

For the Harvest Podcast #2 - New Wineskins

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If your goal is to fill a field which all of us as missionaries or as pastors and church planters, our goal should be to fill the field, fill the earth, make disciples of all nations, right? And so think about what you have in this field, certain borders you have to fill. How do I best fill it? Like do I plant one tree and then just fertilizer, fertilizer, fertilize it and try to fill the field by growing one tree really, really big? Or do I plant dozens of trees in the field?

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That you've got to get a small team to start the thing that's really committed to evangelism and do enough evangelism that you overwhelm that small team quickly. And so the ratio of Christian, the small team, and the faith beginner is a lot higher on the faith beginner side. Now you have something that will continue to grow for a long time.

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All right. Thanks for joining us for episode two of the For the Harvest podcast. I'm here with the Worcesters, three of them anyways. And we're continuing our conversations around accelerating evangelistic growth across the globe. If you missed our launch episode, we kicked it off last time. Be sure to check it out. We'll have a link to the intro episode on the show notes here.

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But today we're picking back up with the conversation around evangelistic growth. And last time, as we talked about harvesting in terms of evangelism, we talked about how it means both picking and packing. And last time we talked a lot about picking. How do you find the evangelistic ripe fruit and then share the gospel? We talked about some really interesting ways of getting the gospel across.

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I encourage you to check that out. If you didn't hear it. But today we're talking about packing. How do you gather the new believers or the faith beginners? And that's another area that, particularly these three Worcesters in their ministries have really focused on. So first, I want to turn it over to you three and just tell us, why do you think this is such an important idea to give attention to today?

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I think one of the things is that you tend to reach people with some may say discovery evangelism, but then often what happens if you bring them into an existing group, they may or may not fit the culture or the spiritual level of the group. And so they may bounce off.

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And so there's just a big problem with the kind of stickiness of your church. When people come in, do they really stick to your church or do they bounce off? And so that's I think something that we want to kind of address today.

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And as I mean we're I'm an evangelist. So nothing gets me more excited than seeing someone cross from death to life.

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But we know that that's just the start of the process of discipleship in that person's life. And so we want to help them plug in to a church or a ministry that will really help them grow and thrive in their first steps of following Christ. So Jesus said, go make disciples. And so part of that is seeing people cross the line of faith.

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But then it's also teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. And so the way to do that is plugging into a church or ministry.

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And I just say as we think about the last podcast and this one, it's sort of the one-two punch for evangelistic growth. Evangelism, that's the Discovery Evangelism.

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The growth part is that they actually keep going to the group or church you're starting. And the thing gets larger in time and you reach more people and they tend to stick.

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Okay. And John, I know you've shared some pretty interesting statistics and also stories over the years as you've seen churches grow and sometimes not grow. And just tell us a little bit about what you've seen in that arena and why you think this is so important.

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Okay. Yeah. Well, I mean, I think we all know that about 80% of churches that exist today around the world are either plateaued or declining. That's just a reality. Though some people think that's unhealthy and that's wrong.

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We're going to talk about that later. But, I'm not so sure about that I think. So it's natural. But anyway. But the other thing, as we look at this...situation, there's two, two illustrations that I wanted to share. One was when I started my first church in California in the Los Angeles area, there was another guy who started a church at almost the same time, and he was in a different suburb at the same time.

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And his approach was he brought in 19 what I call Green Beret Christians to help him do it, they came from a really good campus ministry. And they were really, really sharp people, and they're all geared up to do evangelism. And they had their meeting and they would go out and do evangelism. But when they brought the person, usually one at a time, that got interested at the same week, to come back to the group of the 19 green berets, none of them would stick.

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And so that looked like it would be a great church because all these mature, you know, Christian, they're good, good people. I knew the leader of it. And, but that group never grew. It didn't happen. At the same time we started from scratch, just my wife and I, and we started our whole core group with people that we met in the community, people that became Christians.

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I told you a story about one of those last time and that church is one in the same period of time it had grown to about 150 people including about 100 adults. And 90 something of the adults were new converts. So it grew in a different kind of...it actually grew. Now that's one illustration.

