

CONNECT

HOW TO GROW YOUR CHURCH IN 28 DAYS
GUARANTEED

D O N C O R D E R

WHAT READERS ARE SAYING

“Years ago I was pastoring a little church in a little town with a handful of people. The church was broke and I was ready to give up. Don Corder sat me down, and said, ‘Growing a church is simple. It’s just not easy.’ On his back porch, he wrote down the things I needed to do. One at a time, I started doing those things. My church began to grow. Today our ministry is in multiple sites in multiple towns, serving thousands. *Connect* is that very plan written on that porch all those years ago. I wish I had had this book when I was starting out. Things would have been a lot easier.

Matt Young
Senior Pastor
LifeChurch
Southwest, Ohio

“We are living in a global conflagration of spiritual warfare; and the devastation isn’t somewhere else, *it’s in our own pews*. Everyone knows something is happening. The real issue is to identify the problem and then produce a genuine solution. “

Paul Louis Cole
President of Christian Men’s Network Worldwide
Founding pastor of C3 Church in Dallas
Dallas, TX

“I have used the strategy in *Connect* in two churches and both churches saw increased professions of faith, community engagement, and giving, as well as new members. If you are looking for something that will jump-start kingdom growth in your church, I highly recommend reading this book.”

Joe Fox
Senior Pastor
Grace United Methodist Church
Washington Courthouse, Ohio

“No one I’ve ever met combines profound operational acumen, authentic spirituality, vast experience, and engaging communication style like Don Corder does. Truth be told—no one comes close. You wouldn’t have picked up this book if you weren’t serious about the Great Commission, passionate about the local church as the center of God’s plan and determined that your church be a bastion of health and growth. I know that the twenty-eight tasks outlined in *Connect* will work *because they are working*, right now, in churches large and small, old and new, all across the country. The only thing you’ve got to lose are empty seats.”

Rick Nash
COO
The Kairos Company
Glendale, California

“A few years ago, I asked Don Corder for some advice on growing my church. He shared a whole new way of looking at the way a church grows by focusing on how people form relationships in the twenty-first century. “Going” starts with an act of faith and how “making disciples” starts as a spiritual quest, but *connecting* the church with people *starts with intentionality*. Four years later, our church attendance has doubled.”

Michael Phillips
Senior Pastor
Kingdom Life Church
Baltimore, Maryland

“This stuff works! My church has been working with Don since 2013 and have seen significant growth. *Connect* shares his wisdom and experience from decades of helping churches grow all over the country. If you’ve been struggling, the struggle is over. Buy this book and do what it says. You’ll be glad you did.”

Jon Ferguson
Senior Pastor
Stillwater United Methodist Church
Dayton, Ohio

“Don Corder understands the challenges organizations face in the twenty-first century. More importantly, Don has a heart for God, His people, and the people His people need to reach to grow His kingdom. This book spells out, in an engaging and conversational style, a proven approach to fulfill the Great Commission in a culture that doesn’t consider a relationship with God essential. He’ll help you think realistically about the task your church faces and give you proven strategies so your congregation can thrive.”

Reverend Mark Youngkin
Professor of Communication and Leadership
Valor Christian College
Columbus, Ohio

“Don Corder is a gifted communicator, and he shares his gift with all of us in *Connect!* In it, you will look through the eyes of a master and learn how to connect your church with the people who live around you. Apply the practical action steps described in this book, and your church will grow.”

Ronnie Harrison
Senior Pastor
Kingdom Center Church
Louisville, Kentucky

“The first time Don Corder showed me the ideas written in his new book, *Connect*. I thought to myself, “That will preach!” It is our job to first connect people with the church and then connect people with each other, all while teaching and serving. This is how disciples have been made for 2,000 years. This book changed the way I look at church communications.”

Dr. Jody Ray
Senior Pastor
Mt. Bethel Church
Marietta, GA

“*Buy this book!* Execute the twenty-eight action items. Grow your church. A must read for everyone in ministry.”

Shannon Lee
Executive Director
Relā
Dublin, OH

“I’ve known Don Corder for nearly fifteen years. He is an industry thought leader when it comes to church administration and growth. Don is as practical as he is brilliant. In *Connect*, you will find a turnkey plan guaranteed to grow your church, *but you have to execute the plan*. No one ever grew a ministry by waiting and hoping. Get this book. Do what it says.”

Jon Laria
CFO
OneHope
Pompano Beach, Florida

“Don Corder is a hidden gem in the kingdom. He has a passion for the Great Commission, the church, and for pastors. I have never met a person more dedicated to growing the local church. This book is a gift. Execute the steps and your church will grow.”

Brad White
Executive Director
IAK Donors
Washington, D.C.

“Surveys on religion in America have revealed that fewer people than ever before claim a Christian affiliation. We must realize that the way in which people form relationships, especially with institutions, is different than it once was. This day and age calls for the church to be more intentional and proactive than ever before. Don Corder presents twenty-eight practical steps that *will help any church to grow*. I had the privilege of serving as Don’s pastor some years ago, and I know his heart for reaching people with the gospel. I am looking forward to implementing the steps outlined in *Connect* in the church where I currently serve.”

Dr. Ken Alford
Senior Pastor,
Crossroads Baptist Church,
Valdosta, Georgia

“*Connect!* is the real deal. I have seen the strategy in action and it works! If you have been struggling to grow your church, read this book. Then give copies to your church’s leaders and staff. Do what this book says and watch your church grow.”

