

The background of the entire cover is black, featuring several dandelion seed heads and individual seeds. Some seed heads are fully formed and spherical, while others are in various stages of dispersal, with their white, feathery pappus seeds floating away. The seeds are scattered across the frame, with a higher concentration in the bottom left corner where a large, detailed seed head is visible.

STEVE ADDISON

*Author of *Movements That Change the World**

PIONEERING MOVEMENTS

Leadership That Multiplies
Disciples and Churches

Foreword by **DAVE FERGUSON**

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To Bill Smith

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Jesus, Our Apostle and Pioneer

*Fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we
acknowledge as our apostle.*

Hebrews 3:1



Jesus began something completely new in human history—a missionary movement. Our mission begins and ends with Jesus, our Apostle. The word *apostle* refers to someone who is *sent*. Jesus knew he was *sent* by God in a unique way. Forty-one times in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to himself as being sent. He was deeply conscious of being sent with God the Father’s authority to speak and act on God’s behalf.

Jesus’ awareness of being sent flowed from his unique relationship with God as Father and his empowerment by the Spirit. All four Gospels reveal that both those elements were affirmed at Jesus’ baptism in preparation for the launch of his public ministry. Jesus is the much-loved Son on whom the Spirit has descended (Luke 3:22).

Jesus was *sent* to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. He was *sent* to the lost sheep of Israel. He was the son of

the vineyard owner *sent* to the rebellious tenants. He was *sent* to give his life as a ransom for many. As the *sent* one, he did not act under his own authority but under the authority of the Father (Luke 4:43; Matthew 15:24; Mark 10:45; 12:1-11; John 17:3, 16).

Jesus' mission was God's mission. He was sent into a hostile world bound by sin and under God's judgment, yet still an object of his love.

John's Gospel stresses how Jesus carried out his mission through obedience and dependence on the Father, who sent him. His mission was to bring glory to the one who sent him. He did not come to do his own will or speak his own words, but to do the will of the one who sent him and speak his words. His works are the works of the one who sent him. Jesus as the Son who was sent sustains an intimate relationship with his Father.¹

Jesus' death for the world's sins marks the fulfillment of a life obediently submitted to his Father who sent him. His sacrifice and victory make the mission possible. He formed his disciples, who represent every disciple, into the nucleus of a missionary movement. His death and resurrection and the coming of the Spirit mark the beginning of their mission. They have no mission of their own, only his mission. When the risen Lord appeared to his disciples, he told them, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22).

Previously the Father was the sender and Jesus was the sent one. Now Jesus is the sender and the disciples are sent. Like Jesus, they are to bring glory to the sender, do the sender's will and make the sender known. They are to know him intimately and follow his example, depending on him in prayer. From now on the disciples are to relate to Jesus the way Jesus related to the Father.²

Jesus of Nazareth could only be in one place at one time. Now the limitations of the incarnation are overcome and the gospel will go to all nations through Jesus' disciples. Jesus will be present, through the Holy Spirit, as his disciples fulfill their mission. Jesus' apostolic ministry continues today through his people, who are empowered by the Holy Spirit. It bears his character and his authority, because the risen Lord continues to lead the way.

WHAT DID JESUS DO?

There is no other mission than that of Jesus Christ, God's Son sent to save a lost world through his sacrifice and resurrection. Through the Holy Spirit the exalted Lord Jesus leads the way. To the degree an apostolic ministry continues today, its origin, nature and authority are derived from Jesus Christ. It reflects his mission, his character, his heart.

In *What Jesus Started*, I argued that we must understand Jesus' mission to understand our mission today. What did Jesus do in the Gospels? What did the risen Lord continue to do through his disciples in the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament? Only as we answer these questions can we ask, What does that look like today?

What Jesus Started identifies six activities that describe what Jesus did as the founder of a missionary movement:

1. *Jesus saw the end.* He focused his ministry on Israel while he prepared his disciples to take the gospel to the whole world.
2. *Jesus connected with people.* Jesus crossed whatever boundaries stood in the way and connected with people who were far from God. He sought people of peace, the people that God had prepared to reach their community.