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Another illustration, along the same lines. This is two men, at the same time. I knew them both. They're both friends of mine, actually. They both started churches in the same city in the Dallas area. And one started with 150 people from a church, and they were really trained. They were mature people. And but, oh, man, this is going to be the most exciting church plant ever.

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And they put them in groups. They're going to do evangelism, each of the groups. So they had 10 or 12 people in each small group now training them to do evangelism. It ends up two years later, they did some evangelism, but they never really grew the groups. They didn't start new groups for the new Christians. They just tried to bring them into those groups of older Christians.

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And that church was still 150 3-years later. The other buddy of mine, I was coaching him a little bit, and he did more of the approaches that we take, and he just started from scratch, reached non-Christians. And he ended up reaching about 50 or more people a year. And that church grew, and it became a church of about a thousand in the same city, same year, same age, guys, both good character. The strategy was different.

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Okay. So I don't know about you guys, but that kind of begs the question, like, what is this strategy that we're talking about because I mean, who wouldn't want 19 Green Beret Christians on their launch team? So what's the strategy we're aiming at here?

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Yeah. Yeah. Well, what we're talking about is what Jesus says.

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He made a real blatant statement, almost in your face. He says new wine must, and he used the word must. New wine must have new wineskins. And so I come back and we're going to look at that in a minute. The interpretation of that. The issue is new wineskins. It's a new gathering of people.

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And we are going to find new wineskins as any gathering of people that are in the gathering that is designed for and filled with faith beginners. And our definition, we use that term a lot – Faith Beginner. What are we talking about? They are seekers. Not quite Christians yet, but they're interested enough to come to a Bible study or a church.

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Or they're brand new believers. They're new disciples. And so that includes both of those kinds of groups, and sometimes you don't know which one they are at the stage when they first come around. So New Wineskins is our topic. We think that's the key.

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So let me repeat... You said the definition of a new wineskin in our context here is that it's a meeting or a group that's designed for and filled with faith beginners.

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Well that's the seeker, the person, the seeker, or he's a young Christian, maybe a few months old or maybe a year old even. But he's still, still new in his faith. He's not somebody who grew up in the church and knows all of the Bible verses, and that kind of thing it's not the old time Christian.

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Yeah. So I mean I think you know like one of the things that we're getting at is one of the reasons that people tend to bounce off if they come into a group with all these really hardcore Christians is because if you're a first grader and you come into a seventh grade class, you feel like you're kind of like the one that doesn't know anything.

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And a lot of people, they have pride and they're just kind of, you know, in some way, like they don't want to be the low man on the totem pole. And so they like, feel like, oh, man, this place isn't really for me. I want to find a place, a group of people that, you know, they're kind of in the same boat as me.

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That's kind of like, you know, anytime when you teach about church, everyone's looking around.

Is there like, is there anyone like me? And that's who they're all subliminally asking. And if there's other people like me, then they're probably potential friends or potential people that I could live life with. And so I think the same applies to spiritually.

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Like is it people on the same spiritual level as me in this group? Otherwise they're going to feel like they're like the project and everyone else is way ahead of them.

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One other thing I want to mention and throw in there. This is even accelerated in a problem if the person has leadership gifts. Because if you have leadership gifts, when you move into a group, you're sizing up, where do I fit in the pecking order?

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Can I become somebody significant in this group, I think we all see these in leadership groups. We're sort of like that. And so they're looking around. They see all these people that are five, ten years ahead of them in their Bible knowledge and all that kind of stuff. I can never be in a group here. I'm never gonna be a leader here. And so they don't stick around, but they come in and kind of everybody else knows.

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Well, yeah, we had two girls that both said this that came to a church that we had that was, had a lot of these new believers in it, and they said, oh, I just love this church because nobody else knows anything around here. Yeah.

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But then I think the same girl, a different girl. She said, well, I love this church because nobody else knows anybody else around here either. We're all new, all starting at the same place, and we're all new to this thing of church and Christianity and that's a sticky environment. Now, you don't want to leave them there.

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You want to grow them to be wholly committed to Christ. And that's about the problem. Some of the churches that become so much on that end that they don't really call people to full commitment to Christ. But I think that would be another mistake. We need to when they're coming in, they're feeling comfortable coming around, and we're teaching a real gospel in the full on Lordship of Christ.

