

# MOBILIZE THE CHURCH

A SIMPLE STRATEGY FOR MOBILIZING  
THE BODY OF CHRIST FOR MINISTRY

---

JON WIEST & DWIGHT NASH

---

# THE CHANGING WORLD

## | Our world is changing.

Globalization, secularism, post-modernism, the rise of the information age, and social media have all had significant influence on society. Cities are growing at a rapid pace, rural communities are being transformed, a growing wave of immigrants are arriving, technology is advancing, and culture is rapidly changing.

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy arrives in Oz for the first time and realizes she is in a very different place. "Toto," she says to her little dog, "I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." It's a strange, new world we live in.

## | The church is also changing.

A new culture is emerging, and the Christian story has lost its central place in a society it did much to shape. Nothing has shaken the foundations of the church more than the collapse of Christendom and today North America is being described as *post-Christian* and even *anti-Christian*.

The statistics are sobering.

Only 6% of churches are growing through conversion growth and the other 94% are either reshuffling the deck of existing Christians or experiencing incredible loss as thousands and thousands of people leave the church every year.

In 1990, 85% of people in America defined themselves as Christian. In 2020 that number plummeted below 65%. People are growing increasingly uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the established church.

They rarely turn to the church for answers, they aren't lining up for worship services, and the cultural posture toward the established church is growing in apathy and animosity.

## | What does this all mean?

It means we can't continue to do things the same way and expect different results.

The old models of church growth and church planting as an extension of gathering seekers around an event or worship service is waning in effectiveness. The primary posture of the church must transition from "come and see" to "go and make disciples".

We believe churches should pivot from providing religious goods and services to becoming training centers that mobilize the body of Christ for its disciple-making mission.

## | We are a *sent* people.

Forty-one times in the Gospel of John Jesus refers to himself as being sent. He was *sent* to preach the good news, he was *sent* to the lost sheep of Israel, and he was *sent* to speak the words of God.

In John 20:21-22 Jesus then turned to his disciples and said, "*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.*"

The disciples found themselves huddled in a room with the doors locked behind them. They were scared of the Romans and in fear of the Jews.

This is the posture of many churches today as they circle the wagons and try to ride out the cultural storm that is brewing. Jesus brought peace to their troubled hearts, commissioned

them as *sent ones*, and gave them new power by breathing on them to receive the Holy Spirit.

It was a creative act and it inaugurated something new. In the same way, God wants to do a new thing in your church or network. He wants to activate women and men from every ethnic group to engage and reach people in their sphere of influence. This season marks the beginning of a wonderful opportunity, if only we have the eyes to see.

## A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

Rather than being fearful or worried about our current cultural moment, this could be our greatest opportunity. Yes, the world and the church have changed, but Jesus calls us to lift our gaze and open our eyes.

The disciples had their heads down while traveling through Samaria and Jesus admonished them in John 4:35,

**| "Open your eyes, the fields are white unto harvest".**

I'm sure a few of the disciples were puzzled by this statement. The fields are white unto harvest? The sentiment among many pastors and leaders is often, "*The harvest is sparse, the churches are many, and everyone is fighting for a smaller and smaller group of people seeking spiritual answers from the established church.*"

This is the wrong perspective.

Granted, people are no longer flocking to church services as they did in generations past, and an increasing number have stopped attending altogether. But this says less about the

harvest, and more about our harvesting methods. The harvest is plentiful, but our harvesting methods must change.

**We are now missionaries to a post-Christian culture, not chaplains to Christendom.**

This massive paradigm shift invites a few questions.

- What if pastors and leaders focused more on mobilizing the church?
- What if our churches were training centers, activating the millions of capable workers who worship Jesus on the weekend, but never engage his mission during the week?
- What would it look like if we were to reinvest our resources into mobilizing the church to go rather than adding programs designed to get people to stay?

This shift has been a long time coming.

