

Module 10

A House Church Manifesto

“Toward An Apostolic Strategy For Rapidly Multiplying House Churches In Spokane”





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“Now Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.’ So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ So he went up and looked and said, ‘There is nothing. And he said, ‘Go back’ seven times. And it came about at the seventh time, that he said, ‘Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.’ And he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’” So it came about in a little while, that the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.” (1 Kings 18:41-46)

“The Sound Of The Roar of A Heavy Shower”

In the Spring of 2005 the house church community in Spokane was blessed to have a weekend conference with Wolfgang Simson. I have spent considerable time since Wolfgang’s visit mulling and praying over the things he shared, but particularly the need for a regional strategy for how we are going to see the planting and rapid multiplication of 10,000 new house churches in the greater Spokane (Eastern Washington - Northern Idaho) area. To assist those interested in the house church movement to better understand what God is doing both locally and around the world, we have posted all of the Wolfgang Conference sessions on our website at parousianetwork.com. I hope that you will avail yourself of that resource. As I have listened and reflected on Wolf’s comments, I have been particularly struck by two things. **First**, I was struck by a question, *“How do we prepare for a spiritual wildfire?”* (i.e., a genuine outpouring of God’s Spirit in revival). **Second**, I was struck by Wolf’s discussion of the need for a “locally birthed” apostolic strategy (what he referred to as a “Domino Strategy”) for seeing a local movement of rapidly multiplying house churches which, over time, would result in the planting of upwards of 10,000 new house churches in our area. I was also encouraged by an e-mail I received (just as I was beginning to pen the following thoughts) from fellow house church planter John White in Denver regarding a regional house church strategy for the Denver area. It suggests to me that God is moving many people in the same direction, which is usually what happens when God is opening a new season for His church.

Most of us are overly familiar with the story of Elijah on Mt. Carmel, but I will try to make this interesting. Starting in verse 41 of Chapter 18 (after the whole “prophets of Baal” and “fire from heaven” incident) Elijah received and gave a prophetic word regarding a coming rain storm, which would end the 3-year drought which Elijah had prophesied some 3 years earlier. Elijah “knew-that-he-knew” that this drought breaking storm was coming. His problem was a complete lack of any tangible confirmation. So, being the prophet and ministry leader that he was, Elijah sent his poor long-suffering servant on a climb up Mt. Carmel in search of the promised but elusive rain storm. But alas, no clouds, no storm and no confirmation. But Elijah was persistent. “Go back,” he instructed. But six hot, dusty & tiring trips up Mt. Carmel later, still no sign of the coming storm. By the end of trip #6 up the mountain the servant was probably thinking, *“This guy is nuts, I’m exhausted and if He tells me to do this one more time I may just have to bury his body up here and tell everybody it was an unfortunate climbing accident!”* (Trust me, it’s all in the nuance of the Hebrew footnotes!). But then, on trip number seven, he saw it. *“Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.”* Finally, tangible confirmation of a prophetic promise.

Do you see it? Can you see the cloud yet?

Prophesying revival has become a cottage industry in our day, much of which needs to be held lightly. But that caveat notwithstanding, the Pacific Northwest lives beneath a blanket of reliable prophetic promises that a genuine move of God’s Spirit is coming. Many people, myself included, have in recent months heard in our spirits what Elijah heard in his, *“the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.”* But it has been a long journey, a tough climb, and many of us are feeling somewhat like Elijah’s poor long-suffering servant must have felt around trip #6 up the mountain.

We have been holding a house church prayer and worship gathering every Wednesday evening since last December. Our purpose has simply been to gather, to worship and to pray, and to invite & welcome God’s Presence. One of the prophetic people in our meeting recently had a conversation with a couple (who are not involved in house church, but are gifted prophetic intercessors). *“What are these ‘river houses’ I keep hearing from the Holy Spirit?”* she asked my prophetic friend. When he shared this with me I couldn’t help but laugh. The Lord had told me months ago that the coming move of His Spirit would be an outpouring of the River of Ezekiel 47 in great power which would flow through house churches: *“river houses”* if you will. What she was hearing was confirmation of what I had been hearing and teaching. The River of God’s Spirit is about to flow, and house churches are the channel He plans to flow through. As an interesting “side note,” this woman and her husband are part of the personal intercessory prayer team for the senior pastor of a megachurch in our area. Recently, the Lord gave the husband a prophetic word for this Pastor: *“A move of the Spirit is coming.”*

Do you see it? Can you see the cloud yet?