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And then we help them to really grow. So they want to stay as a young Christian.

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That's really good. Yeah. And I feel like even bringing it back to the baseline principle of you put

yourself in the mind of a brand new... And I work with college students, so I'm just going to roll with that illustration.

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A new college student, and we're out meeting and sharing the gospel with. And maybe they are really open, God just opens their heart and they come to Christ genuinely. We bring them to our weekly meeting, their first question in the back of their mind, whether it's the right question or not is, can I relate to these people?

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Are these my type of people? And do I fit in? They're not looking for a friendly group. They're not even looking for a group with the best teaching or the best whatever fills in the blank. They're looking. Can I make friends here? Bottom line. And that's like a lot of next gen. like younger people in that demographic.

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That's the biggest question. Can I make friends? They're not looking for a friendly group. They're looking for friends. And so having that in a lot of time. This is what I've been praying for and encouraging leaders to pray for that. Pray not just to reach individuals. Pray that we'll reach whole friend groups with the gospel.

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And like even look towards that. And when you reach a new believer from the very get go, say, oh, this is amazing. Who else do you know that could be a part of this? Like getting plugged in and even starting a group around that new believer? I know we'll talk more about that in the discovery group idea, but I think thinking that way now, like birds of a feather flock together and even more so, Gen Z.

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They want a little crew to run with more than ever. Like I do a discipleship school here, in Hawaii. And I assign them a podcast to listen to once a week, like an audio message, you know, a good discipleship audio message. They even listen to those together. It's kind of weird.

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I give that to you so you could go, like, do your workout, listen. But they just got in the little room and they sent me a picture. We're all listening to you. I was in the other room and they were all listening to a podcast of me preaching, you know, and it was just weird.

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But I think it's something we need to tap into that group dynamic, that friendship idea is so even more so in this next generation.

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And wouldn't you say on the campus ministry, it's also the freshmen who come to college and the one thing they want to find is some friends.

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What happens? They're the ones that are going to stick with...same thing with a new suburb. It's growing. People move into a new suburb or immigrants come to a new country. They are hungry to make friends, and they're usually looking for people like themselves.

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Oh, I mean, when we just moved to Hawaii, our family felt that way, too.

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We were desperate to make, you know, I mean, I'm even tearing up because I think people are moving to a new location. Man, they are desperate for friends and especially for their kids. If they have kids, they want their kids to make friends. And people tend to come to Christ in trouble and transition.

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And that sense of need for community is so strong. We could go off on that.

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I have a question. I think they can get us into the meat of it. The church that I'm at right now has been around for 30 years, and they have something kind for everyone and it's a little bit of a larger church.

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So like, someone can come in and kind of feel like there may be someone like me, but it's also big enough where it's not obvious the demographic, one demographic. And so yeah, how would this principle apply? Because I think it's really obvious in a group that's like mid-size, the small like where you come in and you immediately know what the demographic is, but for larger churches and ministries, how would this principle apply?

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Most of my experience has been in startups up to 150 or 200 or so. But I would say the key for a larger church like that is 30 years old. And the people that have been coming, most people I've come in for quite a while. There are some new people coming, but you've got to sort of separate them out.

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And so not only separate out, but you start a new group for the faith beginners or for the fresh start with God. You kind of get you get some place where you collect them together and starting that new group has good potential to grow, and then hopefully they will then even reach out to their friends and it'll grow even more, because the newest Christians and the newest people to a

church are the best people to reach new people because they still have non-Christian friends.

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And so anyway, it's important for a church to be starting. It didn't have to be a whole new church, even though I think I'm all for that. It could be starting a new group of some sort, raising up a leader, sending them out to start a new group, a new wineskin that will reach new people, new wine.

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Yeah. So that's good. If you, you know, if you're in one of those situations that don't think of it as, oh, we have to start over completely from scratch, but you can start a brand new group within your church or several brand new groups within your church, for different types of people. And so I love that idea too, like, yeah, if you have something that's working and, you know, keep it going and you know, you're going to reach new people through that at some level.

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But I think that's kind of a myth too. Like if I just tweak my current thing enough and I just get that, get the right mixture, the right music, the right picture, the right, you know, whatever it is, then somehow maybe it'll take off and blow up. But, I think it's not. It's not either/or.

