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EX¹

THE JOURNEY: TOWARD A HEALTHY MULTIPLYING CHURCH

DARRIN
PATRICK

The Journey: Toward A Healthy Multiplying Church

by Darrin Patrick

The Journey Toward a Healthy Multiplying Church

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Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1
A Church for People Like This

Chapter 2
Multiplication Tensions

Chapter 3
Lessons in Mid-Flight

Endnotes

About the Author

Introduction

I live in the “Gateway to the West.” It was from here that President Jefferson sent out Lewis and Clark on one of the most grueling and dangerous expeditions in American history. The city opened up the great unknown of the frontier, growing to become the fourth-largest city in the nation by the turn of the 20th century. It drew millions of visitors in 1904 for the World’s Fair. But those days are long past. Our 630-foot arch is one of the vestiges of that pioneering spirit. The “Gateway” is now in the middle of America’s “heartland.”

According to Tim Keller and many others, the “heartland” is one of the reasons American evangelicalism has not gone the way of Europe. Midwestern culture is virtually synonymous with “small town, nuclear-family, religiously-oriented, and white-centric.”¹ Contrast that with the urban core throughout America, especially on the coasts, which Keller describes as “morally relativist, culturally adventuresome, sexually polymorphous, and ethnically diverse.” Whatever you want to call it—red/blue, suburban/urban, mainland/coastland—this tension exists in our country.

What makes St. Louis distinctive is that it’s essentially an East Coast city stuck in the middle of the country. We are very diverse and tend to be more liberal than our other Midwestern neighbors. We are very religious, but not primarily evangelical. Our city is heavily Roman Catholic (upwards of 500,000 people), as well as Lutheran and Jewish. From elementary to graduate level, our schooling reflects these demographics.

We are a divided city. Ever since St. Louis County broke off from the city, we’ve seen an ever-growing number of municipalities—91 in total right now. The provincial mindset is evident in the most commonly asked question: “What high school did you go to?”—a question that portrays the extent of the cultural separation. The world recently saw this separation play out in the events in Ferguson, Missouri. It’s astounding that something which caught the attention of the entire world, had little to no functional impact on the thousands of St. Louis residents living just 15 to 20 minutes away from Ferguson. Literally and figuratively, gates are up all over this city protecting and segregating neighborhoods.

Only the gospel through the local church can heal our city. The church is the vehicle and the instrument that carries the message of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The church is God’s greatest thought about how to bring men, women, boys and girls of

all different races and ethnicities to Himself. Paul describes the church as “the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). Jesus Himself said that the local church would attack the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18). This foundation has inspired the vision of The Journey.

A vision is a dream about what we would love God to do. Execution is a dream with a deadline. A friend of mine once said, “Vision without execution is hallucination.” I would love to tell you that The Journey has become what it is on account of sheer vision. That’s quite romantic. But the truth is that a lot of hard work has been exerted. This hard work has not always been smart, and even counterproductive at times, but God has continued to show up and multiply His church.

As I share with you a bit of our history, I hope you find this reflection beneficial for your ministry. At the same time, I hope you don’t walk away with the impression that “our own power or piety” (Acts 3:12) made any of this possible. I can assure you that if God were not in this, The Journey wouldn’t have lasted long. If we don’t continue to hold fast to Jesus and walk in step with the Holy Spirit, we’re in danger of turning multiplication into another buzzword, rather than a call to raise up new leaders to carry out the mission of God in new places.

Chapter 1

A Church for People Like This

The whole course of my life changed during one week in high school. I was suspended from the football team for drinking and received in-school suspension for fighting. On top of that, I thought my girlfriend was pregnant (she wasn't, but I didn't know for a month!). Up until my junior year, I had never been to church. I didn't know any Bible verses. I didn't even know many religious people that I respected. The graduate assistant coach for the football team was one of the exceptions. He knew I was an angry, messed-up young man. He took interest in my situation and invited me to church.

I remember thinking, *Why would I go to church?* But at the same time, I thought, *What else am I going to do?* My relationship with my girlfriend was on the rocks. Several of my friends, who got suspended from the team as well, blamed me for getting us caught. They didn't want to be around me. So I was open to going to church but had never been to anything like it before. This coach kept inviting me, and I kept going. I liked him because he was like me, but at the same time not like me. He was an athlete, who sported a mullet and listened to heavy metal. He was a normal guy who didn't act like he was perfect, which was perfect for me to be around.

After a few weeks at the church, I decided to buy a Bible so I could understand what these people were talking about. And as I was reading my King James Bible (which I didn't completely understand) on my knees every night next to my '80s-style waterbed, I was radically converted! I knew I was transformed because I was actually feeling conviction over my sin and was experiencing a desire to serve God, neither of which had ever happened in my life before.

Along with a group of students that had come to Christ, I started doing ministry at my high school. It was a real grassroots deal. Hundreds of students would gather at this weekly worship service, entirely led by students. During my senior year, a reporter from the local newspaper interviewed me and asked what I was going to do after high school. I said, "Well, I don't know, but I kind of like doing this." And he replied, "Oh, so you're going to be a pastor?" I distinctly remember thinking that I didn't want to be a pastor (I was still hoping to be the catcher for the St. Louis Cardinals), but I knew I wanted to be part of something that was changing people's lives.

The Birth of a Dream

I went off to college and began to befriend and disciple athletes. Amie, my then girlfriend, now wife, whom I had met in high school, was a musician. She spent her free time discipling artists. We brought our friends to church several times, but they just didn't understand the whole church scene. It wasn't that the churches we took them to were heretical or totally irrelevant. They just didn't speak to our friends.

Amie's friends would critique the music, and my friends would leave unchallenged. The artists were underwhelmed by the lack of transcendence and beauty in the worship music and space. The athletes were frustrated at the lack of a clear and practical vision for manhood. Our friends didn't feel like the church was *for* them. It seemed like the church just expected them to "get it." That was frustrating for us because our friends did connect and engage in the small group Bible studies Amie and I were leading and creating on campus.

