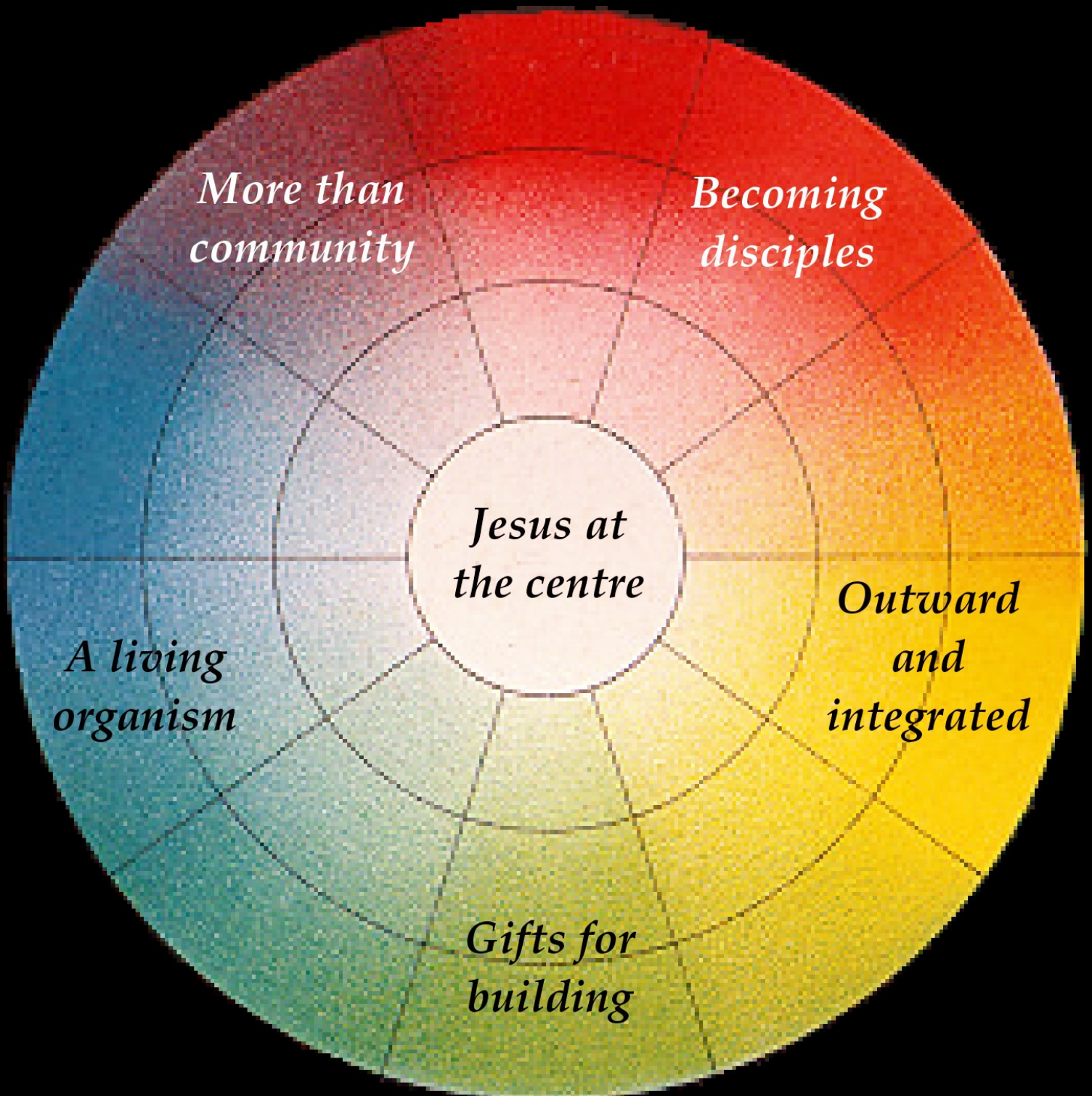


Jesus, Disciple, Mission, Church

Stepping into the future with Jesus

Chris J Jefferies



Comment on *Jesus, Disciple, Mission, Church*

What you have in your hands is the labour of love of a man committed to getting God's people in touch with their inherent potentials as the missional people of God. This very accessible summary and study guide will help individuals and especially communities apply the ideas contained in my book *The Forgotten Ways*. I am grateful to Chris for making it happen.

– [Alan Hirsch](#), [blog](#), author of *The Forgotten Ways*, *Untamed*, *The Faith of Leap* and others.

Alan Hirsch's *The Forgotten Ways* is a foundational classic that describes the six elements of missional DNA. *JDMC* is an excellent and comprehensive primer/guide that sets out Alan's teaching in a simple and accessible way. It is designed for groups to use and provides many useful questions for discussion.

– **Felicity Dale**, [Simply Church](#) blog, author of *The Black Swan Effect*, *Small is Big* and others.

JDMC is a gentle challenge and very practical; it will help you move from thinking and discussing to actually doing. This is an essential tool for simple/missional communities that get stuck with an inward focus, and there were so many good bits I almost underlined the whole thing! I particularly love how Chris has taken *The Forgotten Ways* and made each part bite sized.

– **Marsha Farmer**, [Newforms Resources](#)

With heartfelt thanks

To my wife, Donna, for her support and encouragement, the guys at Caffè Nero who showed me the value of being incarnational, to Alan Hirsch for providing a framework and inspiration in *The Forgotten Ways*, to Neil Cole, Paul Young, Tony and Felicity Dale, Steve Addison and so many others for the helpful things they have said and written, to Peter and Marsha Farmer for pressing ahead missionally in Britain and beyond, and to a host of friends who have encouraged me in ways they may not realise – Jim, Sean, Steph, Terry, John, Kev, Roger, Paul, Mo, Sue, Kevin, Frances, my sister Rachael, Peter and Jody, Ben and many more (I can't even *begin* to list you all here).

Jesus, Disciple, Mission, Church (JDMC)

Stepping into the future with Jesus

A short guide to The Forgotten Ways

Chris J Jefferies

The front cover

The cover of JDMC shows a colour wheel with a bright white centre. The phrases on the wheel describe six essential factors for growth. Jesus must be at the centre of everything – we need to become (and make) disciples – we must go out and become rooted in our local environment – we need to recognise those who are gifted in enabling the church to become mature – we need to grow and flourish and multiply like a living thing – and we need to work through challenges together.

And just as all the rainbow colours are required to make pure, white light, so are these six components essential if Jesus is to be fully expressed in his church.

(The cover is based on an [image from Wikimedia.](#))

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Contents

Comment on Jesus, Disciple, Mission, Church.....	1
With heartfelt thanks.....	1
Publication details.....	4
Introduction.....	7
Where might you use this guide?.....	7
What it contains.....	7
Practicalities.....	8
Some final suggestions.....	8
Working together in six ways.....	9
Key factors.....	9
1 - Jesus at the centre.....	9
2 - Becoming disciples.....	10
3 - Outward and integrated.....	10
4 - Gifts for building.....	10
5 - A living organism.....	11
6 - More than community.....	11
Six parts of a connected whole.....	11
One – Jesus at the Centre.....	13
The One.....	13
Jesus at the centre.....	13
Magnificently modelled mission.....	14
Jesus alone.....	14
Everything is holy!.....	14
Put the gospels first.....	15
Taking it further.....	15
Two – Becoming disciples.....	17
A more effective way.....	17
Really mean business.....	18
Be committed.....	18
We are all priests.....	19
Be active from the start and stay active.....	19
Keeping up the momentum.....	19
Three – Outward and integrated.....	21
Doing it Jesus' way.....	21
Getting out there.....	21
Deeply integrated.....	22
Tell the story.....	22
Live the life!.....	23
A new faith community.....	23
Probe and challenge.....	24
Keep on going.....	24
Four – Gifts for building.....	25
Gifts of service.....	25
1 – Pioneering mission.....	26
2a – Activating the forgotten ways – Thinking it through.....	26
2b – Activating the forgotten ways – Encouraging one another.....	27
3 – Identifying purpose.....	27

4 – Growing the gifts.....	27
5 – Sparking connections.....	28
Develop and encourage each other.....	28
Five – A living organism.....	29
Keep moving on.....	29
Structure for life.....	29
Connect and communicate.....	30
Sneeze the gospel.....	31
Facilitating growth and change.....	32
Six – More than community.....	33
Vision that will change us.....	33
Church at the heart of life.....	33
Get involved.....	34
Responding and becoming active.....	34
The work of the Spirit.....	37
Jesus at the centre.....	38
Becoming disciples.....	38
Outward and integrated.....	38
Gifts for building.....	39
A living organism.....	39
More than community.....	39
Some practical help.....	40
A quote.....	40
The APEST gifts.....	41
Notes on the gifts.....	41
The apostolic gift.....	41
The prophetic gift.....	42
The evangelistic gift.....	42
The shepherding gift.....	42
The teaching gift.....	43
Working together.....	43
Other church leaders.....	45
Why do we need to consider other leaders?.....	45
Bishops.....	45
Elders.....	46
Deacons.....	47
Pastors.....	47
Priests.....	47
Bishops, elders, deacons, pastors and priests today.....	48
Last words.....	49
Not the end, just the beginning.....	49
An intricate fabric.....	49
Just do it!.....	49
A blessing.....	49

Introduction

(Download the latest version – GetJDMC.scilla.org.uk)

This twelve-part guide will help you explore some key ideas from *The Forgotten Ways*, by [Alan Hirsch](#)*. Of course, one way to grapple with the material is simply to read Alan's book, and I highly recommend doing so. And if your church or group wants to discuss and learn together there's *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*, also highly recommended, but it's long and detailed. Another way to start is to read *The Shaping of Things to Come*, a book that provides a lot of useful background.

But if you need an introductory guide you have come to the right place. JDMC is suitable for individual use, but better for up to six to ten people working together. The guide explains the main points to get you thinking and exploring; if you find it interesting you'll want to go further so I'll point out the main sources as we go along. For more information visit the website [Jesus, Disciple, Mission, Church](#).

I became aware of *The Forgotten Ways* when Alan spoke at a conference. I read some of his books, began working through the *Handbook* on my own, and then tried it with others. I wrote *JDMC* because I sensed the need for something short and simple, and I'm using it very effectively with groups of people I know.

* All of Alan's books are available from this link.

Where might you use this guide?

It works well for groups of interested friends, it could be used by a Christian Union at a workplace or college, or it might suit a home group or small group forming part of a local church. Also, it might serve to inject fresh thinking into any church or denomination, perhaps being worked through by a group of church leaders. But please remember that *JDMC* only skims the surface. If you like what you find here, please consider going deeper and further using the sources mentioned above and throughout the guide.

What it contains

JDMC consists of the introduction you're reading right now, a first section to outline the thinking behind *The Forgotten Ways*, six further parts (one for each forgotten way), three supplements to answer questions readers have asked (*not* based on Alan Hirsch's work), and a conclusion. The sessions contain simple, introductory material with questions to get you thinking for yourself. The six forgotten ways can be seen as distinct, but also have a way of weaving themselves together in practice. You may notice this as you work through the guide; take it as evidence that the six ways are inextricably linked and interdependent.

We learn by doing. Good and bad habits alike result from repeated behaviour, and the sessions aim to get you behaving in ways that will form good habits as Jesus' disciples. Over time, I hope and expect that you will behave yourselves into habits and thinking that will take you further in the journey with Jesus than you may have thought possible or necessary.

Don't skip the questions, they're an essential part of the discovery process. Take time to process the material and come up with your own ideas and conclusions. It's not possible to offer exhaustive Bible references in a short guide. The Bible references I've included are merely starting points for exploration. As you read your Bible (and especially the gospels)

you are likely to find that other relevant verses and paragraphs leap off the page.

The sessions include related online material including text, audio and video. You can click through to these resources in the version of the discussion guide at jdmc.scilla.org.uk. The guide is free to use so download it, print it, modify it, or give it away; all I ask is that if you distribute it you provide attribution by including the link GetJDmc.scilla.org.uk and apply the same copyright conditions that I do.

Practicalities

Each part of the guide recommends an online video (see 'For more information' at the end of each section). You might start each session by watching the video together.

One way of working is for everyone to read the notes before meeting. Underline anything that seems important or stands out. Jot ideas in the margins. Mark anything you don't understand so you can raise it in the discussion. Alternatively it may be simpler to read together as far as the first discussion point, and then repeat for the second point. For this reason, the second edition includes a discussion point for every subheading in the text. Decide what works best for your particular group; invent your own method if necessary.