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You want to keep getting as good as you can and on that level. But people get so stuck in that that they're like, oh, we haven't. We need to grow ourselves before we can start anything new. And that's just a false dichotomy.

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What did Einstein say about a crazy person? Yeah, he does the same thing over and over again. He thinks he's going to get different results every time.

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Another way to say that, if you do what you've always done you'll get what you've always got. And so yeah, if you want to get something new, you have to do something new.

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And that's another case for age and stage type ministries. There's actually reading different Christian books and talking to leaders.

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There's almost a trend against that where it's like we need to have intergenerational relationships. And in the church and all that, which is true. But as far as evangelism and plugging people in, it's still the reality. And some people could argue, well, that's shallow, that someone thinks, I only want to be with people like me. We live in a fallen world, and we're trying to reach people that are not perfect.

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And they're not going to have perfect impulses like, oh, I just need to be with everyone all the time. So having a young adult ministry or a college ministry can be a great way to reach new people that age and then just plug them in and yes, still get them plugged into the overall church. But often that starts like 90% of the students we reached in Chico.

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It was from our college ministry because we had a vibrant college ministry. It wasn't because the church was so awesome, it was because the church was awesome. But I think it was because we were so focused on reaching them specifically. And now there's a thriving amount of students that are integrated into the overall church.

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And you were able to bring enough of those new Christian students into the church at the same time that they had an automatic connection group there.

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I know one of the, you know, one of the ideas that's also pretty prevalent is that church meetings should primarily be for, for Christians or for the people in the church. And, you know, I've heard that idea said, but how does this idea kind of fit with that or not fit with that?

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Well, you know, you say primarily, I'm not gonna argue about that. But the other thing, almost like all churches, I've heard them say, all church meetings should be for Christian just to disciple and equip the Christians. And then they go out and do evangelism and that kind of thing. But, I think it's one of those both and things.

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It's both. Go and tell and come and see. But when you have them come and see, you have to come and see the thing they actually can relate to. And some people they can relate to on a similar spiritual level. So it's kind of a both/and. I think they go too extreme on one or the other.

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But if you look at Jesus' ministry, look at Jesus's ministry, think about it. He met...I wouldn't call them church meetings. He met with crowds. I think it's Luke 6:17 and it says that there were crowds of people and crowds of disciples at this huge meeting they had. And the word for crowds in both of those phrases was the same word in the Greek.

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There were multitudes, lots and lots of non-Christians or people and disciples who are Christians and so he had meetings like that all the time. And so I think you can do it. But a little bit of it is the stage of the church you're in and the early stage of the church. It sort of can be

geared more for evangelism and for the newer people.

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And you're kind of starting this new, you know, spiritual preschool and nursery and kind of grow it up over time. And then later on, you in that deeper church, you're doing other things, but that church has got to do some different stuff, too. Once you get there. We can get into that later.

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Yes, I would say especially when you're a smaller church or ministry, you have an advantage, being able to really focus on evangelism and a man's hunger drives him on.

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I mean, if you're going to have anyone come to your church plant or your new ministry, you better go get them. And even thinking about groups, if, say, you're a group of 30 or 40 in the church plant phase or in a new ministry start phase, I often coach leaders to consider starting discovery groups, evangelistic groups instead of community groups, because if you're ministry is like 30 already, that's a community group in of itself.

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If you're already doing a weekly meeting for them, get them starting evangelistic groups among pockets of people. And that can accomplish a lot more to kind of grow and multiply what you're doing.

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Yeah. And see what you got to do. I think the key to this is you've got to get a small team to start the thing that's really committed to evangelism and do enough evangelism that you overwhelm that small team quickly.

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And so the ratio of Christian, the small team and the faith beginner is a lot higher on the faith beginner side. Now you've got something that will continue to grow for a long time. So the team you select, you don't want just anybody there. But even a small group you start a small group with eight Christians and they're going to try to grow it through evangelism.

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But again, they finally get a non-Christian to come to it. But he comes to it's one to eight and he doesn't fit the group. And then they get in there and all the Christians are doing all the cross-references and showing what Bible knowledge they have, and the guy that's new to it just feels completely, you know, out of it.

