

IC UNDERGROUND

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KC Underground is a mission agency that empowers and equips a decentralized network of missionaries and microchurches in Kansas City.

Our mission is to fill Kansas City with the beauty, justice, and good news of Jesus.

How will that happen?

With a missionary on every street and a microchurch in every network of relationships.

The KCUG primer is an invitation to go back and rediscover Jesus' original design for His church. This primer is also an invitation to go forward by reimagining what that design looks like in our day, in our city. This is one of the many tools used to equip ordinary people as missionary disciple-makers in the KC Underground.

KCUNDERGROUND.ORG

THE MISSIONARY PATHWAY:

An Introduction to Movements of God

Did you know that we are living in unprecedented times? Would it surprise you to hear that as you sit here and read these words, the Gospel is spreading throughout the world at a rate that we may have not yet witnessed in 2,000 years of Church history? Although much of the world is not yet touched, in the places where the Gospel is growing, it's spreading like wildfire. For most of us in the West, this is borderline shocking to hear. We have had a front-row seat to the decline of Christianity and its influence on society. We've witnessed an almost allergic response to "church" by many in our community, and it's hard even to imagine that kind of fruit in other places.

God is moving, and the Gospel is spreading, the world is being transformed, and the book of Acts seems to be playing itself out thousands of times over. All around the world, Gospel Movements (also known as "Church Planting Movements" or "Disciple Making Movements") are breaking out, resulting in generations of new disciples, new churches, and new leaders who are saturating entire regions, many of which were previously unreached. There are movements in India that have seen millions of new followers of Jesus and tens of thousands of new churches. Similar numbers exist in China over the last few decades (at its height, these movements produced 10,000 new disciples daily). Indigenous movements seem to be taking over Africa, and tens of thousands of churches have emerged out of new believers in the past decade alone. In the last five years, similar things are happening in countries like Honduras and Cuba, where Discovery Bible Studies and new fellowships number in the tens of thousands. The growth is not slowing down. The underground Church in the Middle East has not only seen similar results, but it's the place where movements are growing fastest. God seems to be specifically doing a new thing among Muslims. Every region of the Muslim world is experiencing multiplying Gospel Movements. And that's just a snapshot. Every sort of culture, from rural to urban, from Eastern to Western, from black to white to brown, is seeing Gospel Movements emerge within them. The question for many Americans, then, is this: "Why not here?"

Although it may seem that this kind of fruit is unattainable here in America, here's the truth: The tide is beginning to shift. It may appear the Church in America is dying on the surface level, but there is a very tangible undercurrent in the unseen places. Amid global pandemics, deep political division, and systemic racism, the Lord seems to be drawing hearts to Himself in a new and powerful way. The world and its answers are not satisfying the desires of hearts. In many ways, our day's environment is ripe for God's move that mirrors what we see worldwide.

We understand that new wine necessitates a new wineskin. Although many churches and Christians have yet to wake up from their slumber, the Holy Spirit seems to be stirring more and more every day to rise and remember their missionary identity as the sent ones of God. Christian leaders in the West are increasingly taking on humility as they seek to learn from the Global South. New prayer movements are spreading across the country as the Holy Spirit stirs people to cry out for our nation and join Him in the neighborhoods and networks in which He has already placed them.

From high school students to baby boomers, prisons to suburban neighborhoods, refugee communities to addiction recovery homes, we see Discovery Bible Studies and microchurches born in every sort of environment. In certain parts of the country, megachurches have radically changed their structure to function as mission sending centers. New local microchurch networks like KC Underground, dedicated to Gospel saturation of entire cities, are popping up around the country. What once seemed radical now seems necessary. And here's the truth: We see the first fruits of significant Gospel movement right here in the U.S. The question is whether or not we will join God as He invites His Church to live into a movement dream of seeing a multiplying Gospel planted among the unchurched in every sphere of culture. It's a vision of disciples making disciples, churches birthing churches, resulting in the beauty, justice, and good news of Jesus filling up our cities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVEMENTS

Disciple Making Movements are sociological phenomena that are, in many ways, measurable. Generally speaking, in the missions world, something is considered a "movement" when there are 4+ generations of new groups/churches in multiple streams, resulting in at least 100 new churches. Additionally, it seems that there are significant similarities and shared DNA present in every movement. These characteristics tend to fly in the face of traditional western ministry assumptions and practices. However, each one is deeply rooted in the examples of Jesus, the early Church, and movements throughout history.

Many Americans who have grown up in the church may find the paradigm shifts here challenging. However, He may be calling many of us to lay aside our cultural assumptions in order to participate in His mission in new and significant ways.