It's more important to cover everything well than it is to get to the end, but it's also important not to get stuck; if you don't have time for a session in one sitting, finish it next time you meet. But if you really can't agree on something, note down the different points of view and move on. If your numbers are larger than ten, I suggest working as several groups (two groups of six will be better than a group of twelve). Everyone should engage and contribute, but in large groups there are always some who are reluctant to speak up.

The suggested things to do are just that – suggestions; see if you can come up with other creative ideas of your own. Don't try to do everything but think things through and aim to do a few things well. Agree on some choices and work on them together. Make notes on things you want to return to later and any decisions you make. Get someone to write down the agreed points and circulate them.

If you feel a session highlights a particular weakness for your group, consider returning to it for a second time later. Or you could tackle the weak area in more depth from *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*.

Some final suggestions

Work through the sessions again from time to time, perhaps annually; different things will come into focus if you do. Better still, read *The Forgotten Ways* and consider using *The Forgotten Ways Handbook* to discover a great deal more.

Don't feel you must read *JDMC* in sequence; it may be better to start with a topic that excites you; the parts are self-contained and will work in any order. Part 1, the overview, would also work at the end. Some groups might prefer to start with Part 3, Becoming disciples. But however you decide to do it, aim to cover everything at some point.

Encourage other groups to work through *JDMC*. Offer to guide them through it, but encourage them to make their own choices about what is most relevant and useful in their own situation. If you are helping another group try to listen much more than you speak.

If you *do* decide to act as a guide for others it would be very useful to read *The Forgotten Ways* first and work through *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*. This will provide more detail and supporting information to help you answer questions and give useful advice.

Chris Jefferies – August 2015

Working together in six ways

(Download the latest version – GetJDMC.scilla.org.uk)

Here's a question to get you thinking. 'Why doesn't church in the West grow explosively like the church described in the book of Acts?'

Jesus told his disciples, 'Go and make disciples of all nations ... and teach them everything that I have taught you' ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). How many of us actually go? How many make disciples? What was this *early, outgoing, discipling* church really like?

The gospels are full of hints and clues in the life of Jesus, and Acts describes the early years of the church in exciting detail. Jesus' followers were reviled and persecuted but determined to press on; they had one another and the presence of the Holy Spirit to sustain them in their constant outward movement.

The church grew from 120 people to 20 million in the first 300 years. Doesn't that fill you with a sense of challenge? Will you rise to it?

Discuss – List some of the ways church today and church at the beginning are different. Can you think of other examples of church movements throughout history that exploded from tiny beginnings? How did they do it? Jesus rarely mentions church, but talks about the kingdom a lot – why?

Key factors

Alan Hirsch identifies six factors that he calls 'forgotten ways'. These factors were all active in the early church and in other examples of explosive growth; think of them as the DNA of the church. Alan suggests that if you follow Jesus, you already have this DNA, but perhaps some of it is inactive. Jesus is our righteousness, but are we a 'faithful city'? ([Isaiah 1:26](#)). Have we, like the church at Ephesus, forgotten the love we had at first? ([Revelation 2:4](#))

In the Western church, what has been lying dormant for so long needs to be brought back into activity. The next six chapters in this guide are intended to help you start the process and begin a more exciting and fruitful journey.

This first chapter of JDMC might leave you with more questions than answers. That is the intention, to get you wondering and pondering. The remaining chapters provide more focus and detail.

Discuss – Before reading on, make some guesses about what the six factors might be. What most enables rapid, even explosive, growth?

1 - Jesus at the centre

As his followers, Jesus should be central in all we do. Few would argue with that! The alternative is to do things in our own strength and wisdom and we know this will never be enough.

The early believers kept Jesus central in their lives and went out and changed their world. Although many of us today claim (and even sing) that Jesus is at the centre, what do we really mean by that? Do our actions truly bear out our words? Have other things got in our way? To some extent this is a way that most of us have forgotten. One of the issues here

is that we might not even be aware there's a problem. ([Luke 9:57-62](#))

If there are other things crowding out Jesus at the centre of our lives, how might we go about identifying them and rooting them out? Consider [Matthew 11:28-30](#); might a burdensome life get in the way sometimes? Is it necessary to struggle?

Discuss – Is Jesus at the centre in your lives? Are there parts of life where he takes second place? Think about money, friends, hobbies, family life, fitness, music, TV, work and even church life. Be as honest as you can; consider in particular how you use your time.

2 - Becoming disciples

This second forgotten way is about revealing Jesus to the people around us by becoming more and more like him. ([John 13:34-35](#)) It demands a lifetime of challenge and we must grapple with it every single day.

Followers of Jesus are always growing in the fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)) and encouraging one another. We learn to become more and more like him in what we say and do. The word 'Christian' began as a scornful nickname used by the Romans and Greeks and just means 'Little Christ'. These 'Christ-ians' were obviously different from other people in society. ([Acts 2:44-47](#)) When Jesus was in a town in Galilee or Judaea he was surrounded by stunned and fascinated people watching his every move. Do we have this effect in our society? We need to do more than declare good news, we need to *be* good news as well, touching people in practical ways.

Discuss – Are you following Jesus' example? Take a look at [Ephesians 5:8-13](#), or even the entire chapter. What's the principle here? Does being a disciple mean being perfect or does it mean growing to be more like Jesus?

3 - Outward and integrated

People who follow Jesus will be driven to go out into the world and will also feel the need to be deeply present in the surrounding culture and society.

Think about seeds, they need to be spread out far and wide but they should also be pressed in and covered over if they are to grow. Jesus went wide *and* deep, setting us an example. He was sent by his Father and lived among us in our world *as one of us*. He travelled the length and breadth of the land, and even into Greek areas like the Decapolis. And he met people in their particular circumstances, identifying with them to make his words and actions meaningful. For example, see him at work in [John 2:1-11](#), [John 4:4-26](#), and [Luke 19:1-10](#).

Discuss – What did coming into the world involve for Jesus? Where did he come from? What did he leave behind? Think about the ways he embedded himself in our broken world and became like us - list as many as you can.

4 - Gifts for building

The fourth forgotten way involves the gifts of service identified by Paul in [Ephesians 4:11-16](#). The gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd and teacher work together. Do we recognise these gifts in our brothers and sisters? The apostolic gift lays foundations and releases and stirs up the other gifts. All of them are there in every one of us, but we tend to

be strongest in one or two.

This form of guiding church life is so completely forgotten that it may seem strange to most of us, yet without it we tend to go in several unhelpful directions. Our spiritual ears and eyes must be wide open even to see this, let alone walk in it.

Discuss – Think about the different ways we run church, can you list some of them? Read [Acts 14:14](#), in what sense were Paul and Barnabas apostles? (Hint: you might need to read a big chunk of Acts to find the answer, and it may remain hidden from you even then.)

5 - A living organism

This session looks at some important differences between organisations and organisms, particularly as they involve movements, networks and growth. As the body of Christ we are an embodiment of Jesus' life and resurrection.

Is the church alive or is it an institution? How can we even begin to answer a question like this? Does the Bible contain anything to help us? As a clue, does Jesus speak more positively about organisations ([Matthew 12:5-8](#), [Matthew 23:1-12](#)) or about living things ([Matthew 13:18-23](#), [Matthew 13:31-33](#))? This is another long forgotten road we need to travel together, a forgotten way.

Discuss – Talk about the differences between organisms (animals, plants, people) and organisations (businesses, governments, schools). Who creates plants? Who creates schools? Who creates church?

6 - More than community

Strong and vibrant communities develop where there is a shared ordeal. We need to be on a risky journey together; we need to be drawn out of our comfort zones. It's not necessary to be persecuted, but it is necessary to be stretched in significant ways in our lives together.

This is the sixth forgotten way, something we are inclined to stop doing when we are comfortable and unchallenged. Read [Acts 4:1-7](#), [Acts 5:17-20](#) and [Acts 8:1-3](#) for some examples of how the early church lived a risky journey. Even better, read the whole of Acts and note how the early church lived and behaved.

Discuss – Is it natural for people to go beyond a place of comfort and safety? So why do we go on roller coasters? Where would you expect the strongest bonds to form, in an army detachment under fire or at a tea party? Why?

Six parts of a connected whole

The six forgotten ways are utterly dependent on one another. Think about a tree. Trees have four principle parts – roots, trunks, branches and leaves. But if any part is missing the rest of the tree will die. Without roots the tree has no supply of water. Without the trunk the root won't receive food from the leaves, the branches would have no support and the leaves would lack water and wither. Without branches the leaves would not spread wide in the sunlight. Without leaves there would be no food supply and the tree would starve.

When all six elements of the forgotten ways are active, explosive growth is possible. And this is the key take-home message. Improvement in any one way is useful, but only

when all six are active will the full benefit become clear. Like the parts of the tree, the six ways depend on one another and work together.

Think of Jesus in the centre surrounded by and intimately involved in each of the other concepts – becoming disciples, outward and integrated, gifts for building, a living organism and more than community. Imagine all six elements at work together. Nothing will be impossible.

That is the dream; it's an awesome revelation. Let's watch Jesus turn that dream into reality in our lives together.

Discuss – What is the most important thing you have discovered during this part of the guide? Different things may stand out for different people; tell one another what seems important and why.

Six strands supporting one another

For more information...

- Watch [Missional DNA](#)
- Read the first part of *The Forgotten Ways* (up to the beginning of chapter 3)
- Study *The Forgotten Ways Handbook* (up to the end of chapter 1)
- Read *The Shaping of Things to Come*
- Read [Alan Hirsch: The Forgotten Ways](#), a summary by Alison Morgan
- Watch Alan being interviewed – [Church disoriented](#), [The future of the church](#), [Rethinking church](#), [Missional advice](#), [Rebuilding church](#), [Understanding missio Dei](#), [On five-fold method](#).

One – Jesus at the Centre

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It's extremely important that Jesus is at the heart of our lives, both individually and in church life too. If we don't get this foundation right we cannot be built into what he wants us to be. What would happen if you built a house of heavy stones but didn't have proper foundations?

The fact is, this forgotten way is fundamental; everything else depends on it and results from it. We need Jesus to be in the right place because he is the only foundation we can trust ([Matthew 16:15-20](#), [1 Corinthians 3:9-11](#)). Has this way been truly forgotten? Not completely, perhaps, but we have sometimes been half-hearted in following it.

Discuss – Do you follow Jesus in everything? List some parts of your life where you do follow him. List some parts where you don't. Is he the foundation of your daily living, truly?

The One

[Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) makes it very clear; Yahweh is One and we are to love him with everything we have and are. What a dramatic change from earlier times when offerings and worship had to be made to many gods, perhaps repeatedly during the day. For us, today, 'Jesus is Lord' in exactly the same way ([1 Corinthians 8:6](#)). No other loyalties are acceptable in our lives, just Jesus.

There are at least three helpful habits we can develop; these are keeping Jesus at the centre, following Jesus alone, and putting the gospels way, way ahead of anything else.

Discuss – Read [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) and think about the difference between one and many where gods are concerned (most people 2000 years ago had to make offerings to many gods). In [John 10:30](#) what does Jesus mean when he says, 'I and the Father are one'? And in [John 17:20-23](#), what does he mean when he prays for all his followers – including you and me?

Jesus at the centre

We need a fresh understanding of who Jesus really is, every explosive church growth movement throughout history has had this focus. Many of these movements were persecuted and this seems to have given them a fresh and urgent vision. They let go of everything that would hold them back and clung to the core of their faith.

We need to know how Jesus lived and worked because he intends to live and work in these same ways through us. We can so easily block him, that's part of having the privilege and responsibility of free will. And we are often overwhelmed by the complications and demands of modern life; our focus on the essential is lost and we are distracted by so many side issues.

To get away from everything that hinders us we need to focus on Jesus much more. The Bible calls him King, Shepherd, the One and Only, the Son, Master, Teacher, Lord, the Almighty with us (Immanuel), Prince of Peace, the Word and more. Jesus himself said,

'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'. ([John 14:9](#)) By reading books about him, watching films about his life, and going through the gospels repeatedly we will begin to notice for ourselves what he is like, what he says, what he does and who he is.

Carefully think about where you are spiritually. How do your lives (individually and together) compare with that of Jesus? What changes would he want to see? When you meet, remember that you are meeting, as in all things, in Jesus' name. ([Colossians 3:17](#))

Magnificently modelled mission

Make Jesus your primary model for mission. Study the ways he interacted with others, the things he said and the things he did. Prayerfully consider what you can learn from him.