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And unless he's just really desperate. He probably won't come back. Going back to that ego thing that David was talking about earlier.

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Well, I want to just to make sure that we can. I know we've got people listening that probably are from bigger churches, some from little churches, some from campus ministries. And so I know that there's a lot of really practical, takeaways here. And so I want to make sure we get to hammer those out really well.

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So for somebody who's in like I'll take myself as an example. Right. So I've got a small church. We're fairly new but not quite new wineskin level. You know, we got about 40 adults. And, and so I've been thinking about how to apply this, and I want to do some discovery Bible studies or some small new groups for evangelism.

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But would you recommend for me or somebody like me, like, do I try to get like 2 or 3 people or what's the right number of people to try to get to do this evangelistic work?

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Okay, I'll just say just let's go back to Jesus. Okay? He started his movement?

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I mean, our whole thing is harvest like Jesus. How do we reach people? You know, the way Jesus did. Let's look at his example. He said, follow me. I'm make you fishers of men. Right? So it's a pretty good, pretty wise thing to do. What did he do in John 1? Well he went out and I think he did Discover Evangelism.

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He went out to John the Baptist's meeting, and met a bunch of people. We talked about that last week and then what's the first thing he did in John 1:39, he invited them, come over to my house late in the afternoon, and they spent the afternoon listening to Jesus and like, like reading the Bible, you're listening to Jesus. So you're having this Discovery Bible study, if you want to call it that.

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It was just one guy. Jesus. And he had two pre disciples in the meeting, the followers of John the Baptist they were not followers of Jesus, yet. and so he had a two thirds ratio. He had the right ratio, you know, just starting with one. That's fine with your friend. And then he grew up pretty fast.

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Within a couple of days they had five. And then, you know, we see what happened after that. But whatever group like when Paul started his ministry, his and Barnabas' like that. They'd go into a place and they would do enough evangelism and effective enough evangelism overwhelm

their group. And that would give them and give them something to, to start with, that would continue to reach that community for generations. Does that make sense?

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So look at him, Jesus. Jesus did it. And so you can start with 1, 2, or 3. But you've got to do enough evangelism that when you have your first meeting you've got more of the faith beginners there. Then you have the old timers. That's the key. And that's what almost never happens. And my observation of watching guys try to grow groups and churches around. They get so many Christians around, percentage wise, that the non-Christian and the new believer doesn't feel like he fits in.

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And so he bounces off. And I think this is just one of the keys that is overlooked, by and large. And a lot of the Christian world. And I see it in a lot of countries, too. I don't see this in the United States. This isn't a United States problem. This is a problem in a lot of places, except where Christianity is first growing, because when Christianity first grew like it did in Mongolia back in the 1990s, all the people were new believers so everybody could come and it would just grow like crazy for a while.

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Yeah. We've seen this principle play out over the years. You know I was doing strictly campus ministry and then church planting and now church. In my campus ministry, we had a strategy for a while that we were actually starting evangelistic Bible studies at two different community colleges and San Diego State and it was working really well for a while.

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There's a reason why it didn't last forever because of community college. Every two years you get a new group of people, but if we had a solid person on that campus, I think it would have been really effective at just continuing to reach. But what happened was we were like, oh, it's too much work to do a separate meeting at the community college.

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So let's let all the community college kids come to the San Diego State meeting. And so what happened is we had too many community college people coming, and it actually changed the whole dynamic of the group. And we stopped being as effective evangelistically. And so it's really interesting the way that that played out. And so we saw those dynamics at play.

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And then when it came time for me to start Compass, actually, one thing we were debating is whether or not we can bring Challenge our current college ministry with us. We could just be like, oh man, we can have a launch large. We can already have, you know, a group of 30 or 40, whatever, come with us and start the church.

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And we were just thinking about it and it was this kind of, this principle that helped us to figure out, okay, no, we're going to select 3 or 4 people from Challenge from our college ministry to help us go start Compass from scratch. And I think I was really, in the long term, a really good decision because it took us a little bit longer to grow, but we grew pretty quick to that similar size of like, you know, 50-70, 60-70.

