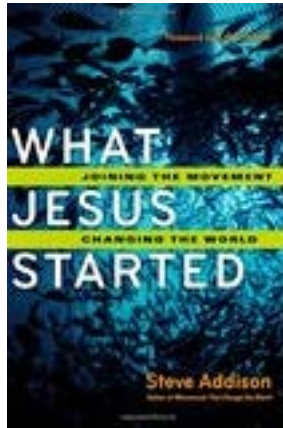


What Jesus Started: Joining the Movement, Changing the World
By Steve Addison



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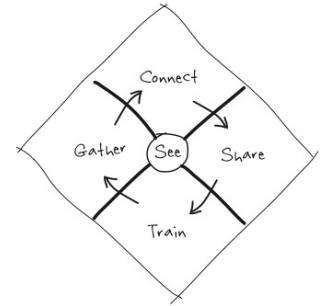
Introduction

Steve Addison has blessed the church with this simple, but thorough, treatment of the early rise and continued expansion of the church. He brings fresh insight into the beginnings of the movement that impacts the world to this day. This book's principles are accessible to all readers. As Addison simply points out the key aspects of Jesus' ministry and explains how they paved the way for a reproducible movement. This review will provide a brief summary of the content of *What Jesus Started*, also pointing out the most significant contributions the book makes to modern church planting movement efforts.

Overview

In his introductory remarks, Addison takes just four pages to welcome his readers into a journey of discovering the key components to the beginnings of the Christian movement. In these brief pages he informs, inspires, and casts vision for the journey by introducing six activities:

1. **See the end.** – believing in the fulfillment of the Great Commission so much that you can actually see it and then work toward what you can see.



2. **Connect with people.** Reaching across cultures, spaces, and invisible lines to establish contact with unbelievers.

3. **Share the gospel.** The author points out straight from the Bible how this was practiced.

4. **Train disciples.** Teaching new disciples to obey Jesus, including His command to go out and make more disciples.

5. **Gather communities.** Movements bring new disciple-making disciples together to encourage one another and cast vision to continue to reach their region.

6. **Multiply workers.** Sending teams out to keep the movement going.

Addison uses the remainder of the book to unpack the importance of each of these elements to the rise of Christianity. These six components not only give the reader the main content, but also provide the structure of the book. *What Jesus Started* is strategically broken down into four parts, each with 6 chapters – one for each of the key components of a missionary movement.

- **Part One** details the ministry of Jesus – His vision, how He connected with people, the message He shared and the way He shared it, how He trained the disciples, His promise to build a church, and His intentional leadership development strategy.
- **Part Two** highlights the efforts of the disciples after the ascension, and the development of the early church. Once again Addison walks through these 6 key aspects of a missionary movement, showing how the disciples followed Jesus’ example and continued the movement He started.

- **Part Three** walks through Paul's missionary endeavors with simple observations from Paul's ministry about the 6 components of a missionary movement.
- **Part Four** is filled with stories of how these 6 practices are still driving the missionary movement today. Addison once again walks through each of the 6, this time sharing stories from around the world about how people are seeing, connecting, sharing, training, gathering, multiplying leaders and seeing a movement take off.

Between each section, Addison masterfully weaves in stories of modern missionaries putting Jesus' strategy into practice today. The reader is inspired and challenged by hearing the success stories of Jeff Sundell in North Carolina, Ying Kai in Asia, and Julius Ebwongu in Uganda.

Summary

Part 1 – What Jesus Began

Addison starts with the historical context in which Jesus was born, lived, and began His movement. Setting the scene in the ancient Near East proves to be helpful as we try to picture what it must have been like for Jesus to begin His public ministry. Page 24 has a map that shows many of the 175 towns in Galilee that Jesus would have visited. This is particularly insightful as the average reader may very well have read in the gospels that Jesus travelled from town to town, but seeing it on a map helps shake us out of our stupor and come to grips with the reality that Jesus was on the move. "By the end of His ministry, most of Galilee's 200,000 people would either have met Jesus or known someone who had" (24).

Another key insight Addison points out is how Jesus was constantly connecting with people! "Jesus didn't wait for people to come to Him. He walked from village to village looking

for people – on the road, in the marketplaces and synagogues, in private homes and in public places” (29). Not only was Jesus constantly on the move, constantly connecting with people – He connected with all kinds of people! Addison points out eight different kinds of people Jesus connected with: family, commoners, the powerful, the “righteous,” women, the prosperous, the despised, and Gentiles.

