to “do church” in a country where only about 6% of the population are Christians, and there are laws against converting people.

The churches Prasad had planted met in homes, each including about 10-15 people. Math says that’s roughly 70 to 100 people—pretty good for a place largely hostile to the gospel.

“Wow, that’s great,” I said, about the seven churches he planted. “How are those churches doing?”

“They are doing well. Many churches have been birthed from those first seven.”

“Tell me about that,” I said.

“Well, with every new church we plant, we give the vision right from the beginning that one day they will plant a church. Once a church gets to ten people, it’s time for the leader of that church to plant another one. If a church isn’t multiplying, there is a problem. So we go to that church and either help them or we shut it down.”

That sounded like a pretty challenging approach to church! These, after all, were just “normal” people leading these churches, not seminary graduates. “So, you’re reaching many more people through the new churches that have been planted?”

“Yes,” Prasad said. “There are now 10,837 that I know of.”

“People?”

“No, churches.”

Wait. WHAT?

I did some more Math. 10,000 churches multiplied by 10 to 15 people per church is somewhere north of 100,000 people! All of that from seven churches this one man had planted about nine years before. All of that in a country that’s 6% Christian, which means people are MEETING Christ for the first time, not just changing churches. And all of that in a place where there are laws against suggesting that people turn to Jesus.

Prasad turned his computer to show me the spreadsheet record of all 10,837 churches to date. Next to each church was listed the number of people who are part of that church, the number who had been baptized, and the number of other churches that one church had planted. The last category said “Number of Disciples.”

I looked at Prasad. There was nothing about him outwardly that struck me as particularly exceptional or captivating that would draw large crowds. He was soft-spoken, laid back and friendly, with a quiet intensity about him. I detected no sign that he was stressed or worried at all about needing to manage, control, or fret over all those relatively new Christ-followers at home. In fact, Prasad told me later that he never communicated publicly—or even much at all—with the 100,000 plus. He only communicated with the generation he himself had equipped, and trusted them to pass things along.

And, who were all the people leading these churches? Prasad answered my question, referencing the last column of his spreadsheet.

“Disciples lead the churches.” He said. “Our focus is to make disciples.”

Jesus’ Last Command

Israel’s leaders referred to the followers of Jesus as “unschooled and ordinary¹” as they tried to quell the disciples’ inflammatory speeches about Jesus dying and rising from the dead to save the world. Fishermen, a government employee, a political nationalist; most with little education—these were some of the twelve who made up Jesus’ closest friends. And, they sure didn’t look like they were destined to be world changers. At first blush, we would probably take Legolas, Aragorn and Gandalf over these guys any day.

In fact, aside from being surprisingly audacious in proclaiming their message about Jesus, there was only one real thing that stood out to Israel’s leaders about the resumes of these men:

When [the rulers and elders of Israel] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. —Acts 4:13

They had been with Jesus. That was what distinguished them from other “normal” people. It was the only feature about their lives that could explain why a bunch more people were running around doing the same things Jesus had been doing; things that led to the Romans and some of Israel’s leaders putting Him to death.

As for Peter and John, and the rest of the relatively small bunch who followed Jesus, they were simply doing what Jesus had modeled for them, and empowered them to do. The miracles they were performing, the “good news” speeches about Jesus rising from the dead and saving all who believe from their sin, the changed lives—they made it clear, it wasn’t by *their* power that any of it was happening. It was by *His* power, working in ordinary people who were surrendered to Jesus’ agenda as their King.

God can do a lot through ordinary people.

¹Acts 4:13

Jesus' last command to his disciples, his closest followers, had been this:
"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." —Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus empowered His followers, ordinary men and women in whom dwelt the extraordinary Spirit of God, to go and make disciples.

The word disciple simply means learner. In Israel, a disciple learns from a rabbi, or teacher. But the nature of that learning is special. The goal of the rabbi is not just to teach his disciples what he knows, but that the disciples become what the rabbi is.

So then, who is a disciple of Jesus? It's simply someone who knows Jesus the Rabbi, and learns to be and do like Him. Jesus, the Rabbi, invited twelve ordinary guys to be in close relationship with Him for about three years, so they could learn to "be and do" like Him.