00:29:02.666 - 00:29:19.900

And we've been at that size for a while now. So that's kind of like the size that I generally can, you know, grow something too. And so it's just kind of interesting, you know, seeing those dynamics play out and if we would have started with, you know, that bigger group, I don't know what would have happened.

00:29:19.900 - 00:29:46.333

But my guess is maybe we could go to a similar size that Compass currently is. And instead of having two groups which are still Challenge still going now we would only have one group. And so I think that's another way to look at it, is by pulling out just a few people from the bigger group and starting from scratch, then you can actually multiply rather than divide, you know, if you multiply rather than divide.

00:29:46.400 - 00:30:07.400

And if you started with the 30 Christians from your other campus ministry, you might have grown, you might even have grown larger. But you have to analyze what the growth was. The growth of churches starts with a big core group usually growing by transfer growth not conversion growth actually study after study, sample after example of that.

00:30:07.400 - 00:30:20.166

If you start out with a lot of Christian, now you see you had this group that starts with a big core group. And they're all kind of, you know, advanced Christians and other advanced Christians in the area will hear. You'll hear about, oh, that's the hottest church. And they got a lot of good discipleship, good teaching there. And so they will come in.

00:30:20.166 - 00:30:53.300

The church will grow fast and maybe even larger than the church that's growing by conversion, growth. But they'll have a lot less conversions at the end of it. And I think what Jesus is after is fruit, which is what we call it. We'll probably use it on his podcast. We'll use a little acrostic called ABS. You guys, I know we talked about that last week or not, but an ab is an adult baptism that sticks and somebody who comes to Christ and, they're willing enough to be identified with Christ, get baptized, and then they keep coming to the church, they stay with Christ, and they stay with the church.

00:30:53.400 - 00:31:03.033

That's evangelistic growth. And so we are always asking people, well, how strong are your abs?

We have a good six pack here and get that going.

00:31:03.033 - 00:31:07.666

Too many church potlucks and you end up with flabs, not abs.

00:31:07.666 - 00:31:19.000

We'll have to get an acrostic for that someday. You can figure out the acrostic for that.

00:31:19.000 - 00:31:23.200

Paul, have you seen the Wineskins principle play out in your ministry?

00:31:23.200 - 00:31:48.700

That's good. Yeah, I think there's a way to think about it on a big scale as far as planting new churches, planting new ministries. But as an individual ministry, you can also apply the same principle, but on a smaller scale. So if you have well committed, if like at a certain point, about eight years in, we had about 50, committed student leaders that we had trained that, each year we kind of had a new batch.

00:31:48.700 - 00:32:09.966

And, and that's one of the perks of college ministry is you can keep the ratios decent because they're all young, and you lose a fourth of them every year for graduation. Right. So, there's pros and cons to that. But we also were able to team them up and they could divide and conquer.

00:32:09.966 - 00:32:35.333

And so we started affinity group ministry on people groups or, you know, groups of people, fraternities, sororities, athletic teams, dorms, majors. We kind of divide. I said this last time, but the campus or your community is more like a waffle than a pancake. And we want to get the syrup of the gospel into every nook and cranny.

00:32:35.333 - 00:32:57.000

And so we would send teams of 2 to 4 out to start a new group for a very specific group of people. And it got to the point we call it your personal ministry target. And so that's what we call that. Now we have changed the title to make it more politically correct, the Personal Ministry Impact worksheet.

00:32:57.000 - 00:33:20.766

Some people didn't like the word target but whatever. Yeah. So we go for that personal ministry impact worksheet, and a student will fill that out and put together a team. And they'll go try to start an evangelistic Bible study for their dorm, for their major. And they get to actually take the initiative. I wasn't up there being like, okay, you guys go here, you guys go there.

00:33:20.766 - 00:33:49.666

It was more like, let's discern together where God may be calling you to go start a new group.

So we started all these little mini groups. Some went well, some kind of they tried, but they never got a group going. But I could talk for a long time about different stories of students. They moved into the dorms together just to start a new Bible study, and they ended up seeing 12 people come to Christ in one year getting baptized.

00:33:49.666 - 00:34:11.766

And they endured all sorts of stuff living in the dorm, the smell of weed, and the more expensive, you know? And so they were in there and they were really living on a mission as like a team of four. They all moved into the same dorm together. And so I do like the team approach, but it doesn't need to be a huge team. So maybe 2 to 4 is really helpful.