Amie and I began to think, *Maybe there should be a church for people like this. Maybe there should be a church for people who don't quite fit in church. Maybe there should be a church for people like us.* And as she and I were moving from engagement to marriage, we began dreaming about starting a church for people who weren't being reached by other churches. I had found my unreached people group.

But how were we going to keep that dream from becoming a hallucination?

Well, as I went off to seminary, we became part of a church plant. We needed to test all of our great theories in the nitty-gritty reality of the local church. Amie and I had served there for six years when we had a sense that it was time to go plant. We asked our pastor, Rick McGinniss, what the next step was, and he suggested I attend a church-planting boot camp. So Amie and I, along with our new baby, traveled down to Charlotte, North Carolina for a boot camp.

For years, my wife had seen how I didn't finish many things before starting something new. I seemed impatient, always pushing against the status quo. She saw all these things as character flaws. During one of the sessions at the boot camp, the speaker talked about the characteristics of a church planter. As we listened, Amie began to realize that what had looked like spiritual immaturity in me actually fit the description of a church planter.

The boot camp affirmed that church planting was our calling. But at that time, it was one of the few resources available to prospective planters. Outside of the church I had been

pastoring in, we didn't know where to turn for more direction. There weren't any books on church planting. The viability rate of new plants was low. It just so happened that we discovered another conference back in Kansas City, which turned out to be even more helpful than the boot camp because it was led by current church planters.

A Location Discerned

At that conference, I met Ron Johnson who had planted a church in urban Denver. I connected with him on so many levels. I knew that I wanted to plant in an urban area that was full of singles, activist young couples, and empty nesters. I wanted to be near the cultural creatives of a city. Ron gave me his cell number and invited me to ask him any questions I had about church planting.

I flew to Denver to spend a few days with him. I was amazed and encouraged when I visited his packed-out church, located in the urban core of the city. Ron actually taught the Bible and didn't try to hide any of the hard truths of Christianity, and yet the church was full of unchurched people and new believers under age 40.

During that trip, I spent my days in the mountains and my nights talking with Ron and his family. I remember asking him where he thought I should plant. After suggesting downtown Denver, Ron asked, "What is the closest big city?" He talked to me about the survival rate of churches that were started closer to where the planter grew up.

Up until that point, I had never considered St. Louis as an option, though it was only two hours from my hometown of Marion, Illinois. After many conversations with Ron and several subtle promptings by the Holy Spirit, I returned home and told Amie, "I think we're supposed to pray about going to St. Louis."¹

Planting The Journey

In June 2001, we left our comfortable suburban setup in Kansas City with a good school, a nice house and a secure job, and relocated to St. Louis. We brought two other couples with us. One of the husbands was a worship leader I knew from college. The other was a skater-punk who had recently married at just 19 years old. We bought a house in South City St. Louis with a big enough basement to gather people for worship and a separate "room," which this young couple lived in.

I started out working bivocationally, laying residential and commercial flooring with the worship leader. When I wasn't laying floors, I went to the local bars, coffee shops, sporting events, gas stations, you name it. I went anywhere and everywhere for hours

every day trying to meet people and talk about Jesus and our vision for the church—the one in our basement.

Now I know many church plants start in basements, but in a city like St. Louis that's filled with Jews and Catholics, we especially appeared "cultish." Surprisingly enough, we were able to gather 30 people. I like to say that you can fool some of the people some of the time, and that will get you a core group. The people we fooled were mainly college-aged kids and a few singles in their 30s with widely varying levels of spiritual maturity. Just as a fun fact, at one core group meeting I counted more tattoos than people.

We knew we needed to get out of the basement for the sake of my marriage and the mission. I approached several pastors about sharing space in their church facilities and was quickly met with hostility. We desperately looked for a building in the urban core but couldn't find anything that worked. Eventually, we found ourselves in a community center (think fancy YMCA) in downtown Clayton, just outside of the city limits.

After about nine months in "The Center," we held our first baby dedications. I distinctly remember that Sunday. We were sweating profusely because the air conditioning wasn't working. One of the children being dedicated was the granddaughter of a deacon at nearby Hanley Road Baptist Church. After the service, this man introduced himself to me and suggested I get in touch with Slade Johnson, the pastor at Hanley Road, who loved to support church planters.

I met up with Pastor Slade, who to my surprise had not one ounce of the territorialism I had encountered with other pastors. After leaving this conversation, I felt like I had robbed him and his church. He moved their service time back to 9 a.m., so that us "youngins" could meet at 10:45 a.m. On top of that, he opened up office space on the building's third floor for us and let our artists have free reign of the downstairs fellowship hall that held 150 people. Some people say they want to make space for the mission to advance, but Pastor Slade actually delivered. We celebrated our first anniversary as The Journey at Hanley Road Baptist Church. Moving from a community center to an actual church building gave us immediate credibility as a church that might actually make it.

Now, more than 10 years later, The Journey has five churches around the St. Louis metro region, and one in my hometown of Marion, Illinois. On average, 4,000 people are joining us for worship on the weekends. In that same span of time, we have planted or have helped replant eight additional churches. If you add up all of the people in the various churches The Journey is connected to, it's about 8,000. How we've managed to

go from 30 people meeting in my basement to a movement of the gospel across the country is truly a work of God building His church through men and women with a passion to reach the lost.

In the following chapter, I'll fill in more aspects of The Journey's history as I discuss some of the major tensions we've faced in embracing God's call to grow disciples and plant churches.

Chapter 2

Multiplication Tensions

Introduction

Back in the '80s and '90s it seems the U.S. church mantra was “every member is a minister.” Living up to that idea meant administering spiritual gifts tests and then making sure that person was serving the church in their area of gifting. That was the win. It's not wrong. It's just not a big enough view of discipleship.

If you're trying to sort out whether or not your church's culture is addition or multiplication, just start by asking yourself: *Are the members and regular attendees of the church being challenged to see themselves as leaders?* And as a follow up: *Are they being equipped to translate the gospel to the unreached people around them?*

At The Journey, we want our people to see themselves as missionaries personally, and multipliers corporately. So they're engaged in community with non-Christians (missionary), and they're not just focused on “owning” their own area of service, but on training up others to do similar work (multiplier). When that's happening, I think we're following the call of the risen Lord Jesus to be His “witnesses” (Acts 1:8) to a world in need of redemption.