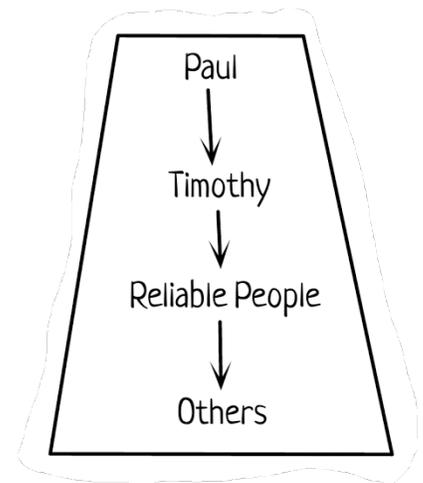
And what, after all, did He tell those disciples of His to do? *Make disciples*. They became the rabbis, introducing others to their Rabbi so those others might know Him and learn His ways, like Jesus had done with them.

And those disciples made disciples—who made disciples.

That was the pattern Jesus gave to His present and future "learners".

- Receive Jesus as the Rabbi.
- Learn from the lives of other disciples how to "be" and "do" like Him.
- Go in the power God gives to model for others how to know the Rabbi, and to be and do like Him.

Paul wrote to Timothy, *"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."*
—2 Timothy 2:2



That's four generations of Christ-followers, all passing on a lifestyle of being and doing like Jesus. "Paying it forward" was embedded in the hearts of God's people.

A few generations into this, we begin to see the power of multiplication. What began a few months after the resurrection with 120 people crammed into a house together praying, became a multiplying movement that turned the entire Roman Empire on its head.

In 100 AD, several decades after the resurrection, there were around **25,000 CHRIST-FOLLOWERS**.

In 310 AD, right before Constantine came to power and “legalized” Christianity, there were upwards of 20,000,000 Christ-followers. That’s a near hundred-fold increase in 200 years, in a land where...

- Christianity was illegal, and Rome was polytheistic.
- Christ-followers were killed and imprisoned for insurrection because they hailed Jesus as their Lord instead of Caesar.
- Believers were labeled as incestuous and cannibalistic because they married their “brothers and sisters in Christ,” and celebrated their leader by “eating his flesh and drinking his blood.”
- There were no church buildings, Bibles or seminaries.²

The movement spread like a contagion, as infected Jesus followers breathed the God virus on others. Ordinary people cared for the discarded sick, loved their neighbors, prayed for their enemies, sang to the one true God, listened to His voice, and invited people to God’s kingdom through Jesus. They modeled this life to new Jesus followers, passing on to them how to do the same. And God moved in power, bringing many people into His family.

And He didn’t just do it back then. Prasad, the man from India, is living evidence that our God is still able do the same mighty works through us that He did through the first disciples 2000 years ago.

Prasad’s churches aren’t the only evidence. Consider one other modern day example: China. In his book *The Forgotten Ways*, Alan Hirsch writes:

[The underground church in China has] a truly a remarkable story. About the time that Mao Tse-tung took power [around 1950] and initiated the systemic purge of religion from society, the church in China, which was well established and largely modeled on Western forms due to colonization, was estimated to number about 2 million adherents. As part of the systematic persecution, Mao banished all foreign missionaries and ministers, nationalized all church property, killed all the senior leaders, either killed or imprisoned all second- and third-level leaders, banned all public meetings of Christians with the threat of death or torture, and then proceeded to perpetrate one of the cruelest persecutions of Christians on historical record.

The explicit aim of the Cultural Revolution was to obliterate Christianity (and all religion) from China. At the end of the reign of Mao and his system in the late seventies, and the subsequent lifting of the so-called Bamboo Curtain in the early eighties, foreign missionaries and church officials were allowed back into the country, albeit under strict supervision. They expected to find the church decimated and the disciples a weak and battered people. On the contrary, they discovered that Christianity had flourished beyond all imagination. The estimates then were about 60 million Christians in China and counting.

In China today, a conservative estimate has the number of Christians in China as at least 100 million.

The Chinese Communist Party, the largest explicitly atheist organization in the world, has 85 million official members.

*Which means Christians now outnumber communists in China.*³

²Hirsch, Alan, *The Forgotten Ways*, p18.

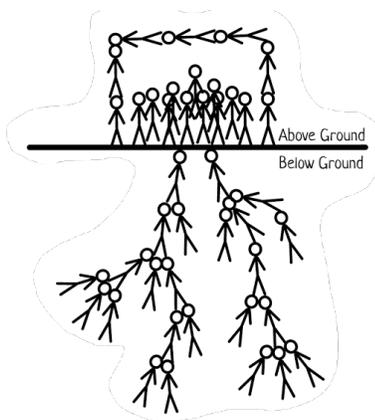
³Williams, Thomas D., PH.D. article *Christians Now Outnumber Communists in China*, 29 Dec., 2014.