So, where is all of this going, you ask? When Wolf challenged us with the vision of 10,000 house churches in our area I was

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skeptical, treating it lightly like a certain degree of “house church hype.” But since then I have sensed the Holy Spirit giving birth to something much bigger than me (or Wolf). I see it. I can see the cloud. It is a cloud no bigger than a man’s hand rising up out of God’s great prophetic sea. It is a promise of thousands of house churches through which the River of God’s Spirit will flow in great power in the coming season.

I see it. Do you? I can see the cloud. Can you?

I hear *“the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.”* Do you?

Are you ready for what’s coming? *“Then the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins . . .”*

Gird yourself up and get ready to run!

14 Propositions (And 1 Caveat) Toward An Apostolic Strategy for Rapidly Multiplying House Churches

Let me begin with the caveat (that’s Latin for “warning”). When it comes to strategies and methodologies beware of what I call “the Finney fallacy.” Charles Grandison Finney, the great 19th Century Presbyterian evangelist declared that revival is simply the result of the right use of the right means. Finney implemented, in a systematic way, new methods of presenting the gospel which were blessed with impressive results. But he fell into the logical fallacy of *“post hoc, propter hoc”* (roughly, “after the event, because of the event”). Here’s how it works: 1) We create and implement a strategy, 2) God blesses and a revival breaks out, 3) THEREFORE, we conclude that the revival broke out as a result of our brilliant strategy. This explains our all-too-human tendency to assign causality to our brilliant methods & strategies. In Finney’s case, he assumed that the revivals which broke out under his ministry were the result of his methodology (thereby assigning causality to his great method which, of course, anyone could then reproduce and create their own revival). In reality Finney was the beneficiary of a season when the River of God’s Spirit was flowing in great power. Finney could have preached from the New England phone directory and gotten the same results (sic) - because the revival wasn’t about the method, or even the messenger, it was about the River.

Does God give us strategies which He then blesses with great fruitfulness? Of course he does. Is a brilliant strategy a pre-requisite to God’s blessing? No. Just ask John Wesley. Following his Aldersgate experience and the birth of an evangelical message, Anglican churches throughout England began closing their doors and pulpits to Wesley (an ordained Anglican priest). Finally, at the urging of his friend, George Whitefield (who had gotten the same reception), and out of a certain degree of desperation born of no alternative, Wesley began preaching in the fields, streets and squares of England. When he preached his first open air message to the miners of Kingswood Colliery in, it was not the result of strategic research on the spiritual strongholds of the coal mining industry or on the social and economic bondages of the miners. No. It was the passionate and desperate act of a man whose heart had been set ablaze with heavenly fire that no strategy could contain or explain. The words of his brother Charles Wesley, seen in the text box to your right, expressed it best::

Let’s agree now that we will be willing to trade all the strategies and plans of men for one burning coal, one divine spark from God’s altar that would kindle such an inextinguishable blaze in the hearts of our generation.

O. K., with that caveat firmly lodged in our thinking, let’s talk strategies. During his time with us in Spokane Wolfgang Simson shared something he called a Nine Step Domino Strategy which represented the core of a regional strategy for planting rapidly multiplying house churches (You can hear Wolf’s presentation of these nine steps in greater detail in the Saturday session from the Conference). These nine steps have sparked some serious thought and reflection on my part. I believe it is time for us to stop debating semantics (house church, institutional church, emerging church, simple church, open church, etc.) and focus our attention on what it means to BE the church, to plant churches, and to reproduce churches. This “Manifesto” represents my thoughts on a regional house church planting strategy that embodies Wolf’s nine steps, but also modifies and expands them into 14 “Propositions” (the first nine are Wolf’s with my modifications, while the rest are my contribution). I offer these, not as a “finished product” but as propositions for further discussion and action. I look forward to seeing what additional ideas these may spark in your mind.