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDIES & MICROCHURCHES

The primary discipleship tool in Disciple Making Movements is Discovery Bible Study (DBS)—a simple and reproducible method used all over the world. Generally Discovery Groups consist of spiritually interested people who read a Bible story together, discover what it says, and respond with tangible obedience. As we join God in mission and plant the Gospel in our natural contexts, Discovery Bible Study becomes the methodology of making new disciples. It's not a program, but rather a "way" of disciple-making from the ground up.

Over time, as new disciples and new spiritual families emerge, DBS environments mature into ongoing microchurches (extended spiritual families, led by ordinary people, who live in everyday Gospel community and own the mission of Jesus in a particular network of relationships). Disciple-making and church formation grow from the ground up, just like what we see in the book of Acts.

PARADIGM *SHIFTS*: Movement Mindset vs. Traditional Western Church Mindset

THINK:
Extraordinary prayer as
the power

DON'T THINK:
*Human strategy as
the power*

THINK:
Planting the Gospel in
existing networks of
relationships

DON'T THINK:
*Extracting people so
we can "disciple" them
in church*

THINK:
Obedience-based
discipleship

DON'T THINK:
*Knowledge-based
discipleship*

THINK:
Discovery-based
learning

DON'T THINK:
Lecture-based teaching

THINK:
Send the ordinary
and willing

DON'T THINK:
Send the gifted experts

THINK:
Disciple groups of people

DON'T THINK:
*Discipleship only
means one-on-one*

THINK:
Disciple to and through
conversion

DON'T THINK:
*Evangelism then
discipleship*

THINK:
Viral multiplication

DON'T THINK:
Addition

THINK:
"Spiritual families" and
microchurches

DON'T THINK:
"Church"

THE MISSIONARY PATHWAY

If one were to look at all Church Planting Movements from 10,000 feet in the air, certain elements are consistent in every one of them. Radical prayer, missionary engagement, disciple-making, church planting, cultural transformation, and multiplication are constants in every move of God. Within KC Underground, we call these consistent movement categories “The Missionary Pathway.” It guides all our training and discussions around disciple-making and the emergence of microchurches. The Missionary Pathway is not the next set of programs to implement and attempt and then move on. Instead, they are reverse-engineered pillars and practices observed from actual movements of God (including what we see in the book of Acts and, best of all, the life of Jesus). In many ways, it’s more descriptive than prescriptive. However, in all practicality, it’s both. To travel the Missionary Pathway is to join God intentionally where He is already at work among those far from Him and be personally transformed along the way. Below is a brief description of each category:

1. Extraordinary Prayer and Fasting

A prayer movement precedes every Gospel movement. New disciple-making flows from the heart of God, so our job is to simply hear and know His voice and then join Him in His work. We are praying to discover and discern where He is already working in order to join him, rather than asking God to bless our strategies. In this huddle, we will discuss and implement missional prayer practices focusing on the contexts and people to whom God has already called you.

2. Live as Missionaries

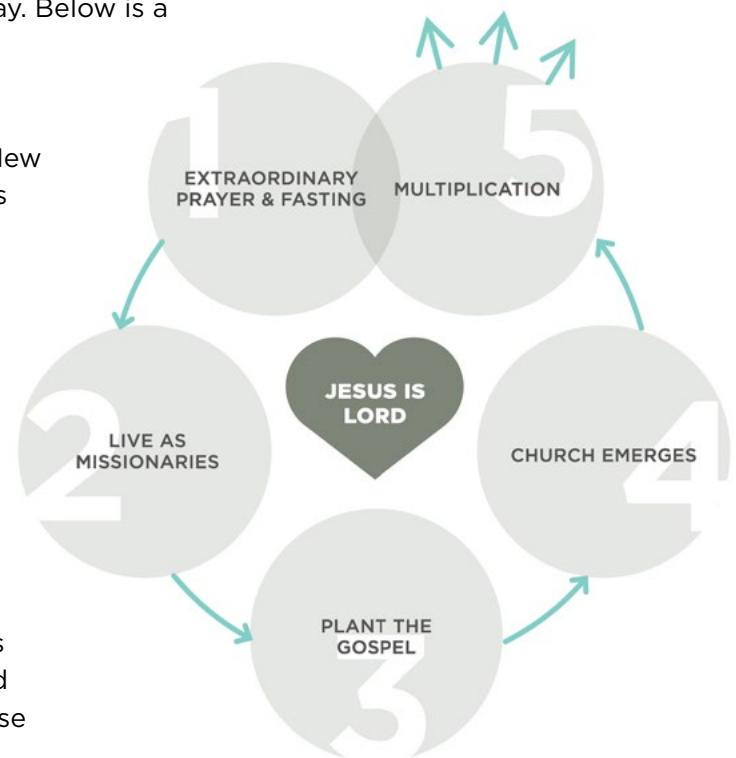
When we understand our identity as missionaries, we are free to run with purpose. This huddle will focus on practical elements of living on mission, including rhythms of blessing others, engaging in Gospel conversations, and finding those spiritually interested (Luke 10 identifies these people as “Persons of Peace”).