Jesus shared a message that was like nothing anyone had ever heard before. He shared it often, with many, many people. His goal wasn't just to connect with people, it was to share a message that could change their lives. His message was wrapped up in memorable stories and teachings – like the prodigal son, and the Pharisee and the tax collector praying at the temple. Addison's goal in this book is not just to point out *what* Jesus taught, but *how* He taught. He engaged peoples' hearts with a message that was reproducible. “For those whose hearts were open, Jesus' message was simple, memorable, and easily passed on” (41).

Next Addison deals with how Jesus trained His disciples. Knowing that they would one day carry on the work, He had to make sure they were prepared to do so. This meant training. The emphasis in Jesus' training was to put truth in action and faith into practice. Jesus commanded things that He expected to be obeyed. Pages 44-46 outline 7 simple commands Jesus gave to His disciples. Addison also points out the different methods Jesus used to train: repetition, in the midst of life situations (on a boat in a storm), with challenging assignments, and often debriefing what they had seen, heard, or experienced. “He taught them in the middle of life, mission and relationships. This was not a classroom approach to learning. The focus was on obeying the truth” (47).

Addison points out that Jesus' desire was to save not just individuals, but to see individuals who would gather into communities. “The fruit of Jesus' ministry was communities

of disciples” (51). Jesus promised to build His church, and He planted the seeds of that vision with the disciples as He did life with them in community – a community of faith and obedience.

The final aspect of missionary movements seen in Jesus’ ministry is addressed in the last section of Part 1. In this short chapter, Addison points out that whether you look in the gospels or in Acts there are three key pieces to Jesus’ missionary commission: Jesus is Lord, Jesus sent His disciples to the ends of the earth, and Jesus will be with them as they go (53). Jesus had trained His disciples over a three year process, and now He told them in no uncertain terms that He was entrusting the mission to them, as they’d be filled with His Spirit.

Part 2 – What Jesus Continued to Do: The Twelve and the Early Church

As with his treatment of Jesus’ ministry, Addison outlines the ministry of the disciples and the early church by demonstrating how they saw the end, connected with people, shared the message, trained believers, gathered into communities of faith, and multiplied leaders. “Luke describes the mission of the Christian movement as a work of the Holy Spirit” (65). The Holy Spirit not only gave the power for this movement, but the vision as well. As the disciples followed the leading of the Spirit, they found themselves in similar situations to those that they had been with Jesus. They proceeded in ways similar to Jesus demonstrating that His training was effective.

The stories of the disciples’ missionary activity seen early in the book of Acts are put on display as Addison, once again, points out simple insights about how they connected with people. Persecution in Jerusalem forced the disciples to scatter and connect with new people in new places. Philip was sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and connected with a Eunuch

whom God had prepared to receive the message. Peter connected with Cornelius by way of a special vision from God. God used each of these connections for the spread of the gospel.

The disciples connected with lots of people, but the point was to share the gospel. Chapter 9 emphasizes the message that the disciples shared. Addison offers a helpful bulleted list of 6 key pieces of the gospel message that can be derived from Peter's sermons and other passages in Acts:

- Jesus is the promised Messiah sent by the God of Israel.
- Salvation has come through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God as the head of a restored Israel.
- Jesus is now present among His people through the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus will return in glory to judge the world and to restore all things.
- God commands everyone to repent and to put their trust in Jesus to receive forgiveness of sins, and to be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and eternal salvation. (81)

As people repented and put their faith in Christ, the disciples then spent time training them. Again, they would have remembered Jesus' stories and teachings that they had heard over and over again as they travelled with Jesus from town to town in Galilee. Addison, also having learned the value of repetition from Jesus, takes this opportunity to review the 7 commands of Christ he highlighted in Part 1. This time he shows how the disciples put those commands into practice and used them to train others.

Sticking to his pattern, Addison next highlights what it looked like for the early church to gather (See, Connect, Share, Train ... Gather). He uses Acts 2:42-47 to make some simple observations about the importance of the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. This community of believers met wherever they could, usually in homes, and followed a

very simple pattern of remembering and obeying Christ's commands, while loving one another and sharing Christ's love with others.

The last chapter of Part 2 is called "Jerusalem to the World." The gospel spread from Jerusalem to Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Cities on the Mediterranean Coast, Syria, Cyprus, Rome, North Africa, and India. Now, how could twelve apostles accomplish all of that by themselves? They couldn't and that's the point. In order for this type of expansion to take place, the disciples had to train new workers and multiply leaders. "The disciples made their contribution to the spread of the gospel, but Jesus had taught them the task could never be completed unless they trained and multiplied workers" (103).

