

VINE WORK VS. TRELIS WORK

THE IMPORTANCE OF A MULTIPLYING MINISTRY

- It is critical that churches identify God's kingdom purposes in order to determine their priorities
- A survey of Scripture reveals that the sign of a healthy, God-exalting church is a multiplying, reproducing ministry
- In the natural realm, God called all creatures and even Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply

Genesis 1:22, 28 ~ God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth"...God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- In the spiritual realm, God has also designed the body of Christ to be a multiplying ministry

Matthew 13:3-9 ~ And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

Matthew 13:31-33 ~ He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES." He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

Colossians 1:9-10 ~ For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 ~ Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,

2 Timothy 2:2 ~ The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

- God has designed the church to be the place where multiplying ministry takes place

Upward

- Upwardly, a multiplying ministry aids believers in worshipping, exalting, loving, and treasuring the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength

Psalms 96:7-9 ~ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth.

- A multiplying ministry assists believers in magnifying God with their lips and manifesting God in their actions

Inward

- Inwardly, a multiplying ministry stimulates believers to both encouragement and equipping
- A multiplying ministry motivates believers to practice the one-anothers, showing kindness and compassion and seeking to minister to each other’s physical, emotional, and spiritual needs
- It also aims to equip the saints for the work of service by training them to grow in their knowledge of God, in their Christlikeness, and in their ministry to the rest of the body
- It is equipping for the head, the heart, and the hands with the goal of presenting every man complete in Christ

Ephesians 4:11-16 ~ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Colossians 1:28 ~ We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

- A multiplying ministry seeks to give people the necessary tools to live and minister for the glory of God



Outward

- Outwardly, a multiplying ministry seeks to win those without Christ to salvation and to see them fully functioning as disciples in a healthy church
- Essential to a multiplying ministry is planning for and constantly looking for ways to proclaim Christ and establish churches internationally as one of the primary means of fulfilling the Great Commission

Matthew 28:19-20 ~ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

- The main verb of the Great Commission is “make disciples”
- The three participles (go...baptizing...teaching) are the means by which disciples are to be made
- The two participles “baptizing” and “teaching” clearly connect the process of making disciples to the local church since it is there where these activities occur
- “Thus the goal of Christian ministry is simple, and in a sense measurable: are we making and nurturing genuine disciples of Christ? The church always tends towards institutionalism and secularization. The focus shifts to preserving traditional programs and structures, and the goal of discipleship is lost. The mandate of disciple-making provides the touchstone for whether our church is engaging in Christ’s mission. Are we making genuine disciples of Jesus Christ? Our goal is not to make church members or members of our institution, but genuine disciples of Jesus.”¹

Acts 1:8 ~ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

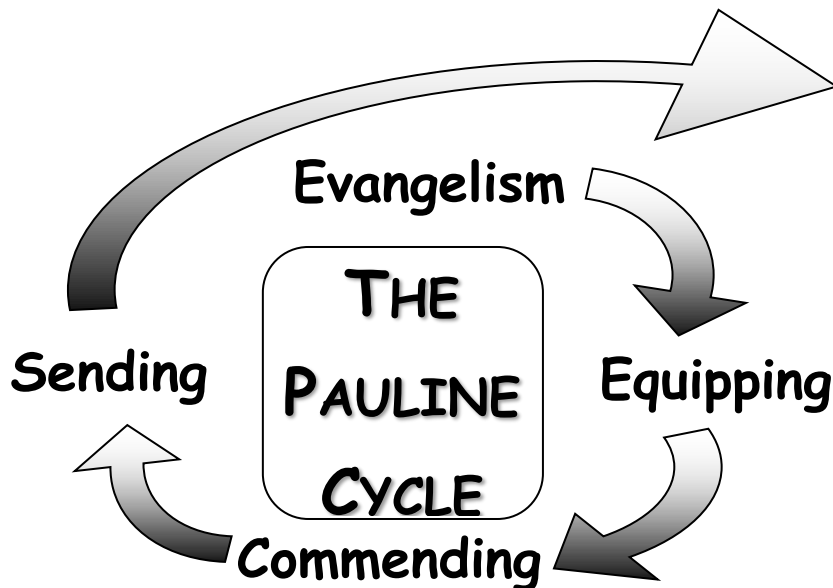
- A multiplying ministry will be always looking for ways to send more workers into His harvest