3. Plant the Gospel

When we live as missionaries, we find people God has prepared to hear the message. Instead of extracting people from their relational networks, we plant the Gospel and begin making disciples, from the ground up, in the everyday rhythms of life. We will focus on a simple yet effective tool used worldwide called “Discovery Bible Study” to help us make new disciples right where people already are.

4. Church Emerges

Disciples grow and learn together. New faith families emerge. Within KC Underground, we call these simple expressions of church “microchurches.” In the book of Acts and within movements worldwide, believers’ primary gathering occurs within homes and everyday spaces. Microchurches can love one another, worship intimately together, and be on a mission in powerful



ways. They are lightweight, inexpensive, and easily reproducible from context to context. When followers of Jesus engage in worship, community, and mission, they are the Church.

5. Multiplication

In a movement, everything multiplies. New missionaries set out, Discovery Bible Studies begin, new disciples grow, new microchurches emerge, and new leaders arise. The only way to see cities and nations reached is to multiply every stage in the missionary pathway continuously.

YOU'RE INVITED

Hearing stories of what God is doing around the world among Disciple Making Movements is breathtaking. The book of Acts is happening over and over again. As Americans, we are crying out to the Lord that we would see a similar work of God in our nation and our cities. As followers of Jesus, this is not merely a pipe dream; rather, it's the example that we see in the New Testament. The Gospel, when released, is multiplicative and transformative, possessing the power to radically change entire cultures.

Here's the best part: Jesus is inviting you to join Him in this epic story of redemption. He's not just calling the experts, the educated, or even the super gifted on this journey. No, it's quite the opposite. Jesus is inviting the ordinary who are willing and obedient. If this is you, you have the right posture to make disciples in your everyday spaces.

JESUS IS LORD

Leads to a Vision of Gospel Saturation

Right before Jesus ascends to sit at the right hand of the Father, He gives perhaps the most ambitious commission ever given to a group of people:

The final scene with Jesus on earth was Him telling His followers to make disciples of every group in every corner of the world. Not some. All. To obey Jesus is to continue His work of spreading the good news of the Kingdom until the whole world is saturated with beauty, justice, and wholeness.

Fundamental Truth #1:

The Great Commission inevitably leads followers of Jesus to adopt a vision of Gospel saturation.

These instructions would be crippling and overwhelming if it weren't for the sentence preceding the command: *"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me."* Gospel saturation is the vision, making disciples the commission, but fulfilling any piece of it is wholly dependent upon Jesus being Lord of all.

Fundamental Truth #2:

To fulfill the Great Commission and see Gospel saturation, we must first understand the Lordship of Jesus.

JESUS IS LORD

This verse is one of many places in the New Testament where we read the phrase, "Jesus is Lord." Alan Hirsch describes this as Christianity's Three-Word-Worldview. By that, he means that we, as followers of Jesus, should see the world through the lens of "Jesus is Lord."

For the 21st-century person unaccustomed to this type of language, the phrase "Jesus is Lord" may not at first carry the same weight and effect it would have had on the first-century person. We know from history that "Jesus is Lord" was as subversive as it gets. It was treasonous. It was counter-cultural in every way. It was a manipulation of the phrase, "Caesar is Lord." To speak anything other than Caesar's name in the place of lordship was punishable by death, for Caesar demanded full allegiance and saw himself as possessing divine authority.

The followers of Jesus were indeed refusing to swear their allegiance to Caesar. They recognized that they belonged to a greater Kingdom, one that would not fade or pass away. These early Christians were declaring so much more than, "I've prayed a salvation prayer, and I will live in heaven one day after I die." They understood that a heavenly Kingdom would break into the present, ruling and reigning with all the restoration power that raised Jesus from the dead.

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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach 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

You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord...

2 CORINTHIANS 4:5

When these first followers uttered the phrase “Jesus is Lord,” they were saying, “Jesus, every part of who I am fully surrenders to you. This is not merely symbolic. You give direction. You have full authority over my decisions. You have full authority over my spouse, kids, where we live, where we eat, how we spend the resources we have, how we open our home, how we serve our masters, if we live for you, or if we die for you. And with this declaration, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ the latter is a genuine possibility.”

We are beginning here with this idea, exploring for a few moments the phrase “Jesus is Lord,” because everything flows from this singular idea. Everything ties to our radical—or the converse, our anemic—commitment to “Jesus is Lord.” We are fascinated with all that He is, or we are not. He receives all of our attention and our affection, or He does not. That commitment of giving allegiance informs our decision-making. We choose to be first and foremost part of a Jesus movement, or we do not. There is no middle ground here.