Proposition # 1: *We need to seek out those in our region who are carrying an apostolic mandate for house church planting. We need to put out an “apostolic call” to those people who are carrying the “John Knox” burden for our area in relation to house churches. These are NOT the leaders of significant ministries today who are already “locked in” to an existing non-*

Thou Who Camest From Above Charles Wesley

THOU who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!
There let it for thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze;
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.
Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up thy gift in me;
Ready for all thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death thy endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.

house church paradigm. Rather these people will emerge from wilderness experiences, from beneath rock piles, or from the sea shore where they have recently floated ashore on pieces of the last paradigm that failed. These should be people who have successfully completed Wolfgang's "5 Steps of Apostolic Migration" (see Module 1) and who are genuine apostles of the house church paradigm and other related forms of "church without walls." Why is this important? Because the "Saul's of Tarsus" must die completely to their old paradigms and what has come before and experience an "apostolic conversion" to house church before they are prepared to become the "Apostle Pauls" of the new paradigm. In addition, they must also link up with the rest of the 5-Fold Ministry, which we will discuss under Proposition 7. Who do you know who is carrying such a burden? Are you one of them? Our challenge as a movement is to identify & call out these "John Knox" people, distinguishing between those who are genuine and those who are not. As of this writing, John White & his co-laborers in Denver are hoping to launch a year long research project to identify every apostolic church planter in Colorado. "Humanly speaking," says John, "these 'sent ones' are the key to the harvest. To use Wolfgang's words, we want to 'pour oil' on these folks."

Proposition # 2: *We need to train up as many harvest workers as possible.* This proposition confronts us with two important questions.

- **First**, where are these harvest workers going to come from? My first thought was that they would not be coming from existing non-house church paradigms. If they were not harvest workers in their previous paradigm, what (besides an apostolic conversion) will make them harvest workers in the new paradigm? When I shared the first version of this "Manifesto" with fellow house church planter John White of Denver he had some challenging thoughts: "We are seeing a growing number of traditional church people (including pastors) who have been sovereignly and supernaturally prepared to move into house church. The Lord of the Harvest has spoken to them about this and they are just ready to go. They need a little help but the DNA takes root quickly and they begin functioning in the new paradigm quickly. (We think [praying Luke]10:2b has something to do with this.) Perhaps Cornelius is a picture of this. One day he was quite involved with the synagogue (as a god-fearer) and the next day he was probably leading a house church. He was prepared for this by two things. First, he was a mature and experienced head of a household (*oikos*). Second, he and his household had an encounter with the Holy Spirit." These people, wherever they come from, must eventually be the products of Apostolic house church conversions, people who have successfully completed Wolfgang's "5 Steps of Apostolic Migration." Otherwise they will not embody house church values (The "house church DNA" described in Module 4). Their values will be those of an old existing paradigm, or those of a conference attendee, but not those of a house church disciple. This is important because both we and they will eventually reproduce who we are, not what we teach.
- **Second**, "What's the training?" What do we want to equip (a word I like better than "train") these house church disciples to do? What's the job description? What's the message we want them to communicate and what gifting is necessary. We should be clear that the greatest "equipping" that any house church disciple will ever receive is their own dedicated participation in a healthy, vibrant house church itself. Personal modeling is the best equipping! House church disciples and harvest workers must be equipped for planting house churches by living and modeling a reproducible house church paradigm. How can they reproduce and plant what they don't practice on an ongoing basis? House church isn't a class, book, course, conference, seminar or technique. It is BEING the church on a daily basis; the living out of Acts 2:42-47. And the living out of the paradigm is itself an equipping experience for reproducing it elsewhere. That being said, there are some excellent house church equipping courses being developed, including the "Organic Church Planters' Greenhouse" developed by Neil Cole and Paul Kaak and available through Church Multiplication Associates (go to www.CMA.org).