Alan DiDio
Senior Pastor
Encounter Christ Church
Red Cross, NC

“Most churches in America are experiencing a plateau or decrease in attendance and participation. *Connect* offers practical wisdom to help churches reconnect with their communities in meaningful ways.”

Rusty Lewis
Vice President
Generis
St. Louis, Missouri

“*Connect!* is just like the author: Smart. Practical. Plain Spoken. Gets the job done. I’ve had the pleasure of working with Don Corder. His passion and life’s work is growing the local church. In *Connect*, we are shown the way.”

Steve Howard
President
Centerpoint Interactive

Dublin, Ohi

CONNECT

How to Grow Your Church
in **28** Days - Guaranteed



D O N C O R D E R

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The Great Commission

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age

(Matthew 28:19-20).

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

When I set out to write this book many of my friends and mentors encouraged me not to write it. I lead a nonprofit organization that virtually manages church communication and growth and they said giving away what we sell is not good business. Some people reminded me that I have a responsibility to my employees who earn their livings and support their families growing churches for our clients. Most of the people who work at The Provisum Group (including me) walked away from prosperous careers in the private sector to serve the kingdom of God by taking their incredible skills and vast experience and dedicating their lives to growing churches. Giving churches our hard-earned, proven and tested church growth strategies in the form of this book just seems counterintuitive.

But serving God and His kingdom is not always easy. It doesn't always make sense. Sometimes it is scary. Most of the time it takes faith. So I chose to lean into the truth that God is good, He is who He says He is, and His Word is true. Twenty years ago when I walked away from industry to serve the church, I decided to trust God for my daily bread and do everything in my power to grow His kingdom on earth.

The book you hold in your hands contains one possible future for your church. In it you will find twenty-eight different once-a-day tasks. If you will do one every day and keep doing them, your church will grow. This book is the exact strategy we execute every day for our church clients all over the country. Our church growth strategy is a culmination of decades of trial and error. If something worked well, we kept doing it. If something didn't work, we figured out why and did our best to fix it. If it still didn't

work, we stopped doing it. We are not guessing and hoping here. This strategy works. But you have to be faithful and follow the plan.

My prayer for you and this book is that you find at least one thing on its pages that makes your life in ministry a little easier and grows your church, because when your church grows, somebody meets Jesus and this world and the world to come is a better place. Blessings!

- Don Corder

FOREWORD: THE AUDIENCE

If you want to grow your church, you have to connect people who live far from Jesus with people who live for Jesus. You have to connect people. This is not a secret. This is not new. But how we connect the church with the neighborhood and community around us has changed dramatically over the last forty years.

In this book, we're going to talk about the groups of people in your church and in your community a little differently. We'll break them down into five groups throughout the rest of the book: the saints, the disciples, the undisciplined, the community, and the neighborhood.

- The “saints” are the people who have accepted for themselves the responsibility of making people into disciples. The saints are the children’s leaders, pastors, elders, deacons, and Bible study leaders, the ones who understand the Bible and do most of the disciple-making in your ministry.
- The “disciples” are the people who joined your community of faith, made a decision for Christ, and proactively seek to grow in their faith. They bring their children to Sunday school, live generously, attend the studies of Scripture, do the work of the church, and serve others in mission.
- The “undisciplined” are people who may or may not identify as a Christian, but did not grow up in a church. Undisciplined people do not have an experiential context or learned precept for Christian living. They have yet to accept the personal responsibility of their own disciple-

ship. Undisciplined people are the raw material of disciple making.

- The “community” is anyone whose contact information you possess. You might not know their names, but you have at least their e-mail addresses or cell phone numbers on record.
- The “neighborhood” are those people who live around your church, but for whom you have no connection whatsoever and possess no contact information.

This book will walk you through a process of connecting with the neighborhood and community around your church and then integrating them into the disciple-making process of your ministry. Understanding how these different groups make connection decisions and connect with people and institutions is an important and often neglected component of growing a church in the twenty-first century.

INTRODUCTION: THE THEOLOGY FOR GROWTH

Since the day Jesus ascended to heaven, Christians have been commissioned to go into all the world and make disciples of all people. This apostolic mission is one of the most important faith tenets that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

What happens between “go” and “make”? There has to be something. The Bible does not say it, but we can reasonably assume it’s up to us to fill in the white space between the lines of this Scripture to fulfill the Great Commission for our generation. It is reasonable for us to infer that between “go” and “make” is exactly what Jesus and the disciples did in their day, which is, connect. The church can’t reach all people if we don’t go; and we cannot make disciples if we do not connect with people. This mission has not changed. However, the world has changed and so has the way we go and connect.

In the first few hundred years of ministry, the church in the West was a minority religious sect in a majority secular culture. Somewhere between Emperor Theodosius I making Christianity the “religion of the empire” in the fourth century AD and Emperor Charlemagne reviving “the Holy Roman Empire” in the early ninth century, the church became a leading force

in a majority Christian culture. The church remained more or less in this leading role until the late twentieth century, but I don't think anyone would argue that today, the church in the West is once again a minority religious sect in a majority secular culture.

