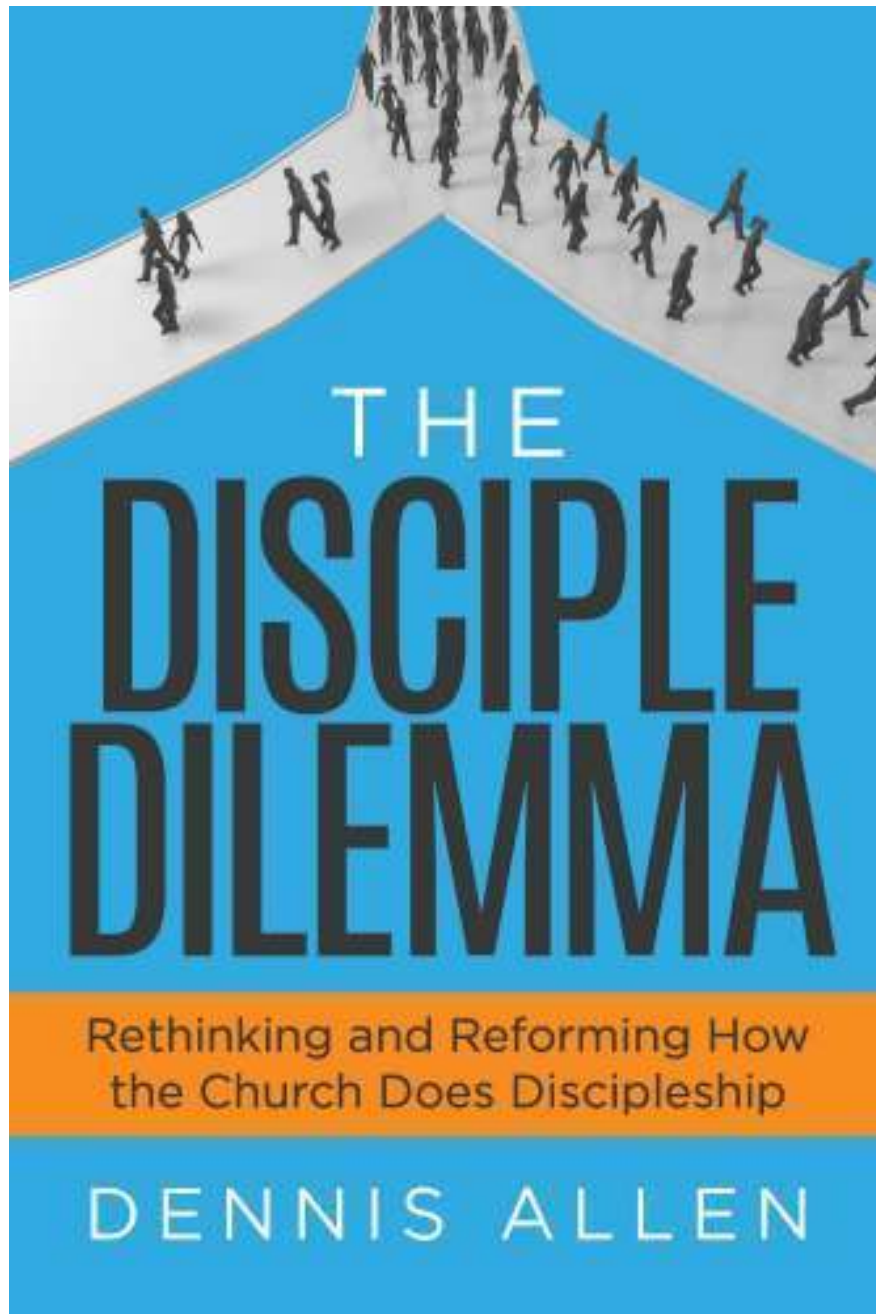


We hope you enjoy this month's download of:



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## The Disciple Dilemma



## ENDORSEMENTS

I'm known for books, lectures and debates focusing on Intelligent Design, and its antithesis - naturalistic Darwinism. So it caught my eye that *The Disciple Dilemma* claims discipleship is being diverted away from its Designer's intent, devolving downward, into a morass of spiritual entropy. Could this be true? Dennis Allen argues that Christianity's altered discipling "DNA" brings in an ominous dilemma. Get ready for a few jolts as Allen shows us how the historical Church, corporate America and today's Christian culture struggle with the discipleship mandate. You might find yourself laughing, recoiling or pushing back as you read *The Disciple Dilemma*, but I am quite sure it will change the way you think about your role in the quest to recover Christ's discipling for us all.