Matthew 9:37-38 ~ Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

- 1. The focus of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is not simply the multiplication of individuals but the multiplication of local churches** – This is evident from Jesus’ promise to build His church (Matt 16:18), His charge to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20), and the fulfillment of both of these in the book of Acts as churches were planted. Acts 1:8 shows that the object of the Great Commission was an ever-expanding spread of the Gospel through the establishment of local churches which would carry out the mandate of making disciples.
- 2. The local church is central in God’s plan for this age, both as the means to and the goal of missions** – Jesus commissioned the Twelve to make disciples and promised them power to do what He called them to do (Matt 28:19-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:6-11). As the strategy unfolds in the book of Acts, it becomes clear that the aim is the multiplication of local churches. First, the Jerusalem church was founded which was devoted to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42-47). Second, a local church was established in Antioch where leaders were trained and equipped (Acts 11:19-30). Third, qualified leaders from Antioch were sent (Acts 13:1-3) to evangelize strategic cities (Acts 13:1-14:26), instruct the new Christians (Acts 14:22), and organize the communities of believers into local churches (Acts 14:23). The local church was both the means to and the goal of these missionary efforts.

¹ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 14.

3. **Paul's missionary strategy is an appropriate model for us to emulate in global missions** – This is true for at least three reasons: 1) His model coincides with and is supported by clear biblical teaching in other portions of Scripture (Matt 16:18; Titus 1:5); 2) His model is the only biblical model we have and the Holy Spirit included it for a purpose; 3) While there may be other viable extra-biblical models, their viability is in direct proportion to the degree to which they measure up to clear biblical teaching. .
4. **The core of Paul's missions strategy must also constitute the core of our missions strategy if we are to avoid discarding several important directives** – This strategy involved: 1) Founding a sending church – Paul helped establish the church at Antioch where many were won to Christ (Acts 11:21, 24), believers were equipped (Acts 11:23, 26), leaders were identified and trained (Acts 11:25-26), and other churches were networked with (Acts 11:29-30); 2) Sending key leaders – Leaders of the Antioch church prayed and fasted (Acts 13:2), were led by the Holy Spirit to select certain men (Acts 13:2), and sent those men to plant churches (Acts 13:2); 3) Evangelizing strategic cities – Paul and Barnabas brought the Gospel to people (Acts 13:4, 14, 51; 14:8), taught in religious centers (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1), and preached in the open air (Acts 13:44; 14:8); 4) Establishing the local church – Paul and Barnabas gathered believers into churches (Acts 14:23), encouraged and strengthened the disciples with instruction (Acts 14:22), appointed elders (Acts 14:23), and passed their baton of leadership on to the elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17-28); 5) Reporting back to their home church – Paul and Barnabas returned home and reported what God had done through them (Acts 14:26-28).



5. **Missions can be defined as: The sending forth of qualified leaders by a local church to facilitate the establishment of functioning, multiplying local congregations in a community of people** – The key components of this definition are: 1) Sending: Missions is not based on individual initiative, but rather on a corporate body of believers sending out from their midst. Thus local churches must view themselves as sending bases not ends in and of themselves; 2) Qualified Leaders: The selection of who went was a crucial issue based on the Holy Spirit's guidance, proven faithfulness and giftedness. Thus, churches must faithfully prepare their people for outreach by equipping all to maturity and some to leadership for the purpose of commissioning a few to missionary work beyond their local sphere; 3) Local Church: The sending base was a local church whose aim was to plant another sending church; 4) Facilitate: The first church planters were primarily facilitators, helping local men become leaders such that there was no painful transition from missionary to local church leaders; 5) Establishment of Churches: The goal of the missionary effort was establishing local churches, not merely winning individuals to Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VINE WORK VS. TRELIS WORK