In the first few centuries of the church, the order of ministry for a minority religious sect in a majority secular culture was:

- Connect
- Evangelize
- Convert
- Disciple

“Going” meant actually traveling to a new place where most people knew little to nothing about Jesus and His kingdom. Once in this new place, the missionary/disciple would become part of the community and connect with his neighbor or her coworker. Relationships would form and grow until the credibility of the disciple was established in the eyes of the non-believer. Then the disciple would share the good news with his new friends. This led to the culminating moment of conversion when the non-believer became a new creation in Christ and then the process of training disciples or disciple-making began.

As a leading force in a majority Christian culture the order of ministry changed. The order of ministry became:

- Evangelize
- Convert

- Connect
- Disciple

Through most of the Dark Ages, it was hard to tell where the state ended and the church began. In many cases, the king of the domain was also the head of the church. As such, “going” was funded by the king and conversion was mandated by the state. There was little need to “connect” or “disciple.” By the mid-twentieth century, there were few places left in Western civilization in which there was no church and no one had heard of Jesus. We were rapidly running out of places to go. By the late twentieth century, “going” and “making” was being sadly replaced by “hoping” and “waiting.”

Let me illustrate. Fifty years ago in the West, if someone walked through the door of a church for the first time, he was probably looking for “a church,” meaning they just moved to the area and needed a new place of worship or for some reason decided to look for a new place to worship. Today, when someone visits a church, she is probably looking for “an answer.” Before, almost everyone was “well-churched,” meaning they had attended church for most of their lives, or at least believed they *should* be attending. They knew what was expected of them inside and outside of the church. They also knew what to expect when they began attending a new church. In order to successfully grow a church, churches just needed to meet the expectations of the new visitors. Churches focused on making worship, preaching, programming, and facilities the best they could be.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of this late Christian-era church was the way it connected with people. Most of the connection methods were passive and rear-loaded. They were passive in that they were de-

pendent on the new visitor initiating the connection. The church would wait for the visitor to fill out the connection card, visit the connection center, register for a new member's class, attend Sunday school, or request a meeting with the pastor. Connecting with other believers and developing relationships with them was "rear-loaded": it was a byproduct of the engagement initiated by the new visitor.

This all changed in the early twenty-first century. Who hasn't heard the name of Jesus in the United States and Europe? As of the writing of this book, if you ask 100% of Americans if they are a Christian, seventy five percent (www.news.gallup.com/poll/224642/2017-update-americans-religion.aspx) will say yes, but only twenty-one percent will be in church on Sunday. Only eight percent of Americans will attend church three or more Sundays in a month. In the post-Christian era, people are not just "un-churched"; more often than not, they are "undisciplined." Undisciplined people are the raw material of disciple-making in the twenty-first century.

Today, people visiting for the very first time are probably looking for an answer. The church can no longer assume that visitors are well-churched, know what is expected of them, know what they want, or what to expect from a church. Many times, there is some life event like an illness, financial crisis, or moral failing that precipitates a person visiting a church for the first time or for the first time in a very long time. Many times, undisciplined people walk through the doors of a church with a giant "should" in them. People who walk into a new church with a big "should" in them are looking for spirituality in everything: "I *should* solve this," "I *should* try church," "I should try something different than what I've been doing." When they walk through the doors of the church for the first time or the first time in a

very long time, they expect the rafters to rattle, the ground to shake, and the angels to sing. This is their moment. “OK, God, I am here. I have done my part. Do Yours.”

It is like joining a gym in January. Most people join a gym in January because they have about ten pounds of holiday “should” on them. In the same way, people are visiting a church because they think they “should” in order to find something they need. But just like the people who join a gym in January, many quit going by February.

Post-Christian era visitors do not know the routine. They don’t know how to be disciplined or even that it’s an option: they do not know if discipling is something that could solve many of their problems or not. At best, they become passive participants in their own discipleship. What they do not know is that the disciples and saints are passively waiting for these new undisciplined visitors to proactively raise their hands and say “I am ready to connect. What do you want me to do?” The Post-Christian era visitor has very little firsthand experience with church and walks through the doors of the church with secular values and expectations.

Imagine if you are visiting a foreign country and walked into a restaurant. In this country, the culture is different. In this foreign culture, it is considered rude for the waiters in restaurants to approach diners until the diner initiates the process by standing and summoning them to the table with an obvious hand motion. But you don’t share the same culture and are unaware of what is considered proper behavior for diners in this foreign culture. There were twenty staff people standing around talking. Not one makes eye contact with you or proactively reaches out to you to initiate a connection. There was a big sign out front, saying “Visitors Welcome,” but no one spoke

to you, helped you to a seat, or brought you a cup of water to quench your thirst. What would this make you think? How would you would feel? Would you come back?

Do you see the inherent disconnect between the late Christian era Church members and the Post-Christian era undisciplined visitor? Once again, as a minority religious sect in a majority secular culture, the order of ministry has reverted back to:

- Connect
- Evangelize
- Convert
- Disciple

Connecting with undisciplined people has to be front-loaded in a relationship, meaning *the church has to make the first move and proactively provide the energy that leads to connection with visitors and undisciplined people*. Most churches today are still acting like a leading force in a majority Christian culture and passively waiting for connection to happen as a visitor-initiated by-product of being in church. Both groups are waiting for the other to take the first step and initiate connection. It is a perfect recipe for decline and decay.

This is why I wrote *Connect*.