When I get discouraged about ministry or my call—which happens more often than you'd imagine—I turn to the Book of Acts. I'm always encouraged by the many signs and wonders the Holy Spirit did through ordinary people that had “been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Reading those stories rekindles that flame inside of me.

I'm also amazed at how the Apostle Paul describes the trials he has faced in advancing the gospel in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27. He talks about how he was beaten, imprisoned and shipwrecked, having faced danger in just about every situation. He mentions sleepless nights, hunger and thirst. But then he concludes this whole catalogue saying: “And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches” (11:28). Paul has gone through as much hardship as you can imagine, and yet his mind keeps coming back to all the churches—ones he either planted himself, helped others to plant, or aided in ministry for a season.

Paul knew the tensions of multiplication better than most. He was always looking to extend the gospel to new ground, while devoting time and energy circling back to

strengthen existing churches. He had to make decisions about which young men to encourage into hard situations (for example, Timothy at Ephesus) and which ones weren't ready (such as John Mark, Acts 15:36-41). Paul never shifted from the hope of the gospel, but he understood the importance of missional flexibility: "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Tension 1: *Facility Acquisition vs. Facility Sacrifice*

I've already talked about how significant it was for us to start holding worship services at Hanley Road Baptist Church. Having emerged from the basement, and grown beyond our meeting space at the Clayton Community Center, we were starting to be perceived as a legitimate church. But given our growth and our desire to be a church for the city, we needed our own place further east.

Right as we hit three services, we realized we needed a new building. Around the same time, about 40 Catholic churches came up for sale all over the city due to a combination of scandal and school closings. We had our eyes set on Holy Innocents Church, which had an old but beautiful sanctuary. It was located in not just the most diverse area of the city, but of the entire state. Within a three-mile radius of this building, you'll find more than 70 languages. As the recent events in Ferguson have made evident (once again), St. Louis is a racially divided city. In the Tower Grove area, 60 percent of the population is Black. Purchasing a facility there was going to make a significant statement that we were serious about seeing all races meet Jesus through our church.

Through a financial miracle, God enabled us to purchase that property. I believe we were receiving about \$10,000 a week through tithes and offerings. Before we had even scouted Holy Innocents Church, we told the church we were going to have a special offering that would go directly toward purchasing a building. The church gave \$400,000. Then we actually got the building and were still short about \$200,000. We did another offering and received \$200,000. We knew that God wanted us to be there.

The property that we purchased gave us 60,000 square feet of space across four buildings—the church sanctuary, an office space, a multi-level school building and the former convent. Having this much space gave us the freedom to hold as many worship services, as we wanted. It also allowed us to house emerging businesses and non-profits so that the facilities could be both appropriately maximized and distinctly missional.

These businesses and non-profits were started by members of The Journey that had a desire and burden to impact their city. The newly acquired facilities allowed us to

support and equip our people for the work of ministry in a substantial way. For some, it was as simple as providing office space. We helped a young entrepreneur and his fledgling tech company access the convent for a year so that his team could build community and refine their strategy. This business eventually became Answers Corp (Answers.com), which now employs more than 150 people in St. Louis, and in 2015, *Forbes* named it one of America's most promising companies.

With this space, we were also able to house multiple ministries: [Mission: St. Louis](#), a mercy ministry aimed at repairing broken families and neighborhoods through before- and after-school tutoring, job training and more; [The Luminary Center for the Arts](#), a ministry aimed at repairing the broken relationships between the church and St. Louis' many talented artists; and [The Karis House](#), a ministry that provides affordable, gospel-centered counseling to hundreds of under-resourced people living in the city. While these ministries started within The Journey, they all operate as private 501(c)3 non-profits, having outgrown their original space.

We started the church with a vision for serving our city, so in one sense, it was only natural to use our resources to support these ministries. But housing these ministries was also costly and frustrating. We wanted to be good stewards of our space, and that meant wading through conflict in negotiating who uses what and for how long. It costs to see your facilities as agents of city renewal and not simply a way to grow the church. For a church that wants to have a great city and not just a great church, there will be many painful choices and conversations.

Tension 2: Journey Churches | Church Plants

When we arrived in St. Louis, I never imagined we'd be a multisite church. I didn't know anything about that ministry model. In my mind, the win for our church was gathering about 200 people in about five or six years, and then sending 50 of them to start a new church somewhere else. In retrospect, my grand vision seems a little small because back then about 80 percent of the churches being planted died within the first three years (higher than the small business failure rate). Church planting was a lot like the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*—guys on the frontline getting blown apart, some leaving the ministry, some even leaving the faith.

When we launched in 2002, our biggest fear the whole time was *What if this thing doesn't make it? What are we going to do then?* But after growing from 100 to 300 people in the first two years, I remember Amie and I looking at each other, saying, "This is going to make it; what are we going to do now!?" It was all happening so fast. We had

been committed to church planting from the beginning, and yet within a short time, we were venturing into multisite, almost by chance.

Due to our unique relationship with Pastor Slade Johnson and Hanley Road Baptist, and its close proximity to Washington University, we kept an evening service there, as we were transitioning into our permanent location at Tower Grove. Right around the same time, we sent out our first planter with a core team about 45 minutes west, but we still had a bunch of people coming from suburban West County, driving 25 to 30 minutes into a neighborhood where they didn't have any relational ties. So on the Sunday we opened Tower Grove, I cast vision for a church out in West County. This all happened in the span of months. Even after planting another church 45 minutes east, we still had space issues.

In the last decade, our understanding and approach to multisite has developed. But let me start by pointing out our basic motivation. We want our people to worship near where they work, live and play, so that they're able to invest in their community and actually have a shot at bringing their non-Christian friends to a church service.

What we learned quickly is that these needed to be churches, not just sites or "video venues." That might sound obvious—and maybe it is to you—but when we started The Journey-West County, I thought it would be really simple. If we just had a few lay guys as elders, we could easily recreate the feel of a Journey worship service. I would drive out there to preach in between services in the city, and the thing would grow. It didn't take long to see that we didn't have the necessary leadership structure to support healthy growth.