Follow his example in leadership by recognising that he was a servant who washed his disciple's feet. He didn't have or desire any institutional or positional authority, but he had immense moral and spiritual authority. Character trumps position. Check this out in the gospels, see how Jesus led and made disciples, work to become more like him in this.

If Jesus is *not* the all-consuming centre of my life, I need to be asking the question who (or what) is?

Read [1 Corinthians 8:4-6](#) and consider what these verses mean. What do they tell you about Jesus? Jesus is described here as a channel for creation and for life. Our awareness of the Almighty's presence in our lives in and through Jesus should stir us up. It is *all* about him!

Jesus says he only does what he sees the Father do ([John 5:19](#)) and only says what he hears the Father say ([John 12:49](#)). He came to reveal the Father ([John 14:9](#)). It's time to start following him in this. Do only what you see Jesus do; say only what you hear him say; live to reveal Jesus. You will be surprised at the impact this will have. Gradually, even the way you think will change.

Discuss – Why did Jesus wash his disciples feet? (see [John 13:1-17](#)) Washing feet was a sign of welcoming guests into the home and honouring them. Whose home is Jesus, as a servant, welcoming them to? For more on the meaning of washing feet see [Genesis 18:1-5](#) and [Luke 7:36-50](#). And notice that washing feet is an action. Jesus is defined by what he does.

Jesus alone

We need to avoid the common idea that we have two lives. There's the life we live in church and the life we live at work and in our free time. One life for Sunday mornings and perhaps a mid-week evening meeting, and another life for the rest of the week. One life with Christians, another life for worldly people. One life following Jesus, another life following our own desires and needs. ([Matthew 6:24](#), [Luke 9:57-62](#))

Recognise that it's necessary to see things very differently. *All* of life comes under Jesus' direction.

Discuss – How might you restructure your life around Jesus? Are there things in life that are more important to you than Jesus? Career? Financial security? A nice home? The latest in home entertainment?

Everything is holy!

Make those 'ordinary' things holy! Every part of the Tabernacle was holy, not just the impressive parts, but every little thing. ([Exodus 40:9](#)) If we are truly a temple built of living stones, we are all marked as holy, set apart for the Almighty's exclusive use. ([Ephesians 1:13](#)) How can you make cleaning, shopping, work and study holy? Sometimes we think of holiness in terms of what we avoid doing. Instead, begin to think more positively in terms of what you do.

Even the things that give us the greatest pleasure can be enjoyed in his presence, with his blessing and in gratitude. Sometimes we regard these things as worldly, and of course they *can* be if we misuse them. But they can (and should) also be brought into the place of holiness, part of the kingdom. Think of nothing as apart from him.

Worship is much more than singing songs and praising the Lord, it's also a matter of obedience. Worship is living lives that honour Jesus, it's gratefully offering our world back to him. As you read the Bible pay attention to what constitutes worship and allow that learning to reshape how you define and practice worship.

In particular consider the everyday. How do you love the Lord, the creation, and other people (how do you treat them), consider your obedience, are you willing to spend time in Jesus' company?

Not only should Jesus be at the very centre of our lives, he should also not have to share that place with anyone or anything else.

Discuss – Do you reserve certain activities for use only in church? What are they? They might include prayer, worship and communion; is it possible to take these activities out into society? If not, why not? If so how?

Put the gospels first

Measure everything you do against what Jesus taught. And to get to grips with that teaching, read and think about the parables and topics like prayer, money and the kingdom; go through the Sermon on the Mount thoroughly. ([Matthew 5:1-7:29](#)) Do your best to absorb these truths into your daily life and expect to be deeply affected by them.

Reading the gospels on a steady cycle is one idea, aim to read some verses every day. If possible read the same passages as other people you know so you can talk about what you read and share insights. Get as many people as possible to join in. Study one of the gospels in depth from time to time. Studying a gospel can be done together or it might be made the topic for a teaching series.

When you read other parts of the New Testament, read them with the life, words, actions and nature of Jesus as the framework. Let Jesus be the source of light that makes the entire New Testament clear to you. And when you read the Old Testament books, look for Jesus there as well. Interpret everything with Jesus' teachings and actions in mind.

Discuss – Talk together about practical ways you might spend more time in the gospels. They focus on Jesus and they'll help you do the same. What could you do individually? Even better, what could you do together?

Taking it further

Spread the benefits. If you found this session useful, encourage others to try it.

Where will you take this next? Make some notes about things you have decided to do

and goals you want to achieve. Make a list of questions you want answered. Check out the extra information below. Come back and revisit this section from time to time.

Discuss – What is the most important thing you have learned during this part of the guide? Different things may stand out for different people. Which of the ideas here and those of your own could you begin to put into practice? (Don't bite off more than you can chew! But make sure you actually make a start on something.)

No life without a beating heart

For more information...

- Watch [*Jesus is Lord*](#)
- Read chapter 3 of *The Forgotten Ways*
- Study chapter 2 of *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*
- Read *ReJesus*
- Visit *Cruising the Gospel* online - [*Cruising the gospel*](#)

Two – Becoming disciples

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Becoming disciples is important because it's the main way believers grow to be more like Jesus. It's not a process with a beginning and an end; it's ongoing throughout our lives. And we're not automatically disciples simply because we have believed. Not all of the crowds who listened to Jesus or were healed by him were disciples. Only those who followed him and were greatly changed could claim to be disciples. ([Matthew 4:19](#), [Matthew 10:38](#))

The English word 'disciple' is rather old-fashioned these days, but it has more or less the same meaning as 'apprentice'. In particular it's all about learning to do the things that the expert is already doing, and Jesus is the expert here. Apprentices don't just learn from books; this is a hands-on experience. At first, things will often go wrong, but apprentices get better and better by repeatedly doing something under supervision. Expect that to happen to you as Jesus' apprentice.

Because this change is hard and takes time, Jesus put most of his effort into three years of living closely with a small band of men and women who were prepared to do much more than simply be amazed. They were utterly transformed in those three years. The fact that Jesus worked this way reveals how important making disciples was and is. He put everything he had into those few, and when he returned to the Father they were the ones he continued to work with to reach the nations and build his church. ([John 17:6-23](#))

Jesus needs men and women who will become conformed to his image. They are his disciples.

The challenges for us include rejecting false gods such as consumerism, becoming more and more like Jesus, and understanding that we most effectively change by doing, not merely by thinking. Imagine an apprentice plumber who had studied all the books on plumbing but had never bent a pipe or soldered a joint.

Discuss – 'We most effectively change by doing, not merely by thinking.' Is this true in your experience? List some examples. Think about the skills involved in sport, work, music, art. Are there any areas of life in which regular practice doesn't help?

A more effective way

If we are going to become disciples, who will disciple us? Sometimes it's been thought that we need to follow others who have set us a good example. But if we follow another person there is always a risk of following some bad habits in amongst the good. This must be so; we know that nobody is perfect.

To do better than this we must follow a leader and guide who *is* perfect ([Matthew 4:18-22](#), [5:43-48](#), [John 10:30](#)), and that's a tall order indeed for any human being – except one.

Discuss – Who could you turn to as the One example to follow? Yes, the answer is obvious, of course. But what does this mean in practice? Talk together about anything you might try to help you become better disciples of Jesus.

Really mean business

We can begin by setting ourselves the highest standard for discipleship – the standard Jesus himself set us. This includes loving the Father with all our heart, mind and strength; denying ourselves; lifting our own heavy cross; and following Jesus and loving those around us in active and meaningful ways ([Luke 10:25-28](#), [Matthew 16:24-25](#), [James 2:14-17](#)).

It will help us if we talk about these commitments daily, read what the Bible has to say about them, and pray and work together to sharpen our focus. Read the Bible ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)), especially the gospels, with a view to what we must *do* (not just what we must think). Regular patterns of prayer, together and alone, are essential ([Philippians 4:6](#)). Don't forget worship ([Hebrews 12:28](#), [Romans 12:1](#)) another key part of becoming a disciple. And worship includes serving one another and the wider community, offering everything back to the Father.

So we need to become kinder, more generous and more patient. We must think about justice, and giving and using our spiritual gifts. And we will need to meet around Jesus and encourage one another. We are responsible for the way we use our time, our skills and our money. These resources are not just for our own pleasure; the way we live speaks volumes about what we value – and the world is watching and listening.

We need to care about our neighbours and about the environment. How can we release more time for friends and family? Are there ways we can represent the Almighty's deep concern for justice? How can we better care for our surroundings? Try to become an ace recycler, or help keep the locality clean and tidy. Save fuel by turning down the heater or the air conditioner; drive less and walk or cycle short distances instead.

Jesus' disciples lived and travelled together, ate and talked and listened and learned together. Community is an essential part of being a disciple, for us as for them. He calls us to love one another as he loves us ([Ephesians 4:32](#), [Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

Discuss – Pick one or two of the ideas in this section (or ideas of your own) and consider together how you could use them regularly to focus more on living as disciples of Jesus.

Be committed

It's useful to agree some standards to help us in our lives together as disciples; this guide doesn't give you any rules to follow so you will need to work out your own. Every group is different, but getting into some sort of discipleship rhythm is useful. Our aim is already clear ([1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1](#)) but the details need working out.

Try hard to discover what really matters most to you. You'll need to talk about it, and pray together, and you'll need patience because it may come gradually. You're looking for the group's sense of purpose, something that really grips you, a shared passion. Once you understand why your group exists you can begin to work out some of the details together. You'll be searching for objectives that are both exciting and challenging. As soon as you recognise these group purposes start working towards them.

Choose one or two activities for each of them. Some examples might help. Suppose you really care about the state of your local area, you might organise or join a weekly walk to clear litter or adopt a piece of waste ground and turn it into a beautiful flower bed. Or perhaps you're passionate about homeless people in your town. If so, find practical ways to regularly bring them food or give them shelter. Maybe the group feels driven to dig deep into the Bible: in that case work through a study course together, find and watch a relevant

DVD or online video together each week, or share something significant that you've learned or found challenging. One or two could do this every time you meet, different people each time so that everyone is active in sharing.

If enough people in a group are actively growing as disciples it will become the norm. Talk about what you are doing, demonstrate it, give plenty of examples, tell stories of successful outcomes, and encourage others to share too. Try to get more groups of people engaged, tell them about your activities, invite them to come and see for themselves, suggest they try working through this guide with their own group, help them get started.

Discuss – Spend a little time right now talking about the group's passions and purpose. Consider options for practical ideas like the examples above, and decide how you could work on these together. If it's difficult to make progress give yourselves more time and come back to it in a few weeks or months. Oh, and pray about it.

We are all priests

No, I'm not suggesting you all sign up for holy orders – but we *are* a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a chosen race ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). In Israel the royal and priestly functions were separate. But in Christ they are combined, he is King of Kings ([Revelation 19:16](#)) and he is also our Great High Priest ([Hebrews 4:14](#)). Every single one of us is a servant of Christ and should be fully active – it's part of being a disciple.

Find out what everyone's leadership gifts are. We all have them, there are no exceptions. We all have the role and duty and joy of encouraging and equipping others for service. We must build one another up in love. It's part of discipleship, part of becoming like the Master.

Discuss – I can guarantee that everyone in your group has taken the lead in some way, great or small. Can you identify some of these leading abilities? It might be initiating something, reminding the group to listen to what the Spirit is saying, spreading a good idea to another group, getting people to care for one another and cooperate or explaining something.

Be active from the start and stay active

Get stuck right in with the business of making disciples and growing in discipleship. ([Acts 14:21-22](#)) Don't wait. Be active right from the start. Then reflect together, pray together and celebrate what Jesus is doing amongst you and around you. What went well? What might have been done better? What can you learn?

Keep going around this loop – action, reflection – action, reflection – do and grow. This can be very helpful, giving people a chance to experiment and learn about strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Coaching can steer you through the process. It's much like sports coaching. Coaches should aim to empower, equip and energise Christ-like growth. You might need help to find or train suitable coaches, but it will be worthwhile.

Discuss – Do you see the value of reflecting on your successes and failures? Have you started doing this yet?

Keeping up the momentum

Don't lose what you have discovered in this part of the guide. Spend time praying about how

you should respond ([Matthew 6:6-8](#)); listen to the Holy Spirit ([John 14:26](#)). Write down what you hear from him and record any significant thoughts, ideas or plans you have. And spread the benefits; if you found this session useful, encourage others to try it too. (If you're unfamiliar with purposefully listening to the Spirit, read *The work of the Spirit* and then return here.)