In the Western church, the form and function of the church have usually been the forefront priority. How we do church when the church gathers has consumed much of our training in seminaries, conferences, and books, and it has left most of us longing for something more.

What we read in the pages of Scripture speaks about a fully-alive life that has been promised to us, an adventure of the highest order. What we read speaks of belonging at a deeper level than a membership card. We read a compelling narrative about a few nobodies that sparked a movement across the ancient world. We don’t read the details about a sterile event that leaves us asking if we should come back next week. How do we recapture that story?

Alan Hirsch writes, “All genuine Christian movements involve at their spiritual ground zero a living encounter with the One True God, capturing the meaning of ‘for from Him, through Him, and to Him are all things.’”

1. We must ask, “Have I had that encounter? Is this true of my life?”

Steve Addison concluded from an exhaustive study of Christian movements that they maintain growth with white-hot faith brought about by a rediscovery of Jesus’ place and importance.

2. We must ask, “Is my life maintained by a white-hot faith informed by the centrality of Jesus?”

Returning to Hirsch, he writes, “For an underground church [i.e., a Disciple Making Movement], all the clutter of unnecessary, traditional interpretations and theological paraphernalia is removed. It has neither the time nor the internal capacity to maintain weighty systematic theologies and church dogma. It must travel light...Faith is once again linked, in utter simplicity, to Jesus.”

3. And so again, we must ask, “Is my faith linked in simplicity to Jesus alone? Do I want this?”

GOSPEL SATURATION

An encounter with Jesus is only the beginning. If you were to dive deeper into Paul's words written in 2 Corinthians 4, you would see that an encounter with Jesus leads to a missional embodiment. Paul writes that he and his companions preach "Jesus is Lord" and have the light of Jesus in them. They know the glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus. This encounter has led to their response. He emphasizes that they live out of the power of Christ in them, which helps them face trouble on every side. Moreover, despite all the danger and even the threat of death they continually face, they continue to serve and preach because of their encounter with Christ. Why? So that God's grace would reach more and more people, so that there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

To put movement language around this, we would say **that a commitment to Jesus as Lord leads to a commitment to Gospel saturation**. It is the natural outflow—the former results in the latter. A genuine encounter with Jesus leading to the declaration, "Jesus is Lord" will produce a desire to see the Gospel saturate our souls and cities.

Unfortunately, the "gospel" has often been reduced merely to "accepting Jesus" for the purpose of "forgiveness of sin" and a "place in heaven, when I die." It's a transactional view of salvation where I take care of my sin problem and receive a fire insurance policy to make sure I don't go to hell.

It's not that that is incorrect, but it is radically incomplete.

A more holistic understanding of the Gospel is concerned about both Heaven and Earth and the ultimate merging of those. Within His context, the good news is about a relational, political, religious, artistic, economic, intellectual, and spiritual revolution designed to give birth to a New World.

When you begin to study what the prophets have to say about what it looks like when the Kingdom entirely comes, you'll realize very quickly that yes, the Gospel includes forgiveness of sin and a life indestructible beyond the grave. But the Gospel is much more expansive than that. The Gospel of the Kingdom consists of every sphere of human concern and engagement, from care for the poor, bringing justice to the oppressed, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, fostering education, providing healthcare, building safe, decent housing, creating art and beauty, freeing souls, and propagating healthy and deep community. When Jesus told us to pray, "Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," these are all the things He wanted to see break into the present.

The question follows: How will we see a reality where every woman, man, girl, and boy has repeated opportunities to see, hear, experience, and respond to this holistic gospel? It will happen when every follower of Jesus understands that their birthright is that of a loving missionary and disciple-maker. It will become a reality when we equip and empower everyday believers to move into networks of people who don't yet know how much they matter to Jesus and begin to demonstrate and proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.

WHAT IS *GOSPEL SATURATION*?

How do you know that you have attained it?

A WORKING DEFINITION:

Every man, woman, girl, and boy has repeated opportunities to see, hear, experience, and respond to the gospel.

A GOSPEL SATURATION VISION AFFECTS OUR CHURCH STRATEGY

The Church, as described in Ephesians 1, is fundamentally about Gospel saturation. Here Paul says that Jesus is filling everything in every way, and the Church is the fullness of Him. The vision of KC Underground, therefore, is to see Gospel saturation in Kansas City. Our mission is to join Jesus in seeing Kansas City filled with the beauty, justice, and good news of Jesus, until the whole city is saturated, leaving nothing and nobody untouched.

To find success in that vision, two things must be true. First, we must understand the authority and Lordship of Jesus. Second, our strategies must match our prayers.