We knew we needed a lead pastor over each church, but we didn't immediately recognize what that would look like. Over time, it has been helpful for us to think of pastoral ministry as a three-legged stool—leading, shepherding and preaching. We wanted these guys to be strong leaders and shepherds, who would preach on occasion, translating the missional vision I was providing through my preaching into a specific strategy for their area. This framework helped us distinguish between lead pastors and church planters. As we identify guys who have a unique vision and see that being accomplished through their preaching voice, we commit to training, equipping and resourcing them to plant churches.

We also aren't opposed to releasing our Journey churches as their own self-supporting, self-governing churches, though locally we have found it easier to start them as Journey churches. Operating under the same rhythm, the same elder board and the same strategic vision makes it easier to provide training and coaching opportunities. Starting

as Journey churches has enabled us to gather larger core groups and provide more financial and administrative resources. The Journey-South County was able to launch with about 200 people—members and regular attendees—from Tower Grove and another 50 or so from West County. But that doesn't mean we don't look for opportunities to replant within the metro region.

Replanting

In the book *Replant*, Mark Devine and I tell the story of how The Journey played a part in revitalizing First Calvary Baptist in Kansas City, a church dating back to the 1840s.¹ I won't get into the story of (now) [Redeemer Fellowship](#) here, but in talking about multiplication, we don't want to lose sight of the incredible work of church revitalization.

Not even a decade ago, the big victory was that we were planting as many new churches each year as the number of churches dying—we were “breaking even.” That doesn't like good “Kingdom math” to me. I strongly encourage you to get active in breathing new life and vision into older churches that may have name recognition, but dwindling impact. To think that God's people gave all this money for sometimes 50, even 150 years, gives me pause to wrestle with what it means for us to be good stewards. And what's great about replanting is that it really lends itself to a certain type of leader and pastor who would not thrive as a solo planter.

We have even been able to leverage our multisite strategy for the sake of replanting. Just four years ago, when I wrote about our West County church in my book, *For The City*, I went into even more detail about its early struggles.² I wrote that I believed one day that The Journey-West County would eventually become an effective ministry center. Today, we're seeing that hope come to fruition.

A clear example of God's hand in that endeavor was the eventual connection with Manchester Baptist Church. This church, full of older saints, had recognized that their influence was waning, and that they were struggling to attract youth, especially young couples. Out of humility and a desire to see the gospel go forward, this small congregation gave us their church building and came under our leadership. The Journey-West County is now one of our most generationally diverse churches.

Tension 3: Leadership Retention | Leadership Release

From the beginning, we wanted to empower church planters to plant churches. Even in our core group phase, we encouraged guys to find creative ways to reach the city. One of our first core group members had a heart for people in the restaurant business,

especially those working “second-shift.” So he and another core group member started gathering people at a diner around midnight, after the employees got off work. Out of this gathering they started up small groups and had about 30 people in those groups.

At first, it was great that he had pursued this passion. But we soon realized that all of his time, energy and thoughts were so focused there that he couldn’t really engage with our church. Before we had even launched the church, I was finding myself dealing with the tension of releasing and retaining leaders.

Unfortunately, as he tried to reach non-Christians, he pulled away from healthy Christian community. He became cynical and even defiant towards church leadership. He ended up losing both his ministry and his marriage. This tragic loss gave me pause to think about the *timing* of releasing leaders to start new ministries. To this day, we’re still learning how to best distinguish between “good opportunities” and “God opportunities.”

I’ll get into that distinction more in chapter 3, but let me share with you some key takeaways from our history of planting churches outside of The Journey.

Our first planter came in as a summer intern. He had been a youth pastor for a number of years, but was burned out. He had a heart to plant where he grew up, in a far western suburb of St. Louis. At the time, it seemed wise to release him, and I’m greatly encouraged to know the church has been active since 2006. But looking back, we also realize that we didn’t equip him as well as we could have. The same goes for his core group, many of which came back to The Journey.

Here are three things we learned from that experience about *equipping planters*:

1. We need to address any cynicism in the heart of prospective planters. Almost all church planters are cynical about the church as it exists. Implicit in their desire to plant is the belief that no other churches are doing it right, so they’ve got to do it. Now, part of that discontent and restlessness is fueled by God. But some of those feelings are immaturity needing to be addressed by qualified elders in that planter’s life. When I reflect on my six years as an associate pastor in Kansas City, I see how Rick and the other elders protected me from myself.

2. Make sure this leader’s marriage is in a strong place. As much as planting can fill you with excitement and anticipation, few things place as much pressure on a married couple as risking everything to start a new church. When we moved to St. Louis, Amie and I were in a really good place, having done ministry alongside each other since high

school. But that didn't stop her from crying every night for the first six months. Change is death. It can produce new life, but it certainly has its pains.

3. Work through issues of contextualization. It's easy to assume that if a guy is from the area he's planting in, then he's got the best insight. We were an urban church. Acts 29 was an urban church-planting movement. It was a foreign idea for us to plant in the suburbs. We didn't help prepare him for this context enough, and in a nutshell he tried to plant an urban church in a suburban area.

We didn't do him any favors in *equipping his core group* either:

- First, we didn't prepare them to deal with the type of sacrifice they would endure. Many were not ready to deal with the pains of slow growth. In part, they had poor expectations of what was "normal." The Journey grew so quickly that they hadn't considered some of the unique circumstances aiding that growth, like my involvement in the leadership of the Acts 29 Network.
- Second, we didn't spend enough time training their core ministry leaders (children's ministry, community group leaders, etc.) before releasing them. And then we didn't have an implementation strategy afterwards to send our leaders there for a designated period of time.
- Third, the core group didn't get enough time with the planter and his wife. They knew them in relation to the broader mission of The Journey, but they didn't know them interpersonally. They were in favor of the plant in principle, but there had not been enough time for them to receive and take ownership of the unique vision of the planter.