To quote the famous proverb, “The best time to plant an oak tree was twenty years ago and the second-best time is now.”

It’s time to change our harvesting methods.

Rather than focusing on getting people to come to church, now is the time to mobilize the people of God to go to the world. We want to partner with you to make it happen!

If you desire to mobilize more workers for the harvest, we can help.

It’s why we started *Mobilize the Church*.



Our mission is simple.

***We partner with pastors and network leaders to equip and mobilize more workers for the harvest.***

We’ve both served as pastors who have given ourselves to church planting and multiplication for the last 20+ years. Although we have experienced the joy of serving as district leaders, church planters, and sending pastors, we have also had our fair share of setbacks and challenges in ministry.

We understand the obstacles, tensions, and emotional toll that pastors experience when they commit to mobilizing others. We recognize the challenges that district and denominational leaders face as they navigate closing churches, starting new ones, and building a pipeline of future church planters.

We also understand this approach is not easy. It is not a quick fix, and it will take time.

Ministry is complicated and often difficult.

Mobilizing the body of Christ is not nearly as easy as it sounds. Rather than adding to the complexity, we have tried to build a simple process that will allow you to better visualize a mobilization strategy for your church or network.

**We call this strategy a Mobilization Pipeline.**

We love the church, and in the pages that follow we want to offer a simple blueprint for activating every follower of Jesus to make disciples, pioneer new works, and start churches.

Let’s do it!

# MOBILIZATION PIPELINE

The word mobilize means, “To make something movable or capable of movement”.

A *Mobilization Pipeline* is a process designed to mobilize the body of Christ to live out their mission and calling. Our *Mobilization Pipeline* is depicted below and represents our guiding philosophy of mobilization.

This pipeline depicts people at various stages of mobilization and helps identify transition points for each person. The foundation of the pipeline is *Stage One* and each successive stage builds on the previous one.



- **Stage 1** - Identify disciples
- **Stage 2** - Disciples to disciple makers
- **Stage 3** - Disciple makers to pioneer leaders
- **Stage 4** - Pioneer leaders to church planters
- **Stage 5** - Church planters to sending pastors

The foundation of the pipeline is populated by hundreds of thousands of disciples of Jesus. This is the starting point for mobilization, and the goal is to move them through a series of stages.

The first stage is to identify disciples who are hungry for Jesus.

These individuals are then challenged to share the gospel and become disciple makers. Disciple makers then need a process for discovering their calling and reaching new groups of people.

These pioneers become the raw material for future church planters who are then encouraged to be sending pastors and the process continues.

## This is the basic premise of our *Mobilization Pipeline*.

It is a process that provides a way of evaluating local congregations to identify next steps in equipping the body of Christ for mission.

To address the unique challenges at each stage of the pipeline, we have created a number of different courses and training experiences for pastors and leaders. A full list of these courses can be viewed on our website at [www.mobilizethechurch.com](http://www.mobilizethechurch.com) or scan this QR code.



## IT STARTS WITH A QUESTION

Building a *Mobilization Pipeline* begins with a simple question.

### | Who do you have?

We don't begin by asking how to get the people "out there" to come to church. Instead, we begin with the people in the room. How can we mobilize the people "in here" to go out into the world?

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 and the master's response to the servant who buried his resources is sobering. We often apply this parable to personal gifts and resources, but it could also be expanded to include pastors and network leaders.

- How are you stewarding the women and men who worship Jesus on the weekend in your church?
- Who has God already given you to mobilize?
- Will you hold onto them out of fear or let them to go?

A few weeks ago, I was standing in a line that wrapped around the sidewalk and my frustration was mounting. There was one checkout lane open and only one person working the counter. I scratched my head in disbelief. This is crazy.

### | Where are all the workers?

Our nation is waking up to a labor shortage, but the church has been wrestling with a labor shortage for nearly 2,000 years!