The church cannot “make” disciples of undisciplined people if we do not connect with them. If we are going to fulfill the Great Commission, the church is going to have to take the lead in this Post-Christian era and initiate

connection with everyone we meet, and in everything we do. Technology has replaced much of the “going” of the past. The making of disciples has not changed much in 2,000 years, but the in-between — the connect part — has changed dramatically in the last forty years.

In this book, I am going to provide you with a literal checklist of twenty-eight tested and proven tasks that will improve the “connect” of your church, so you can engage in “making” disciples and fulfill your purpose, the Great Commission. If you, or a designated staff member or volunteer, does each of these tasks once a day and keeps doing them, you will connect with more undisciplined people, your church will grow, and you will receive the deep satisfaction and fulfillment of achieving your purpose.



**DAY
1**

CAST THE VISION

The vision of every church is the first macro — the Great Commission: to make disciples of all people everywhere. From that macro-vision, churches today more or less adopt a vision that is either attractional or missional. The attractional churches want to build crowds. The missional churches want to make disciples. But the vision is always to serve the macro — the Great Commission. To make disciples of “all nations” requires both bringing people to a place of evangelism and then making those people into disciples.

One of the things that separates Christianity from all major faiths is that we have an apostolic mission. We are the only major faith group that grows by assimilating the hearts and minds of people. No other faith group is geared to grow, or has an incumbency to grow, like ours.

This book does not address disciple-making. Disciple-making is the role of ministry. What we’re teaching about is creating *an environment* and providing the *raw material* for disciple-making to occur. In *Connect*, we will assume the challenges you face are not in making disciples, but are in connecting with the undisciplined people who live all around you. We will give you a step-by-step plan that connects your church or ministry with undisciplined people and gets them to connect with the disciples and saints in your church or ministry. We will also assume that church leadership is called by God, and that God Himself has planted in you His vision for the flock you lead.

To that end, the church needs to make sure that everyone we lead understands this global disciple-making mission as well as the specific vision God has for your local body of believers. One thing I learned a long time ago is that there are many gifted speakers but far fewer gifted listeners. As such, if we are going to inject this God-given mandate to evangelize the

world (at least your piece of it), we will have to be relentless in the communication of that vision.

One mistake I see many ministry leaders make is the assumption that everyone already knows. The number one rule in marketing and communication



“THE NUMBER ONE RULE IN MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION
(ESPECIALLY IN MINISTRY) IS ‘YOU ARE NOT THEM.’”

tion (especially in ministry) is “You are not them.” Here are three questions you could ask every person you lead in ministry:

1. What is the greatest commandment in the Bible?
2. What is the Great Commission?
3. Who was the apostle Paul and what did he do?

How many laypeople that you lead in ministry do you think could answer all three questions correctly? Give it a try. You might be surprised. Over the years, I have seen many pastors’ and ministry leaders’ jaws drop when they see how few people in their churches today have what just thirty years ago was considered a very basic understanding of Scripture. This lack of spiritual and scriptural understanding is a byproduct of our Post-Christian era of spiritual relativism.

If you would like to send a little survey to your congregation asking these three questions go to www.connectandgrowyourchurch.com/survey and we will set it up for you.

It is so important that everyone understands that the reason the church exists is to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. As leaders in the body of Christ, it is our job to make sure everyone we lead knows this mission and embraces the vision. In addition, it is important that all the disciples and saints know the Post-Christian era order of ministry, which now is:

- Connect
- Evangelize
- Convert
- Disciple

To make sure everyone knows the reason the church exists and that they see this new order of ministry, we as leaders must ensure that this vision is discussed over and over and over again: in every service, in every class, in every small group, in every staff meeting, in every communication. We must make sure that everyone “has heard.”

DAY 1

ACTION STEP

CAST THE VISION

Ask all the leaders and staff in your church these questions: What did you do this week to help people know that we are a people called to make disciples of all people for the transformation of the world? What will you do next week?



DAY
2

DEFINE YOUR BRAND

When we talk about your church’s “brand,” we are not talking about a logo, a slogan, or a mission statement. Your brand is what you want your saints and disciples to say to their friends and neighbors. Your brand is what you want the community and the neighborhood to say about your church.

A typical church branding statement could be: “Green Park Fellowship is committed to making fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.” That sounds like a short, crisp statement that anyone in the church could memorize, right? Now imagine one of your life group leaders looking over the fence as her neighbor is weeding a flowerbed and saying, “Hey, you need to come to our church because we’re committed to making fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ!” The best response your leader would probably get is a hollow



“DEFINING YOUR BRAND IS DONE BY CREATING MESSAGING AND MOMENTS THAT CAUSE PEOPLE TO SAY THINGS BEHIND YOUR BACK THAT YOU WANT THEM TO SAY.”

stare and a weak nod. That’s not our desired result, is it? Undisciplined people aren’t scrambling for reasons to get up on Sunday mornings and become devoted Christ followers.

Defining your brand is done by creating messaging and moments that

cause people to say things behind your back that you want them to say.

One church we work with has a committee-created, church-body-approved statement that cannot be changed. It is also so lengthy and cumbersome, it cannot be used. We solved that communication problem by creating an internal branding statement that no one will ever see written. It wasn't adopted by a committee nor printed into the church by-laws. It isn't framed on a wall in the church office. The "branding" is simply this: "It's that really big church with all those nice people who do all that really cool stuff."