The valuable principle we learned from this was ***incubation before multiplication***. We kind of operated out of the mindset that "God would build the church (plant); we just needed to raise the money." Contributing to that mindset and our lack of preparation for this planter and his core group was the fact that we were in the midst of a pivotal transition. We had just purchased our first facility in a highly strategic part of the city. Releasing this plant was just not our primary focus.

In retrospect, I can identify several initiatives where we could have used this planter's gifts, while providing both him and the core group with more training and leadership development. This need really struck home when we released one of our first elders to plant 45 minutes in the opposite direction just a year later. We made the assumption with this elder that because he had been around The Journey for so many years, he understood the pressures of planting. But he had never been a lead pastor. He had

served in an executive role, but did not have the same visionary leadership. Eight months after we sent him across the river, he had a moral failure that disqualified him from the ministry.

Before you get thoroughly discouraged about your abilities to navigate this tension, let me share with you perhaps our best nugget of wisdom, having released numerous church planters in the last decade. It “only” took us four planters to realize that we didn’t need to replace the old staff guy with a new staff guy immediately. We could get by, and even thrive, by **empowering high capacity lay leaders** to carry some of the weight.

When we sent one of our pastors, who fulfilled a strong executive role, to aid a replanting effort in Kansas City (his hometown), we were able to lean on a member of the church who had an M.B.A. from Washington University and was good with finances as a lay coordinator, overseeing a bunch of groups within the church. We didn’t want to lose this pastor, but we knew that church in Kansas City needed his gifts. If we hadn’t been willing to release him, we may not have discovered a guy that would eventually serve on our executive board of elders. What can feel like death can bring new life. Even life that’s already in our midst.

Tension 4: Attractional vs. Activational

We were against video venue preaching. When we had three locations, we had pastors that could preach at each one. And I would drive back and forth on Sundays to preach live as well. We embraced a lot of the typical criticisms of streaming video. We didn’t want to create this celebrity pastor culture where people would cling so closely to my preaching that it would devalue the other pastors. I thought it would disembodify the message from the messenger. And practically, I just didn’t think it would work in our context with St. Louis being so culturally segregated.

We resisted video preaching for about a year. During that year, we began to experience mission drift. When I went to members’ meetings at our different churches, I noticed the churches weren’t aligned. When I interacted with staff and leaders, it seemed like we were losing sight of our core values. People weren’t thinking about The Journey as one church in many locations. They were just seeing their own location.

They were enjoying their existing relationships, but losing sight of the mission. In a short but powerful essay, Tim Keller writes, “The larger the church, the more a distinctive vision becomes important to its members. The reason for being in a smaller church is relationships. The reason for putting up with all the changes and difficulties of a larger

church is to get mission done. People join a larger church because of the vision—so the particular mission needs to be clear.”³

To counteract the mission drift, we saw that our church needed a steady diet of visionary preaching, challenging them to take risks and to live out the message before their friends, neighbors and coworkers. As the church grew in size and complexity, video preaching became the primary way our members and regular attendees would receive the vision from me.

In addition to all that, our lead pastors were feeling pressed. Going back to the three-legged stool idea, it was very difficult for them to lead and shepherd when they had to prepare a sermon. Something was getting dropped. So, from a resource allocation perspective, we thought it would be better to offer a video sermon once or twice a month.

As we researched video preaching, we leaned on [Northcoast Church Teaching Pastor] Larry Osborne—through his conferences, Leadership Network events and phone calls. I also was especially challenged in one conversation I had with [Seacoast Church Lead Pastor] Greg Surratt. I had explained to him how I didn’t want to do video preaching because of the lack of connection with people, and he responded with something to this effect: “If you’re arriving after the worship music and leaving before communion, how are you any more connected now?”

Through that research, coupled with our built-in conviction to grow disciples to engage their communities and to continue planting churches, we felt that doing video would not compromise that vision. In many ways, we felt it would enhance the mission. And it certainly lent itself to a multiplication of leaders. It did not just open up space for non-Christians in a given area; it opened up more opportunities for people to participate and exercise their spiritual gifts (notice that at the beginning of this chapter I said this wasn’t a bad thing?).

Tension #5: Systems Optimized vs. Systems Disturbed

Visionary leaders are catalysts for mission, but they need (lots of) help with implementation. Because they’re wired to look for new opportunities to plant the gospel, they often are not gifted with the attention to detail that enables the church to execute the vision. By constantly looking into the realm of possibilities, they can lose sight of the human and financial resources actually present within the church. It can be difficult for these kinds of leaders to know when structures need to be established or reconfigured. They can sense the mission stalling out, but might not know how to fix the engine.

If the church is growing, the question is not: “Do we need structures in place?” Rather, we should be asking: “Do our structures support or hinder the mission?”

We see this in the Book of Acts. As the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplies, the apostles have to address questions of adequate care for the widows in their midst (6:1-7). Luke does not give us the nuts and bolts of how the church implemented its care system, but he does show us how the apostles identified and empowered new leaders with serving gifts to tackle the issue. In this instance, the system that was put in place enabled the apostles to continue their focus on prayer to God and proclamation to people.

The leadership infrastructure needs to support the mission. For the vast majority of churches in North America, the issue is building unnecessary structures. With a multiplying church, the (good) challenge is in the mission outpacing the structures. But eventually, if the system is not updated, the church will drift from mission. It takes more than a well-oiled video-preaching method to sustain momentum. God supplied me with speaking gifts, but not managerial ones. And many of our pastors were church planters in the making. Six to seven years after planting The Journey, our growth had also outpaced the experience and gifts of our leaders. The vast majority of the staff was in roles they were playing for the first time. We needed help from outside The Journey.

We hired Lisa Haase, a leadership consultant who had the knowledge and experience necessary to keep us from plateauing from a lack of healthy systems. Lisa was able to unearth the complaints present within our staff and pastoral culture. My hope was that we were developing leaders that were unified in vision and willing to take risks for the gospel. But even though we were growing, this was not the case. Instead of operating from a clear, strategic vision, we were chasing down new opportunities right and left. Eventually, we were moving in different directions (for example, mission drift). And because a lot of my drive was coming out of an unhealthy place, our leaders were getting stretched beyond capacity and were responding in self-protective ways (more on this in chapter 3).