Proposition # 3: *We need to create church planting teams of up to 4 people each, to act as a quick response team to plant a house church within 24-to-48 hours of someone coming to Christ.* I want to expand on Wolf's point here, and take it beyond only planting a house church at the point of conversion. We must become a movement which "plants-and- teaches-to-the-moment," and this must also become an "equipping" value. Here's what I mean. God arranges "teachable moments" in the life of an individual or a family (even an extended *oikos*) when He so works in their lives (through an answered prayer, a conversion, a demonic deliverance, a family reconciliation, the breaking of a drug addiction, etc.) that the result is a unique openness on their part to the things of the Kingdom and hosting a house church gathering in their home. This in turn opens an opportunity for teaching (what I call "affective" learning because it involves their "affections") about the Kingdom of God and what a house church expression of the Kingdom is all about. Wolf is right. We must move quickly to embrace and maximize such teachable moments and turn them into opportunities to plant house churches in receptive and fertile soil. By so doing (rather than simply inviting them to "go to church" with us somewhere else) we embody, model and teach another important house church value, namely, the value which declares, "Not In Mine (i.e., my house) But Yours" (NIMBY for short). We must take the Kingdom of God to where people are; rather than trying (in vain) to convince them to come with us to

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another place. We must model and teach them the reality that there is no place more holy, sacred and worshipful than their own living room if God is in it!

Proposition #4: *We need to create a regional co-ordination “hub” to co-ordinate between new converts and church planters.* O.K., I’m not really sure about this one. I’m not sure what the purpose is here, and why, in reality, this isn’t simply one of the roles of the 5-Fold ministry gifts whose responsibility it is to oversee the life of the various house churches. I dislike extra layers of bureaucracy, and that’s what this one feels like. Maybe someone can educate my ignorance on this one, but till then I’ll move on without comment or discussion.

Proposition #5: *We need to establish clear discipleship standards.* Wolf made an insightful comment when he observed that, “*We always multiply who we are, NOT what we teach.*” Or as Graham Cook once observed, “*You will destroy with your character what you build with your gift.*” Personally, I believe that the challenge here is to impart biblical character (sexual purity, integrity, honesty, Christ-likeness, charity, benevolence, prayer & fasting, etc.) in our discipleship without devolving into “Christian legalism,” an insidious form of pseudo-sanctification which perpetrates a lie that holiness is achieved through rule-keeping (“I don’t dance, smoke, drink or chew or run around with girls who do”) and attempts to place us in outward control of what should be God’s inward process of Spiritual transformation in the life of an individual. Herein lies the importance of treating personal discipleship as a mentoring relationship in which a more mature disciple models what it means to grow in Christ by “mending one another’s nets,” rather than treating discipleship as a program which can be successfully accomplished via a twelve week “discipleship course” (Are such courses good and helpful? Yes! Are they sufficient to produce genuine discipleship? NO!). This is not a “moot” point. An experienced leader in the house church movement recently observed that there are two leading causes of conflict and failure among house churches. According to this person, the two top causes are:

Immature leadership - This means that the leader (or one of the leaders) of a house church is spiritually immature (often resulting from a lack of experience). When a crisis eventually occurs within the house church (as crises usually do), the leader’s immaturity causes the crisis to be poorly handled with the result that the house church is seriously damaged, compromised or even destroyed.

Legalism - Legalism is often a manifestation of a controlling spirit and usually stems from an unbalanced understanding of God and how he works in people’s lives. For a legalist, pleasing God means creating and adhering to a carefully crafted set of rules which control personal behavior and result in “holiness.” When a crisis eventually arises a legalist is unable to “let go” or to resolve it on any terms other than his (or her) set of “rules”. The result is often wounded people and a splintered church.

Ultimately, both maturity (or immaturity) and legalism are issues of discipleship which can only be dealt with by what I call “personal mentoring on the fine art of mending nets,” one of the callings and functions of the 5-Fold ministry.