Jesus lamented this fact in Luke 10:2 when he said, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few"*. He then turned to the dozens of capable individuals standing with him and invited them to pray.

He also commissioned them to go.

Miroslav Volf once said, *"There is something deeply hypocritical about praying for a problem you are unwilling to resolve"*.

Who do you have, and specifically, as you look at your congregation or network, who are the people passionately pursuing their relationship with Jesus?

It starts by identifying the disciples in our midst.

## DISCIPLE (STAGE 1)

Identifying disciples is the first stage of the process.

Disciples are hungry for God.

They have experienced His incredible love and it has awakened in them a love for him. Henri Nouwen in his book *In the Name of Jesus* describes the core question for every disciple. It is not how much they accomplish or the depth of their biblical literacy. Instead, the primary question for every disciple is whether they love Jesus. This was also the question Jesus asked Peter in John 21:15, *"Do you love me?"*

### | The mark of a disciple is love.

This love translates into a desire to spend more time with Jesus. It is a hunger for God. When we abide in Him, we bear much fruit. But it also translates into loving others and a life of obedience. Jesus said in John 13:33 *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

Love and obedience go hand in hand.

Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will obey my commands".

A person who is not following Jesus is not a disciple. There is a cost to discipleship. Disciples must learn to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus.

Love and obedience are the twin marks of a disciple, and we define a disciple as, "A person who trusts and follows Jesus."

Therefore, the first step in the *Mobilization Pipeline* is to identify disciples and equip them to live on mission.

That brings us to stage two.

## DISCIPLE MAKER (STAGE 2)

The primary calling for every disciple of Christ is to be a disciple maker.

The *Great Commission* is a command, not a suggestion.

Before we ask, "Where are all the church planters" a more basic question should be asked.

### | Where are all the disciple makers?

The established church paradigm often tries to disciple the congregation through the programs and ministries of the church. In this model, the pastors do the heavy lifting of disciple making and very few people live on mission.

We believe pastors should spend less time on programming and more time identifying disciples, equipping them, and mobilizing them to make disciples of others. In this model, pastors and

leaders spend more time identifying, training, and equipping disciples. Identify. Train. Equip.

### | Mobilize them to go.

Yes, disciple making starts with go! It is to be accomplished on the move. Tragically, the *Great Commission* has been separated into two halves as though evangelism and discipleship are mutually exclusive. Biblical disciple making must include both.

A disciple maker is, "A person who builds a relationship with someone and helps them learn how to trust and follow Jesus."

This is the heart of Matthew 28. We are to "go", "baptize", and "teach them to obey".

The church planters of tomorrow are the disciple makers of today. When it comes to building and growing the church, Jesus said, "I will build my church".

Our job is not to build the church but to equip people to make disciples.

This will naturally lead to the third stage in the *Mobilization Pipeline* - pioneer leaders.

## PIONEER LEADER (STAGE 3)

If the *primary* calling for every follower of Jesus is to make disciples, a more *specific* calling is given to a subset of these individuals with stronger leadership qualities and a clear call.

We call them pioneer leaders.

Disciple makers are called to a few.

## | Pioneers are called to a group of people.

A pioneer is, *“An everyday missionary called to find creative ways to engage and reach a group of people uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the established church.”*

Pioneers carry a specific burden for a specific group of people. They might be Muslims, artists, teachers, single mothers, athletes, drug addicts or people in their neighborhood, local gym, coffee shop, or any other geographic or demographic group.

Pioneers come in all shapes and sizes.

They are new believers, seasoned saints, urban, rural, suburban, or small-town dwellers. They are ethnically diverse, male and female, lay and clergy. But above all else, pioneers *live sent*.

## | Pioneers are action oriented.

They are on mission. They don't simply dream, but they also “do”.

If disciple makers are the foot soldiers of the movement, the pioneers are the special forces. Most find themselves employed in their current vocation while simultaneously launching a new ministry outside the physical walls of the church.