If addition had been our focus, we would never have reached out to a leader like Lisa. But we were concerned about the long-term viability of The Journey in embracing God’s particular call for us in the greater St. Louis region. Lisa helped bring order to the chaos. Through much conversation and prayer, she aided us in articulating a strategic vision for the church. She exposed the leadership gaps we had in gifting and experience and the dysfunction on our teams. She was the right leader at the right time with the right

attention to systems—and most importantly, she raised up and empowered leaders with similar gifts.

Chapter 3

Lessons in Mid-Flight

Not that I've done it, but I would guess that one of the hardest things to do is build a plane while you're flying it. That's really what we've done and in many ways are still doing. Every multiplying church has to face it at one time or another. Still more difficult is to not just be building while in motion, but inspecting it in mid-flight. But by God's grace, we have learned some things since planting The Journey more than a decade ago.

Lesson #1: The emotional health of the leaders is vital for staying on mission.

When Amie and I uprooted our lives to start The Journey, we were prepared in almost every conceivable way. We were prepared in our marriage. We'd just had our first kid. We knew each other well, having been together over a decade—seven years of marriage after five years of dating. We were excited about moving closer to our families. We were on the same page theologically and missiologically. We had great mentors.

I was also prepared spiritually. Since I had become a Christian, I had a consistent devotional time, having kept journals for years. I loved listening to worship music while driving. I would even fast on occasion. I was prepared evangelistically. I had a heart for non-Christians. I was excited about the possibility that everywhere I went there was someone to meet who either needed to meet Jesus for the first time or could be a part of our core group. I was a voracious reader. In those days, I read at least 100 pages a day. I was acquainted with the leading thinker on contextualization. I was even prepared relationally with an advisory board of pastors.

But as I look back, I was not prepared emotionally—*not at all*. Below, I share several challenges I was not prepared to navigate:

Betrayal

Within a year of relocating, both of the couples that came with us to St. Louis left the faith and broke off their marriages. I spent hours with these men pleading for them to fight for their marriages. The worship leader and I had probably spent 20 hours a week together for nine months. If it hadn't been for Amie, by God's encouragement, I would have quit. And even after we planted, I had to deal with leaders lying to me and then starting new ministries or slandering me to other pastors and network leaders.

The Weight of Counseling

When I was an associate pastor back in Kansas City, we had a larger church with more resources. I didn't have to be on the frontlines. But once you're in there, the amount of brokenness you have to deal with can be unfathomable. I remember making a hospital visit for a girl in the church who had become pregnant with her boyfriend. She handed me her stillborn baby wanting me to pray. And then there's the wreckage you see in so many marriages. Brokenness was constant.

Boundaries between home and church

We were gathering people to worship in our basement, right next to the efficiency apartment we had created for one of these couples, and right below our bedroom. It made for some weird dynamics. Everything felt like it was melded together. There was no separation. People would randomly stop by the house because it *was* the church.

The Weight of Risk

When everything is on the line, the pressure can be overwhelming. People have invested in you, both relationally and financially. Your family has sacrificed everything in following you. When you're in that spot, you feel exposed. Unresolved issues with my dad kept resurfacing. It exposed my achievement idolatry and my fear of failure.

Now, how did that affect the mission?

When you lead, you plug your life into an amplifier. Everybody is listening. People are trying to make photocopies of your style and passing those copies around. Your leadership shapes the perspective, the pace and the priorities for your people.

I was leading out of fear and pride. I gave into self-sufficiency and self-protection: *If it's going to be, it's up to me*. I had inherited this mindset from my dad, and it was resurfacing after betrayal. I didn't just take this perspective with our people. Despite all my theological training, I functionally acted as if Jesus had promised to build His church, but it was really on us to get it done.

We do need an urgency for the mission, but when your motivations are askew, you'll start operating in this frantic, hurried pace. The unmet need to achieve and perform compromises your ability to be reflective about the process. You fall prey to the tyranny of the moment. You just try to get everything "done." There is a reality that you have to

work hard, but as a result of my leadership, we didn't necessarily work smart for a long time.

There is a phrase that doesn't come from me, but we eventually started using around *The Journey*: *We don't want to use people to get ministry done. We want to use ministry to get people done.* When you're in frantic, survival mode, it's tempting to just give people stuff to do. And even if you give them some tools, the real question is whether or not you're concerned about their development as leaders. While they're serving, are you asking the question, *What could they become?*

Lesson #2: Good opportunities are not necessarily *strategic* opportunities.

Do you remember the situation at the end of Mark chapter 1? Jesus had spent the previous day healing the sick and casting out demons. Early the following morning, He goes out to a solitary place to pray. The disciples are searching for Him everywhere. When they finally find Him, they subtly rebuke Him, saying, "Everyone is looking for you." Then Jesus responds, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out" (1:38). Even though there were more people in need of healing, Jesus left Capernaum.

Jesus models for His church the importance of a clear strategy for timing. Having deep fellowship with the Father and the Spirit, He knew His mission. Because of this, he could distinguish between good work (for example, healing physical needs in Capernaum) and strategic work (continuing to proclaim the advent of God's Kingdom throughout Israel).

What distinguishes strategic opportunities from good ones is the potential for sustainable impact. We reached a point where we were largely reacting to opportunities that came up on our radar. We had no strategic way of saying, "Here's our focus for this time, and these are the things we're going to do." Because we had not articulated a strategic plan, we struggled to align our churches in mission.

Our reasons for developing and implementing strategic plans may come across as an attempt at exerting control from the top down, and certainly that is a temptation for the leaders of any gospel movement. But the lack of alignment was not fostering healthy missional practices. Our churches were becoming more and more siloed. In a sense, the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing. Consequently, innovation was stalled because collaboration was weak.

Here are some steps we've taken to become less reactionary and more purposeful in our mission:

1. *Recognize the culture of the church:*

In leading a church, you will always have to discern your preferred vision of the culture versus the one that actually exists. I wanted us to be a church that equipped and released leaders for their flourishing and that of their ministries. But after six to seven years, we had more of a compliance culture. When your people are afraid of making mistakes, they may be engaged in the task of leading, but in reality, they're not leading the mission. Not living in reality and living in fear choke the movement of the gospel.