Proposition #6: *We need to provide inner healing & deliverance ministry to new converts in order to heal or cut off past demonic influences.* Yes! And such ministry should be a regular, normal and on-going aspect of the ministry of our house churches. Jesus’ instructions to His disciples were that they should preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons (Matthew 10:7-8). But much of the traditional church has chased such functions out of the normal life of the church. The result is that “para-church” ministries have arisen to fulfill the very ministry functions that should have been occurring in the daily life of the church. I believe that every house church expression of *ekklesia* and the Kingdom of God should be a place where all of these things take place as a normal and regular part of ministry. To send people somewhere else other than to a house church for these ministries is to subtly model and teach that such needs cannot be met in the house church. I believe this represents the “Balkanizing” of the church, dividing the work of the church up into competing “religious franchises.” One group has the “healing franchise”, while another has the “deliverance franchise” and still another has the “prophetic” franchise. As a result the Kingdom of God now appears to consist of a string of religious franchises, and we are now somehow “obligated” to send people to those “franchises” in order to receive simple ministry which should be taking place in the house church. Can’t people receive healing in a house church, or deliverance, or prophetic ministry, or biblical teaching, or financial counseling? Isn’t this precisely the issue Paul dealt with in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, “*And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?*” Paul’s point is that all these gifts function within the church, the *ekklesia* of the N.T., which is always a reference to house churches! Want to get healed? Skip the healing rooms and come to a house church meeting and let them pray for you. That’s what Paul is teaching us here. So, here’s my conclusion. If we are ever to see a genuine house church movement in our city, one of the things that must happen is we must END this Balkanizing and franchising of the Kingdom of God and we must begin declaring that there is no ministry function or activity

which cannot or should not occur within the context of a simple house church meeting.

Proposition # 7: *We need to embrace a genuine 5-Fold ministry of gifted apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers and encourage them to function as teams and to multiply themselves strategically.* In addition to Proposition #1 and the raising up of the Apostolic, we need to encourage and facilitate the formation of 5-fold teams which work and function *together* and exercise their giftings among the growing network of house churches. The 5-Fold needs to model among themselves the House Church values they seek to teach and impart to the House Churches. Simply put, how can they promote the unity of the body in the bond of peace if they themselves are not unified. To facilitate this we need a regular “School of the 5-Fold” in which the 5-Fold Ministry people interact with one another and learn how to compliment each other’s unique gift and calling for the greater edification (building up) of the church. House churches, on the other hand, including their elders and deacons, need to acknowledge the validity of and the need for this ministry and invite the 5-Fold teams to visit them on a regular basis and impart God’s heart, strategy, vision, encouragement and teaching. 5-Fold people without house churches are like generals without armies. While house churches without the ministry of the 5-Fold giftings are like companies of soldiers without strategic instruction or equipping on where they fit in the greater battle plan for our city and our region. And the 5-Fold ministry teams, as they visit and interact with the various house churches, need to be looking for, calling out, raising up and anointing new 5-Fold teams, thereby multiplying the leadership for the next phase of church growth. Felicity Dale shared a cautionary observation regarding 5-fold ministry teams which deserves attention: *“Obviously the 5 different ministries functioned in the NT, but I am not convinced they functioned in 5-fold teams, at least not as a set and permanent team. I am concerned if we build a doctrine or practice on a single verse. Maybe my caution comes from our experiences in the UK where we saw such teams formed across the nation and becoming a source of division in what was then known as the house church movement (I am of Paul, I am of Cephas etc.). All the different house churches belonged ‘under’ one 5-fold ministry team or another. In the NT, it appears to be a much more fluid thing, and maybe that is what you are meaning. A prophet was needed, and Agabus happened to be around.”* Felicity’s concern is valid. People tend to polarize around personalities. Part of any “School of the 5-Fold” should include specific cautions against this type of “I am of Cephas” thinking, which I believe is the responsibility of the 5-Fold to recognize and teach against. The idea of “fluidity” is also good, sort of a 5-Fold “mix and match” approach to teaming up with various gifted people. One of the purposes of the “School of the 5-Fold” would be to build a degree of “working trust” among various 5-Fold people which can only come about by spending time together, praying together and sharing each other’s lives. You can read more regarding our perspective on the role of the 5-Fold ministry in Module 7 under *“Leadership: Who’s In Charge Here Anyway?”* and in **Appendix A** in our Article *“Of Servants, Fools and Kings.”*