If Gospel saturation is our ultimate aim, then “planting a church” cannot be the extent of our strategy. To reach an entire city, we must regain the simple and multiplicative method of Jesus and the early Church. Heavy structures built around non-reproducible personalities or programs will never help us reach our true goal. Expensive buildings and lengthy, scholarly-focused training environments will never crank out leaders fast enough to see Gospel saturation, let alone keep up with simple population growth. We must go back to a lightweight and deep-rooted disciple-making strategy that unleashes ordinary people to plant the Gospel, make new followers of Jesus, and see simple forms of church emerge in contexts all over the city.

Our strategies flow from a vision of Gospel saturation founded in the authority and Lordship of Jesus. As we send missionaries into every corner of culture to make disciples and bring light to the darkest places, we will see microchurches emerge in every network of relationships. These extended spiritual families will bring healing to broken homes and elevate the city. They will be small enough to move quickly and adapt to new contexts. Then, new disciples and missionaries will multiply into other unreached pockets of people. These missionaries and microchurches will be the everyday representation of Jesus.

If we are going to ignite and be a part of a genuine Jesus movement, then we must return and recapture the depth of “Jesus is Lord,” not only for our mission but for our own lives. He must take the throne and have full authority to guide us. We must seek to bend all our rhythms and ways around Him. Out of this, we will understand that we have already been sent on mission, just as Jesus was. Not only will we understand that we have been sent, but we will go on mission as He went on mission, fully incarnating among the people to whom we have been sent.

And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

EPHESIANS 1:22-24

SPIRITUAL FAMILIES EMERGE:

An Introduction to Microchurches

If you could clear all the dirt away in your local forest and peer beneath the surface, you would discover an elaborate interconnected network. The trees' roots and fungi intertwine into a complex system that passes information to one another, and even eats together by sharing nutrients.

This doesn't always mean that every individual tree has a deep root system. Certain larger trees like redwoods possess a shallow root structure. One might assume that a hefty storm with powerful winds could quickly bring these giants crashing to the ground. But this rarely happens. The reason is not due to the depth of their roots, but that redwoods grow in clusters. Their roots intertwine in a way that profoundly provides for one another.

In many ways, this is the perfect analogy for the way Jesus designed His Church. Throughout Scripture, we see a handful of consistent images used to metaphorically describe God's people (bride, body, temple, etc.). However, one that consistently seems to make its way into our everyday language within the KC Underground is the family metaphor (GALATIANS 6:10). Jesus designed His Church to function as a family that operates much like what we witness in the forest. At its core, the Church is the family of God whose members intentionally allow their lives to become rooted together. Alone, we are too shallow to withstand the storms of life. But together, an extended spiritual family with Jesus at the center can withstand anything.



SPIRITUAL FAMILY

The theme of family weaves throughout the narrative of Scripture. Jesus Himself instituted and affirmed the biological family. He called people to be faithful in marriage (MATTHEW 19:1-9) and honor their parents (MARK 7:9-13). Similarly, Paul thought it wisest for most people to marry and have children (1 CORINTHIANS 7:8-9; 1 TIMOTHY 5:14) and provided clear instructions for how families can flourish (EPHESIANS 5-6).

And yet, according to Jesus, the biological family is not our primary family. First and foremost, we are “members of the household of God” (EPHESIANS 2:19). In cases of conflicting loyalties, Jesus made it clear, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple” (LUKE 14:26).

We understand the Gospel when we see it through the lens of family. Although we have sinned and become illegitimate children, God sent His Son so that we could be reconciled to the Father. Through Jesus, anyone can join the family by faith in Him (JOHN 1:12-13; GALATIANS 3:6-9). Because our God is the perfect dad, because Jesus is our reconciling Savior, and the Spirit is the very presence of God within us, we are now a part of an eternal family.

WHAT IS MICROCHURCH?

For this reason, within KC Underground our working definition of a microchurch is **“an extended spiritual family, led by ordinary people, who live in everyday Gospel community, and own the mission of Jesus in a network of relationships.”**

The Church is first and foremost about identity, not activity. We have a deep ache in our hearts for people to understand that Church is not a building or a program or an event. The Church is not built around one or two influential voices. But the Church, at its core, is family.

If we understand this fundamental truth, the people of God are free to live with passion, love, and purpose. We are open to living with new rhythms that mirror the ways of the early Church. Perhaps the most concise description of these rhythms is portrayed in Acts 2.

Furthermore, readers of Acts get a glimpse of where and when these rhythms played out.

In Jerusalem, the believers gathered both in the temple and in the home. In the larger setting of the temple courts, the apostles taught, performed miracles, and evangelized. The early believers learned, worshipped, prayed, and fellowshiped together in this corporate space.