- In order for a church to become a multiplying ministry, it requires the effort and commitment of the entire body, not a select few
- Furthermore, the focus of ministry must be on people not programs...on individuals not institutions...on the vine not the trellis
- “That’s the thing about trellis work: it tends to take over from vine work. Perhaps it’s because trellis work is easier and less personally threatening. Vine work is personal and requires much prayer. It requires us to depend on God, and to open our mouths and speak God’s word in some to another person. By nature...we shy away from this...Trellis work also often looks more impressive than vine work. It’s more visible and structural. We can point to something tangible – a committee, an event, a program, a budget, an infrastructure – and say that we have achieved something...The concentration on trellis work that is so common in many churches derives from an institutional view of Christian ministry. It is very possible for churches, Christian organizations and whole denominations to be given over totally to maintaining their institution...Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that in many churches, maintaining and improving the trellis constantly takes over from tending the vine.”²

Necessary Ministry Mind-Shifts³

- “We will be arguing that structures don’t grow ministry any more than trellises grow vines, and that most churches need to make a conscious shift – away from erecting and maintaining structures, and towards *growing people who are disciple-making disciples of Christ.*”⁴
1. From running programs to building people
 2. From running events to training people
 3. From using people to growing people
 4. From filling gaps to training new workers
 5. From solving problems (reactive) to helping people make progress (proactive)
 6. From clinging to ordained ministry to developing team leadership
 7. From focusing on church polity to forging ministry partnerships
 8. From relying on training institutions to establishing local training
 9. From focusing on immediate pressures to aiming for long-term expansion
 10. From engaging in management to engaging in ministry
 11. From seeking church growth to desiring gospel growth

² Ibid., 9-10.

³ Adapted from chapter 2, *Trellis and Vine*

⁴ p. 17

- “Once we’ve spent time and resources training our leaders we soon fear losing them. However, one of our goals in training people should be to encourage some of them into further formal training in theology so that they might progress into denominational or missionary ministry. **We must be exporters of trained people instead of hoarders of trained people.** In a resource-poor church, this can be hard to do. Even in churches with many leaders, regular turnover and re-training is demanding. But our view of gospel work must be global as well as local: the goal isn’t church growth (in the sense of our local church expanding in numbers, budget, church-plants and reputation) but gospel growth. If we train and send workers into new fields (both local and global), our local ministry might not grow numerically but the gospel will advance through these new ministers of the word.”⁵

LET US TRY TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT THESE MIND-SHIFTS MEAN IN practice with just one nitty-gritty example.

Imagine a reasonably solid Christian said to you after church one Sunday morning, “Look, I’d like to get more involved here and make a contribution, but I just feel like there’s nothing for me to do. I’m not on the ‘inside’; I don’t get asked to be on committees or lead Bible studies. What can I do?”

What would you immediately think or say? Would you start thinking of some event or program about to start that they could help with? Some job that needed doing? Some ministry that they could join or support?

This is how we are used to thinking about the involvement of church members in congregational life—in terms of jobs and roles: usher, Bible study leader, Sunday School teacher, treasurer, elder, musician, song leader, money counter, and so on. The implication of this way of thinking for congregation members is clear: if all the jobs and roles are taken, then there’s really nothing for me to do in this church. I’m reduced to being a passenger. I’ll just wait until I’m asked to ‘do something’. The implication for the pastoral staff is similar: getting people involved and active means finding a job for them to do. In fact, the church growth gurus say that giving someone a job to do

within the first six months of their joining your church is vital for them to feel like they belong.

However, if the real work of God is people work—the prayerful speaking of his word by one person to another—then the jobs are never all taken. The opportunities for Christians to minister personally to others are limitless.

So you could pause, and reply to your friend, “See that guy sitting over there on his own? That’s Julie’s husband. He’s on the fringe of things here; in fact, I’m not really sure whether he’s crossed the line yet and become a Christian. How about I introduce you to him, and you arrange to have breakfast with him once a fortnight and read the Bible together? Or see that couple over there? They are both fairly recently converted, and really in need of encouragement and mentoring. Why don’t you and your wife have them over, get to know them, and read and pray together once a month? And if you still have time, and want to contribute some more, start praying for the people in your street, and then invite them all to a barbeque at your place. That’s the first step towards talking with them about the gospel, or inviting them along to something.”