Proposition # 8: *We need to create a financial structure built upon Apostolic values and principles to fund the emerging work.* Here our house churches must both teach and model radical sacrificial GIVING as well as a lifestyle of radical sacrificial LIVING! Why should people be motivated to GIVE radically if others are not willing to LIVE radically. I am not yet convinced that all new converts in the New Testament brought all their wealth to the Apostles and then lived on whatever the Apostles and deacons thought was adequate. I am not convinced that Scripture teaches this as a normative lifestyle, therefore I am reluctant to build a house church funding structure on a theologically suspect teaching which could lend itself to great abuse and harm to the house church movement (the wisdom of combining money, control and coercion - “This is God’s will for you” - is questionable at best). But I am fully convinced that the New Testament teaches and the early church practiced both radical sacrificial GIVING and radical sacrificial LIVING. After reviewing my initial draft of this “Manifesto” Tony Dale had this reflection on this issue of money and financing ministry: *“We need a growing maturity to understand how the Holy Spirit wants us to fund ministry that impacts the region/nation, and that are not merely the outgrowth of one local home church or home church network. I don’t know if there is a sense of unity on this issue yet among leaders of these emerging movements.”*

Proposition #9: *We need to create a network of Christian professionals.* A couple of years ago my late friend Kristen Grace (in whose home the Kansas City Metro Fellowship began with Mike Bickle, Bob Jones, et. al.) believed she heard God saying that the various ministries in our region should re-organize themselves into “ministry hubs” of related ministries which would come together as “networks” or “coalitions” of co-operating ministries. Unfortunately, because it didn’t “fit” with the prevailing plan and represented a decentralization of the then-existing power structure, both Kristen and her vision were politely received, co-opted and dismissed. The coalition or network never materialized as envisioned. But the need for such networks remains. I believe that two types of networks are needed.

- **“The Spokane Blessing Network”** - This first network is a network of Christian ministries which have unique services and resources to offer to the body of Christ (including many services and/or resources which the individual house churches cannot provide for themselves). We have begun forming this network and it is now available on line at www.parousianetwork.org (Click on “The Spokane Blessing Network” in the left hand site menu).

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- ❑ ***“The Spokane Market Place Transformation Network”*** - This second network is a network of professional people within the greater Market Place, and I will address this more fully under Proposition # 10.

Both of these networks should have an internet presence consisting of a home page which lists organizations, people, ministries or businesses by category with links to individual web pages which would include a photograph of the person & location, a brief summary of specific services they provide and needs they are equipped to meet, and their contact information. Both of these networks should include doctors, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, debt counselors, business people, politicians and media people, to integrate the transformation process into the larger community, to explain it to the public and to give it public credibility.

Proposition # 10: We need a multi-pronged regional strategy for planting house churches and other alternative forms of Churches without walls. John White of Denver points out that any such strategy should include four components:

- ❑ ***Clarity about the end result*** - Where are we going? What does the product we are seeking to achieve look like. To my thinking this means that we are clear on our purpose of producing disciples who are meeting as house churches and other forms of churches without walls and who possess a kingdom vision to reproduce themselves and to transform their particular “oikos” (i.e., extended family or sphere of influence).
- ❑ ***Clarity about my personal assignment*** - What are my gifts and where do they (and I) fit into what God is doing. What has God gifted and called me to do? John White goes on to say, *“I’m thinking more about the John Knoxer kind of thinking here. ‘Give me Scotland or I die!’ What part of the harvest am I called to? Could be large (a whole country) or small (my block). Could be geography (the state of Colorado) or could be a people group (all of the Russian speakers). The text doesn’t say this but when Jesus send the 72 ‘ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go’ (Lk. 10:1), I think he gave them specific assignments. “You two go to Capernaum. You to Jericho. Etc.” We need to be clear about our ministry assignments.”*
- ❑ ***Clarity about the starting point*** - John White (and many others) suggests that the starting point is Luke 10:2b, *“And (Jesus) was saying to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”* It is hard to argue with the strength or importance of that verse. But it seems to beg a question about a prior point. Who is supposed to do the praying? Answer: a cadre of committed disciples who have accepted Jesus six commands found in Matthew 10:7-8 (the parallel passage to Luke 10). Here they are: Preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons & freely give. So, what’s our starting point? Which comes first, the committed disciple who has accepted the commission of discipleship as given by Jesus, or the praying disciple who is asking God for more harvest workers. Or isn’t the starting point a recognition by the individual believer that God is calling him or her into a life of radical discipleship in the Kingdom of God. Who, other than radical disciples, will be willing to pray such prayers or enter into the labor of such a harvest?
- ❑ ***Clarity about my partner*** - This asks the question, *“With whom has God called me to labor.”* While Jesus did indeed send disciples out by twos, we also see a pattern in the New Testament of 5-Fold ministry teams which labor together. Where are the people, and where is the team, that God has called me to labor with?

