

Dave and Jon Ferguson

**Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start
a Missional Church Movement**

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Two brothers, describing their journey of creating home groups, churches, networks and missional church movements in the wider area of Chicago, USA, wrote this book. Their journey started when they were in college, dreaming about how God could use them, and many years later it resulted in achieving a successful missional church movement, which continues to spread and reproduce. The aim of the book is that readers experience encouragement and enlightenment in which they will realize – *I can do it*. Therefore, the authors believe that their experience and paradigm can be transferred to everyone, so the subtitle of the book states: *How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement*.

The book consists of four parts which explain the progressive growth of the movement. The first part speaks about movements starting from one person, the second about reproducing groups from 10-100, the third about reproducing congregations from 100-1000 and the fourth about reproducing movements of tens of thousands. Each part contains several chapters and every chapter starts with presenting some “big idea.” The book has many personal stories and graphics which support the authors’ ideas.

In the introduction, the authors present the Fibonacci sequence about the exponential reproduction and the data about problematic decrease in the number of churches in the USA. Thus, they want to show that Jesus’ great commission is actually not being fulfilled. The solution is that you and your friends start a missional church movement.

Part one, chapter one starts with a big idea that “a missional movement can start with you.” The authors endeavor to convince the readers that they themselves can start a missional movement and they present the example of how they started a new church called Community Christian Church. At that time, they learned the five principles of reproduction: it requires everyone to have an apprentice; it is proactive, not reactive; it is not about size, it is about leader readiness; it is not about our kingdom, it is about God’s kingdom; and it happens on the edge and at the center. Chapter two speaks about the path of leadership and works out the idea that “the leadership path is a life-on-life process for developing leaders in a missional movement.” As supporting arguments, they provide the example of Jesus Christ and his work with his disciples as apprentices, and

the story of a Christian who gradually progressed from leading a house group to leading a network of churches. Chapter three speaks about the apprenticeship and works out the idea that a “missional movement begins by becoming an apprentice of Jesus.” It explains how the author understands the difference between a disciple and an apprentice, and the need for apprentices and apprenticeships in order for people to develop into leaders. Chapter four speaks about reproducing leaders and about the idea that “A leader must develop four key relationships to start a missional movement.” These are relationships with followers, apprentices, peers, and coaches. They also provide a description of the five steps necessary for developing leadership. Chapter five speaks about reproducing artists and about the idea that “attracting and reproducing artists is essential to starting a missional movement.” Artists are creative people who catalyze new Christian congregations. Therefore, it is necessary to create a church culture which attracts artists, assigns them significant roles, and develops their talents. They list five factors for reproducing artists.

The second part starts with chapter six, which speaks about reproducing groups and the idea that “reproducing small groups connect the unconnected and spread a missional movement.” It is important to develop 3C Christ followers. The first “C” stands for “celebrate” and refers to the relationship between us and God. The second “C” stands for “connect” and refers to the relationship between us and the church. The third “C” stands for “contribute” and refers to the relationship between us and the world. The authors explain why small groups are the best settings for reproducing leaders. Chapter seven deals with reproducing missional teams and the idea that “missional teams ensure that movement is always going and sending.” Missional teams are focused on bringing the Good News to the people outside of the church. If we want a missional church and missional teams, we must go out to the people and not wait for them to come to church. Churches should grow from missions, not missions from churches. Chapter eight describes reproducing coaches and the idea that “the coach-leader relationship is crucial to sustaining a missional movement.” Among other things, it speaks about a new coaching model, three primary coaching tasks (equipping, recruiting, serving), and six coaching questions for people they train.

The third part starts with chapter nine, which speaks about reproducing venues and sites and the idea that, “launching new venues and sites accelerates the spread of a missional movement.” The idea is that one church can function in multiple locations. How to achieve that, the authors describe in seven moves. Chapter ten speaks about reproducing multiple sites in order to reach a whole region, and about the idea that “continual reproduction of sites increases the momentum of a missional movement.” The authors point out the advantages of a multisite church as opposed to starting a new church or having one big church.

They pose eight questions which need to be answered in order to achieve a multisite church. Chapter eleven speaks about reproducing churches in order to impact the world and about the idea that “launching new churches is foundational to spreading a missional movement.” The authors present important lessons they learned about starting new churches, about pastors who send people, and about people who are starting a new church.

Part four starts with chapter twelve which speaks about reproducing networks and the idea that “every missional movement has a reproducing infrastructure.” The authors talk about the importance of apostolic leadership, common ideology, trust and accelerated reproduction on all levels where there are leaders, artists, centers and networks. Chapter thirteen describes a reproducing movement which continues to reproduce and thus fulfills Jesus’ commission. It deals with the idea that “a missional movement has a momentum empowered by God’s Spirit.” Movements are maintained by clear vision, simple systems and accelerated reproduction. At the end, the authors once more encourage the readers: *You can do it!*

After the main text of the book the authors give thanks to many friends who, by their lives and actions, influenced the writing of the book. In the appendix, there are discussion questions to go with each chapter and a web-page link, www.exponentialseries.com where you could watch video introductions for each chapter. However, for some reason that page is unavailable in a web browser but I found the page www.exponential.org which contains announcements about conferences related to book themes, video-messages by author Dave Ferguson, and many additional materials in English language.

After reading the book, one of my first thoughts was that this book is primarily for the American (USA) spiritual area where evangelical Christianity is dominant (or for some other region where evangelical Christianity is already prevalent) which is why such grand visions of exponential church reproduction in short time can succeed. The book also contains many stories and illustrations from American culture but it is commendable that the authors illustrated every theoretical premise with a true-life story. My second thought was hypothetical in the sense that this could work in my country if we could launch new Roman Catholic churches, because 86% of the population adheres to the Roman Catholic religion and evangelical churches are often regarded as sects. Therefore, in my judgment, their experience and paradigm cannot be transferred to any setting. However, that which can be applied in every setting are the principles that the authors thoroughly describe. Thus, the book can be very valuable for our readers because it contains plethora of important principles of leadership, apprenticeship, small groups, raising people for ministry, reproduction, etc. I was especially impressed how they recognized and emphasized the importance of recognizing, including, and raising artists in the church for the growth of the church. There-

fore, despite the North American tone, this book can be highly useful for readers who want to know more about leadership and reproduction, and who will know how to apply the book's principles in their setting.

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