Part 3: What Jesus Continued to Do: Paul and His Team

Once again keeping with the pattern, the first chapter of Part 3 explains how Jesus helped Paul develop a vision to spread the gospel. Paul could *see the end*. This chapter ends with a preview of how Paul did all 6 of the key components of a missionary movement. The value of this repetition not only shows Addison's understanding of how people learn, but also the value he places on following Jesus' methods for training disciples.

Addison uses the story of Paul and Silas in prison to show how Paul *connected with people*. This is a challenging picture as many in the West struggle to embrace the discomfort that can accompany living on mission. But Paul used this opportunity to *connect with people* that needed to hear the gospel. Paul didn't miss a chance to *connect* and didn't wait for people to come to him. He went where people were and always had his eyes open to find opportunities. "He spoke to government officials, prominent politicians, Greek philosophers, angry mobs, pagan sailors, occult practitioners, Roman soldiers, businesswomen, wealthy aristocrats,

craftsmen, and jailors” (122-123). This chapter finishes with a look at how Paul *connected* in various settings including: synagogues, homes, the workshop, city squares, a lecture hall, with prominent people, and even during trials and imprisonments. The lists of diverse people and settings forces the reader to grapple with just how intentional and widespread Paul’s efforts were in connecting with people. This can be challenging even to those who have some knowledge of Paul’s ministry.

The *share* portion of Part 3 simply shows Paul’s method and message to Jews and to Gentiles. When sharing with Jews, Paul went to the synagogue and addressed the people, highlighting Jesus’ ministry as the climax of God’s love for Israel. Addison uses the examples of Paul’s message in Athens, and to the Thessalonians to show the gospel he *shared* with Gentiles. Page 136 contains a valuable table showing 7 key aspects of the gospel message, all derived from I Thessalonians. The insights on contextualization are helpful, but the great value in this chapter is the emphasis on how Paul, regardless of the audience, consistently verbalized the truths of the risen Christ and His invitation to enter His Kingdom.

Addison uses two examples to show how Paul trained disciples. Paul’s letter to Philemon showed that he didn’t just care about leading people to profess a certain religion, but to follow Jesus in a way that impacted all of life. Of Philemon and Onesimus, Addison states: “Having shared the Gospel of God’s grace with them, Paul was now, from prison, teaching them how to live out the Gospel’s implications... he was teaching disciples to follow Christ” (139). The second example is the letter to the Galatians. Paul was not content just knowing that the Galatians believed in Jesus; he longed to see Christ formed in them!

When Paul *shared* the gospel and trained new disciples, he would then gather them into communities. These communities of disciples often met in homes where they learned what it

looked like to follow Jesus and be the people of God. This is how Paul planted churches. Paul loved the church and spilled his heart and much ink in an effort to strengthen the churches he had planted. “He would often circle back and visit, or leave behind a team member, or send a team member or letter – all for the purpose of strengthening the churches” (143).

Paul was also big on teamwork, seldom working alone. “There are about one hundred names linked with Paul in the New Testament; thirty-eight of them are coworkers” (152). This chapter is loaded with names and anecdotes of Paul’s fellow laborers. Addison points out that the impressive spread of the gospel in the province of Asia was done with the help of men and women that Paul partnered with and raised up as leaders. Paul demonstrated that a missionary movement requires leadership multiplication.

Part 4: What Jesus is Doing Today

In Part 4, Addison turns his attention toward modern missionary movements. These 6 chapters provide story after story of missionaries with a vision for God to move. They connect in different ways depending on their context. One man enters mosques and connects with the Imam, asking questions about Isa. From there he invites anyone who wants to talk more to join him for tea across the street. Anyone who joins could be a person of peace. Another missionary visits homes taking surveys. One man gets a strong sense that he is to go to a certain village. On the bus ride he meets a man who had a vision that he would arrive on a bus. This connection leads to missionary activity that results in a movement that facilitates thousands of people come to faith. The common thread in each story is how these people were intentional to get out and connect with people.

A key insight into movements is the recognition that everyone must be able to articulate their faith in a simple, reproducible way. Addison shares stories of how missionaries are training

people to do just that and seeing big results. He also emphasizes the need to train many in order to find the few who are ready to share the gospel consistently. He also stresses the importance of discipling new believers, training them to share their faith immediately. Addison asks a penetrating question: “Can someone you have just led to Christ go home that same day and share the Gospel with the people they know and love” (178)?