In the houses, however, is where the church functioned as extended spiritual families. It was in this setting that they lived in an everyday Gospel community. These spiritual families were led by ordinary people who owned the mission of Jesus in their relational network. These microchurches in Jerusalem had everything in common, sharing possessions, meals, laughter, and conversations. They celebrated together as new people joined the family daily. Stories of life with Jesus were shared with openness and honesty. Dinner was prepared with many hands, and the eating was accompanied by more laughter and stories, for they were sincerely glad to be together. Each would say, “These are my favorite people!” The conversation always moved to the rediscovery of the apostles’ teachings, each retelling what they heard about Jesus and His ways. And the discussion was catalytic. They had been “taught to obey” (MATTHEW 28:18-20), so the conversation moved to practical obedience. Prayer flowed continually. And it was challenging to figure out who was “in charge,” as each person brought “a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation” (1 CORINTHIANS 14:26) to share. What a beautiful picture of the family of God!

MICROCHURCHES EMERGE OUT OF THE OIKOS

The Greek word used in the New Testament for the family is *oikos*. This is a robust word that went beyond the immediate family’s idea to include

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and 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.
ACTS 2:42-45

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, praising God and enjoying all the people’s favor. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved
ACTS 2:46-47

extended family, household slaves, and their network of friends, neighbors, and business associates.

According to Michael Green, author of *Evangelism in the Early Church*, “Christians... made a deliberate point of gaining...households as lighthouses... from which the Gospel could illuminate the surrounding darkness.”

As the Gospel spread, more and more households flipped their allegiance and became part of the mission of God. The Gospel, therefore, took *oikos* and transformed it into something more significant. What was once merely an earthly family had now been transformed into an eternal, spiritual family on mission. And church planting was directly related to new disciples produced within previously existing networks of relationships.

For this reason, within the Underground, we say that microchurches emerge rather than are planted. As new disciples are made, natural networks of relationships (*oikos*) are transformed into spiritual families. We do not plant churches; instead, we plant the Gospel. As the Gospel is planted, disciples are formed from the ground up, resulting in new microchurches. We believe the order is important. Gospel planting and disciple-making that lead to the emergence of churches is the model clearly present throughout the book of Acts. To understand church formation in this way is the difference between redistributing Christians into smaller groups and birthing new microchurches out of new disciples.

Oikos is at the core of Gospel planting. Instead of extracting individuals from their families and friends to attend services at the temple courts, the early church infiltrated and transformed existing houses to become new spiritual families. In this sense, form follows function. A microform of Church is the natural setting for a group to function as a family.

Why is this important? The honeymoon phase of early believers in Jerusalem would not last long. A nimble form of church, rather than the bulky temple form they knew so well, was essential as the Gospel spread “throughout the ends of the earth” (ACTS 1:8).

THE MICROCHURCH AS THE PRIMARY EXPRESSION OF CHURCH

Following Stephen’s martyrdom, the Church experienced severe persecution, resulting in the complete shutdown of public gatherings at the temple courts. What happens next is not the church’s death, but instead, a multiplicative scattering of God’s people. The persecution and shutting down of the temple resulted in an increased disciple-making rate across the Roman Empire.

The form of church that endured was the microchurch.

Microchurch is not the trendy next thing. It’s not a program that will attract the masses. Microchurch is not a JV church that’s secondary to a larger congregational meeting.

...On that day, a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
ACTS 8:1 (NIV)

Microchurch is not a small group that merely seeks to learn new spiritual truths together. Instead, microchurch is the primary expression of God's people. It is the form that best houses the essential functions of the spiritual family. It is a form that can change, adapt, multiply, and thrive regardless of the environment. In many ways, the book of Acts and the Epistles is the story of Jesus living in and through a movement of microchurches.

THE FUNCTIONS OF A MICROCHURCH

In the book *Microchurch*, Brian Sanders says, "If you strip everything away that is not essential to being a church, what are you left with? In the Underground, the answer we decided on was worship, community, and mission. When Christians work together in sincere worship and genuine community to accomplish the part of God's mission, they function as the church. Worship, community, and mission, then, are the basic elements. The church can include more elements, but not fewer. What makes a group of people a church is that they worship together, are committed to each other, and undertake the mission together. Whenever those three things overlap, that is the church."

Worship, community, mission. We call this the "ecclesial minimum" (*ecclesia* is the biblical word from which we get our word for church). When a group of Jesus-followers together engage in these lifestyles and practices, we have church. As an *oikos* discovers Jesus together and begins to walk in obedience to His voice, these rhythms start to take shape, and new spiritual families emerge. As those who were once far from God begin to confess their sins, respond to Jesus' words, get baptized, and share the good news with others in their lives, we have a fully functional New Testament church. We don't graduate from that. Although the microchurch may mature in those practices, the functions of worship, community, and mission remain the church's primary functions.