Most are co-vocational and will go on to start new outreach ministries, non-profits, fresh expressions, or discovery groups in tandem with their church.

A few may even go on to plant new churches and this brings us to stage four.

## CHURCH PLANTER (STAGE 4)

The church planter.

In the past, church planters have been the starting point for most conversations regarding mobilization.

But in this pipeline, the goal is to faithfully identify disciples and disciple makers while simultaneously empowering the pioneer leaders who emerge.

## | The fruit of the process is church planting.

The focus should be on inputs more than outputs.

To use an analogy from baseball, you are building a farm system and developing your own talent, rather than recruiting all-stars from another team.

The best mobilization pipeline starts from within.

Internships and residencies will be a vital part of this process and there will more than likely be a proliferation of smaller churches (“rabbits”) over larger, established ones (“rhinos”).

Twenty years ago, the template of a “successful” church planter was to find a charismatic leader with incredible stage presence, the ability to preach, high leadership skills, a great staff, and a wonderful facility.

With fewer of these individuals available and fewer lost people seeking answers from the established church, this model is entrenched in a different paradigm.

Would you be more apt to attend a local mosque if they had a better band and a more charismatic speaker? Not likely.



In the same way, it's doubtful that lost people will attend churches because they have the best sermon series to kick off the new year.

This is not to dismiss those with the capacity to lead large, growing churches. Praise God for the few.

However, this *Mobilization Pipeline* is designed to proliferate smaller and more nimble churches with a greater ability to reproduce.

That brings us to *Stage Five*.

## SENDING PASTOR (STAGE 5)

A disciple should make disciples. A church should plant churches.

It is at this stage that church planters and pastors transition to become sending pastors and build their own *Mobilization Pipeline*. If you are a pastor who is leaning into mobilization and reading this article, that person is you!

### | You are a sending pastor or leader.

Most church planters sacrifice their own blood, sweat, and tears to establish the church and unless they consider how they can send others, they will stay fixated on church growth.

But as one church planter commented, "God didn't help you grow the church to make it large. He wants you to leverage it for His Kingdom."

Apple trees can do more than produce a single apple. They are designed to produce an entire tree full of apples. In fact,

they even carry the DNA to multiply apple trees and even apple orchards.

The key is learning to let go.

We call these churches "*Sending*" churches and the pastors that lead them are sending pastors.

### | Sending pastors multiply.

If humans failed to reproduce, the population would begin to decline. The same is true with churches and this reality is presently occurring in the Western church.

But it's not too late! You can become a sending church at any stage of your life cycle.

We have both experienced the challenge of leading "*Sending*" churches and wouldn't do it any other way. Movement began to happen in our churches when we began to realize we didn't exist for ourselves but to give ourselves away.

The influence of a sending church goes beyond its own timeline and geography.

Sending pastors are willing to decrease so others can increase.

Sending churches focus on the kingdom and their missional footprint more than their local church.

Living as a sending pastor and leaning into mobilization is not easy. There are challenges and tensions along the way.

The next section will explore a few challenges that are more common along this journey.

## CHALLENGES

Living as a sending pastor and “*Sending*” church is not without its challenges. Leaning into a philosophy of ministry focused on mobilization will cost you something.

There are four primary challenges to implementing a mobilization pipeline.

### | The first challenge is ego.

This process is humbling and requires us as leaders to die to self, stop coveting other ministries, and quit competing with other churches on external metrics like attendance and programming.

Mobilizing people to go will often be unnoticed and we must be willing to die to building our own kingdom in order to build the kingdom of God.

### | The second challenge is fear.

Releasing people to make disciples, pioneer new works, and plant churches often means losing control, risking failure, investing financially with little return, and the constant risk of letting go.

We must live in faith over fear.

### | The third challenge is apathy.

This challenge comes after a difficult season of ministry where people are tired, risk adverse, weary of change, and perhaps even complacent.

This spirit must be resisted if we want to mobilize and train others.