As with every section of this guide, there's a real need to put what you are learning into practice. It needs to move from being head knowledge to being something you do. In fact, it will work much better the other way round; begin with some doing and the head knowledge will gradually crystallise.

So don't spend too much time theorising and planning. Make some simple choices and get started. There are some ideas in the notes above, and there are many more in the sources listed under 'More information' below. But often, the most relevant ideas may be those you think up for yourselves.

Discuss – Is anything holding you back? If so identify it and deal with it. If not, go and make a start on the activities you decided on!

Following the Master in every way

For more information...

- Watch [Disciple making](#), [Why is discipleship important?](#), [Being a disciple that makes disciples](#), [How not to make disciples](#), [Your church is only as good as its disciples](#)
- Read chapter 4 of *The Forgotten Ways*
- Study chapter 3 of *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*
- Read *Untamed*
- Consider Life Transformation Groups - [CMA Resources](#)

Three – Outward and integrated

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On the one hand this is about being mission minded ([Matthew 28:19](#)), a people who are always going out into the world. On the other hand it's about being embedded in the culture around us, a people who are deeply involved ([1 Corinthians 9:19-23](#)).

Mission is far more than just a church activity because it's based on Father's constant intention to mend and restore creation. We often try to attract or even cajole the world into coming to what we are doing, but Father sends us out. Drawing people in separates them from their culture and friends; to catch lots of fish we must put out to sea where the fish live, not just sit on the pier with a rod and line trying to hook them onto dry land.

Discuss – Think about how you might share in a culture in order to reach the people there. How fully present will you be among the people you want to reach? Do you know who they are yet?

Doing it Jesus' way

Be wary of reforming people, persuading them to wear different clothes, eat different food or change their customs, culture and language. This won't reveal Christ to them; if you claim to represent Jesus, they will assume that he is like you. Jesus came to live among the ordinary people of Judaea and Galilee and he expects us to live among the people around us and identify with them; this demands that we go deep, something Paul understood and practised ([1 Corinthians 9:19-23](#)). Jesus shows us how to do it, he ate with Pharisees and tax collectors. He was fully present. He came as a servant and he shared the good news. It's completely astounding that the Almighty Creator of the universe lived as a man among the village folk of Galilee for thirty years – and nobody noticed! That shows us how deeply he involved himself in the local culture, he became invisible.

Jesus is our example for going out and going deep. These two activities work together so that the gospel (good news) and the church (the gospel people) become firmly embedded in the local community. Rapid expansion is not going to happen any other way. We need to understand that knowing Jesus more deeply will lead us into both going out ([Luke 10:1-4](#)) and going deep ([Luke 10:5-7](#)). That will affect what church looks like in the place where we live. If we let him, Jesus will take us first into mission and then into new church life shaped as he wants it to be. And this will be different depending on whether we live in France or Fiji, inner city or village, or among the poor or rich.

Discuss – Will you identify with people as you find them, or will you bring your own culture with you as if that, too, is part of the good news? Jesus came in weakness, he came to give up his life. Talk about what that might mean for you as you follow him.

Getting out there

Getting close to the people we want to connect with is something we can plan for. Living in the locality is a good start. Find out where people gather and go there regularly ([Acts 16:13-](#)

[16, Acts 17:17](#)), if possible go in pairs or small groups. Cafes, sports clubs, pubs, the market place and local parks are all good places to choose. Use these places for your planning meetings and discussions. Walk your dog regularly and get to know the people you meet on the way, take books and study material to the library or a local cafe and read there. Join local clubs and societies that interest you. The more often you are in the same place at the same time the more likely you are to meet the same people and get to know them.

You will need to make space for this in a busy life. Good relationships grow informally over time so be available for that to happen. Stay longer to talk; be willing to go somewhere else when a friend needs help. Make time at weekends when most people relax; simplify and streamline your life to make this possible. Reduce the time you spend planning and meeting as a group or church so that you can be more available in the local community.

Be creative and try as many new ideas as you can. A good way to start random conversations with people is to offer them something they don't expect. Take a container of cupcakes to give away, or hot soup in the winter. Ask people to choose their favourite photo from a folder and then give it to them to take home. You'll be surprised how open people can be when you do things like this. As you read the gospels, notice how Jesus engaged people.

Ask yourselves questions such as – Where do people gather? Where do they find meaning and identity? Where is the Lord already working? How can I join in? What does good news look like to these people? Think about the groups of people you are being called to reach. Make friends with local influencers and leaders, people who are spiritually open and have good reputations. Again, in the gospels, notice where Jesus went and who he talked with.

Discuss – Talk about some ways you might go out taking love and good news with you. What groups of people do you think you might reach? Think of things that will work among those people. What would be good news for them? Write down these ideas so you can refer back to them later. Take time to pray about it before moving on with the next section.

Deeply integrated

Become significant in the lives of other people; make the time and commitment for it to happen. Your local culture is an asset, use it to the full; be involved in significant events like weddings, funerals, and parties ([John 2:1-10](#)). Develop conversational skills, interact like Jesus did, follow up with people, and build a network of friendships ([John 4:5-26](#)). But don't spread yourself too thinly; devote most of your time to relatively few people so you can get to know them well. Take part in local projects and groups, community gardens, fund raising for a school, helping at a care home, joining a walking group or anything like that.

Discuss – See how many ideas you can list that involve local activities. Choose one or two of them and consider how you could make a start (as individuals and together as a group).

Tell the story

It's essential to share the story of the good news with people. This means noticing opportunities as they arise in conversation, loving people deeply, finding out how the Lord has already touched them, and focussing on Jesus. Remember that Father is already at work in people's lives; try to find out how, listen well, and ask probing questions (Jesus did).

Storytelling is a great tool. Tell some of the stories that Jesus told (the parables) and use your own words to share the things he did and the conversations he had. But don't forget to tell the stories of Jesus' work in your own life and those of others you know. People engage with stories and often identify with them and become emotionally involved. As an example, [Luke 7:36-50](#) is a great story to tell to anyone who wants to come closer to Jesus. Build your own collection of favourite stories, learn them well and tell them in your own words when people need to hear them.

Discuss – Talk about some stories you might use. Pick something from the gospels or something from your own lives. Has someone been touched by Jesus and changed in some way?

Live the life!

We must not only speak the good news, we must live it out too. People will notice straight away if what we say and what we do don't match. As in everything, just look to Jesus for some examples. He loved life and he loved people ([John 11:1-3](#)), he ate and drank with them ([Luke 15:1-2](#)), partied with them ([John 2:1-11](#)), and demonstrated the love, welcome and joy that is in the Father's heart. He said, 'I only do what I see the Father do'.

Here's the theory – by watching Jesus at work we see what the Father is like. And by watching *us* at work people will see what Jesus is like. Now go and turn that theory into practice. Demonstrate Jesus' love and grace to the people around you. To do it you will need to live a life that's deeply integrated in the local culture.

Holy does not mean distant or stuffy. Jesus is holy and we must follow him into the energy and joy of living as he did. Be light and salt; make people's lives brighter and better flavoured. Be kind, be thoughtful, love much; maybe there are ways you can turn water into wine (at least figuratively). Eat with people often. Sharing reveals Father's welcoming nature. Invite the poor and lonely, become known for the best parties in your area.

Discuss – Think about the many ways you could show people that you love them. What about the difficult people who sometimes seem hard to love? How will you behave towards people like that? List some ways to bless and encourage the people you know.

A new faith community

Expect a new faith community to gradually develop as you continue to go deep. Let it grow in its own way; don't try to mould it into what you have done before; let the community own it. And don't try to draw people out of their natural culture. Don't just identify with local people but allow yourself to become one of them. Try to understand which aspects of the community support the gospel and what gets in the way. Focus on ways of rescuing the culture and guiding it towards Father's purpose for it.

Mission can and should continue from this new community. Send small groups out again to carry the gospel into further new contexts.

Discuss – How will you avoid the temptation to mould new faith communities with the stamp of your own experience and style of church life? What did Jesus mean when he said, 'On this rock I will build my church'? ([Matthew 16:18](#)) Hint: He didn't mean he would base it on Peter. What is the basis of church? (check [verses 15-17](#)) Who does the building?

Probe and challenge

Jesus challenged commonly held views in his own, Jewish, culture. The Samaritans were strongly disliked by Jews – unholy and to be avoided. Jesus came into Jewish culture and lived amongst the people who held these views, but he challenged them. He told the story of the good Samaritan. He had a shocking conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well outside her village; the disciples were quite surprised but afraid to ask him about it ([John 4:27](#)). He healed a group of lepers; one of them was a Samaritan. Read what happened next in [Luke 17:11-19](#).

We, too, should sometimes challenge the accepted norms of the local culture. Where there are thought patterns or customs that are strongly against the underlying principles Jesus taught, we can and should find ways to call people to change. But be very careful, where there is *no* conflict with the way of Jesus we are not justified in calling for change. Victorian missionaries sometimes made this mistake by assuming they should bring their entire culture as part of the good news.

Discuss – Think about missionaries in Africa in the nineteenth century. Which of the following things needed to change and which did not? – Clothing, education, head hunting, nose piercing, body paint, farming, medicine, cursing enemies? How can you avoid making similar mistakes?

Keep on going

It would be a pity to work through this part of the guide and then move on as if nothing had changed. See the material as an opportunity to live life differently in the future. Keep changing, keep moving forward, return to this part of the guide again to check on progress. What has changed in your lives since the last time, what still needs to change?

It's always possible to go out and deep more than before; so don't stand still, keep learning and experimenting with new ways of reaching out. Go deeper and deeper into the community and culture you are trying to reach. Remember Jesus' great command to 'Go and make disciples of every nation' ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)).

Discuss – What are the main discoveries you made as you worked through this chapter? What will you do differently in future?

Further and deeper, again and again

For more information...

- Watch [Missional incarnational impulse](#) and [Missional practices](#).
- Read chapter 5 of *The Forgotten Ways*
- Study chapter 4 of *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*
- Read *Right Here Right Now*

Four – Gifts for building

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Everything that happens in life depends on its surroundings, and that can have a big impact. Any gardener will tell you that some plants need plenty of sun and a freely draining soil, others need moist and shady conditions, and yet others only grow in acid soils. And of course almost nothing grows in a desert.

Jesus said, 'I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it' ([Matthew 16:18](#)). So what sort of environment has he provided in which this building (or growing) will take place? History shows that whenever there has been major growth in mission there has always been apostolic leadership at work.

Discuss – What do you think an apostle is? What does an apostle do? Don't worry if you are vague about the work of apostles; church in the West has had little to say about them for a very long time.

Gifts of service

People with an apostolic gift draw the church back to its essential task, guiding it into reaching and changing the world. This work of mission has been forgotten again and again throughout church history. Not only that, apostles stir us up into developing our own gifts and callings.

These people care for the gospel and remind us of its eternal purpose. They pioneer new forms of mission and church, they take care that all six forgotten ways are present and active. They keep things on track, and they offer a nurturing home where other essential gifts can work to good effect. In the list below, each gift produces a suitable environment for the next one.

Work of an apostle > Work of a prophet > Work of an evangelist > Work of a shepherd > Work of a teacher – (APEST).

These are all gifts of service; the purpose of the gifts is for the building up of the church so that we can all become mature ([Ephesians 4:11-16](#)). Throughout the long history of the Western church, the apostolic and some other service gifts have been overlooked and only those of pastor (shepherd) and teacher have been widely used. The results have been ineffective and short on impact. There is no space here to detail the other gifts, but check the resources at the end of this part for more information, and take a look at Part 9, *The APEST gifts*.

We'll look at the five main activities of apostles (pioneering mission, activating the forgotten ways, identifying purpose, growing the gifts, and making connections). See if you can spot people like this in your own group; they're almost certainly there. Help them to become active, value them, encourage them. And why not try for yourself? Anyone can do apostolic things at *some* level, but people with an apostolic gift will revel in them and excel.

Great places to look for inspiring examples are Acts and the New Testament letters. Paul is a wonderful example of the gift of apostle. Read *Journeys to Significance* for more about

Paul. And don't forget that Jesus reveals in himself all of the gifts from apostle right through to teacher, so look for powerful examples in the gospels too.

Discuss – Can you find at least one or two examples of each of the five apostolic activities in the New Testament? If you're stuck, come back to the question after completing the rest of this part of JDMC.

