

How This Revolutionary Movement Will Radically Advance the Kingdom

Megachurch pastor Chris Galanos uses just seven words to describe his shock when he discovered a new church growth strategy that transformed his life and his ministry: “They never taught me that in seminary.”

As founding and lead pastor of Experience Life Church (eLife) in Lubbock, Texas, Galanos has seen a fresh commitment to disciple making—specifically to the disciple-making movement (DMM) strategy of church growth—exponentially expand his church’s outreach. The Holy Spirit has brought Galanos and eLife into a new way of “doing church” that has radically transformed it in ways that are impacting not only their local community, but the world. He took time to share with Charisma about DMM’s origins, its present and potential impact on the current church model and why the Holy Spirit has given him such a deep passion for helping others embrace it.

Radical Discovery

In 2007, Galanos and his wife, Emilie, along with a group of 10 others, began eLife with a prayer meeting in their living room. He says the Holy Spirit “laid it on his heart” after seminary to start a church in his hometown. At that initial meeting, the group asked God to allow them to help 10,000 people make commitments to Christ over the next 10 years.

By its eighth year as a church, God had allowed eLife to surpass that lofty goal.

What next? Galanos asked God. What do You want our vision to be for the next 10 years?

He had begun reading missiologist David Garrison's *Church Planting Movements* and noticed a pattern. Time and again, he saw missionaries whose goals stretched far beyond "lofty." Instead of planning to reach a few people or even a whole city with the gospel, they developed plans to reach entire people groups. They were willing to do whatever it took to succeed.

That's when the Holy Spirit pointed out the WIGTake question in Garrison's book, credited to another missions expert, David Watson: "What's it going to take to reach everyone in the people group?"

Galanos says that in seminary, "You're usually taught that you take an existing church, you start a new church, you grow it over time using traditional methods. Hopefully you reach a few hundred people, maybe a few thousand. But I didn't hear anybody ever planning to reach an entire people group. We have to be willing to do whatever it's going to take!"

This concept moved Galanos and a team of leaders into a season of prayer, fasting and seeking Holy Spirit's direction about the direction of eLife for the next 10 years. Using research from the Joshua Project ([http://www.joshuaproject.net](#)), they found approximately 200 million people in their U.S. people group who needed to know Christ.

"In learning this for the first time in our lives, our hearts broke not just for our friends or our neighborhood or our city or our region, but for our entire people group," Galanos writes in his book, *From Megachurch to Multiplication*. "We couldn't help but pray the same as missionaries all over the world, 'Lord, would You allow us to be a part of reaching all of them? Not just some. Not just the ones who live near us. But all of them!'"

Galanos noticed that Watson, in working with an unreached people group of 90 million in India, developed a plan to reach the entire group in 20 years. What would it take for his

church to reach its people group in the same length of time?

Using the principles of multiplication—individuals committed to making disciples will, in turn, make more disciples—he and his team prayed toward their goal. They concluded that to stay on track to reach their entire people group in 20 years, they would need to reach 1 million people in the next 10. So their new WIGTake addressed that incredible number.

Galanos also asked his team to read three books to help them understand the methods that had so captivated him: *The Great Evangelical Recession* by John S. Dickerson, *Spent Matches* by Roy Moran and the Garrison book mentioned earlier. All three helped them understand what their pastor already believed: The only way to reach their goal of 1 million in 10 years and 200 million in 20 years was through the DMM strategy.

One of the truths Galanos and his team discovered on their journey to embracing DMM was that the traditional way of doing church costs a lot—in time, in staff and especially in money. As he says in *From Megachurch to Multiplication*:

For many American churches, including ours at times, 'success' is having as many people as possible fill up worship services on Sundays to hear teaching from God's Word. That explains why you hire a church staff to facilitate those services. That explains why those staff members spend their whole week planning for those services and the programming surrounding those services. That explains why you need to raise a lot of money from the congregants to fund those salaries. That also explains why buildings are so important. You need a place to have these worship services. And you need the money, often millions of dollars, to be able to build and maintain these facilities.

DMM offers an alternative model that explains how the missionaries he studied, along with Galanos and his team, could set such huge growth goals. A DMM movement focuses not

on adding members to a church but on making disciples who will make more disciples. With DMM, he says, "Disciples naturally form into churches, and many new churches are planted. They don't plant churches hoping to get disciples (that's what I did). They make disciples, and from those disciple-making efforts, churches are planted."