The majority of this growth has been, like with Prasad in India, through groups meeting in homes, cafés and social clubs, where ordinary people are becoming disciples of Jesus, and turning around to equip others. It's happening below ground.

The Below Ground Movement and SouthBrook

In Acts 2:42-46, Luke writes, *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."*

The early believers met regularly in at least two different venues. The temple was the public place of worship, where the whole "Jesus crowd" came together. At the temple, people came to hear the apostles, see signs and wonders and praise God, and then brought friends to do the same. The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



They also met together in homes, where ordinary people lived out the practices of Jesus in everyday life, teaching and modeling for others how to do the same.

When persecution broke out, the church was scattered and the public "temple time" had to cease for a while.⁴ They had to go below ground, meeting in homes and in hiding, continuing in the practices of Jesus, and passing them on to others.

The movement below ground is where the multiplication happened.

At SouthBrook, we want to model ourselves after the early church. Temple and home. Above ground and below ground.

In our 5 on 5 Challenge, regarding Acts 2:46 printed above, Charlie writes:

The "Crowd" happens on the weekend and other large gatherings.

Notice they met in the temple area. This was a large gathering of thousands.

The "Crowd" is the diverse collection of all of us and it's where we socially interact, learn and worship God together as one.

That's our temple time. [It's what SouthBrook has ABOVE ground.]

It's really important. But it is just the beginning.

⁴Acts 8:1

Most of us are pretty familiar with the above ground stuff. That's the nature of something being above ground: We can SEE it. Like the early church, people can come hear great teaching, worship God together, and bring their friends.

What some don't yet see is that we're also building a BELOW ground movement. We're joining Prasad, and the Chinese Church, in fulfilling Jesus' last command to multiply disciples who make disciples. Ordinary people are meeting in homes, businesses, and cafes, engaging in the practices of Jesus together—AND training others to do the same.

SouthBrook's main vehicle for people meeting out in the community as "households of faith" practicing the 5 S's together is called the "Play Group". Play Groups are extended family-sized communities "putting their lives in play" around a common kingdom mission.

Our main vehicle to multiply disciples who make disciples is called the "Huddle". A person who leads a huddle is called a "Coach". Huddles are meant to mimic what Jesus did with His twelve apostles. Here is an excerpt from The Coach's Playbook about a huddle:

A SouthBrook huddle is a group, led by a coach, devoted to learning to live like Jesus did, and becoming coaches themselves.

Jesus told His followers to, *"Go, make disciples of all nations..."*

Disciple means "learner." A disciple of Jesus is someone who knows Jesus, and who learns to "be" and "do" like Him.

DISCIPLESHIP = 5S JOURNEY

Jesus modeled for us how to "make disciples." He took on the role of a coach. He invited twelve friends to follow Him on a journey of learning to be and do like Him. This is the journey of discipleship. At SouthBrook, we call this the 5S Journey. Practicing the 5 S's are how we become people who "live like Jesus forever."

When Jesus left Earth, like a NASA Rocket three years later, he left behind eleven guys whose characters and practices looked a heck of a lot like His. Those eleven were able to pass on what they had learned to others, so that they could do the same.

Jesus had trained His "players" to become coaches themselves. And the new coaches trained new coaches.

Doctors have residents. Electricians have apprentices. Jedis have Padawans. Paul had Timothy. "Huddle" is our vehicle for coaches to train new coaches.

Become a coach? Invite people into our lives, model how to live like Jesus, and then equip them to pass it all on to others? It may sound a bit intimidating and maybe some of us aren't ready for it yet.

- Maybe some of us don't know how.
- Maybe some of us believe we just don't have lives worth imitating.
- Maybe some of us feel we simply don't have the time.

On the other hand, it's easy to forget that the disciples were just "unschooled, ordinary" people who Jesus the Rabbi equipped and empowered. The people in India and China, being raised up to make disciples, and the SouthBrook people who are already leading huddles—if God can work through them, can't He work through us as well?

When a thought creeps in like, "I could never do that", it may actually reveal more of what we believe about God than what we believe about ourselves. Like maybe God's EXTRA-ordinariness isn't enough to overcome our ordinariness.

Those who have gone before us are living examples that He CAN.

As we embark on this coaching journey together, it will be helpful to remember this simple truth:

When we ordinary people say "yes" to joining God in His work of being and making disciples, we're simply doing what Jesus asked. And when ordinary people do the things that Jesus asks, in the power that He gives, GOD will change the world.