Now, the goal of this multi-pronged strategy should be to see the spiritual transformation of our region through the transformation of those major areas where people naturally spend their time:

The Transformation of Our Neighborhood

- ❑ We need to identify the “neighborhoods” of our community. How many discernable and identifiable neighborhoods are there? What are their boundaries? What is the unique character of each neighborhood that distinguishes it from the others?
- ❑ We need to offer a simple reproducible concept for becoming a reproducible house church and then planting a reproducible house church on every block in that neighborhood. We are calling our reproducible house church concept “Safe Houses of Hope & Prayer.”
- ❑ We need a strategy for planting reproducible house churches in every identifiable neighborhood in our city. This strategy should include:

- ⇒ Asking God to raise up one or more “persons of peace” to host a house church gathering in each neighborhood. Again, John White’s observations are helpful on this point: *“Amen to this! One thing we must be clear about is the nature (definition) of a ‘person of peace’ (how do you know when you have one?). Some teach that this is any person who is open to the message and who has some influence (positive or negative). In this way of thinking, the woman at the well in John 4 would be a ‘person of peace’. This would lead us to try and plant a church in the home of anyone who meets Christ. The result of this has been lots of churches being planted but also of many of them dying fairly quickly because of the immaturity of the new leader. My belief is that we must understand ‘person of peace’ in the context of the First Century Jewish culture. Shalom implies ‘wholeness, health and maturity’. So, the ‘person of peace’ may not be a believer but they are a mature person who is probably an experienced head of a household (Cornelius is a good example). I can’t prove it but I suspect that Paul is describing a ‘person of peace’ in 1 Tim. 3. All of this means that we might plant fewer churches initially but they will be much healthier and will have a much better chance of reproducing. This also shapes the way we pray [Luke]10:2b.”*
- ⇒ Prayer walking and anointing the boundaries of each neighborhood (I personally like to drive stakes with appropriate scripture verses attached into the corners of the “target area” and anointing them with oil symbolizing the anointing which breaks the yoke, and juice symbolizing the blood which redeems).

The Transformation of Our Market Place

- ❑ We need to see Market Place Ministry as an important opportunity to reach nearly 100% of the population where they spend some 30% of their time. This ministry outreach should be understood as an opportunity to connect with people and to eventually plant house churches and other “churches without walls” within their *oikos*.
- ❑ We need a Market Place ministry to professionals in the Market Place which has as its goal, not the raising of money or financial resources, but the birthing of a Kingdom vision for a spiritual wildfire in the Market Place and the eventual spiritual transformation of the Market Place and our Community. To do otherwise is to reduce Market Place ministry to nothing more than a glorified fund-raising project.
- ❑ We need to create an internet-based networking resource hub (which we are calling the Spokane Market Place Transformation Network) to intentionally co-ordinate Christian business and professional people in the Market Place. We currently have such an internet-based networking hub under construction which you can see at www.marketplaceprayer.org.
- ❑ We need one or more Market Place ministry locations in various Market Place locations throughout the city, to serve as a hub of personal ministry to those who work in or visit the Market Place (Something similar to “The Mars Hill Café” ministry that Kevin and Lisa Crouse are developing in Australia or “The Service Station” in Spokane, Washington).

The Transformation of “The Academy”

- ❑ This aspect of community transformation was left out of my original draft of this “Manifesto.” This was an oversight on my part, probably due to being 25 years removed from my last college ministry assignment! But it is an important aspect of house church ministry. The future of the church is, in many ways, in the hands of those under the age of 25, and a significant number of these potential house church planters are in school (“The Academy”). I am still thinking and praying about this one, so in the mean time, take a moment to visit www.campuschurch.net on the internet.

Proposition # 11: We need a consistent message to our community that is biblically derived, Kingdom oriented, power driven and relevant to our Post-Christian Post Modern culture. This message should probably include a call for the spiritual and practical transformation of the various sectors of our community.