Following the Spirit's leading, eLife developed a specific plan to transition into DMM ministry and chose to announce it at the church's 10-year anniversary celebration in September 2017. At that point, Galanos and his team, with help from DMM mentors, had already enlisted and trained 54 church planters in DMM methods. In 2018, after months of prayer walking around their areas of focus, most of those launched DMM groups. Here, the multiplication process began.

Revolutionary Approach

Galanos says when he first learned about DMM, he realized something.

"The primary difference between what I was doing and what I saw in DMM is that they were taking the Great Commission literally and risking everything to accomplish it," he says. He adds that most, if not all, pastors "have a heart to fulfill the Great Commission, but we struggle with the execution. DMM makes the execution of the Great Commission possible!"

And Galanos uses the Great Commission as the model to highlight the differences he sees between DMM and more traditional church growth models.

"In the first two words of Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus said, 'Therefore, go,'" he says. "That, to me, is a big difference between DMM and the traditional evangelical church model. In our church, and in most others, in order to reach lost people, you try to get them to 'come' to church. That's why buildings are so important. ... You don't primarily go to the lost to make

disciples on their turf; you try to get them to come to your church. Jesus seemed to encourage the disciples to focus more on going to the lost than trying to get them to come to you.”

Galanos adds, moving further into the Great Commission, “Next, Jesus said, ‘and make disciples.’ I think every evangelical American pastor wants to do this well. I also think most evangelical American pastors would admit they’re not doing it as well as they’d like.”

Galanos says Dickerson “nailed it” when he wrote in *The Great Evangelical Recession*: “The late-20th-century church model, in so many applications, requires so much energy and attention that little to nothing is left for anything else, including discipleship. The 20th-century church model, which revolves around buildings, weekend gatherings, sermons and such is not primarily focused on discipleship. Discipleship gets crowded out because doing all of those things takes so much time.”

Galanos—and many other pastors—“totally agree with Dickerson here,” Galanos says. “We all want to make disciples well, but it seems like all of the other traditional church activities keep us so busy we don’t have much time to really consider, In all that we’re doing, what are we making? Are we making disciples? Or are we making something else?”

Galanos also adds that he often read right through the next part of the Great Commission, “of all nations” because he was still concentrating on the “make disciples” aspect. Instead, he suggests we need to allow the Spirit to guide us into imagining how the first disciples heard this straight from Jesus Himself.

“Jesus said to make disciples of whole nations and to aim to make disciples of all of them,” Galanos says. “Do you know how many people were in all of the nations at that time? Around 200 million. The disciples would’ve heard Jesus saying, ‘I want you to go and make disciples of whole nations, aiming

toward all 200 million.' What?"

But Jesus told them how, Galanos says. "They'd have to make disciples who made more disciples who made more disciples. If they would multiply disciples (the essence of DMM), it could reach whole nations. That's very different from the traditional evangelical church model, which simply seeks to start a church, hire a preacher, buy a building eventually and hope it grows over time.

"There's no initial aim, usually, to reach an entire city, region or nation," Galanos says about the traditional model. "I'd never heard of such a thing until I saw it in DMM and the Lord revealed it to me in the Great Commission."

The Holy Spirit also gave Galanos insights into Jesus' command to baptize in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit (v. 19b). "The disciples didn't have to run and fetch the 'religious leaders' to do the baptizing," he points out. "These movements have a culture of empowering ordinary believers to make disciples and plant churches. That's a major difference as well.

"In the American model, we often don't encourage 'ordinary, unschooled men' like John and Peter (Acts 4) to make disciples and plant churches," he says. "We leave it for the professionals. As I was exposed to DMM, I saw that this philosophy is clearly impeding the multiplication of disciples in the American context because we've put the responsibility of the Great Commission in the hands of a few clergy rather than the many laity. That's another big difference."

In giving the Great Commission, Jesus instructs His disciples to "teach the new disciples to obey all the things He has commanded them," Galanos says. "The focus wasn't just on learning or the accumulation of knowledge. It was on obedience to Jesus."

And Galanos points to a radical new, Spirit-empowered

definition of ministry success.