2. *Assess our leaders holistically:*

God's mission advances when the right leaders are in the right spots. And as the church grows, the concept of "right" evolves. We have a responsibility to steward both the movement and our leaders. We need to know what our resources are, humanly speaking. We look at their previous ministry experience. We identify their passions and spiritual gifts to help them discern their calling. And in the context of all those elements, we use assessments that add another layer of insight into personality and potential team dynamics. If people are in roles that don't align with their experience, passion, gifting and personality, the mission will not thrive. Neither will they.

3. *Formalize the strategic planning process:*

If you examine Paul's first two missionary journeys in the Book of Acts (13:1-21, 36), you can discern a pattern of *commissioning* in an established area (Antioch, 13:1; Troas, 16:6), *planting* the gospel in new areas, *nurturing* the new churches, followed with *evaluation* in Jerusalem (15:1-16:5; 21:15-36).¹

Several years ago, we began implementing biannual leadership meetings so that our pastors and staff would actually share their ministry plans and evaluate them in front of their peers. We took all of these ideas out of our heads and put them on paper. This formalized process enabled us to create S.M.A.R.T. goals for our leaders.

Though it may be counterintuitive, all this discussion of strategic evaluation has enabled us to be more responsive to the Spirit's movement in our midst. Clarity of purpose and alignment of resources might seem "restrictive" but actually leads to "freedom" for the church to pursue its mission.

Lesson #3: Churches can plant non-profits.

The means of salvation is grace through faith. The purpose of salvation is a renewed creation. How we read the Bible shapes our understanding of the gospel and its implication for ministry pursuits. We're called to read both *along* and *across* the Bible. When we read *along* the whole Bible as a single story of God's redemption, Scripture makes evident the purpose of salvation. When we read *across* the Bible, looking to summarize Scripture's teaching on God, sin and faith, the means of salvation is brought out. When these readings are in balance, we have a rich understanding of the gospel wherein "God has come to reconcile individuals by his grace and renew the whole world by and for his glory."²

All this means that we work to address brokenness in whatever form. We don't drive a wedge between word and deed ministries. We regularly and boldly proclaim Jesus as "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). But we know that God entrusting these resources to our care is not just about having a good church, but also a great city.

Consider how historian Rodney Stark describes the *favor* that the first Christians had in their cities:

Christianity revitalized life in the Greco-Roman city, by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships to help people cope with the many new and urgent problems that resulted from living in the urban core. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments, a community beyond the community. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for reconciliation.³

Personalize that quote. Imagine what it would be like if that was said about your church—and other great churches in your area. That vision has led us not only to start new churches, but also to found and partner with ministries that are meeting felt needs throughout St. Louis and beyond.

While aligning with our core values, another common thread runs through the majority of our non-profit ministry partners. They began with a Journey staff member, intern or layperson listening for God's direction, discerning the areas of need in their city, and responding in faith. Not a single one was a top-down initiative. We didn't pitch ideas and

then ask for people to step up and lead. God sent leaders into our church, and we kept our eyes and ears open to them.

When we think about partnering with non-profit ministries, it's easy to reduce the relationship to financial assistance. While that's a significant way to resource our partners, it by no means is the only way. Depending on the needs, we have provided leadership training and aided in developing strategic vision plans. We have sent some leaders as board members and countless volunteers. With many of our established partners, we provide marketing and communication support.

Over the years, we've noticed three ways in which these partnerships have developed:

1. *Incubating ministries within The Journey:*

These are ministries that need to be established for several years before they have access to grants and garner external recognition. This was the case for The Luminary Center for the Arts.

2. *Resourcing existing start-ups:*

One of our lay leaders, Dedee Lhamon, started [The Covering House](#), a place of refuge for young female victims of sex trafficking or exploitation. After several years of promoting this ministry to our churches, a direct financial partnership developed.

3. *Connecting with established ministries:*

These are ministries that are doing work in our city and are aligned with our own vision and values. These ministries have more knowledge and experience than we do, so these partnerships are about recognizing the planting of the gospel that has already started to bear fruit. For example, [Urban K-Life](#), our newest ministry partner, had impacted the lives of high school students throughout St. Louis for over a decade before we made a formal connection.

While we did not set out with these clear categories in mind, we hope they'll assist you in identifying what's viable for your church.

Lesson #4: Churches must consider the APEST model for their ministry.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we have the closest thing to a systematic doctrine of the church. Many scholars believe it was a circular letter to be read throughout all of Asia Minor, meaning it wasn't focused on just one specific context, but was a whole pattern for God's church. Advanced in years and sensing his impending death, Paul was giving instructions on how to further God's mission in the world as the church.

To maintain unity (Eph. 4:1-7) and promote maturity (4:13-17), Jesus poured out gifts through the Holy Spirit to His church. In this crucial passage, Paul shows that while the whole church is responsible for pursuing this vision for Kingdom growth, it actually begins with the leadership of the "the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). When the church properly taps into each one of these gifts, the "saints" (4:12) are equipped for ministry, and the church flourishes. That's how "the manifold wisdom of God" is demonstrated throughout the world (3:10).

Most churches don't assess their leadership structures this way. Young churches tend to conform to the image of their senior leader. So if the senior leader is a gifted evangelist, he will typically attract other evangelists. When they all congregate, the environment may become primarily seeker-sensitive and pragmatic. If the senior leader is a strong teacher, he'll gather other teachers, and the church then emphasizes Bible study as the main way to grow in Christ.

As churches grow, many will adopt a business model of leadership. Their senior pastor will start functioning as a CEO. Their executive pastor, a COO. And then the rest of the leadership teams will be filled with strong business guys and a handful of shepherds.

Now, in one sense, I see nothing wrong with studying current business practices for transferable principles. The doctrine of common grace gives us confidence to say that all truth is God's truth. Every human being has been created in the image of God. And so there is something good and true to be observed in every area of culture, though it is marred by sin. But when the business model becomes the primary model, the majority of the leaders become focused on the maintenance of the church and can lose sight of God's mission for the church.