In the last section of the book, Addison takes one more opportunity to hammer the importance of obeying Jesus, not just knowing more about Him. “The goal is not to teach new believers everything they need to know. It is to teach new believers the habit of *obedience to what they know*” (182). Three key questions are provided in considering the effectiveness of a discipleship strategy:

1. Is it obedience oriented?
2. Is it simple enough that a new believer can begin discipling someone they know?
3. Does it lead to the formation of disciple-making groups and churches? (182)

The chapter on *gathering* kicks off with a story of workers who visit the Mising people to encourage and strengthen the churches there. The Mising people have simple churches, based on Acts 2:38-47. These stories are encouraging, but the big contribution of this chapter is the idea that the gospel precedes the church. In order to see multiplication become a reality, we must shift the way we think: do not plant churches in order to spread the gospel; spread the gospel in order to plant churches. “The Gospel creates the church, not the other way around” (187).

The importance of multiplying leaders in the modern movement is highlighted with a story about an Iranian believer named Brother Haik. He left his home to reach Muslims and raise up leaders to carry on the work. Upon returning home he continued to share the gospel and make disciples, but also raised up leaders so the gospel could spread beyond his own circle of

influence. This intentional leadership development helped lead to a movement of the gospel in Iran that continues to this day.

Sticking with his pattern, Addison hits the 6 key components at the end of the last section of the book, this time calling for action from the reader. In the final chapters of the book we find this challenge: “What happens next will determine whether reading this book has been an intellectual exercise or an experience that will change your life. If God has spoken to you through the message of this book, what matters now is obedience” (194).

Key Contributions in *What Jesus Started*

Steve Addison takes his own teaching to heart by keeping it simple and repeating the main ideas throughout the whole book. See, Connect, Share, Train, Gather, Multiply – these 6 components of a missionary movement shape the entire work, making them stick. If you want to know how Jesus did these, you can find a succinct list on p. 28. To see how Jeff Sundell accomplished all six turn to p. 58. If you want to know how Paul did it, p. 119-120.

“The Christian movement was something new in human history” (16). Addison points out insights that make the common Christian pause and ponder. Because the Christian movement was new in human history, we ought to pay attention to the way it advanced. We ought to be careful students of the key players in the movement. They were doing something brand new. In many ways, we feel the task ahead of us here in the West is similar. Something new is needed.

“Everything Jesus did on mission was reproducible and sustainable” (35). Jesus “told and retold the stories and his teachings so that his disciples could remember them and pass them on to others” (36). This simple observation actually helps explain why we have such clear accounts of Jesus’ teachings in the gospels. The disciples had heard them over and over again! “Jesus founded a missionary movement. His methods of training workers had been simple and

reproducible” (105). And “the movement could only spread rapidly if their message and the training was simple, memorable and readily transferrable” (86). This key insight is so needed in an age of where the church is bombarded with the next best program and curriculum, most of which are complex and not easily reproduced.

“The Christian movement could not have spread rapidly if it relied solely on a small group of ‘professionals’ to share the gospel” (84). In keeping with the emphasis on simplicity, Addison points out how important it was for ordinary people to carry the message. Tearing down the thick divide between clergy and laity will be crucial if Christians want to see the kind of progress described in this book.

“There was nothing inevitable about the spread of the Gospel” (p. 17). The Christian movement didn’t happen on accident. “There was nothing automatic about the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the world” (99). Not inevitable, not automatic, but intentional. Very specific, very intentional steps were taken by the early church that led to a movement. The church today is in need a strong dose of intentional and strategic thinking.

At the end of the last chapter the reader will find an *Implementation Guide* (p. 199-246) designed to help anyone who wants to put these principles into practice. Filled with questions and micro journals for responses and progress, this guide will be valuable asset to those longing to see God move in their missions efforts.

Conclusion

If you are looking for a book filled with academic fireworks, this is not the book for you. If you are looking for a book filled with practical church planting silver bullets for the modern world, this is not the book for you. If you are looking to avoid a challenging treatment of New Testament mission that may cause you significant discomfort, this is probably not the book for

you. If you want to get a good look at the missionary movement that Jesus started and called you to join, then you will want to read this book. It will help you See the end, Connect with people, Share the Gospel, Train disciples, Gather churches, and Multiply leaders. Just know that putting these principles into practice will likely send you out into the margins, but if you go like Jesus went, you go with a powerful message of hope and redemption.