In communications, whether this church is loading up a truck of young people to help flood victims, or hosting a Parent's Day Out, all of their communication is weighed against this message: that big church full of nice people who do cool stuff. We've so permeated their communications with this message that now the saints and disciples tell their friends, "Come with me! You'll love all these really nice people. And they do such cool stuff." The result is that the community and neighborhood see that congregation as the big church with the nice people who take care of other people and do cool stuff.

Back in the 1990s there was a book by Steven Covey called *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. One of the chapters was titled "Start with the End in Mind." Author Steven Covey challenged readers to decide what we want on their tombstones. He encouraged the reader to consider what they wanted their epitaph to be. I'll tell you mine:

"Here lies a man of integrity and respect. He loved his God. He loved his family. He loved his fellow man and he always tried to do his best."

Now, how am I going to get that on my tombstone? I'm going to have to live it every day of my life in front of everyone I meet.

An epitaph is something that is said when you're gone. Same with branding. What do you want the neighborhood and community to say about your church behind your back? Your branding statement, whether only used internally or emblazoned on the wall, challenges you to live up to it every day. Create the message and live the message. That's how your church is going to get the reputation (or brand) it wants.

Most churches create a committee that ends up with a wordy statement, often just to accommodate the thoughts and feelings of the people in the room tasked with coming up with the statement. The statement may please the ear, but does it connect with people? If you're a communications leader or pastor, and for some reason you're unable to change the mission or vision statements of your church, you can still write one that works for you. One church we work with started with this committee-driven statement, "We are Christ followers who care enough to share truth, show grace, and shine love to our community; and an evangelistic force, equipped and spiritually educated, to impact culture beyond the walls of the church to all people everywhere." This is a fine thing to aspire to be. There's nothing wrong with any of those words. You just can't very well say that to the neighbor over the fence. It doesn't connect.

As you work through your branding, keep your statement short. I advocate making statements no longer than a haiku poem—17 syllables. One organization we worked with had a pretty wordy branding statement that had included things they were against. What they were for and what they were against were really good things. There was nothing theologically wrong with it. But in the end, we simplified it to "God is good. He is who He says He is and His Word is true."

DAY 2

ACTION STEP

DEFINE YOUR BRAND

Have a discussion with a leader or staff member about specific ways they saw your church living the brand. If you don't have a branding statement, start a discussion about what your church would like people to say about it behind its back.



DAY
3

CLARIFY YOUR CALLING

In Ephesians 4:11, we are told of the fivefold ministry of the church. These five offices were appointed that the church would be built up, and all would become mature and attain the fullness of Christ. In this verse, the Bible tells us that some are appointed to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. So not everyone is appointed to be a pastor and not everyone is appointed to be an evangelist. Apostles go. Prophets exhort. Pastors shepherd. Teachers teach. Evangelists connect. As ministry leaders, it is important that we know to which of these offices we are called, and just as important to know to which offices we are not called. It is the heart of the evangelist that burns for those who live far from Jesus. It is in the passion of the evangelist that undisciplined people hear the gospel and connect with the body of Christ.

We in the church are in the relationship business, so the first thing we have to do is connect with people so that they will hear the message of the gospel. To do this, the church leader or pastor has to make an important first decision. *Am I the person on my team who has the burning desire and fiery yearning to reach undisciplined people?* Church leaders have various gifts. Not all pastors or staff members are evangelists. The person at your church whose responsibility is to gather people *must* have the evangelist gift. If we're to complete our mission to make disciples, if we are going to connect with undisciplined people, we have to make sure that the people we appoint to connect our ministries with the neighborhood and community have an evangelist's heart.

To take the steps we outline in this book, first find the person whose desire for connecting the people to the church oozes. Perhaps it sounds daunting to add one more person. But remember that a church only needs about

five people to complete the fivefold ministries. The gifts are there in your church. Here's how you find them. Let's say your church started to shrink.



“WHO WOULD BE BROKENHEARTED ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT GOING TO MEET JESUS? YOU WANT THAT EVANGELISTIC PERSON TO BE PART OF THE CONNECTION PROCESS AT YOUR CHURCH.”

Who would be worried about whether you could keep the lights on and pay the bills? Who would be concerned about the reputation of the church and its standing in the community? Who would be brokenhearted about the people who are not going to meet Jesus? You want that evangelistic person to be part of the connection process at your church. That's the one whose heart is breaking when people aren't meeting Jesus. That heart beats in the person who will work tirelessly to connect your ministry with the neighborhood and the community around your church.

The post-Christian church is paying for a late-Christian era phenomenon. At some point, we decided not to appear too aggressive, so we stopped proselytizing. The evangelist on your team needs to be *so* willing to proselytize that the passion of it will sometimes rub other people on the team a little raw. If you don't have someone on your team like this, get one. Perhaps it's a board member or a volunteer.

When you find that person, you want them in leadership. This person can serve as the director of evangelism and outreach or, depending on the size of the church, they may be just responsible for the annual chili festival and vacation Bible school. This person who sees the jewel of a lost soul as the most valuable treasure on earth needs to be part of the process of communicating with the community and neighborhood around you.

In the vast majority of churches, this person is a creative and relational person. They might not be the best at administration or technology. Even though good administration and technology are important, being passionate about bringing people in and making an emotional connection is most important for the evangelist. Everyone else can report to the evangelist and other tasks can be outsourced, but the burning desire to see others find Jesus cannot be outsourced.