**-Tom Woodward**

Executive Director of the C.S. Lewis Society, Tampa, FL

Research Professor, Trinity College

Author of the award-winning book *Doubts About Darwin*

*The Disciple Dilemma* is a must read for those who desire to comprehend the tie between true leadership and discipleship grounded in the Lordship of Christ. It effectively sets before the reader the dilemma faced by Christians today: whether to follow the shallow 'easy-believism' of our Modern Western church and business traditions, or to comprehend and take on the costly service of following Christ in sound leadership and discipleship.

**-Tom Harvey**

Academic Dean of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford UK

Missionary and Seminary Professor to Asia

Author of *Acquainted With Grief: Wang Mingdao's Stand for the Persecuted Church in China*

I am an entrepreneur, investor and a global apologist. The two common links in all those roles are people and leadership. *The Disciple Dilemma* is making the case that leaders in all vocations and roles serving Christ must understand and tackle the dilemma we now face. If we are to restore committed and surrendered disciples to go into the watching world, we must understand these issues. If you lead one or more people in work, ministry or family this book is useful for you. Be ready for intrigue, provocation, perhaps even laughter, but above all be ready to be changed.

**-Andy Moore**

Entrepreneur and Apologist, Oxford UK

Managing Director at Chorus Network

Director at ADF International (UK)

Founder of Living Telos blog

If discipleship could be likened to the operating software for followers of Christ, then *The Disciple Dilemma* is making the case that some of our software has been hacked! *The Disciple Dilemma* brings to light peculiar symptoms infesting the contemporary Christian community generally, and disciples specifically. But it doesn't stop there. Dennis caught my interest when he began to connect ancient history, corporate practices and church traditions to our present-day challenges. And he's made a case that this trojan-horse code is infecting commercial, civic and societal outcomes as well as Christian discipleship. *The Disciple Dilemma* urges Christian leaders to reformat discipleship back to Version 1.0, Christ's way. This is a vital read for leaders!

**-Mike Hardin**

Provost and Vice President, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama

Professor of Quantitative Analysis

Formerly, Dean of the University of Alabama Culverhouse College of Business

Author and Ordained Minister

With candid insight that is as unapologetic as it is refreshing, *The Disciple Dilemma* locates the Western church in a place of spiritual anemia and exposes the ancient path of fast-held traditions that brought us here. Allen doesn't pave an easy road of sanitized solutions or cookie-cutter fixes, but instead calls us to seek out the wilder, messier, costlier road that Christ Himself journeyed on His mission to make disciples. As a leader in ministry and business, I encourage Christians to take the iconoclastic challenges found in these pages seriously... and then summon the audacity to do something about it.

**-Kara Kennedy**

Executive Director, ClearTrust LLC, Lutz, Florida

Entrepreneur and Apologist

Board Member, the Securities Transfer Association and the C.S. Lewis Society

Author of *Supper, Reflections from our Table*

One of the greatest challenges for me serving as a senior executive has always been people. Specifically, finding, recruiting, motivating and retaining great people to do what they are called to do. As a leader in the Christian community, you're facing that same problem, serving and coaching your people in discipleship. Allen takes us on a challenging walk through Biblical, corporate and church history to show us the divergence of Western discipling from Christ's way of doing things. If you are a leader in Christian community, and I am not only speaking to Pastors, the responsibility is on you to get discipleship with your people fully aligned with Christ's ways. This book is a strategic and Biblical workout that Christian leadership needs to consider with all our hearts, minds and strength."

**-Dave Engelhardt**

President of the C.S. Lewis Society, Tampa, Florida

President of CertainTeed Gypsum (Retired)

Formerly, President ThyssenKrupp Elevator

Why are millennials leaving the church in droves? Why do pastors and staff members work themselves to exhaustion while most church members warm the pews? Why do believers war with one another instead of pulling together? Why has society stopped listening to the concerns of Christians? Using humor and incisive insight, Allen presents an historic case for re-thinking the way we do discipling. I recommend *The Disciple Dilemma* for any leaders who wonder what's going on in the ranks of disciples.

**-Dixie Hunke**

IMB Missionary to China and Africa  
Birmingham, Alabama

*The Disciple Dilemma* makes the audacious claim that since the second century the Christian community has been attempting to clone, instead of make disciples. What's the problem with that? Just as biological embryo cloning is fraught with high failure rates and subtle, life-threatening risks, discipleship cloning, which is another way to say mass-producing disciples, is not Jesus' way, and a low yield endeavor. Bluntly, cloning is not working well for the disciples nor Jesus' Church. Leaders, ranging from Pastors to teachers to personal disciplers need to read *The Disciple Dilemma*!