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Who Really Does The Vine Work?

- Is it mainly the job of the pastors and elders...and the rest of the congregation simply supports their work?
- Or do all Christians play a part in vine work?
- It is important to understand that the Scriptures don’t describe two classes of disciple: those who wholeheartedly serve the Lord and those who don’t
- The call to discipleship is the same for all

Luke 9:23-24 ~ And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

- The expectation from all true believers is that they would abandon their lives to Christ and His mission

⁵ pp. 25-26

⁶ pp. 26-27

- This is normal Christianity, not Christianity reserved only for a few select individuals who have chosen to follow Christ unreservedly
- Numerous places in Scripture make it clear that “people work” is the responsibility of every believer, not just pastors/elders

Romans 15:14 ~ And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12 ~ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

1 Corinthians 14:26 ~ What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Ephesians 4:15-16 ~ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 5:18-19 ~ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Colossians 3:16 ~ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Hebrews 3:12-13 ~ Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25 ~ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 Peter 4:10-11 ~ As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- “If we pause to reflect on the implications of this vision of vine work by every Christian, many of our most cherished assumptions about church, ministry, evangelism and congregational life are called into question. For a start, it radically dissolves many of the traditional distinctions between ‘clergy’ and ‘laity.’ Many of us minister in contexts where the unspoken (or even spoken!) assumption is that it is the pastor’s job to build the church, and the members’ job to receive that ministry and to support it through involvement in a range of jobs and roles – counting the money, organizing morning tea, ushering, serving on committees, and so on. The pastor (or pastoral staff team) is really the one who does the vine work and the rest of us do what we can to maintain the trellis, not least by giving money. The New Testament’s vision of ministry is quite different. The pastors and elders certainly take the lead in vine work (in prayer and proclamation), and are responsible for guarding and teaching the word and maintaining the gold standard of sound doctrine. But one of the effects of this work is to equip and release members to do vine work themselves.”⁷

⁷ pp. 57-58.

Training and Gospel Growth

- When it comes to training within the church, the aim is Gospel growth, growth in the lives of people and growth that expands throughout the world

Colossians 1:3-6 ~ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

- There are three important implications of the fact that the gospel by its very nature produces growth
 1. “The first is that the growth of the gospel happens in the lives of people, not in the structures of my church... We may multiply the number of programs, events, committees and other activities that our church is engaged in; we may enlarge and modernize our buildings; we may re-cast our regular meetings to be attractive and effective in communicating to our culture; we may congratulate ourselves that numbers are up. And all of these are good things! But if people are not growing in their knowledge of God’s will so that they walk ever more worthily of the Lord, seeking to please him in all things and bearing fruit in every good work, then there is no growth to speak of happening at all.”⁸
 2. “Secondly, this means that we must be willing to lose people from our own congregation if that is better for the growth of the gospel. We must be happy to send members off to other places so that the gospel may grow there as well. And be warned: this will happen if you take gospel growth and training seriously. If you pour your time into people, and mentor and train them, the consequence will often be that some of your best people – in whom you have invested countless hours – will leave you... A commitment to the growth of the gospel will mean that we train people towards maturity not for the benefit of our own churches or fellowships but for the benefit of Christ’s kingdom.”⁹
 3. “The third radical implication of this understanding of ‘gospel growth’ lies in the way we think about people. We see people not as cogs in our wheel, or as resources for our projects, but as individuals each at their own stage of gospel growth. And our goal for each person is that they advance, that they make progress, that they move one step forward from where they are now.”¹⁰
- “Training is the engine of gospel growth. Under God, the way to get more gospel growth happening is to train more and more mature, godly Christians to be vine-workers – that is, to see more people equipped, resourced, and encouraged to speak the word prayerfully to other people, whether in outreach, follow-up, or Christian growth.”¹¹

	Outreach		Follow-up	Growth		Training	
	Raising issues	Gospel		Need help	Solid	General	Specific
Bob	•						
Jean			•				
Barry				•			
Tracey			•				
Don					•		
Mark		•					
Sarah							•

⁸ p. 82

⁹ p. 83.

¹⁰ p. 83

¹¹ p. 90