The evangelist gift is the gift that draws the crowds. When I was a young Christian, I was invited to be on the evangelism committee of my church. A great saint of God in that church, one of the best Bible scholars I ever heard, said the evangelism committee was like the marketing and advertising committee. I didn't know it then, but now I understand that this was Late-Christian era thinking. The Late-Christian era model was, "Everyone is going to church anyway, and we just need them to come to ours." If people come to church because they are looking for one to attend, then marketing would work. The Post-Christian era model is that much fewer people perceive a *need* to go to church anymore. If our churches don't adjust, then our numbers, our influence, and our mission will continue to shrink.

Today, gathering an audience is the first step in evangelism. In Acts 2, about one hundred and twenty people gathered in an upper room. The Feast

of the Harvest was happening right outside, with perhaps a quarter of a million people attending. All of a sudden, tongues of fire fell. People heard their native language being spoken and they were drawn to it. Then Peter went out and preached to the crowd. Three thousand were saved. Note that the first thing God did was to gather a crowd out of a crowd. Disciple-making is done knee-to-knee, one at a time. Most evangelism is done in *groups*.

The group we want to gather needs to be as big as we can possibly make it. God told us to go make disciples of *ethnos*. That word, translated as “all nations” in Matthew 28 means “all people.”¹ Only in the last thirty years has connecting with “all people” become technically possible. The creation of the Internet has had a greater effect on our world than the Gutenberg press. Its impact on society is more in order with the discovery of fire or the wheel. The Internet has changed how people connect and how relationships form, especially with institutions.

The new generation is greatly affected by the Internet. A famous leader once said “young people today love luxury, have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise.” Sounds bad, doesn’t it? Socrates said this in about 400 BCE. We do have a generational problem but it’s not a modern problem. The issue that *is* modern, and that didn’t affect the young people of Socrates’s day, is the Internet.

The Internet’s greatest impact is in how relationships are formed especially with institutions. We in the church are in the relationship business, so we have to understand that the Internet has changed relationships and how

¹James Strong, "Strong's Greek: 1484. ἔθνος (ethnos) -- a Race, a Nation, Pl. the Nations (as Distinct from Isr.)," Biblehub.com, accessed August 16, 2018, www.biblehub.com/greek/1484.htm.

they are formed. We can embrace that the Internet is a tool for evangelizing everyone, yet understand it's also a curse that makes the Devil chuckle.

God said *ethnos*, meaning “all people.” If God didn't want a crowd, why did He say “all”? We are the first generation that has the possibility for everyone who is alive today to hear the name of Jesus at the same time. We *can* do that so we have to start living like people who *can* do that. If it's possible to evangelize everyone on earth at the same time, then we need to at least start evangelizing everyone in our neighborhood or town. In the part of earth that we occupy, we need to start gathering the “raw materials”: the crowds, to be evangelized. This starts by choosing the hearts (evangelists) who will lead the drive.

DAY 3

ACTION STEP

CLARIFY YOUR CALLING

Identify at least one person in your church with an evangelist's heart and meet with them. Ask them to dream with you on how you can reach your community and neighborhood. Then together, try and turn one of those dreams into reality.



DAY
4

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Church growth statistics tossed around today place the average American church attendee in a pew about once a month. The more startling statistic is that when we are in church on Sundays, seventy-nine percent of our neighbors aren't.

To know your audience, consider that on any given Sunday, eighty percent attending are the regular attendees and twenty percent are the non-regulars. That twenty percent adds up. When I share this number with pastors and ministry leaders it usually mirrors their personal experiences. A better way to put it is that twenty percent of the seats your church fills in any given week are filled by people who come to your church less than once a month. But have you ever wondered this over a course of a year? How many unique individuals does it take in a given year to fill the seats you fill on Sundays?

Usually, when I try and explain the math behind these numbers, most people start looking at their smartphones. But the math behind this is powerful, and the impact of understanding it for your church is profound. Please stay with me here.

Let's say a given church gets 100 people each Sunday in worship, never more, never less. Eighty people come more than once per month and twenty come less than once a month. That means this church fills 5,200 seats per year ($100 \times 52 = 5,200$). However, to calculate how many unique individuals it takes to fill these seats requires that we know the average number of visits per month for each group.

I run a charity (TheProvisumGroup.com) that manages churches and faith-based charities all over the United States. Some of our church clients take attendance every week and we keep those databases for some of them.

Once a year we take all that data and put it into one database and “do the math.” I can tell you that all the people who attend one or more times a month average 2.75 visits per month (33 visits per year). People who attend less than once a month average .2 visits per month. Now in this group of less-than-once-a-month visitors are all the “one and dones” too. These are the people who come one time (like to visit Grandma at Christmas) and do not return again in that same year. Regardless, as a group they average .2 visits per month (which is 2.4 visits per year).

The table below illustrates how many unique individuals it takes to fill 5,200 seats per year (100 people in worship times 52 weeks = 5200 filled seats per year) where eighty percent of the seats are filled by people who average thirty-three visits per year and twenty percent of the seats are filled by people who average 2.4 visits per year.

	PERCENT OF WEEKLY WORSHIP	SEATS FILLED PER YEAR	GROUP AVG. VISITS PER YEAR	UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS PER YEAR	PERCENT OF TOTAL
12+ VISITS PER YEAR	80%	4160	33	126	22.54%
11- VISITS PER YEAR	20%	1040	2.4	433	77.46%
TOTAL	100%	5200		559	

Over the course of a year, the actual number of casual, non-regular attendees equals about seventy-five percent of the unique individuals who walk through your doors. Or stated differently: For every person who attends your church more than once per month, there are 3.43 people who attend less than once per month. This is why the “membership” numbers of

most churches soar by comparison to the “regular attendee” numbers.