**-Tim Bertram**

CEO ProKidney, Raleigh, North Carolina  
DVM; Board Certified Toxicologist

My life's work is discipleship, on the mission fields of Southeastern Europe, the U.S. and Latin America. *The Disciple Dilemma* aims at the world of disciples and missions. If you lead or disciple one, two or a thousand people you need to read this book. You may not agree with everything written, but you will feel like Allen has been looking over your shoulder, as the book takes you through the things that hamper disciples, and what we, as leaders, need to do to regain the fuller way of Christ in making disciples. Read the book!

**-Josip Debeljuh**

Serving as a Missionary, Zagreb Croatia  
Global Outreach International & The Church at Brook Hills  
DMin Candidate in Missions, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Where was this book when I began my pastoral ministry? Discipleship is something we pastors assume we are very familiar with, but are we actually on mission making disciples as Jesus has called us? Are we forging reproductive disciples or just multiplying 'Christianized' spectators? Dennis Allen challenges us to understand discipling properly and engage it effectively. We would like a simple three or four point guide, but Allen tells us we must do a lot more thinking through what is needed biblically. We can't simply copy what others are doing. You may not like everything Allen says, but I believe his book will help you be a better disciple maker.

**-John Grossmann**

Senior Pastor

Grace Evangelical Free Church, Cincinnati, OH

A must-read for leaders in every facet of Christian community. As a leader and global missionary with Campus Outreach I am convinced that being a disciple and making disciples are our calling, regardless of gender, vocation, age or location. And I believe discipleship is under siege today in many Christian communities. *The Disciple Dilemma* raises haunting questions as it forces us to hold our traditions of discipleship up to the looking glass of Jesus' model of discipleship. Whether you lead one or thousands, this book is a candid, clever and thought-provoking wake-up call to the disciple-making dilemma that sits before us!

**-Melanie Rogers**

International Ministry Strategy Director, Campus Outreach SERVE

Birmingham, AL





# THE DISCIPLE DILEMMA

Rethinking and Reforming How  
The Church Does Discipleship

DENNIS ALLEN



NEW YORK

LONDON • NASHVILLE • MELBOURNE • VANCOUVER

# THE DISCIPLE DILEMMA

Rethinking and Reforming How the Church Does Discipleship

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*For Calvin & Barbara Miller, Mickey & Carol Dalrymple,  
and Wilson & Charline Henderson.*



## WITH IMMENSE GRATITUDE

To my beloved, Karen, my coach, counselor and friend. She really did try to clean up my tpyos.

To Newton & Vivian (Dad & Mom), Raymond, Brent, Ken, Dixie, Melanie, Meredith, Josip, Marko, Libby and Matt for your support and help in this project.

To the faculty and class of BP 2019 at OCCA, The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics. Especially David Lloyd and Os Guinness. This is your fault.

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To Thomas Womack's insightful editing, and Lisa Grimenstein's precise proofreading, such that the fears of my grammar teachers were not yet again realized.

Reston, Virginia  
Spring 2022



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The radicalism of Christ's way must challenge us.  
He does not want to win numbers but dedicated hearts.

J. Heinrich Arnold, *Discipleship: Living for Christ in the Daily Grind*

## 6

### *Christian Tradition:*

Herd Community Causes Disciples

### *Business Tradition:*

Too Big to Fail

Pope Gregory the Great was a visionary man, and a most capable leader of the church at the end of the sixth century. Almost a thousand years after his death he would be lauded as “the last good pope” by the famous reformer John Calvin.

Gregory’s father was a wealthy Roman senator, while his mother would later be venerated as a patron saint to women. Gregory grew up very blessed, and apparently quite humble. He was an academic wonderkid in law, the sciences, and literature. And though Gregory eschewed attention and the limelight, they would have their way with him nonetheless.

He would hold public office by age thirty-three. Upon his father’s death, Gregory converted the family’s substantial Sicilian estate into a monastery. During this time Gregory would view all that he’d grown up with—the estates, the money, the power—as *contemptus mundi*. He felt

disdain for this life's trappings. He wanted a smaller life, to live in close relationships with the people around his monastery. He was always among the people, giving away food, comforting the sick, talking to and relating to the community. Gregory had chosen to serve Christ by living out his life in close relationships among the locals.