1 – Pioneering mission

Releasing new communities is a healthy thing to do, so always have new projects on the go. Dream, pray, form teams, and make a start ([Luke 9:1-6](#)). Apostolic stimulation and guidance are needed for this to happen, and it can't be rushed. Close supervision and micromanagement are very unhelpful.

Try lots of new ideas even if they seem risky: see failure as a chance to learn. It's useful to think about Christianity as always pioneering things; there are plenty of biblical examples of this; find them and study them. Make and cheer on some heroes (people who will go out and try new things). See how quickly Paul seized an opportunity in Athens ([Acts 17:16-34](#)).

Implant the idea of mission in the heart of the community. Tell stories about the early church and the church in China. Suggest everyone reads books like *The Starfish and the Spider*. Get everyone to consider how to make church simple and reproducible.

Map out the process needed and get people to work through it. Often, the map will emerge later and can be written down when it's clear.

Discuss - Are you at a stage where you can begin to spawn off new communities? Even if you are a very new group yourselves, you can dream about it, pray about it and talk about it. If you've been together for more than a year, ask yourselves, 'What is holding us back?'

2a – Activating the forgotten ways – Thinking it through

This is all about a culture and a way of life. Encourage people to work through JDMC and read *The Forgotten Ways*; help them understand the ideas they contain. It may not be clear to people at first; parts of it have been forgotten for a long time and are not part of normal church life in the West. Clarify thinking about the entire system, not just the six parts individually. Active mission helps us live out Jesus' calling. Apostolic people will help a group absorb these ideas by explaining their value and guiding their development.

As a group, think about Father's work in redeeming his creation through the Son ([Revelation 21:5](#)). Read and explore the Bible on this, go to conferences together, listen to recorded teaching, share books and articles about going out and going deep. Retelling stories of success is an inspiring thing to do. It will help you see how you've been used, remind you of your calling and make the future clearer. Write down your most exciting stories, ask people for memories, keep photos and make slide shows, interview people and collect the stories in a book.

Discuss – Even if you are a new group, it's likely you have at least a few stories to tell. Re-share them and write them down now, before they are forgotten. They'll be useful later!

2b – Activating the forgotten ways – Encouraging one another

As you go out to reach the world together, put time aside to think and pray about what you are doing. Ask one another questions about how things are going. A weekend retreat now and then will help with this sort of planning and remembering. Don't slip back from mission and become inward-focussed; it happens all too easily.

Reawaken one another to the gospel, are you drifting away from your first calling as mission-minded people? Avoid becoming lukewarm ([Revelation 3:14-22](#)), be wary of busyness and make mission an essential part of life. Mission-focussed prayer helps the six elements work together as they should, so keep mission at the heart of your prayer together. This will help everyone remember that Father stirs up mission and is involved in it. Jesus said we should pray for more workers in the harvest ([Luke 10:1-4](#)). Consider prayer walking areas where you're connecting with people.

Discuss - How are you doing in these areas? Talk together about successes and failures, ways you might do more or improve your focus. Pray about it.

3 – Identifying purpose

There will be a reason that your group exists, it is likely to be something to do with a shared passion which has been implanted in you by the Lord for a specific purpose. Read [Isaiah 55](#), and especially [verse 11](#). Find out what you are passionate about, Papa will reveal it to you, and he will walk in it with you as well. Is it a particular function (such as helping the poor, feeding the hungry, or reaching the lonely)? Is it to reach out to a specific area or people group? Whatever it may be, talk about it, pray about it, and ask one another significant questions. Apostolic leadership will help this process.

It takes patience and commitment to discover purpose. Pray regularly, reflect and work together, ask outsiders who are familiar with what you do. Here are some useful questions... Why did the Lord create the group? What was the original dream? How has the group been used? What does the group do best?

Discuss – What is your purpose? If you don't yet know, agree to spend some time investigating.

4 – Growing the gifts

Read and watch material that helps you develop an understanding of the five service gifts – they're often called ministry gifts ([Ephesians 4:11-12](#)). Check out the JDMC section on The APEST gifts (p 41) as a starting point. Talk together about the gifts you see in one another, give one another feedback; most people are strong in one or more gifts. Recognise that these gifts are not limited to experts, but are distributed throughout the body. If any of the gifts is significantly absent in your group, ask Jesus to bring the right people to join you. There's no room here to examine all the service gifts in depth, but make time to understand them early.

Use the *do it and consider it* approach mentioned earlier. Provide books, DVDs and articles and encourage people to go to conferences and workshops. Find suitable networks. Explore 'For more information' at the end of this part of JDMC and use the material.

Be careful not to control anyone ([Matthew 20:25-28](#)), there's no need for it and it undermines the life that Father has poured into the group. Instead, just inspire people and let them do what they do best. People don't have power because it's been granted by a leader but because it's been granted by Jesus ([Acts 1:8](#)). Look for passion, ask questions,

encourage experimentation. Free up time for all this, don't over-programme, and aim to get the group dreaming.

Discuss – Delegate five people from your group (or five small teams of people) to find out more about the five service gifts. One person or team to investigate one gift. Agree a time to report back, perhaps a week or two.

5 – Sparking connections

Apostolic people link others together for positive action ([Acts 11:19-30](#)). Encourage them! They are starters, full of ideas, and inspire others. As catalysts, they get people talking and connect those with similar passions. They intuitively keep track of people and relationships. Sometimes they even network networks. If that sounds strange, just think of the internet. It's called the internet because it networks company, government, and other networks. Apostles sometimes work at that sort of scale – Paul did.

People with an apostolic gift are widely connected and love to put the people they know in touch with one another. Sometimes the results are startling and unpredictable (in a good way). Movements really need people who can do this, it makes it far easier for good ideas to be shared widely and rapidly. A well-connected movement is an agile movement. Not everyone who sparks connections is apostolic, but all apostles are good at this.

Discuss – Do you know anyone with this ability to connect people and build networks? Could you do this too? Like all the gifts of service, this is part of the church DNA that is in all of us to some degree.

Develop and encourage each other

Bounce ideas off one another and keep thinking about the gifts of service. Try to work out where each of you is strongest and encourage any strengths ([2 Corinthians 13:11](#)). Tell one another, 'I noticed you come alongside Steve when he was struggling. It seems to me you have some of the instincts of a shepherd. Well done!', or, 'I'm glad you reminded us to pray earlier, we needed to hear that.' And above all, look for and encourage everyone who shows signs of going out to actively press forward with new things, laying foundations, making a fresh start, stirring people up, drawing out dormant gifts.

Gifts of service to equip and build

For more information...

- Watch [Apostolic environment](#) and [On five-fold method](#)
- Read chapter 6 of *The Forgotten Ways*
- Study chapter 5 of *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*
- Read *The Permanent Revolution*
- Read *On the Verge*
- Watch Neil Cole talking about [leadership](#)
- Read *Journeys of Significance* by Neil Cole
- Read [Release the APE](#)
- Visit the [Newforms Resources](#) website

Five – A living organism

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The New Testament likens the church and the kingdom of heaven to various other things. These include the human body ([1 Corinthians 12:27](#)), farmers' fields ([1 Corinthians 3:9](#)), the effect of yeast ([Matthew 13:33](#)), seeds ([1 Corinthians 3:6](#)) and trees ([Luke 13:18-19](#)). These are great illustrations because church actually does behave quite like a living thing. Church is alive! It is Christ's body. Of course, church and kingdom are two different things; church is part of the King's domain, though by no means all of it. But both are alive.

Think about it. The church grows, reproduces and responds to the world around it. It develops and matures; it spreads like seeds or a virus. The good news about Jesus spreads from one receptive person to the next as we talk about it and especially as we live it out. You can see all of this at work in the book of Acts. Some of the most astonishing Jesus movements have had loose network structures and have spread widely and rapidly. Think in terms of a forest or a city of people; each tree or citizen is like a local church while a movement is a network like a forest or city.

It's very important to encourage real life in church; we need to get the structure right for that and we will have to help the lifelike processes of growing and reproducing come to the fore. To do this, we must avoid too much organisation and control, things we tend to like because they make us feel useful and safe. But we shouldn't be in control – Jesus should!

Discuss – Talk about the structure and management of what you do. Are there things you need to change? Are there things you should stop doing? How might you free people up and encourage more natural processes to take over?

Keep moving on

Think and talk about church as a movement. Aim to plant movements, not churches. Pay attention to stories of great movements past and present, read books about them, get excited about the possibilities.

Begin consciously *behaving* as a movement. Be fluid and adaptable, ready to take risks, build in lifelike structures, aim to multiply, dream and experiment, look into ways of changing from what you are to what you need to become. Remember that movements are networks; find as many ways as you can of connecting people really widely.

Discuss – What might prevent you from moving forward? Talk about the way you think, your expectations and your goals. Are these as flexible as they need to be? When change becomes necessary, what forces might stand in the way? What is the difference between a movement and a church?

Structure for life

Change or remove anything and everything that stifles real life; good structures are very simple and easy to copy. Think about gardening rather than engineering because gardening involves living things. What is the easiest way to make a city? What is the easiest way to

make a forest?

Remember that living things grow by themselves according to the life code (DNA) that is within them. An oak tree cannot produce grains of wheat and an acorn can never grow into a cabbage. In the same way, it's impossible for the church to produce seeds of injustice and someone who continues to follow Jesus can never grow into a thief. Each grows according to its type. Jesus said we'd be known by the fruit we produce, either good or bad. Aim to produce plentiful, good fruit! ([Matthew 7:15-20](#)).

In other words, you don't need to *make* the church grow. You can't! All you can do is help the process start and provide the right conditions. Take good seed, bury it to the right depth in well tilled and manured ground, make sure it has enough water, keep away weeds and pests and your job is done. There *will* be a good harvest, but it might take a little time and patience.

Make sure leaders give power away, not hold onto it as the world tends to do; leaders should see themselves as servants ([Matthew 20:25-28](#)). Encourage every part of your group to think for itself, and give everyone the opportunity to use their gifts and interests freely and fully. What did Paul write about the body of Christ? ([Ephesians 4:11-13](#)) Encourage passion and ownership by telling great stories; invite people to act with boldness and 'have a go'; involve *everyone* in planning. Celebrate every success; rethink and retry after every failure. Learn from every mistake and look for the positive aspects; never give up.

Share information as widely and openly as possible. Get apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to explain what they do to everyone. Share any problems and talk about them; if possible become part of a wider network; welcome change whenever it's needed. Don't try to turn chaos into order but instead see if you can find meaning in the chaos. You may need to change your point of view or encourage others to say what *they* think.

It's best to structure things around the passion, energy and life that you see in people. Everyone is a potential power house in their own, unique way so encourage them to be more active, not less. Don't build 'windbreaks' that slow the wind down, instead build 'windmills' that harness its energy. Remove obstructions to active life and, when that is not possible, find alternative pathways to get around them. Build mission and church around people's interests, and choose meeting times to avoid clashing with social gatherings in the wider community. Let go when something is no longer useful, support new ideas and fresh energy whenever they appear in the group.

Shared beliefs and purposes are great at holding networks together. So form common values, beliefs and practices and help newcomers to understand them. Find simple, clear, memorable ways to talk about them. Share the stories of the group's origins often and in as many ways as possible. Encourage one another and tell people why you value them.

Discuss – Spend some time right now to dig out the stories of how your group got started. Write these stories down; perhaps someone will volunteer to collect them in a notebook or folder or post them to a blog. Also, talk about the ideas in this section. How many of them are you already doing? List examples. Where do you need to do better?

Connect and communicate

Churches on mission usually connect with one another to form networks. Read Acts and the New Testament letters and you will see this everywhere, for example [Acts 11:20-23](#), [21:3-4](#),

[1 Corinthians 16:19-20](#). These networks may be formal or very informal, but where there is no network, encourage people to talk and swap ideas. Adapt what others have done rather than developing it again from scratch, and work together, especially for training. Host workshops, share books, DVDs and digital resources, go on retreats with other groups, share meals, share bread and wine together.

Don't keep things to yourself ([Colossians 4:16](#)). Let others learn from your mistakes and tell them about successes. Share newsletters and calendars. Set aside time in meetings for people to share, use email and the web to send out materials and stories. Promote good books, provide lists of email addresses, perhaps set up a social network group.

Try to dream and plan with other groups. People with strong APEST gifts will wake everyone up and get them dreaming, thinking and planning. Ask questions like, "What is Jesus preparing for us?", "Where is Papa already at work in the community?", "What does good news look like for the people around us?" Make alliances.