Catch the weight of this: About seventy-five percent of the people who walk through the doors of your church over the course of a year attend your church less than one time per month. How will you disciple them? How will you even get them to come back? Think about your church communications. To start with, how much common knowledge can you assume everyone who attends your church possesses? How can we assume that people who attend a few times a year possess the same knowledge about what is happening at the church as people who attend every week? How do we communicate with both groups? Does our communication work for both groups? If people are coming less than once each month, what kind of communication do you need to use to be adequately conveying the information you have?

For example, let’s say an announcement is made from the pulpit, “To become more involved, go to the Connections Center after the service.” The seventy-five percent people who you’ve managed to get interested are going to walk out of the service and hunt for a “Connections Center.” If all they see is a sign that says, “Welcome,” they aren’t going to know if it’s the right place. What is announced has to be clear, and the follow-up needs good signage and an actual person waiting there to act on the instructions that were announced.

Another common mistake is when the communication from the pulpit, let’s say for a church picnic, is “Go see John Campbell.” Twenty percent of the people sitting in church that day don’t know John Campbell. So your good efforts to have an event to draw in the community are thwarted by assuming they know someone who is in fact a stranger.

A good way to grasp what your people are experiencing is to visit another church — or have a staff member go and report back — and watch the level of communication. Seeing how much common and local knowledge



“ONE BIG REASON COMMUNICATIONS ARE POOR IN MOST CHURCHES TODAY IS THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE RUNNING CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS ARE THINKING IN TERMS OF THE LATE-CHRISTIAN ERA”

is assumed in most churches might help you adjust the level of communication in your own church.

One big reason communications are poor in most churches today is that the vast majority of people running church communications are thinking in terms of the Late-Christian era. They have Late-Christian era paradigms. That paradigm states that people are wandering into our church because they are looking for a church, and the only question is “which church will they choose.” That paradigm says that once people join, they will attend most if not all services. We tend to hire people with this “old church” paradigm because they know how to get things done. We need their expertise, and yet they perpetuate Late-Christian era thinking on our staff, on our board, and when we go out to dinner with them.

Seventy-five percent of the people who walk through your church doors probably don't have that paradigm. They might be in the church building because of a wedding or a funeral. Or maybe it's to honor a parent or see a child's performance. Or it could be a crisis they're going through. But remember, seventy-five percent of those who are coming to your church *do not think* the way the staff person or board member thinks.

Forty years ago, people went to church because "that's what you should do." Going to church was something you *did*. In the post-Christian era, going to church is something you *try*. In the Late-Christian era, people who walked through the doors were looking for a *church*. Today, the people who walk through the doors are looking for an *answer*. I know I keep repeating this but understanding this diversion of paradigms is key to connecting with the community and neighborhood and therefore crucial to growing the church.

In the Late-Christian era, most of the people who walked through the doors of the church were *members* or at least children of members somewhere at some time in their lives. Perhaps they attended Sunday school as kids and received biblical training, so they were already disciples. Today, the people who walk through the doors of the church are *customers* — at least in their own eyes. We don't have to advocate "Christian consumerism"; we just have to understand that's how *they* view themselves.

For people over fifty years old today, many if not most of them went to Sunday school as kids or knew others who did and they understood church to be a place that serves and meets the needs of *others*. The people who visit today are looking to get something for *themselves*. They want to be served. The people who walk through the doors of the church *want their needs met*. As we connect with these people and begin the disciple-making

process, these Post-Christian era people begin to learn that self-sacrifice is entry level Christianity. But in this Post-Christian era, *we have to connect before we disciple*.

Years ago, when people decided to join a church, they received many more benefits than just their faith. Some wanted to build social equity. You may have heard how Dwight Eisenhower claimed to be Presbyterian in order to have a church affiliation, just so he could run for president. If you were a life insurance salesperson during that era, you might join the biggest church in town to increase your customer base. If you were running for mayor, you'd want to expand your reach or gain volunteers by joining a church. In other words, there used to be a *social advantage* to joining a church. Today in many places, there is a *social disadvantage* — a stigma instead.

Undisciplined people are the raw materials of disciple-making, so to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples, we need to connect with *people*. We have to deal with people, and the people we get may not be the ones we want! They might be “what’s in it for me” people who are focused only on themselves. Or they may be coming with great social pressure *against* them attending. They may be coming infrequently and cannot be counted on. But we can’t serve the people we wish we had. We can only serve those actually come; and more importantly, come back. They’re the reason we’re here.

Jesus is the One who told us to make disciples of “all” people. Obviously, no one church is going to reach all seven billion people on the planet today. But if we have seventy-five percent of our attendees coming infrequently, then that’s where we start. And if seventy-eight percent of the people in your neighborhood are not attending, then that’s who we target.

DAY 4

ACTION STEP

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Pick a current communication and have someone show you how the communication accounts for all people (saints, disciples, community and neighborhood) as well as all levels of attendance. How does it move the neighborhood to community and move community to disciples (being made)?