Or so he thought. Known at home and abroad for his ability to relate with people and draw them in to the teaching of the church, his talents gained the eye of Pope Pelagius II, who ordained him a deacon. The pope would soon send Gregory to Constantinople. Emperor Maurice was there, and the pope sought troops and aid from his head of state in order to defend Rome against the invading Lombards. Gregory, with hesitance, went. He moved freely among the very worldly elite and powerful in the Byzantine capital, and he did so without compromising his own standards. Yet military support from the emperor would never materialize. Realizing that the emperor wasn't going to help in Rome's plight, Gregory returned home.

When Pelagius II died of the plague in the year 590, the hands-down choice as the new pope was Gregory, the reluctant hermit. He would in vain try to continue living a monastic life as a pontiff. It would prove impossible to command a global church while living off the grid. Reluctantly he was extracted from his monastic closet. And so, he acted. He would see and move on the need for great scholarship and reasoning to challenge the church, to upgrade missions work and outreach, and to be his people's leading servant. And he would heed the call to serve the poor when citizens of Constantinople turned away from their own people's gut-wrenching needs. What Gregory did in his time as pope would be worthy of a Harvard Business School case study in entrepreneurial genius, leadership, truly compassionate capitalism, and an attempt to reignite discipleship in a very large Christian institution.

Gregory would organize his own logistics systems, a revolutionary accomplishment for that time. He would devise supply chains, accounting practices, and equity-incentivized farm operations with delivery nodes to ensure food supplies arrived for the needy, diverting what would have

been church revenue into supplies for starving street people. Gregory the ever-serving deacon would even develop his own version of Meals on Wheels, where people who were incapacitated from ravages of plague and poverty could be assured that food would arrive in the hands of stewards. Stewards who were compensated only upon discharging their duty. Gregory knew how to extract performance from stodgy staffers. And his keen sense of strategy would launch successful mission endeavors to the Anglo-Saxons, the Netherlands, and Germany.

In Gregory's life we can begin to comprehend the challenges of personal discipling in the small church environment as well as seeing him lead disciples in an institution of massive scale and size. Gregory truly understood serving people, reaching them at a personal level, leading them to serve other people in need.

But our interest in Gregory goes further than his administrative and managerial savvy. As leaders, we need to consider a big question that gets little attention: Is there a "right size" in bodies of believers, an optimum scale and mass for discipleship? Gregory succeeded in ministering personally; he succeeded in managing ministers, whether in his own small hometown environment, or as a global pontiff. His work, words, and scholarship as a pope were significant. Yet the question of organizing the first Giga-church (10,000-plus members) toward effective discipleship is before us. How did Gregory do in that regard? He was, after all, snatched from a local deacon's life, one of relating and walking and living among his peers, to become the administrator of the most massive church with a massive staff, massive social problems, and massive numbers of congregants awaiting what's next.

Until Gregory's arrival on the scene, it would be fair to say the Roman church had chosen to set aside discipleship for market-share. And in that growth rollup, a culture of "too big to be concerned with discipling" had arrived. Leave that to the executives, the cardinals, the pope. The church was too big to fail, discipling too failed to be big.

"The radicalism of Christ's way must challenge us. He does not want to win numbers but dedicated hearts."<sup>81</sup> Too-big-to-fail numbers thinking

wrecks businesses too. In 2008, Bear Stearns, one of America's oldest and most prestigious investment houses, was sold to JP Morgan for less than ten cents on the dollar of its value twenty-four months earlier. Bear Stearns had been worth \$66 billion USD back in 2006, going big with more than \$300 billion under management only months before the crash. Books aplenty have dissected the company's downfall,<sup>82</sup> many pointing to its concentration in subprime derivatives, questionable assets, and collateralized debt obligations, all stretching them well beyond their capacity to operate when the financial crisis of 2006 arrived. In other words, they were in debt way over their heads and loaded with bad collateral. Others point to a perfect financial storm in the housing market, or simply to Wall Street greed. These are all subcomponents of a much larger issue that caused Bear Stearns' demise—and that same issue torments churches today as much as it does Wall Street: When numbers displace the mission, the numbers rule. When numbers rule, the rule of law is not a mission, it's numbers. Said another way, what really matters—the mission, or the numbers? Only one can have top billing. A lot of business people will say the mission of any business is to maximize returns to its investors—the numbers mantra again. But that's a dilemma in itself. The prize of a business is the returns it garners in money and market share. But the mission is something else altogether. In sports we focus on the game, not the trophy. We want the trophy. We like the accolades that go with the trophy. But we play the game our way, using our talent, our mission. If we succeed, the trophy comes with the winning performance. Numbers may indicate things like market share and monetized success, but numbers are not the mission.