“Success isn’t measured by buildings, budgets or attendance,” he says. “It’s measured by whether disciples and churches are multiplying to the fourth generation and beyond such that whole people groups can be reached.”

Remarkable Results

By now, it may be obvious why DMM has proven to be such an effective method for evangelism and discipleship. “Multiplication always grows more quickly than addition and thus has the potential to reach whole cities, regions and nations,” Galanos says. “That’s not to say that addition is bad or unhelpful. You can still reach a lot of people through addition, but nothing like what you can reach through multiplication. And if our goal is to do whatever it takes to make disciples of all nations, it will require a multiplication strategy.

“Justin Long, movement researcher with Beyond, has said, ‘A team of two or three can reach 100,000,’” Galanos says. “That’s not theory. That’s proven.

“Here’s just one example that I can personally testify to because I know the people involved,” Galanos says. “A married couple and single lady (a team of three) went as missionaries to a very unreached part of Asia. For 14 years, they did traditional ministry and could count on one hand the number of disciples they had made. Their missions agency, Beyond, offered a training in DMM, which they went through and then reproduced with Indian brothers and sisters. After implementing DMM principles in this area for seven years, this Indian-led team has seen 38,000-plus churches planted and over 200,000 baptized.”

As for eLife itself, now three years into DMM, “There’s no question that this journey into DMM has been the most rewarding and fruitful journey we’ve ever been on as a

church,” Galanos says. “While it has required much faith at certain points, the Lord has done so much that we are thankful for.”

But Galanos also encourages churches considering a similar transition to DMM to count the cost.

“Jesus wants His church to follow Him,” he says. “It’s not always going to be easy. It’s often going to be risky. It will likely require us to count a cost and be willing to give up our comfort, traditions and preferences. But following Jesus and walking by faith is always worth it!

“That’s what we have tried to do since our church first started,” he says. “The leaders of our church have tried to have ‘ears to hear’ what the Spirit is saying to His church (Rev. 2:7). And as we’ve heard His voice, we’ve tried to do our best to follow Him.

“When Jesus told us to transition our church to a DMM focus, we knew that not everyone would want to join that journey with us,” Galanos says. “And we were OK with that. We knew that the Lord might lead many people to join a different church in town. And we were OK with that too. We did our best to bless those who told us they wanted to move on and encourage them as they left. Was there pushback or criticism? Was it hard at times? Of course. But following Jesus by faith is always worth it.”

Today, he says, “We’ve had the opportunity to train over 700 pastors and church leaders in the last few years, some of whom have joined the journey with us. That has been so encouraging. As a result, Experience Life is not just a local church in Lubbock but is now a network of churches meeting in 12 different states and several different nations.

“We’ve seen hundreds of groups started with lost people, and while some have not continued, we are encouraged by those who are continuing to discover together with their family and

friends more about God's plan for their lives," he says. "We've had thousands of spiritual conversations with lost people and prayed for thousands of hours together as a network of churches. We are continuing to send people to unreached people groups to share about Jesus with those who have never heard. And best of all, we are well positioned to reach the 1 million we're praying for if the wind of the Spirit continues to blow His wind into our sails!"

And Galanos has a word for others interested in DMM.

"It seems difficult to me that someone would ever even consider DMM unless they've first considered Luke 14 and found that following Jesus is worth any cost," he says. "DMM is costly, especially for American pastors. It may require us to give up some things we've always cherished. It may expose competing allegiances or even idols that we've worshipped in place of God. But our church has found, and I've found in my personal time with God, that Jesus continues to be worth it. If following Him costs me my life, my comfort, my security or even my church traditions, He's worth it, and I'll gladly surrender all to Jesus. Jesus is the greatest treasure!"

READ MORE: Find more information and resources on the disciple-making movement at [.](#)

Marti Pieper is a freelance writer and editor.

This article was excerpted from the December issue of Charisma magazine. If you don't subscribe to Charisma, [click here](#) to get every issue delivered to your mailbox. During this time of change, your subscription is a vote of confidence for the kind of Spirit-filled content we offer. In the same way you would support a ministry with a donation, subscribing is your way to support Charisma. Also, we encourage you to give gift subscriptions at [,](#) and share our articles on social media.