Proposition # 12: We need a long-term commitment to dedicated fasting & prayer for God’s blessing for this strategy. This could include:

- ❑ A regular (weekly) time of worship, prayer, intercession and seeking God for His will and purposes regarding the house church movement in our area. In keeping with good house church practice this should take place in a home (we must model house church values in all we do). Eventually there should be such a gathering in every neighborhood of the city with each gathering focusing primarily (but not exclusively)

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- upon the unique needs of that particular neighborhood.
- A regular (and therefore consistent) time of prayer and fasting for the needs and direction of the house church movement in our area. I would suggest a region-wide prayer and fasting covenant, the goal of which would be to set aside one day per week (such as a Friday) to meditate on Scripture ("feed on the Word") and to pray for our families, for the churches that meet in our homes, for our neighborhoods, for the needs of those around us, and above all, to ask our Sovereign God to turn our house churches into the new channel where the River of His Spirit will be poured out and will flow in great power and blessing!

Proposition # 13: We need to create an information hub that is widely and easily accessible as a place of news, information, networking, sharing needs & blessings, asking questions, etc.

- We need an internet website that is specifically focused on the house church movement in our region and what God is doing here. House church networks within particular neighborhoods could have pages devoted to their neighborhood, meeting times & places, etc.
- We need a house church "blog" where regional house church participants can communicate, share stories, ask questions, etc. via the internet.
- We need an on-going area wide radio program that gives the house church movement a public voice and serves to "normalize" the new paradigm to the general public.

Proposition # 14: We need a city-wide house church gathering (a "Celebration" meeting) on a regular basis. A "stepping stone" toward this could be the neighborhood prayer & worship gatherings. As these "come on line" and grow they would be logical stepping stones to a larger and regular area wide gathering for the greater house church family in our region. In my original draft I suggested a monthly "Celebration" event. In response Tony Dale of House2House offered good wisdom on this point: *"We would have big questions on the wisdom of having a regional celebration too often, and would say from our own experience that having such a gathering monthly is way to often. If you do it monthly, it not only takes a huge amount of time and resources (the sort of thing that traditional Pastors find taking up much of their time week by week), but it also models a type of gathering that will quickly be viewed as the norm. The regional gatherings, we believe, need to focus around the fact that from time to time the Holy Spirit brings along to your region gifted ministries (Eph. 4 type) that it would be good for everyone to be exposed to. For example, when Wolfgang was in Spokane, that was a regional gathering. But you only think towards something like that one or twice a year. I actually think that something locally (regionally?) on a yearly basis, and then encourage everyone to also support something National (such as a Greenhouse type event, or an H2H type event) annually would be enough (i.e. there would be two "celebratory" events each year)."*

Seasons of Striving, Seasons of Ceasing & Seasons of Outpouring

I can't speak for the rest of the world, but Americans (and American Christians) are not particularly or widely known for their humility. In a philosophical sense Americans are the spiritual descendants of the Romans, who were lousy philosophers but great builders. Like them, we love to build things. If architecture is the embodiment of a Spirit, then Americans are possessed by a "spirit of bigness". *"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,"* wrote Oliver Wendle Holmes. In addition we are compulsive "doers," embodied in the phrase, *"Don't just stand there, do something."*

But Kingdom values are often "inverted" values. God often tells His people to "Be still (literally, "Cease striving"), and know that I am God." There is an important, and often overlooked point here. God wants us to take the time to know the difference between Him and us; between what He does and what we do. As a result, God is NEVER in a hurry. The God who spent 2000 years preparing the way for the coming of His Son and who sent Him "in the fullness of time," isn't in a hurry. There are indeed seasons when God tells His people to "Cease striving." Stop laboring. Seek Him until His face is all you see and His Presence is all you desire. Take the indispensable time to be quiet, to worship sacrificially with fasting, to pray and to listen. Such "ceasing" goes against the grain of most American's (and American Christians) who are incorrigibly compulsive "doers." Such seasons of ceasing, of fasting, praying and seeking God are seasons of preparation, and are indispensable to future seasons of blessing. When such seasons of preparation change to seasons of productive obedience God can accomplish more in two or three years of Spiritual Outpouring than man could have accomplished in twenty years of striving.

Seasons Change. And I now sense this one changing. Are you ready for what's coming? *"Then the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins . . ."*



Let the River flow . . . Rest time is over. Gird yourself up and get ready to run!