As an organization grows, it must either have faithful followers committed to the mission, or the organization becomes its own mission—which is to say mission failure begins. Bigger always justifies more staff, more policies, more facilities, more numbers, and more layers in order to build up more size and planning for rinse-and-repeat like that all over again. Don't assume this means an organization cannot become big and still hold to mission. But leaders must realize that size has to be subservient to the mission, it cannot be a goal in itself, and not a casual add-on

feature independent of mission. As size demands more attention at the cost of mission, mission becomes cut flowers, which is to say nice looking, but no longer functional, no longer rooted in a mission. Numbers, success metrics, and influence—subsets of a growth-based approach, loosed from a mission will become...the mission.

The tradition of growth (or avoiding growth) is an old but very common mission distraction that can crush discipling just as clericalism and lordship-lite production thinking can. In fact, these three dysfunctions can often be found emerging together in the rush and crush to deal with growth. These were the kinds of things that Gregory inherited. But is that a fair assessment? Think about Gregory's dilemma: Coupled with the twin crises of plagues and wars, how could anyone criticize priorities of ministry over something less immediate? It would be natural for a leader in that situation to focus on that moment and all its chaos rather than the mission. "We need tourniquets, not teaching!" So, we have an opportunity to learn something about leadership that is much harder to grasp in the fog of the issues and conflicts Gregory faced in his time. Gregory led by example throughout his life, ministering directly to people. To rephrase it, he gave away a lot of fish, yet he was not much into teaching fishing. Great compassion. Making disciples? That's a trickier read. Why? He may well have been pouring his life into others to make disciples pursuing Christ. But we cannot point to that, so we cannot be sure. A beautiful ministerial and managerial life. A discipling legacy is less obvious. And here we see a vital point. Gregory's papal life offers much in terms of personal doing, but little in his impact as a maker of discipleship culture. By all accounts, Gregory proved he understood what it meant to be an individual follower of Christ serving distressed people. He proved also that he was a master of organizational management and strategic planning. But so few around him understood and rightly valued discipleship. So rather than nit-pick this marvelous man of God, let's learn from him. What must it have been like to take the reins of leadership in the midst of that huge organization, at such a time of disease and death?

What should leaders take away from Gregory's great works? Not simply how to compassionately serve people, and how to set up savvy systems to leverage the bigness of a church for God's work. Gregory showed us outstanding vocational aptitude as a disciple of Christ. He showed us excellent ministry leadership, finding ways to motivate people to serve and perform. What he demonstrated is that some of us will attain or inherit roles of leadership, influence, and power. And when that happens, if we're not prepared for it ahead of time, our personal discipling and discipleship will fall to the tyranny of the urgent, the tyranny of administration, the tyranny of growth, fame, and power. Mission cannot succeed if we don't allow it to change a culture centered on works, causes, and tribes into a culture that sticks to the mission of enabling disciples of Christ. The point? You'll get all the beautiful things of justice, unity, real and effective agape love only when you pursue the real mission—making disciples.

There's wisdom to be found in looking at what Gregory did, and wisdom in hearing Jesus telling us (in Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7) that yes, the urgency of the poor is always there, but focus (the mission) on him, then let that focus drive ministry, drive results.

For leadership, following Jesus's strategy to develop (or rebuild) a community of discipleship lets disciples multiply disciples, which is precisely what leaders should desire for their people. And in that journey, that strategic process to help enable people to minister greatly, and enable people to pursue causes passionately. Then disciples go into work life, home life, civic life, and ministry roles, and out across the globe. A mission of making constant followers of Christ, as disciples, is the true means of multiplying service and ministry, rather than plugging temporary holes where there are ministry gaps or chronic troubles. Leaders must organize in that way. Plug the mission, not the holes. Then the disciples will plug the holes. Holy hole-fillers thrive because leaders are wholly committed to discipleship's holy call.



## A Man with a Big Plan

What does all this tell us about the size tradition? Is size constructive or destructive for discipleship? And a natural follow-up: How am I, as a leader, supposed to deal with size and its impact on discipleship? Glad you asked.