The background features a network of circles and lines. Some circles are solid with a human silhouette icon, while others are dashed. A large, faint human silhouette is on the right side. A dark grey horizontal band is positioned behind the 'DAY 5' text.

**DAY
5**

ASSUME DESIRE

Rule Number One for follow-up is: *Assume the person who gave you contact information has a desire to connect.*

In the Late-Christian era (the second half of the twentieth century) people were reluctant to give out their contact information. They were reluctant



“RULE NUMBER ONE FOR FOLLOW-UP IS: ASSUME THE PERSON WHO GAVE YOU CONTACT INFORMATION HAS A DESIRE TO CONNECT.”

for many reasons, but the main reason was the fear of losing control of their information. It was common practice for marketers and list compilers to sell the information they collected, but that is not as much the case in the twenty-first century. There are do-not-call lists; unsubscribe and blocking options; and spam filters. On top of that, there are real consequences for people who exploit these digital channels of communication. In fact, the only place left over which we have no control is our mailbox. Anybody who wants to spend their money on postage and printing are legally allowed to mail us whatever they want.

In the twenty-first century, people wouldn't have given you their contact information if they didn't want to receive follow-up. In the Post-Christian era, there is *no* perceived moral obligation to step inside a church door, and *plenty* of perceived reasons to stay away. The people who visited your

church today went because they *wanted* to go. They are looking for something and they are expecting the church to put its best foot forward and reach out . Many times, they are looking for change. Something in their life has become unsatisfying to the point that they are willing to take action and going to church seemed like the right thing to do today.

Maybe they know someone who goes to church and they want a life like someone they know who attends your church or someone else's church. They walk through your doors thinking, *Somewhere in here is the key to what I am looking for*. We know that Jesus is the answer and it is the job of your communications and outreach teams to connect them to people who will show them the way, and the truth and the life.

One of the churches we work with was taking their follow-up campaign very seriously. We worked with them to develop a six-part drip campaign — meaning that the new person got some type of communication from the church every week for six weeks with a goal of meeting that person's individual needs to provide the opportunity to connect in a more meaningful way; and as a result, have the visitor return.

In that church, as invariably happens, one person argued against sending “so much” communication. This person insisted the communication wouldn't work and why. This is how it went:

Him: Visitors are going to feel like we're hounding them.

Me: They gave us their name because they want us to connect with them. If they don't want us to connect, they can just unsubscribe.

Him: They'll all delete it.

Me: If everyone deletes it, why does our average campaign have a forty percent open rate?

Him: So then sixty percent don't open it!

Me: That would only be correct if you assume that the same forty percent open all six. That's an assumption I don't make.

Him: Well, I delete everything I get like that.

Me: *You are not them.*

This simple conversation represents one of the most dangerous precepts left over from Late-Christian era thinking. There are still people in the twenty-first century who are well churched and know what they are looking for in their faith lives. But today, most people don't. The assumption that people visiting churches are well churched, know what they want and will let us know when they are ready to connect is a precept that is separating the church from the neighborhoods and communities with which Christ commanded us to connect. Your church will probably not grow if this twentieth century precept still prevails in your congregation. It's a church killer.

There are three fatal flaws in communications that are exhibited when this precept reigns supreme.

First fatal communications flaw: When these conversations happen, it's generally because the person speaking is saying what they think or feel, not what the data shows. In my book, *Minding His Business*, I taught the important marketing principle, "*You are not them.*" It's impossible to overstate the fatal flaw of thinking that others are like us. We are not able to peek inside their brains or see their choices or have the perspective of their

background. We do not know why they came. **We are not them.**

Second fatal communications flaw: We cannot assume that a visitor has *no* desire to learn more about what the church has to offer. They *attended!* We asked for their contact info and they gave it to us. Further, for many of these people, we asked for their information *only if* they wanted us to follow-up with them. We made a spoken covenant to find out together what God has for their lives (See Chapter 10, page 37 for The Provisum Minute). **We made a promise to see what the Holy Spirit would do through our connection.** For all those reasons, at the very least, we have a moral obligation to contact those who give us their information and make our very best effort to connect them to people in our church.

Third fatal communications flaw: We cannot assume that the community — the people for whom we have contact information — do not see the church as something they need more of in their lives. Many people are struggling to get up every day to face the problems that drove them to your church. **They want our answers**, which is why they've agreed on some level to "give church a try." If they were not interested, they would have unsubscribed.

These assumptions were birthed in the Late-Christian era and are generally carried into the present day by well-meaning, well churched people from that era who attend church because they have convictions or traditions, not because they just feel like it. This kind of person doesn't have to look at a brochure on the "Seven Steps of Salvation" because they already know them. Without even reading it, they could give a good guess.

As our communications pave the way for connection to take place and

the disciple-making process to begin, some people will connect for a while. Some will never connect. But some will connect and grow. Some will commit their lives to Christ. In this Post-Christian twenty-first century digital world, if they really did *not* want you to communicate with them, they would *not* give you their e-mail addresses or cell phone numbers. They would unsubscribe or block the church's communication. Most don't.

We need to assume desire. In all our communications, assume that *people want to have something you have*. Assume that if you have their contact information, they want to hear from you. Assume desire.

DAY 5

ACTION STEP

ASSUME DESIRE

Actively contact one person who recently appeared on your file. Ask that person to describe their expectation. Ask them if their expectation was met. Ask them if you could pray for a specific need for them. Invite them back to the next outreach or connect event.