You will need good character, deep relationships, respect for others and appreciation for what they are and do. Do whatever you can to help others succeed in mission. Identify the essential issues and choose to understand more than to be understood. Be willing to listen.

Discuss – What have you already done as a group that you could share more widely? Even very early in your shared lives there will be good things to offer others; make a list of them. Can you think of other people or groups that would benefit from hearing some of your stories? How will you contact them? Don't just talk about this, but begin doing it.

Sneeze the gospel

The gospel will spread easily and widely if the conditions are right, just as it did in the first few centuries in the Roman world and beyond ([Acts 2:36-41](#)). Part of our task as Jesus' followers is to match the message to the society and culture we are part of. Read Acts together and list the ways the early church did this.

Simple, deep, meaningful messages work best; "Jesus is Lord" is a really great example because it captures a central and essential truth in just three words. The message and the people who carry it need to be very easily and quickly transferable. Distil the essence of the gospel and make church as simple and reproducible you can. At the very least, avoid unnecessary complications in both the message and the messengers.

Experiment right away without waiting until you have a perfect approach, but learn from your mistakes. Look for new ideas, new people and shared learning. Value and celebrate anyone who pioneers new ways of thinking about mission and church life. Let new believers develop their own forms of church as you pass on the basics about gospel and community. Use the passions, gifts and lifestyles you find in groups of people.

The gospel should be really simple to catch and very infectious. But progress may seem slow so you will need to be quite persistent and very, very patient. Pray often and with great hope and expectation; think carefully and sympathetically about the host community but keep church as simple as you can, small and really easy for others to copy. Pray especially for more workers to gather in the harvest ([Luke 10:2](#)).

Discuss – You are already far enough along to begin spreading the good news far and wide. I'm telling you – you are! Talk about how this process is going. Think together about better ways to work in the future. Can you simplify things? Pray for specific people you know who need to hear and see the truth. How will you demonstrate Jesus to them?

Facilitating growth and change

Think deeply and talk together about what you are doing; pray about how you might reach those around you ([Ephesians 6:18-20](#)). Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you and guide you (as he did Peter in [Acts 10:9-23](#)). Consider re-reading this part of JDMC later and revising your approach as necessary.

Do your best to be practical but try to understand the underlying reasons for what you are doing. Bounce ideas off one another and keep thinking about how living things grow and reproduce – that is how church will grow and reproduce too. Something big can grow from the tiniest seed. Try to work out where you are weak and where you are strong. The objective is to keep moving forwards and trying new things. Think in terms of new ways and old ways, going forward but also reflecting on where you have come from, focussing on Jesus but not for one moment forgetting the people living all around you. Remember the seeds but don't forget the tree, remember the tree but don't forget the forest!

Discuss – You decide to plant a daffodil in your garden. Would it be better to buy a plastic flower for immediate effect, or plant a bulb, water it, keep the weeds away, and wait for it to grow? How many daffodils will you have in ten years time? Did you make them grow?

Full of life, growing and thriving

For more information...

- Watch [Organic systems](#)
- Read chapter 7 of *The Forgotten Ways*
- Study chapter 6 of *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*
- Read *On The Verge*
- Read the story of [Elzéard Bouffier](#)

Six – More than community

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We need much more than just community, we need shared commitment – real brothers and sisters who will suffer for one another ([Acts 20:1-6](#), for example). Think in terms of the films Band of Brothers, Lord of the Rings, The Matrix, or good old Star Wars. Life together in danger or on an adventure is a powerful thing. This is something that marks the early church and the Chinese church as distinctly different from traditional Western church.

The Bible certainly supports this idea, just consider David and his men in the books of Samuel, or for that matter Jesus and his disciples in the gospels. Life together in danger, turmoil and uncertainty creates very strong commitment and a shared purpose. Living as part of a missional community exposes us to the right kind of experiences. We have to take risks, we may be rejected sometimes, we have to get outside our comfort zone and we can encourage one another along the way.

Can you think of more examples of shared commitment similar to David and his men or Jesus and the disciples? Acts is a good place to look.

Vision that will change us

Dream together; a shared vision is a great way to draw people beyond friendship into becoming true comrades ([Proverbs 29:18](#)). People need a sense of ownership, it's not enough to tell people what to do, so work together on the vision, talk about it, and start to develop it. The seventy-two went out according to Jesus' vision ([Luke 10:1-11](#)), and we must also grasp his vision and go where he is about to go.

Understand comradeship – Find and study biblical examples (for example, David and Jonathan in [1 Samuel 20](#)), watch films together, and discuss dangerous adventure as a team. Work together on a short-term mission and discuss the shared experience. To develop this kind of powerful community you will need to do far more than meet in a room and talk. Vision and action need to go hand in hand.

Spend a few minutes right now to think this through and come up with one or two ideas for shared action. (Both words are important, don't do it alone and don't just talk about it.) Look again at 'Three – Outward and integrated' (p 21) and 'Five – A living organism' (p 29) for some ideas, or look at the many ideas in the resources at the end of this part.

Church at the heart of life

Jesus commands us to love one another ([John 13:34-35](#)). Notice how the early church was seen by local society – Tertullian, in 197 AD, reports that people said, 'See how they love one another'. Do people say that about us?

Church should be for people, not people for church; we need to integrate church in the context of life. Everything church does needs to be in the context of the local community. Avoid special and artificial environments. How can you rearrange church in your local culture? Consider what you do and how you are organised, do these things fit well with the

community and make church accessible to them? Think carefully about the ways Jesus involved himself in society ([John 2:1-11](#), [John 4:1-42](#)) and aim to become open and relevant like him.

Going out and deep - Are you located close to the community? Often? Are you open to spontaneous interaction? Think up some new ways to achieve these goals. Check out 'Three – Outward and integrated' (p 21) for some ideas, but do your best to add others of your own.

How can you effectively get involved in your local community? Brainstorm for a list of ideas that will fit your own environment. Do you know your society and culture well enough to make appropriate choices? If not, talk about how you might change this. Pick one or two ideas from your list and begin work.

Get involved

Get deeply involved in efforts *already* being made by the community. Good things to do include caring for the environment, fundraising, volunteering, pursuing justice, travelling to a third-world country to serve people in need, helping with a food bank or the elderly.

Find ways to reach your community with other believers. You could join a local sports club or book club or go to the same pub on Sunday afternoons or do something with friends from work or with neighbours. Do it with other Christians and do it regularly.

Be adventurous and take some risks. Risky, adventurous experiments are good for us. Be original. Think of new ways to communicate the gospel and be church in modern society. It's not necessarily easy, but it's very worthwhile. Use New Testament stories for encouragement (for example [Acts 8:26-38](#), [John 2:1-11](#), [Acts 17:16-34](#)). Make plenty of space for change and experiment. How can you connect with an unreached group in the community? Try out new ways of doing church and mission. Gather for discussions on philosophy or other topics, preferably in a pub or coffee shop.

Church doesn't need to be the exclusive source of the projects you get involved in. What do you think about this statement? Try to list some things the community is already doing that you could become involved with.

Responding and becoming active

Spend some time praying together about how to respond; ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and hearts and listen to him as he guides you. Don't feel you must all get together to do this; two or three can listen and hear whenever they are in the same place for a few minutes. Bounce ideas off one another and keep thinking about new ways to be active. Talk about the buzz you get from working together. Encourage more people to get involved. Communicate the ideas and thoughts as widely as you can.

As with everything in JDMC, it's most important to make a start. Don't just listen to the Spirit, don't just talk about ideas, don't just plan. Get out there and actively *do* the things you have been shown. Getting something wrong is not a big deal; make some corrections and try again. But not making a start would be a *huge* problem.

There are some helpful tools out there to get you started with deliberate and focussed listening, both to the Holy Spirit and to one another. Try them out, and if they help, use them, if not try something different. Work through the next part of JDMC (p 37) where the Spirit's involvement is explained. But don't be inactive. How will you grow and go forward

if you don't know how to listen? If you do try Virkler and SASHET be persistent. Some people are naturals with these tools, others may find them harder, some might get stuck. Be prepared to help one another.

If you have not been used to listening to the Spirit, try Virkler together (p 40). If you find it hard to express your hearts to one another try SASHET. Both are described in 'Church of Two' below.

Growing together through thick and thin

For more information...

- Watch [Communitas, not community](#)
- Read chapter 8 of *The Forgotten Ways*
- Study chapter 7 of *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*
- Read *The Faith of Leap*
- [Church of Two \(CO2\)](#)

The work of the Spirit

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The work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned briefly in the previous part of JDMC, 'Six – More than community' (p 33). It is not explicitly presented in *The Forgotten Ways*, but it is certainly implied on every page. In the first edition of JDMC I closely followed the structure of Alan Hirsch's work, but in this revision I have decided to add extra sections including this one about the Spirit.

I want to guard against any suggestion that JDMC is merely presenting an organisational mechanism for rapid missional spread. It's much more than a worldly method or a management technique. Instead it is the pattern set by Christ himself, and therefore the Spirit of Christ is present throughout and waiting for us to hear his guidance and encouragement as we do the work the Master has entrusted to us. To depend on human technique alone won't cut the mustard - far from it! One of the forgotten ways is keeping Jesus central, following *only* him, adding *nothing* in addition. This utter dependence on Christ surely implies and demands a dependence on his Spirit – how could it possibly be otherwise?

We need to recognise that this new life we live is not *just* about what we do, nor is it *entirely* about receiving from the Spirit. Jesus wants our co-operation. If there was no need for the work of the Spirit, why would Paul warn us not to quench him? ([1 Thessalonians 5:19](#)) And if there was no need for human effort and will why would he tell us to strive? ([1 Thessalonians 5:15](#), [1 Timothy 4:10](#))

So in this additional part of JDMC I want to highlight some of the ways we can recognise and value the Holy Spirit's activity as we attempt to remember and activate the six forgotten ways. I also offer some advice on spiritual listening at the end.

To be clear, this section should not be seen as an additional 'forgotten way'. It isn't that at all. But the work of the Holy Spirit surely runs deep in each of those six forgotten ways. He is, as already mentioned, the Spirit of Christ and he was sent specifically to enable us to continue the work of Jesus. If we are the body and Jesus is our head, then the Spirit is like a nervous system – fundamentally centred in the head but with sensory and motor connections to every part of the body. When we resist him and are disobedient, part of the body is effectively paralysed. And if the body acts without the Holy Spirit it is sleepwalking and ineffective.

If all of this sounds hard – it *is*. We have to learn to die so that we can begin to live in Christ. It's not that we have to work hard to be more like Jesus; rather we have to let go of all our own goals and desires and effort and planning and let Jesus live *his* life in *us*. He will tell us and show us what to do, when to do it, and how. The Holy Spirit is no less than the Spirit of Christ, he is our guide and walks with us in every situation. He is the heart and mind of the Messiah expressing himself through his people.

Talk together about the ways the Holy Spirit has interacted with you in your lives as you follow Jesus. Are there some encouraging stories you can share?

Jesus at the centre

We have seen how important it is to keep Jesus right at the heart of everything we do. We have seen that we must follow Jesus alone and that there can be no room for following anyone or anything else.

Without the Holy Spirit we will find this impossible. We receive the Spirit from Jesus as a baptism ([Matthew 3:11](#)). In response to our love and obedience, Jesus sends us his Spirit ([John 14:15-17](#)). We are not free to defile our bodies because they are 'temples of the Holy Spirit' ([1 Corinthians 6:19](#)) - and if this is true of our bodies, isn't it also true of our hearts and minds? The essence of keeping Jesus at the centre is that we know Jesus is Lord of our lives and our thinking and our emotions, of all that we are and all that we do. Yet we can't even say the words 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit ([1 Corinthians 12:3](#)).

Discuss this together. How has the Spirit helped keep you focussed on Jesus? Try to find specific examples rather than generalisations.

Becoming disciples

This is a matter of following Jesus and becoming conformed to his image. Look at the fruit of the Spirit as set out by Paul in [Galatians 5:22-26](#): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This is how the Holy Spirit moulds us to become more Christlike. This is fruit, it grows in us day by day, year by year. And the degree to which we have become conformed is expressed in all we think and say and do.

Doesn't this sound familiar? Isn't this the very process of becoming disciples that we are looking for? If we are filled by the Spirit and respond to him we will bear the fruit of the Spirit in every way. We co-operate with the Holy Spirit when we develop a habit of joy or patience or gentleness. Right behaviour over and over again forms those habits of fruitfulness in us. There are two sides to this. We cannot do it in our own strength so we need and depend on the Spirit. But he will not coerce us, he expects to see our obedient willingness to *allow* him to change us.