A preeminent name in corporate growth strategy is Peter Drucker, one of the most highly regarded business thinkers of the twentieth century. Ask anyone with an MBA about Drucker, and be ready to sit back and listen. Born in Austria in 1909, he fled Nazism for America as a professor in the late 1930s, where he wrote thoughtfully on politics through the 1940s—especially the evils of totalitarianism—before turning his brilliant mind to business in the 1950s. Drucker’s career spanned tenures at both New York University and the Claremont Graduate School in California. His monographs in *Harvard Business Review*, and his more than thirty published works, along with a plethora of fascinating speeches, are widely embraced today in boardrooms and the most elite business schools.

He’s the name behind modern management strategy. Corporate titans such as General Electric, General Motors, and AT&T credited Drucker with their massive strategic and financial gains in the 1970s and 1980s. In other words, this guy had credibility with big business. And the odds are likely that half of those reading this book in America are worshipping under Western church traditions introduced by Drucker’s personal influence—influence that altered the course of Western Christian churches. And with it, he altered the course of Western discipleship.

Peter Drucker—born Lutheran, and later in life an Episcopalian—stated, “I’m not a born-again Christian.”<sup>83</sup> Drucker’s passion was sociology, especially the welfare of society. He wanted better for humanity than what he fled from under the Nazis. As one of the original social justice warriors, he saw things in corrupt political power that reviled him. His aim was to find a better way to address human evils, *acedia* (spiritual sloth and apathy), and social failure, and he frequently railed against totalitarianism, greed, and poverty. Drucker wanted to enable real change in a culture, change that would alter society from the bottom up, outflanking

the powerful. Drucker surmised that change would best be brought by the regular folks, and thereby force the topside people—government leaders, business titans, nonprofits, and elites in society—to come around to a better way.

In the 1940s and early 1950s, Drucker thought and wrote about political enlightenment. But after recognizing politicians' addiction to power, he gave up on politics as a way of culture change. Corporate strategy became his go-to path forward through the 1960s, when many of his bestselling business works were produced. But by the 1970s, Drucker had come to realize the same power addiction trap lurked in businesses. He was coming to think that while the aim of changing Western society was feasible, it wouldn't be by either political or commercial means. Those ships had sailed, many of those leaders using Drucker's ideas to grow, but without taking aboard the ethical freight Drucker felt was necessary for society. And those political and commercial ships would not willingly relinquish the power and wealth journeys they were on.

Drucker saw that a new path was needed. It required lots of people. It required conviction and enthusiasm that wasn't lured away by opportunistic power, wealth, or fame. This new way would need to be made up of two special assets. First, a highly empowered social machine that could rally millions of regular folks to a just and moral cause. Second, leaders immune to power traps in order to successfully pilot that new cultural machine.

In the 1970s, Drucker could already see the machine in its prototypical phase. Scattered around some of the big cities were these peculiarly big churches. You might recognize names like Brooklyn Tabernacle, Liberty Baptist, National Presbyterian, Coral Ridge. These were mega-sized gatherings where thousands attended each week. They were faithful people who sought a moral order, who weren't in it for monetary or political gain, and who wanted things to be different, to be better in the world. Where these churches stood theologically didn't matter at all to Drucker. He was after the social leverage, not the soteriology. He called his idea "the phenomenon outside my window." One of those big churches that was right outside Drucker's window was Robert Schuller's drive-in Garden Grove

Community Church. It was a mere twenty-six miles from his Claremont office, where thousands of these nice church people gathered every week.

Along with his new approach, Drucker needed fresh leadership to implement his idea. He needed leaders without guile or aspirations of grandeur who would spend significant time with him, learn from him, and emulate his thinking in societal change—in a word, Drucker would need disciples. They would be “playmakers,” borrowing a football term, winsome leaders who could attract many alongside them to scale up the work, scale up the size of the voice, and thence scale up the social agenda Drucker sought to influence through the Western church.

He found his disciples in three men. Perhaps these names are familiar to you. The three Drucker disciples were Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Church outside Los Angeles; Bill Hybels, former pastor of Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago; and the late Bob Buford, a cable-tv mogul and founder of the Christian Leadership Network. A casual tour around the web will reveal personal stories from each of these three very influential men telling the world that Drucker mentored them and architected their organizational game plans.

The notion of these three Drucker disciples was to integrate the gospel with people’s passions and wants. This so-called “attractional” model would scale to mega-size, pulling in members who wanted to sync up their personal agendas with a moral or Christian kind of venue. And he thought, these people would want to see their participation become an influential platform. It would be leverage to broadcast the gospel even further, do ministry bigger, and change society by means of power, by means of influence. It was a new approach. Unless you want to look back to the fourth century and Constantine. The Drucker plan wasn’t intended to make disciples, even though that may have been on the minds of his protégés. The Drucker approach would attract people into churches. Gathered up mostly from other smaller churches, it would turn out, with many of those people attracted to the megas actually sticking around and becoming wonderful followers of Christ. But the concept itself was classic

business school: a marketing campaign aimed precisely at gathering power in market share.