00:34:11.766 - 00:34:16.333

You want it to be small, overwhelm them.

00:34:16.333 - 00:34:34.333

One of the things that I think you brought up, I think is a good thing for us to discuss at some point. Is that idea of the target, like what is wrong with having a target? I think that's a good thing to discuss, because if you look at Jesus's ministry, he actually had a target like he went first to the Jews.

00:34:34.333 - 00:34:53.466

He said, I'm first going to the Jews. But the reason he went to the Jews was for the sake of the whole world. You know, that God's whole purpose for choosing the Jewish people was that he would reach them so that they could be a blessing to the whole world. And so, I mean, if you don't want to have a target, you're probably not going to be very effective.

00:34:53.566 - 00:35:01.966

It's a whole thing of like, if you aim at nothing, you'll hate it every time. I kind of think it's biblical to have a target of people.

00:35:01.966 - 00:35:17.733

I agree. With the target he not only was going to bless the world to the Jews, but he also showed us how to reach a specific target so he can look at his principles and his practices, his methods, and how he reached that one target.

00:35:17.733 - 00:35:33.500

And we can take the same principles and we can apply it to other targets. So it's good missionary training just to watch how Jesus did in one group is how we can do it with new groups. When I went to Russia, we had to do it differently. I had to think about Russians. We had to think about the unchurched Russian, not the Russian that goes to church.

00:35:33.500 - 00:35:50.800

We had gone to Canada. We had to think about the Canadians, which you think they're a lot like

Americans, but they're not. They're very different on the inside. And so the target thing is, it is an important part of it. And that's what ties into that. We are to spend a whole session on that sometime.

00:35:50.800 - 00:36:04.133

So I mean just to give a little bit one more thought about the target thing is like there was the woman that was the Syro-Phoenician woman that she came to, even though she wasn't part of his target, he still helped her out, you know.

00:36:04.133 - 00:36:20.100

And so you can have a specific target. As long as you're open to everyone and you help anyone who comes to you and genuinely is seeking God and like so I think that's the thing that people push against is like, oh, well, we're not targeting you, so we're not going to love you. You're not going to share the gospel.

00:36:20.133 - 00:36:31.333

No, that's not the point. Like, we love everyone, we share with everyone. But in order to do that most effectively, we need to be willing to target specific people and types of people.

00:36:31.333 - 00:36:41.066

But there may be some wisdom in using a different term if that automatically rubs people the wrong way, maybe use a lighter term.

00:36:41.066 - 00:37:14.033

But I do think it's not only biblical, it's missiology 101. Like every missionary learns contextualization. And it's just silly to think about someone going to a tribe in Papua New Guinea and thinking, well, we need to make sure we don't make these two homogeneous. So we need to, you know, like we, you know, we need to make sure if there's any white people that come around, I mean, you know, it's like, no, they're they're trying to reach these people where they're at and in their language in a way that makes sense to them.

00:37:14.133 - 00:37:22.266

And, you know, that's definitely a biblical and strategic way to go about ministry.

00:37:22.266 - 00:37:35.900

So back to the wineskins for a second. That's good though. That fits into it. But the wineskin thing, Jesus did it in a small group we saw in John 1, but he also did it in a large group.

00:37:35.900 - 00:37:58.466

We see it in John 4, right? The woman at the well, she brought all those people out and so he had a large group crowd. And so that large group crowd was also designed for and filled with faith beginners, just like the first one. And even though he had a core group of five at that point in John 4, he used that thing to help launch this larger meeting so it can be larger.

00:37:58.466 - 00:38:24.833

And then you really see it in Luke 5 and also Matthew and Mark, where the parable of the wineskins comes in where Jesus is blessed with his presence. Levi's party. And who is Levi's party? Well, Levi's party or his meaning that he gathered at his house, his feast. It had his tax collectors and sinner friends, and they had this meeting.

00:38:24.833 - 00:38:45.333

Jesus blessed it with his presence. And then it got two criticisms, right? Who are the two groups that criticize anybody? Remember the two groups that criticize that meeting? Remember the first religious leaders? Yeah, there were these Pharisees, religious leaders, anyone remember the other one? That's right, John the Baptist's followers.