Is there spiritual fruit in your lives? How might you explain this to someone who doesn't yet know Jesus?

Outward and integrated

We need to reach those around us; Jesus commands it. He said, 'I've been given all authority in heaven and on earth, so as you go, make disciples of all nations ... and I'll be with you.' ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)) But as we go out into the world and seek to embed ourselves deep in the culture (as he did), we do not go alone.

Not only are we together as a community of his people, we are also together in the community of the Almighty Creator. The Son has made the way open and has sent the Spirit to fill us – Father, Son, Spirit, and us! It's not going to heaven when we die; it's far better than that. It's living in their community right here, right now and forever. Jesus says he is with us right to the end ([Matthew 28:20](#)) and he says that if we have seen him we have seen the Father ([John 14:9](#)).

In our going out and going deep we remain in the Presence, for the Holy Spirit is in us and communicates with us and for us. We couldn't be effective carriers of good news without him. There are some great examples in the New Testament; read [Acts 8:26-39](#), [Acts 10:9-21](#) and [Acts 16:7-10](#).

As you go out and deep in the culture around you, how will you pay attention to the presence of the Holy Spirit with you? Consider prayer, listening, and the truth that the Spirit is alive within you and wanting to communicate with you.

Gifts for building

It really should be self-evident that the Holy Spirit is involved in the fivefold gifts of service – apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers (APEST). These are gifts indeed, and Christ himself is the giver ([Ephesians 4:11-12](#)). Paul explains that we are indeed one, but that these gifts of grace are handed out in individual measure to each of us ([Ephesians 4:1-7](#)). We are one, we all receive, yet we all receive individually as he chooses ([1 Corinthians 12:27-30](#)).

And if there's any doubt in your mind about the role of the Holy Spirit in all this, read [1 Corinthians 12:1-11](#). Verse 11 is very clear! 'All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.'

Jesus himself chooses how to distribute these gifts of service. What gifts can you identify in one another? Tell one another what you see, this is a good way of encouraging one another.

A living organism

We know that we need to see the church as a living entity and not as an organisation or institution built and managed by human ability. But what part does the Holy Spirit play in this?

I must begin by pointing out that only the Spirit of Christ can reveal this truth to us. Jesus often told parables to illustrate the nature of the kingdom of heaven, and some of them involve living things. The kingdom is like yeast or a mustard seed; it grows and develops and expands as only living things can.

Now the church is not the same thing as the kingdom, but if church is not *part* of the kingdom we are in serious trouble! The church, too, is described as part of a living thing; church is the body and Jesus is the head. It's significant that a body only remains alive as long as the head is attached. Cut off an arm or a leg and a body may continue to live, but cut off the head and it dies immediately. And how is the church attached to Christ? It is the Holy Spirit who makes the connection; he is the Spirit of Christ, yet he has been implanted in you and me, the members of the church. And he works in us ([Luke 12:12](#), [Acts 1:5-8](#), [Romans 8:26](#)) and amongst us ([Acts 9:31](#), [1 Corinthians 14:12](#), [Ephesians 4:3-4](#)) as we gather together. The Spirit of the Head is present within every individual part of the body.

Considering church as you have experienced it, talk about aspects that are like an organism and aspects that are like an organisation. Are there ways you can help things move more towards the organism end of the spectrum? What part might the Holy Spirit play in this?

More than community

We need to work together in a community where we will be significantly stretched by sharing in making tough decisions, facing difficulties, supporting one another, and pressing forward together. The challenges we face will be diverse, but whatever they are we are

surely going to need the encouragement and wisdom and guidance and insight of the Holy Spirit. [Romans 7:6](#), [1 Corinthians 2:15](#), [Acts 12:1-19](#).

We all share in the presence and work of the Spirit in our lives. How does this feed into community life, and in particular how does the Holy Spirit draw the community into facing challenges and difficulties? Talk about your own experiences and those of other people you know.

Some practical help

Many believers and followers of Jesus are familiar with the activity of the Holy Spirit, individually and in meeting together. Others may have little or no personal experience of him. The key to listening is not hard, it's basically a matter of paying attention. Our lives are often too busy and too rushed to do this, but there's a simple exercise called Virkler that can help. Whatever your previous experience of hearing the Holy Spirit, I recommend you try Virkler for yourself.

It's a curious name – why 'Virkler'? That's simple! The person who first suggested this straightforward practice is called Mark Virkler.

There are four steps, sometime called the four keys.

- 1 - Clear the clutter of everyday things from your mind
- 2 - Imagine being in Jesus presence
- 3 - Pay attention to the thoughts that pop into your mind.
- 4 – Write down what you are shown, as you receive it. Review and process the material afterwards.

There's no space here to explain Virkler in detail, but in my experience it can be extremely helpful. Refer to the resources listed below if you decide to try Virkler for yourself.

A quote

The Holy Spirit teaches us to be more like Christ. His fruit builds in our lives over time. He equips us by pouring out his gifts as and when they are needed. He builds us in relationship. The Holy Spirit sends us out on mission. He wants us to live in the world as a blessing and a challenge. He is always doing new things. - *From Chapter 3 of 'Simple Church', see below.*

One spirit in all and through all

For more information...

- Read chapter three of [Simple Church](#) (edited by Eric Carpenter)
- Read about [Church of Two \(CO2\)](#), especially 'Listening prayer' (Virkler)
- Read Chapter 19 of Neil Cole's book [Organic Leadership](#)

The APEST gifts

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Notes on the gifts

There was no time to describe the individual gifts in *Four – Gifts for building* (p 25). The emphasis was mainly on the apostolic gift because, amongst other things, apostolic action prepares the way for the other gifts to be released and used effectively. It is therefore the first gift, not in importance but in necessary sequence.

Although the remaining gifts of prophet, evangelist, shepherd and teacher are not in themselves 'forgotten ways', they are likely to be identified and activated where an apostolic gift is already at work. It will be helpful to know a little more about these four other gifts. All of them are *equipping* gifts ([Ephesians 4:11-13](#)); where they are functioning fully, everyone will begin to understand them. Where they are at work and understood everyone will, hopefully, become active and mature.

We won't cover the apostolic gift in detail here; refer to *Four – Gifts for building* (p 25) where it is already described. However, it is certainly worth repeating that all disciples of Jesus have some level of all five of these gifts of service. We are all able to serve the body in every one of these ways. Remember that Christ lives in all of his people, and he excels in all the APEST gifts and can express them through any of us when the need arises. Every believer contains everything necessary to start an explosive missional movement from scratch. Don't forget that Jesus distributes these gifts by his Spirit as he chooses, so you can't obtain them by human effort. But human effort is certainly needed to use them well and to the full ([Colossians 1:27-29](#)).

Why do you think the apostolic gift is 'foundational' in a sense that the other gifts are not? If you can't answer this question, return to it after reading 'The apostolic gift' below. If you are still not clear, work through 'Four – Gifts for building' (p 25) and then try again.

The apostolic gift

Remember that this gift is foundational; read [Acts 1:1-4](#). We can think of the apostolic as a sending gift, an apostle is an emissary or, indeed, a missionary. People with a large measure of the apostolic gift tend to get things started and then move on to repeat the process again somewhere else; this is what Paul did, over and over again. He also returned from time to time to make sure things stayed on track; when he couldn't be there in person he wrote letters for the same purpose.

Apostolic people prepare the ground for the prophetic gift to work. They also stir others up to do apostolic things. And they are always concerned about right foundations and right direction. Don't think of this gift as more important than the others, it is usually first in sequence but if you are apostolic you are a servant in the church.

We are all emissaries for Jesus. Is there a difference between reaching people with the good news, and being apostolic? If so, can you identify this difference? Discuss.

The prophetic gift

Read [2 Peter 1:19-21](#). Peter is referring to the Old Testament prophets, but prophecy always has these same characteristics. Those who have a prophetic gift care deeply about holiness and the Almighty. Have we asked him about this plan we've devised? Are we giving him the glory? You've got it all wrong, this isn't how he wants it done! – These are prophetic remarks.

Such people are zealous for the Father, zealous for Jesus, and they want to see everyone honouring them and listening carefully to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes they seem to offend people; they are not always good at co-operating with others. They may be loners, and they tend to see things in different, other-worldly and sometimes inconvenient ways.

This Christ-centred, kingdom-minded, Almighty-glorifying habit will rub off on those who see and hear. The church will grow more prophetic where prophets are already at work. And because prophetic action touches hearts and challenges people in powerful ways, it prepares people who don't yet know Jesus to examine themselves and draws them into a place where they become receptive, even hungry, to hear more. In this way, the prophetic gift prepares the way for the evangelistic gift to function ([1 Corinthians 14:24-25](#)).

Sometimes we think that prophecy is a matter of predicting the future, and sometimes it may be that. But the main thrust of the prophetic gift is to draw people to obedience, wisdom, understanding, and to lift up and glorify the Father, Son and Spirit.

Can you identify people you know who have this way of seeing things? Talk about how to understand and make the most of what they say. Read [1 Corinthians 14:29-33](#) and discuss what this means in practice.

The evangelistic gift

The evangelistic gift of sharing the truth about Jesus ([Acts 8:4-40](#)) is often strong in those who love people. Perhaps the simplest way to think about it is that evangelistic people are particularly gifted at introducing people to Jesus. People with this gift enjoy mixing with others; they talk easily about any topic, but especially about Jesus and the good news; they are full of great stories; people are usually happy to listen to them; they may heal and eject evil spirits from people. Where apostles and prophets have been working for a while, the ground may be very fertile for the evangelistic gift to be effective. Where an evangelist is at work, it's likely that others will be enabled to share the good news much more widely too.

We are *all* called to announce the good news and make disciples, so thinking this is work only for those with a strong evangelistic gift is a huge mistake. The purpose of an evangelistic gift is to equip all of us to do the work. And it's easy to see that as more disciples are made, there will be a growing need for the work of shepherds.

Think about people you know who are naturals in the evangelistic gift. They are often talkers and may not be such good listeners. They love partying, they like crowds, they are outgoing and easy to get along with. And they love people. How might you encourage them to get out the message that Jesus loves people? Can you make it easier for them to equip everyone else to do this work too?

The shepherding gift

Where an evangelistic gift has been at work, there will be plenty of raw material for the gift

of shepherding to function – numbers of people who are newly following Jesus. Those with the heart of a shepherd will do anything to see people happily functioning well together. They're always willing to go to enormous lengths for the sake of the flock or, indeed, a single sheep. Like Jesus, they will lay down their life for the sheep, and they will lead them to sources of reliable and healthy food and water. Shepherds know the sheep really well, and the sheep know the shepherd ([John 10:11-18](#)).

If someone is hurting, the shepherd will be there. If there's an argument, the shepherd will be there. If everyone is happy the shepherd will be happy, but will always be alert to danger of any kind. False doctrine, bad teaching, unkind behaviour, carelessness or conflict and a shepherd will notice right away, and dive straight in with helpful support and correction. Don't try to hurt or mislead the sheep. If you do, you will have to deal with a riled up shepherd!

Another way of looking at this is that the evangelist introduces people to Jesus, while the shepherd introduces them to community with Jesus at the heart of it. Following Jesus is a first step, but following him *together* is essential too.

Can you think of times when there has been internal conflict or external trouble in church life? Can you identify those with strong shepherding gifts? They will be the people who smooth down frayed nerves, comfort the distressed, confront wrong behaviour and step in to make peace.

The teaching gift

Once those with evangelistic and shepherding gifts have gathered new believers into a community that we might call church, those with a teaching gift finally have people to teach. The Bible tells us that not many should teach ([James 3:1](#)), partly because teaching is a dangerous occupation if what is taught is incorrect, and perhaps because not many are really necessary. One teacher can address many learners at once.

This gift has become central in traditional church life. The teacher addresses the class (or congregation) from the front and he (less often she) has the role of pastor or vicar or priest, or minister (there are many such titles). Meanwhile the other gifts have been displaced or redirected and are not really encouraged. This tradition has done significant harm; it results in religious organisations replacing the living, organic church life we see in the New Testament. All should be participating and contributing, not merely listening.

So although the teaching gift is necessary, even essential, it should not be the primary gift at work in the church - not many should teach.