The secret ingredient for the early megas was a seeker-sensitive venue. This seeker approach was detailed in Donald McGavran's 1965 book *The Bridges of God*. Seeker-sensitive meant that you figure out what people are looking for in their wants and wishes in a church experience, then you give it to them. You market Christ to personally felt needs. It would put church growth on steroids.

Willow Creek and Saddleback prove that strategy out convincingly. Both churches grew to more than twenty thousand members each within a few years of their founding. With growth like that, all the benefits and baggage of big could not be far behind. Size and influence were Drucker's objectives. Bigger meant more. More influence, more attraction, and more shots-on-goal to change a culture, with the crowds hearing and then taking goodness into society, just like the landowners didn't in the fourth century. Some traditions never die, they just keep coming around and around.

Some would argue that the Drucker approach was so novel that even Jesus hadn't thought of it. But Drucker had one very prescient thought we do need to learn from: Get a community of believers focused on something motivating, like discipling, and you generate people who'll go out into the world and influence the world as humble followers of Christ, not as power brokers. That's a key point for Christian leaders, no matter what size organization you lead.

This idea of size and influence in the 1970s and 1980s was already in motion with Christian organizations outside the churches. And politically conservative thought leaders figured out how they could catch a ride on it—two familiar examples being the Moral Majority, led by the Reverend Jerry Falwell in the political space, and a conservative resurgence among Southern Baptists to power-wash religious liberalism's influences away from their membership.

So now the megachurches were on the rise too—intentionally designed as Bigs for Jesus, to give glory to God by virtue of size and influence. At their core, these megachurches relied on size as the brand for their contin-

ued propulsion. This kind of approach was not, I would argue, a discipleship-oriented mission, but it does create buzz and enthusiasm.

Bill Hybels began Willow Creek Community Church in 1975, and Saddleback started under Rick Warren in 1980. Both were focused on reaching people and serving God through Drucker's mentoring model. Hybels made an art of surveying community needs, then asking people to come experience what they wanted, in a church-lite setting. Saddleback would lean more into a discover-what-God-wants-in-you approach that would eventually produce a blockbuster book, *The Purpose Driven Life* (twelve million copies sold). Both churches had a common logic: You matter a lot, come hear how God's way aligns with you. We can do big things for God together.

This Big model became a template put to a program by Bob Buford's business, the Christian Leadership Network, which became a megachurch consulting system. Buford's protégés would train thousands of pastors worldwide on how to do mega.

So how did Drucker's game plan perform? In 1983 in the US, there were less than a hundred so-called megachurches (with two thousand or more attendees), which all in were hosting about 250,000 people on a Sunday.<sup>84</sup> Today there are about a thousand such churches, with a combined total attendance of more than five million. (Those numbers are understated, because most Baptist and Presbyterian churches—many of them megachurches—don't usually participate in surveys by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the leading observer of the megachurch movement.) The known list shows at least a tenfold growth in the number of these churches since 1983, and a twelvefold increase in the headcount.<sup>85</sup> One other interesting point: Most of the growth into megachurches is by attrition of members from smaller churches. Attracting big, pulling big—from smaller churches.

Today, about 10 percent of US churches host over 26 million people. That means 30,000 churches out of 300,000 average 900 people or more. In other words, over half of US church attendance on a Sunday is concentrated in a big (or mega/giga) church, some headcount live, some vir-

tual. Think about that. Ten percent of the churches in the US account for more than half the attendance. The other 25 million attending worship are spread out across 270,000 churches, those smaller churches averaging about ninety-five people per church.

### Size Dynamics

This new normal is an old tradition: size is good. For some churches, that means big is where it's at. Big preaching, big music, big facilities, big names—the venue is in going big.

For others, small is holy. In the small churches, it can be intimate, it can be exclusionary, the purposes being to keep things personal, intimate. Or it might be church polity—small is a doctrinal emphasis for the Quakers, for example. Or maybe small is just circumstantial—a church too remote to draw large crowds.