MICROCHURCH IS AN APPRENTICESHIP NETWORK (WORSHIP)

Here is the biblical definition of worship: "Offer your bodies as sacrifices... this is your spiritual act of worship" (ROMANS 12:1-2). Worship, therefore, is so much bigger than singing songs on a Sunday morning. The microchurch is the family in which we grow into the Lordship of Jesus in every area of life. We learn the Word of God together. We learn together to hear the Spirit speak. We learn together how to embody the words in our lives. We disciple one another in the Lordship of Jesus by learning to obey all He has commanded us (MATTHEW 28:18-20).

Discipleship is best seen as an apprenticeship to Jesus. Fundamentally, an apprenticeship is a journey toward mastery in a given area. In Jesus, we are being apprenticed into the fully-alive life (JOHN 10:10).

Like any other pursuit, transformation is an apprenticeship that requires us to come alongside someone who is further down the road. As disciples,

we are willing to be a beginner again and again, as we discover more areas of needed transformation in our lives. We are always students who need teachers. We are always players who need coaches. The microchurch, an extended spiritual family on mission, provides a relational network broad enough and deep enough to help each of us find teachers in the areas in which we need an apprenticeship. Information is not enough. An example that is mostly modeled from the stage is not enough. We imitate and embody what is tangible and expressed right before our lives.

We then do the same for others. As we move forward, we are also always teachers who need students, coaches who need players. Again, others' transformation requires imitation, which requires a relationship with us in a given area. It requires a whole framework of relationships made up of interwoven relational connections...an extended spiritual family. That's why one-on-one discipleship is not enough. No one person can model all the needed areas of growth for us. We need an extended spiritual family as a school for mastering the art of living with Jesus.

MICROCHURCH IS A MISSION BASE (MISSION)

In the early Church, families were mission bases. Entire households heard, believed, and spread the Gospel together (E.G., ACTS 16:30-34; ROMANS 16:10-15). Many microchurches start as immediate biological families that become extended spiritual families through missionary living and Gospel planting.

The mission of Jesus is at the very center of a microchurch family. Mission reaches down to our very deepest understanding of who God is, why we are here, and how we live. Mission is not a tag-on. Mission is not a department. The mission isn't something we volunteer for a few hours a month. Mission is not something reserved for the elite or the paid professionals. Mission is the sweeping force that runs through everything we are and do.

Ultimately, the mission is not first about the activity. Mission is first about identity: God's identity and ours, as His offspring. Mission starts by understanding that we serve a God who is a missionary. By His very nature, our God is a sent one who left His throne, on mission, to redeem all of creation in Jesus. It's this simple: The Father sent Israel. The Father sent the Son. The Father and the Son sent the Spirit. The Father, Son, and Spirit are sending the Church. If God is a missionary God, then as an offspring, we are a missionary people.

Microchurches know their missional context because often they have emerged out of that context themselves. Mission was in the DNA from the beginning. They know the people to whom they are sent and the people there who don't yet know how much they matter to God. A microchurch continues to own God's mission in a particular space or people by planting themselves deep into that context. They live like missionaries, establish credibility, plant the Gospel as God draws new disciples to Himself. From there, multiplication is a natural byproduct. New life begets new life.

MICROCHURCH IS A CARE NETWORK (COMMUNITY)

Consider the dozens of “one another” commands about the community in the New Testament. Essential and straightforward commands like love one another. Be devoted to one another. Honor one another. Live in harmony with one another. Accept one another. Instruct one another. Serve one another. Be kind and compassionate to one another. Submit to one another. Teach and admonish one another.

Now, think about the environment in which these commands are best fleshed out. Is it in a larger setting or a micro-setting? The Church is most tangible and embodied at the smallest level, not the largest. The microchurch expression makes sense of the one-another commands to the church. For example, “bear one another’s burdens” (GALATIANS 6:2). We can do that most meaningfully and sustainably at the micro-level. It starts to lose its tangibility, meaning, and transformation if it’s only at the “big” level of hundreds or thousands. At the microchurch level, we can walk with others daily, bearing those burdens, as a care network.

THE FAMILY BUSINESS

The church is the family of God, and family is best experienced in a setting where lives can intersect and overlap in real ways. The church has never been about structures, personalities, programs, or professionals. Church is about family. And the family business has always been about filling every corner of the earth with beauty, justice, and good news.

Perhaps today is the day that God is reminding you of your place in His family and your purpose in the family mission.

Our vision within KC Underground is to see Gospel saturation in Kansas City. We want to see a missionary and microchurch in every neighborhood and network in our city. This vision cannot be done with expensive and heavy structures but can only be done by returning to the Scriptures and remembering extended spiritual families’ role.