What changes would you need to make to reduce the influence of the teaching gift and restore the balance in which all five APEST gifts work together to equip everyone in the church? The necessary changes will vary greatly depending on your circumstances. It might mean a minor tweak or it could demand a major rethink.

Working together

All five of the gifts of service – Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd and Teacher (APEST) should work together. If they do not, the church will be very much the poorer. The gifts are personally distributed throughout the body by Jesus and their purpose is to build us up in love and make us mature by equipping us all to do the work ([Ephesians 4:7-16](#)). That

work is in part to go and make disciples, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded his original disciples ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). But it is also to love without limit or reservation ([John 13:34](#)). If you think about it, those two things, the command to go and tell and the command to love are pretty much different aspects of the same thing. If I love my neighbours surely I will tell them the good news about Jesus! How could I not? And sharing the good news simply demonstrates the love I have in my heart. Jesus loves the lost, he came to save sinners, not the just. So I should do the same. So should you!

Read [Ephesians 4:11-13](#), and [Matthew 28:16-20](#) again. Discuss the two aspects of reaching full maturity on the one hand and going to make new disciples on the other. How are you doing in terms of maturity and in terms of mission? Talk (and pray) about doing even better in these areas.

Five gifts serving and equipping the body for maturity and effectiveness

For more information...

- Watch a Neil Cole [video](#) on this topic.
- Read the first part of *The Forgotten Ways* (up to the beginning of chapter 3)
- Read *Interpreting Ephesians 4: [The five-fold giftings](#)*.

Other church leaders

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Why do we need to consider other leaders?

We have already seen in part *Four – Gifts for building* (p 25), that the original pattern of church leadership springs from the apostolic gift. We also saw that four further gifts are released to operate where there is an apostolic foundation, and we looked at these in more detail in the previous part, *The APEST gifts* (p 41). But the New Testament also mentions bishops (or overseers), elders and deacons, and today we use the terms pastor and priest quite widely. We need to briefly examine these too and understand how they fit into the overall picture. Before we do this, let's consider the New Testament principles around authority – particularly what Jesus himself said and modelled.

It's easy to think of the Greek words and their English translations as positions in a hierarchical authority structure, each with defined powers and roles. But as we have seen in *Five – A living organism* (p 29), church is much more a life form than an organisation. The six forgotten ways are not the only things that have been mislaid during the two millennia since Jesus' time. Our understanding of the functions of bishops, elders and deacons have changed, and very dramatically so. We need to understand them again as they were understood by those early believers, just as recorded in the New Testament.

Perhaps the first thing to say is that as with the APEST gifts, bishops, elders and deacons are not positions of authority in the sense of ruling over other believers. Jesus explicitly told his disciples that they were to love one another as he had loved them ([John 13:34-35](#)). If he came to serve, so also should we. And he also told them that they were not to rule over one another as the gentiles do ([Matthew 20:25-28](#)). Paul writes that we should submit to one another ([Ephesians 5:21](#)). This much is very clear. So whatever else we may say about bishops, elders and deacons, we can be quite certain at the outset that they are not about enforcing rules, governing people's behaviour or managing an organisation.

Discuss – Bishops, elders and deacons don't seem to chime with the idea of the APEST gifts of service or with church as a living organism. Is this a problem? If so, how can we resolve it? Talk this over together before moving on.

Bishops

The Greek word here is 'episkopos' and it means, literally, 'overseer', someone who keeps watch, someone who keeps an eye on things. Another word we could use is 'lookout'. It need not be understood to mean an official who makes sure everyone follows orders, although it might seem to *imply* control because that is the sense of the English word 'overseer' in everyday usage.

We need to check the New Testament to understand how the word is used there. Here are some wise words from JP Louw and EA Nida writing in *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 'Though in some contexts [episkopos] has been regarded traditionally as a position of authority, in reality the focus is upon the responsibility for caring for others'.

This is a responsibility we all share, we must all look out for one another.

'Episkopos' is not always used in a positive way; just take a look at [1 Peter 4:15](#). Which word in this verse contains the Greek 'episkopos' do you think? There's another Greek word 'allotri' which means 'other people's business' and 'meddler' (NIV) is 'allotriepiskopos', an 'episkopos' who meddles in other people's business.

When Paul writes 'episkopos' it's clear he is referring to particular people he regards as effective at keeping watch to detect – and respond to – error. But this doesn't mean that the other believers were free to relax. If any of us sees error, or somebody promoting it, we must question it and, if necessary, alert others. Might it be that Paul is simply saying that we need people among us who will be alert and willing to respond? Perhaps he is just saying that some are better at this than others and it's useful to identify them, recognise them, and pay attention to what they say. Indeed, the work of keeping watch is one of the things shepherds need to do, something they are gifted at. (See *The shepherding gift*, p 42.)

Jesus himself can be regarded as an 'episkopos'. In [1 Peter 2:25](#) we read that Jesus is 'the shepherd and guardian of your souls'. Some versions translate this as guardian (NASB, TLB), some as overseer (ESV, NIV), and some as bishop (ASV, KJV). Once again, the sense is not of ruling but of taking care, keeping watch (part of what a shepherd does as noted above).

Discuss – Look up '[overseer](#)' in a concordance or search function and draw your own conclusions about the work of an overseer or lookout. Try to get a feeling for what these people were expected to do. Did they have authority over other believers?

Elders

Paul made a habit of identifying elders in the churches he planted ([Acts 14:23](#), [Titus 1:5](#)). It's worth mentioning that the word translated 'appointed' might equally well mean 'pointed out' or 'identified'. But in English, the idea that Paul 'pointed out' elders is very different from the idea that he 'appointed' them. In everyday life, people who are appointed to a position are given authority to make decisions and to act in a particular role. But let's remember that the New Testament and the words of Jesus himself suggest love, humility and submitting to one another as the primary focus.

The word 'elder' is from the Greek 'presbuteros' and it does literally mean an older person. But it is also used to signify someone who is wise, and this is probably the sense in which Paul uses it. Eldership is not a role involving the giving of instructions or the making of decisions on behalf of others. Rather, elders are those people in the church who have more experience and wisdom. They are people we would naturally turn to when we are confused or anxious or when conflict arises. Pointing such people out in new and inexperienced gatherings of believers was a wise precaution taken by Paul and those he coached.

Bear in mind that the word 'authority' has two rather different meanings. The police have authority and you do what they tell you or face the consequences; this is command authority. Plumbers have a different kind of authority and you do what they tell you because you have a problem they know how to fix; this is knowledge and wisdom authority. Which kind of authority do you suppose elders should exercise?

*Discuss – Did Jesus exercise command authority or knowledge and wisdom authority? (Trick question – you should be able to find examples of both.)
What kind of authority does he want us to exercise over demons? What kind does he want us to exercise with one another?*

Deacons

Sometimes, individuals or small teams were given particular tasks, often when there was a specific need. The men and women who were given these tasks were called 'deacons' (Greek 'diakonos'). The word at its root means 'dust kickers', people who would run errands. Over time it came to have a more general meaning in everyday Greek, 'servant', 'waiter' or 'administrator'. Deacons in the early church were about getting things done.

At their first mention (in [Acts 6:1-6](#)) they were responsible for giving out aid to Greek widows who had been previously overlooked, but the task could be anything else that needed regular and reliable attention. For more on deacons see [1 Timothy 3:8-13](#)).

Discuss – Read some of the passages about deacons and talk about the people who were chosen to do the work. Can you identify people doing some of these things in the church today? (They may or may not be called 'deacons'.) Do deacons have command authority or knowledge and wisdom authority?

Pastors

Pastor is an old fashioned word for 'shepherd'. Read about the The shepherding gift in the section on The APEST gifts, page 42. Bear in mind that there are many people today called 'pastor' who are administrators, teachers and managers. This is not the same thing as the gift of shepherding.

Priests

Where does this title come from and what does it mean? In the Old Testament we read about priests and, in particular the 'High Priest' or 'Chief Priest' ([2 Chronicles 19:11](#)). The priests were members of a single family, descended from Aaron and his sons ([Exodus 29:44](#)). The men of this family were responsible for offering sacrifices on the altar, first in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. An animal would be slaughtered and offered on behalf of the people when they had transgressed the law in some way. A sin offering was required for forgiveness ([Leviticus 4:27-31](#)). The priest acted as a go-between, taking the living animal and offering its life (the blood) in place of the sinner's life, a substitutionary sacrifice.

Priests today are church leaders who offer the bread and wine on our behalf, a role that the New Testament clearly states is not required. All who believe in and follow Jesus are priests! ([1 Peter 2:9](#)) We offer Christ's substitutionary sacrifice to all who will accept him. We are the go-betweens, and need no-one to bring us into the Presence of the Father, something Jesus has already done once and for all ([John 14:9](#)).

Discuss – Were the priests helpful towards Jesus or a hindrance? (eg [Matthew 16:21](#)) How do you suppose the church made the mistake of thinking we still need this role today? Talk about the role of Jesus as our Great High Priest and our role as a Royal Priesthood ([Hebrews 4:14](#)).

Bishops, elders, deacons, pastors and priests today

Many denominations use these words in a different sense than the early church. Often they are used for organisational roles. But if we see church as a living organism rather than an organisation we will also need to understand these terms in living ways instead.

Discuss – Do we need to identify certain people as bishops, elders and deacons? Paul identified them, talk about how he saw them and why he regarded them as necessary and useful. Did he see them as functions of control or of service? How do we see them? And is there a role for pastors and priests?

Plenty of helpers to detect error, provide wisdom and get things done

For more information...

- Note: there seems to be very little written about bishops, elders and deacons (except material that treats them as positions of hierarchical structure in denominational organisations). Although they are rather old, the following two web pages are worth reading – [Overseers? Bishops?](#) and [Elders? Presbyters?](#) There are also my own blog posts on [Leaders in the church](#).

Last words

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Not the end, just the beginning

Please don't think that because you have reached the end of the guide, you have also reached the end of the journey. I hope you'll explore the more detailed books on 'The Forgotten Ways' as well.

The various parts of this *JDMC* guide are just that – a guide. You will only grow and progress if you do the work yourselves daily, weekly, and on into the extraordinary future that Father already has planned for you. He will show you and lead you but you must take the steps one by one. As you live and work and discover new things together you can expect to grow significantly and have an impact on those around you.

An intricate fabric

Remember that the six forgotten ways are woven together to form a rich and intricate fabric. Although I've presented them here individually and in a linear form, they are not like that in reality. Each depends on the others, all are needed in our lives together. They don't begin with knowing Jesus and end with doing stretching things together, they are more like a grand party where the participants, the music, the lighting, the flowers, the food, and the decorations create an unparalleled overall experience. Take one of them away and the party will be much the poorer.

However, each way does depend on the previous one and provoke the next in significant ways. People who put Jesus first will find themselves becoming disciples. If we truly follow him and love him, we'll do what he says by going out and deep. Amongst groups of new believers who are open, the APEST gifts will find an opportunity. Where apostolic foundations take route, organic forms of church life will develop. And where church is active, stretching challenges are inevitable.

Just do it!

So make a start in your own lives and your own situation. Listen to what the Spirit says and do what he tells you. Keep Jesus at the centre. Make disciples and grow as disciples yourselves. Make sure to go out but also embed yourselves deep in the local culture. Explore your gifts and encourage one another in using them. Don't over-organise but be ever more fully alive as parts of one living body. And face some stretching challenges together.

A blessing

I bless you in the name of Jesus, that you may you find yourselves at the heart of revolutionary and explosive growth. It might seem to begin ever so slowly, but stick with it and see what it will become! You'll find your deepest peace, not by resting, but by being fully active children of the Father and walking daily with the Son.

*Glory to the Most High in heaven above, and
peace on earth for everyone on whom his favour
rests (Luke 2:14)*

For more information...

- There's loads more! But it's worth saying that you will greatly benefit by exploring and praying and listening and analysing and struggling for yourselves. JDMC is not a method to follow, it's a set of questions to answer in your own way. Every person is unique and so is every expression of church. There is a pattern to be strictly followed – his name is Jesus – but everything else is open to change as circumstances demand and as the Holy Spirit guides.
- Go through the JDMC questions again if you sense it will be useful.
- Check out Alan Hirsch's original books and mine them for the gold that is in them.
- Keep reading the Bible, on your own and together.
- Tell the Bible stories and your own stories to anyone who will listen. Tell true stories and parables. Don't read them out, learn them and recount them in your own words.
- Keep moving like a skillful boxer. Don't be the same today as you were yesterday, or a year ago.