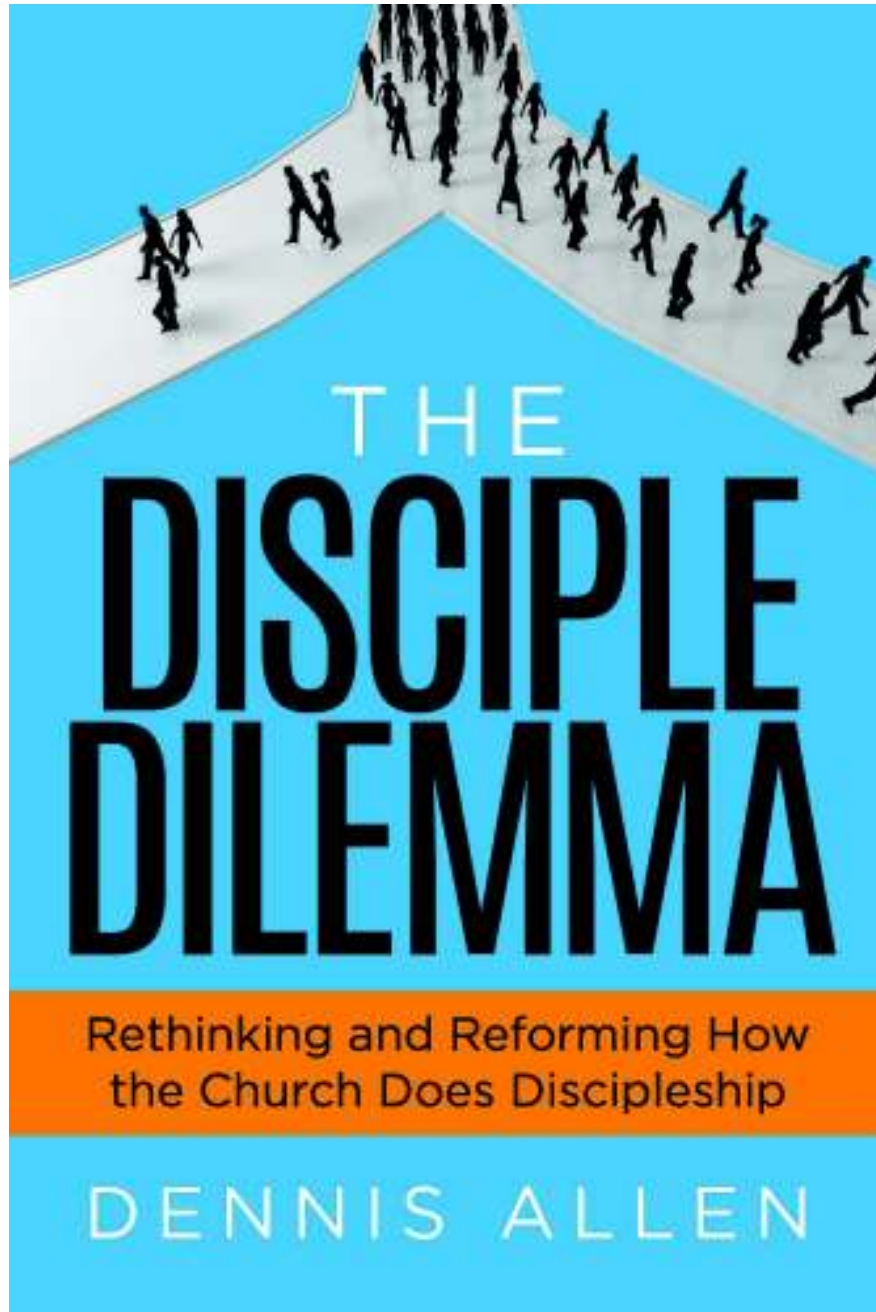
But in either tradition, small or big, size can overtake mission, all supposedly for success and glory for Jesus and the gospel. In both cases, big and small, the centuries-old tradition is in full force: Size matters; head-count done our way is what matters. Our discipleship? I think you meant membership, didn't you?

Popularity tends to attract wanna-be's to mimic, and the mega model did just that. Some people just enjoy the buzz of the big event. Others go there to hawk health, welfare, prosperity, fame, and books—all in order to glorify God, we're told. Oh, and often creating vast wealth for celebrities, validating William Cowper's lines: "A business with income at its heels furnishes always oil for its own wheels."<sup>86</sup>

With churches hewing to the tradition of size as the mission, the mission to make disciples was being lost. The laity—Christ's true agency for disciple-making—would be told to tithe and show up to hear the anointed. Size was kingdom power. Focus on size. Whichever size "fits" you.

Don't get lost in the debate over whether small or large churches are biblical models. Ask what the mission really is supposed to be—not the mission statement words, but the actions that demonstrate what the mis-

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