But here’s the truth: As an organization that operates one-part missions organization and one-part network of microchurches, we sit in an interesting place of tension. On the one hand, we simply desire to see the people of God live as a network of spiritual families, led by ordinary people, owning their particular mission. We want to see a simple model of church that will help followers of Jesus flourish in every part of life. We want to validate these micro-expressions for what they truly are: church.

On the other hand, we have no desire to merely re-form Christians into smaller groups and relabel them as “microchurches.” The goal is not to retreat and go small, but instead, it’s to be nimble and replicate. Our collective heart



beats for creating new disciples within new networks that will eventually, like a Gospel-virus, slowly take over the entire city. It's not division; it's multiplication. It's disciple-making that leads to church planting, not the other way around. We agree with Mike Breen, who said, "If you make disciples, you always get the church. But if you make a church, you rarely get disciples."

We aim to simultaneously validate the microchurch as the primary expression of church while always training towards Gospel-planting, leading to the transformation of the already existing *oikos*. We believe that the form of microchurch is essential, but the form alone will never reach the goal Jesus gave to us in the Great Commission: to make disciples of all nations, all people groups, in every corner of the earth (MATTHEW 28:18).

This grand mission, simply put, is the purpose of the family business. And microchurch, the extended spiritual family, is the form best set up to house a mighty move of God.

HUDDLES:

A Boots-on-the-Ground Training Experience

PURPOSE & VISION

If you are reading this, then it's quite possible that you are either preparing for or thinking about taking practical steps to live on mission, make disciples, and perhaps see new microchurches emerge. If this is you, you are invited to participate in a seven-week huddle covering the Missionary Pathway. Grab a few friends, perhaps people you are in community with already, or people who share a desire to be missionally-focused in new ways (whom we call "potential missional Christians"), and begin to work through the huddle together.

The Missionary Pathway huddle intends to equip and empower everyday missionaries to make disciples of Jesus within their existing contexts and do that within an on-the-go training environment.

The goal is that these huddles would directly lead to Discovery Bible Study environments that often mature into new spiritual families (microchurches).

A secondary goal would be for members to reproduce this huddle with other potential missional Christians. As multiplication occurs on both fronts (among non-believers and potential missional Christians), we could see a powerful move of God that sees new groups of previously unchurched people surrendering to Jesus, as well as an army of trained-up believers equipped and unleashed into an unbelieving world.

HUDDLE STRUCTURE & EXPECTATIONS

The seven-week huddle will be organized by the five major elements within the Missionary Pathway, focusing on the first three (Extraordinary Prayer & Fasting, Live Like a Missionary, Plant the Gospel). The emphasis is on practical learning and immediate implementation of the concepts and practices that will be discussed. The huddle itself is set up in a "reverse learning" model in which participants will complete online pre-work throughout the week (found at missionarypathway.com) before meeting in-person (or online) with others in their huddle.

The weekly format:

- Before the huddle: complete the online pre-work throughout the week.
 1. Personal Discovery Bible Study
 2. Training video/reading
 3. Practical tool to implement
- During the huddle: gather together to discuss and troubleshoot the content/practices of the week, discover critical concepts in Scripture, and create personal obedience statements called "I Will Statements."
- After the huddle: live it out. Practice what you're learning—experiment.

ALL HUDDLE
MATERIALS:
missionarypathway.com

NEXT STEPS

Following this huddle, you will be equipped with some essential tools and language to help set you on a trajectory of making disciples and seeing new microchurches emerge. Each participant is encouraged to reproduce this huddle with other potential missional Christians in their spheres of influence.



NETWORK WITH OTHERS

Don't travel this pathway by yourself. There are more and more networks emerging that are focused on movements, multiplicative disciple-making, and microchurches. Find them and partner with them. Ongoing coaching is an essential part of seeing movements of God endure. Networking with others is crucial for camaraderie and encouragement.

If you are in the Kansas City area, you are invited to partner with KC Underground, a network of microchurches dedicated to seeing Gospel saturation in Kansas City.

After the huddle, decide what's next for this group. Does it make sense to continue as a TEAM (a group on mission together focusing on a particular area or affinity)? Perhaps this group will scatter as they continually walk this Missionary Pathway with other teammates. Or maybe this group will decide to more intentionally walk out the rhythms of worship, community, and mission and organize into an ongoing microchurch (a spiritual family on mission) as you continue to stir one another in your separate or shared mission fields.

Continue to live on mission in your context. Walk the Missionary Pathway. Start Discovery Bible Study environments. See new disciples made and new spiritual families emerge.

Reproduce this huddle with other potential missional Christians. Train and release more workers into the harvest.

CONNECT WITH THIS NETWORK
KCUNDERGROUND.COM