## | The fourth challenge is spiritual warfare.

The enemy will do whatever he can to keep the church focused inward. When pastors and leaders are focused on internal issues, programming, and pacifying members, they are no longer a danger to the evil one. But when the church is focused on mobilizing others, you can expect spiritual attack in the form of strongholds, temptation, shadows, and sin.

These challenges need to be acknowledged and faced head on. The stakes are too high to allow ego, fear, apathy, or spiritual warfare to slow you down.

In addition to the challenges of mobilization, there are also tensions that need to be managed if you want to minister as a sending pastor.

## TENSIONS

There are problems to be solved and tensions to be managed and it’s important to know the difference between the two.

The biggest tension for most sending churches is the tension of gathering together versus mobilizing to go.

### | Gathering vs. scattering.

Gathering the church for worship, groups, and other events requires facilities, finances, resources, volunteers, and time.

While it is vital to gather as the larger body of Christ, this can also create tension with rapid mobilization and slow down the process. To manage this tension, a few questions might be asked.

## Questions to consider:

- Are there ways to streamline worship services, allocating more staff resources for equipping, and provide more finances for sending?
- How excellent do gatherings and worship services need to be to remain effective?
- How might you change your role as a pastor to free up more time to equip, train, and send?
- How can facilities be maximized for mobilization?
- When should you continue to develop and when should you begin to release?

There are also different seasons in the life of the church, and this can also create tension. Certainly, there are times when it's more important to train and equip, and other times when people need to be mobilized to go.

Some churches can mobilize rapidly, and others need more time to recover.

Knowing the season is important.

## CONCLUSION

If we want to mobilize the church, it's important to recognize the challenges and tensions.

But the process is worth it.

In Luke 10:3 after mobilizing the seventy-two to go into the towns and villages in the surrounding region, they eventually return. They stepped out in faith and experienced incredible fruit as a result.

A few of them exclaim, *"Even the demons submit to us in your name"*.

Jesus smiles and in Luke 10:21 we see him praising the Father. It's the only time in the Bible where Jesus is described as "full of joy".

That joy can be yours.

## Will you mobilize the church?

There is an enormous group of potential workers that gather together each weekend in churches across the country. They are called. They are gifted. They are ready. We need to mobilize them to go.

Identify them.

Train them.

Equip them.

Mobilize them to go.

This is the process of mobilization and it's the only strategy to reach the growing harvest. Our culture is changing.

- What might it look like if every pastor and leader began to recalibrate their ministry around equipping and training and the art of mobilization?
- Do you need a ministry partner to effectively navigate the challenges and tensions you will face along the way?
- Would it be valuable to have a catalyst to encourage you and keep you moving forward?

Our desire is to partner with pastors and network leaders to mobilize the body of Christ. In the final few pages, we want to share a few ministries we have launched to achieve the goal of mobilization. Let's partner together to reach our growing harvest field and mobilize the church.

## LET'S CONNECT!

If you desire to mobilize more disciple makers, pioneer leaders, and church planters, and want to learn more about participating in any of the courses listed in this short booklet, please scan the QR codes under each ministry or reach out via email, phone, or social media.



***Dwight Nash***

Co-Founder Mobilize the Church  
Executive Director

p: 214-458-3981

e: [dnash@mobilizethechurch.com](mailto:dnash@mobilizethechurch.com)



***Jon Wiest***

Co-Founder Mobilize the Church  
Strategic Director

p: 515-689-7145

e: [jwiest@mobilizethechurch.com](mailto:jwiest@mobilizethechurch.com)



**mobilize**  
THE CHURCH

**JOIN THE**  
*movement*

**WWW.MOBILIZETHECHURCH.COM**

[dnash@mobilizethechurch.com](mailto:dnash@mobilizethechurch.com)

[jwiest@mobilizethechurch.com](mailto:jwiest@mobilizethechurch.com)