We have tried over the years to avoid the traps of both young and growing churches. We have not done everything perfectly. Part of the challenge is our own sinfulness, but part of it is the Bible's silence on the matter. Scripture tells us that a church should have elders, but doesn't really tell us how they should function. Scripture tells us to have deacons, but doesn't tell us what they should do.

This lack of step-by-step clarity is one of the big reasons that multiplying churches tend to adopt contemporary management theory as their ecclesiology. Even in reading Ephesians (and the Book of Acts), we're not given a manual for church leadership. It's hard work to reflect on the practical implications of the APEST model for the church. We are not told how all of these gifts function, but it's clear that they all need to be functioning. It takes experimentation.

Only in the last few years have we labored to understand what APEST means for The Journey. We even took our executive board of elders, which consists of a number of guys in the business world, through Alan Hirsch's and Tim Catchim's book, *The Permanent Revolution*. With Ephesians 4 in mind, we're examining how our executive leadership team and our local elder teams function. We want to make sure we're not missing important pieces. In some cases, that has involved bringing people onto our leadership teams in a formal capacity, but in other cases, it has meant giving some leaders more influence by inviting them into meetings, even if they're not on those teams.

By making these adjustments, our apostolic leaders are able to focus their attention on potential opportunities for the gospel to be extended and start new initiatives. In the past, we had so much of our time and energy spent on internal matters. When apostolic leaders are constantly being drawn to existing things, we tend to be disruptive and frustrated.

Our increased understanding of the APEST model keeps us from blocking out our prophets, who help us discern the motivations behind new initiatives. Just this past year, we delayed a major churchwide initiative because our prophets sensed the timing was off. Along with our shepherds, they help us say no when we need to focus more on care. Believe me when I say that this is messy, and that we are just in the beginning of walking through this. But experimentation is vital if we're going to be a part of a multiplying church.

Lesson #5: A church (not just a network) can be a movement.

One of the mistakes I made early on in our church was focusing too much time and attention on our church-planting network to the detriment of leading our church. This was partly because Acts 29 was exploding in growth and partly because it was a lot easier to be a consultant than a pastor. But maybe the underlying belief that was fueling my lack of appropriate engagement with our church was that I wrongly believed that only networks could really be *movemental*.

What we're learning is that a local church can also be a movement—that in a sense, it can be its own network, though it may also choose to affiliate with a larger network. The danger with any church or network is that it devolves from being a movement to simply existing as an institution. Now good stewardship requires organization, but the tendency of a growing church is to move towards maintenance rather than mission. Of our churches, we must constantly ask, *Where is the mission losing out to maintenance?* Here are four movement dynamics that Tim Keller gives us for reflection: ⁴

Unity

A movement is organized around a common vision for the future, whereas an institution is organized around by-laws and ground rules. In a movement, all leaders and key players have same goals, whereas in an institution each leader/department presses for its own agenda. A movement progresses by arriving at consensus or near consensus, whereas an institution progresses through negotiated compromises.

Openness

In a movement, leaders have a higher tolerance for ambiguity and organizational “messiness,” but in an institution, leaders have a high need for clarity and compliance. In a movement, the responsibilities of leaders overlap with lots of generalization. But in an institution, “silo” and turf consciousness develops, leading to contentiousness.

Sacrifice

In a movement, a great deal of sacrifice is tolerated (low pay, long hours, poor conditions), whereas in an institution, individual interests are more important than the progress of the whole. In a movement, there is a high level of trust within the organization (less need for accounting and evaluation), but in an institution, there's often little trust (leading to constant meetings and time-consuming reporting).

Spontaneity

In a movement, leaders tend to be “self-starters,” not needing a lot of approval and encouragement. But in an institution, workers need rewards, perks and heavy accountability from the top. In a movement, new ideas are solicited and incorporated quickly, but in an institution, innovation is seen as threatening if not coming from the top. In a movement, there are strong relationships where lots of “offline” thinking is done in the context of friendship. But in an institution, few friendships exist, and little occurs outside of meetings.

One of the beautiful effects of the emphasis on church planting and the advent of church-planting networks is that it is not considered “cool” for a church to simply grow

by addition and fail to connect to a larger movement. Gone are the days where the solitary church is lauded only because of its size. Emerging leaders are after impact and multiplication. What we see is that a large church *can* stay a movement and should embrace that if the Lord so chooses.

Endnotes

Introduction

¹ Tim Keller, [“The Missional Church”](#) (2001)

Chapter 1

¹ You can read more about our calling to St. Louis and the miraculous way in which God provided the finances to plant in the book *For The City: Proclaiming and Living Out the Gospel*.

Chapter 2

¹ Mark Devine & Darrin Patrick, *Replant: How a Dying Church Can Grow Again* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2014).

² Matt Carter and Darrin Patrick, *For The City: Proclaiming and Living Out the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), chap. 9, Kindle.

³ Tim Keller, [“Leadership and Church Size Dynamics”](#) (2010)

Chapter 3

¹ Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 63-64.

² The Council of The Gospel Coalition, “Foundation Documents,” TheGospelCoalition.org, accessed February 24, 2015,

³ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 161.

⁴ Tim Keller, “Movement Dynamics,” London Church Planting Consultation, 2008-09.

About the Author

Darrin Patrick founded [The Journey](#) in 2002 in the urban core of St. Louis, Missouri. The Journey has six locations and has released seven church plants. Darrin is vice president of the [Acts 29 Church Planting Network](#) and has helped start multiple non-profits in St. Louis. He also serves as chaplain to the St. Louis Cardinals.

After earning his B.A. in biblical languages from Southwest Baptist University and a Master's of Divinity (summa cum laude) from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Darrin earned his Doctor of Ministry from Covenant Seminary. Darrin is author of [The Dude's Guide to Manhood](#), [Church Planter](#), co-author of [Replant](#), and [For the City](#), and contributor to the [ESV Gospel Transformation Bible](#).

Darrin is married to his high school sweetheart, Amie, and they have four beautiful children: Glory, Grace, Drew and Delaineey.

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