00:38:45.500 - 00:39:01.600

That's right, that's right. And so you don't pick it up, sometimes you don't pick that up because of a lot of Bible translations, it has a little, you know, a little added thing. It's not in the Bible. It asks a question about fasting. A lot of them say that or something like that. And it kind of separates the whole context of that passage.

00:39:01.700 - 00:39:25.500

That passage ends up with what wineskins starts with Matthew becoming a Christian, having his party, having two groups react against it, and Jesus answering the reactions. And then Jesus goes into the parables. And one of the parables, a short parable that he taught, was that new wine must have new wineskins. And if you try to put new wine in old wineskins, what happens?

00:39:25.500 - 00:39:30.200

You guys remember this too. What happens when you put new wine in an old wineskin?

00:39:30.200 - 00:39:32.500

It blows up, spills and bursts it.

00:39:32.500 - 00:39:51.800

Why does it burst? The old thing is a little inflexible. They like the way they do things and the people in the old wineskin, they just naturally sort of look down on the person who's kind of not with it, doesn't know all the ropes of the church and those kinds of things.

00:39:51.800 - 00:40:11.033

And you can try to work against that, but they can kind of sense it. But the big play point of that, that parable is that the new wine needs to go in the new wineskin. And I personally believe that a good application of this is that a new wine is the new people that come to Christ.

00:40:11.233 - 00:40:33.133

That's the fruit of the vine and that's the people, and they're the ones that if the group blows up,

they're liable to be spilled out. Jesus even says that they'll be spilled out. Two negative consequences. It's a negative consequence for the old group, the old wineskin. And it's the negative consequence for the new wine that should be put into a new wineskin rather than the old wineskin.

00:40:33.233 - 00:40:45.100

I just think this passage just lays out what we're talking about beautifully. I think Jesus teaches us that. And that's one of the key passages that we try to build a lot of things around.

00:40:45.100 - 00:40:53.033

The story of that reminds me of that story of the Jesus Revolution movie, if you guys remember, and how Chuck Smith started that.

00:40:53.033 - 00:41:17.300

And then at first there was a resistance to all the established things going on. It's a really good illustration of those dynamics. By the grace of God, they were able to kind of move forward. But a lot of times it doesn't go that way. You know, if there's an influx of new people and they're breaking against what the established thing is.

00:41:17.300 - 00:41:21.066

So, but that's just an interesting illustration. That came to mind.

00:41:21.066 - 00:41:39.200

That's the whole Jesus movement. I was a convert during the Jesus movement thing. And, that's kind of what happened. We had a lot of old wineskin churches, and there's something new that God, God was birthing. And that started a lot of new churches as a result of that, because they were so different from the older type churches and groups.

00:41:39.200 - 00:41:46.900

Same thing with groups or campus ministries. Great historical illustration.

00:41:46.900 - 00:42:04.966

In the movie he said our door is always going to be open to everyone. And he said, if you don't want that, then the door is also open for you. You can leave, it goes both ways. Yeah, some of his people left. And so I think that's a good mentality to have.

00:42:04.966 - 00:42:26.933

Who are we to serve? That's the question. Jesus came to us just to serve the lost to lay down his life for the lost. And so we've got to keep that in mind. We equip the saints to do the work at a ministry which is the building of the body of Christ, which is the growth of the body of Christ, which involves evangelism and discipleship and also evangelistic growth.

00:42:26.933 - 00:42:50.933

Well, this has been some great conversation about new wineskins. We've covered a lot about how to start new groups intentionally for faith beginners. And, one of the things that I've heard, John gives very interesting and sometimes controversial ideas on whether it's always necessary for a church to continually grow in order for it to be healthy.

00:42:51.033 - 00:43:10.733

But we don't have time to talk about that. We're going to talk about that at our next meeting, and also look forward to another podcast where we're going to dig into the nuts and bolts of discovery Bible studies. I know, and a lot of you guys here have spent a lot of your ministries, working on and refining ways of gathering, faith beginners around God's Word.

00:43:10.733 - 00:43:29.766

So I'm really looking forward to that. Thanks so much for joining us for today's conversation around accelerating evangelistic growth.