3. *Jesus shared the gospel.* Jesus called people to repent and believe in the good news. His death brought forgiveness of sins and life with God.
4. *Jesus trained disciples.* Jesus called disciples out from among the crowds. He taught them a new way of life.
5. *Jesus gathered communities.* Jesus' disciples were the nucleus of the renewed people of God. He prepared the way for the birth of the first church at Pentecost. As the risen Lord, Jesus continues to build his church.
6. *Jesus multiplied workers.* Jesus trained his disciples to make disciples and launched a global missionary movement.

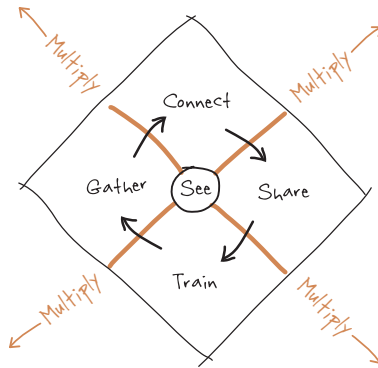


Figure 2.1. Six elements of the movement Jesus started

APOSTLES AND MOVEMENT PIONEERS TODAY

If you hear the word *apostle* and think only of the Twelve and Paul, you'd be mistaken. The New Testament refers to a wide variety of people as apostles. The noun *apostolos* was not a common word in secular Greek, but it appears seventy-nine times in the New Testament, mostly in the writings of Luke and

Paul. The verb *apostellō* means “to send,” and frequently “to send with a particular purpose.” The noun *apostle* means someone sent with a commission.³

Luke records that after a night of prayer Jesus chose twelve out of his wider band of disciples and designated them apostles (Luke 6:12-16). Jesus picked this smaller group “that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:13-19). He then sent them out two by two to preach the good news of the kingdom to Israel and to perform signs and wonders. These apostles were to be itinerant and rely on God’s provision as they went.

For Jesus, apostleship was far from a static theological concept. During his lifetime the Twelve were appointed to be with him, to learn firsthand from his active engagement in ministry and to share in that ministry. Thus the Twelve are represented in the Gospels as missionaries-in-training. To be an apostle meant to have power and authority to cast out demons, to heal the sick and to preach the gospel of the kingdom. It also meant that one was a representative of Jesus, carrying on his ministry. Apostleship was, for Jesus, a dynamic reality of pioneering ministry.

At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, following the resurrection, Jesus gave his disciples the authority to go into all the world and make disciples of every people group. Jesus further promised to be with them to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20). In Luke’s account the disciples were instructed to wait in Jerusalem until they were empowered from on high (Luke 24:49).

The Twelve occupy a unique place in God’s purposes. Their number is closed, symbolically representing the twelve tribes of the new Israel.⁴ Yet the church in a wider sense is apostolic,

empowered by the Spirit and sent into the world to continue the ministry of Jesus. The apostolic ministry begun by Jesus continues through his people in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵

Over one hundred years ago J. B. Lightfoot argued that neither Scripture nor the early Christian writings indicate that apostleship was limited to the Twelve.⁶ The New Testament writers apply the term *apostle* to a variety of people other than the Twelve, including Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14); James, the brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19); Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6-9); Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6); Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7); and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25).⁷

Paul distinguishes the Twelve from “all the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:5-7). He referred to his opponents at Corinth as “superapostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11) and once as “false apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:13). His problem was not that they called themselves apostles, but that they preached a false gospel.

Paul taught that apostleship is a spiritual gift for the church’s common good and ministry (1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11-13). In Ephesians 4 Paul lists a variety of leadership functions with the purpose of equipping and maturing the body of Christ. Some of those leadership ministries are more likely to be mobile (apostles, prophets and evangelists) while others are more settled (pastors and teachers). The role of a pastor-teacher is by nature more likely to be limited to a local congregation or network of congregations.⁸ Apostles are *sent ones*. The nature of apostolic ministry means it cannot be confined for very long in one location.

Twice Paul places the gift of *apostleship* first on his list of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). In Ephesians he states that apostles were appointed *first* by God. Why does

Paul list apostles first? An apostle is a pioneer who lays the foundation on which other ministries build. The gift of apostleship has precedence over the other gifts in the founding and building up of the local community of disciples.⁹

The word *apostle* was applied to individuals in the New Testament in two main ways.¹⁰

1. *The band of Jesus' disciples who became known as the Twelve apostles.* Jesus formed the Twelve into a missionary band who, as representatives of the whole church, received the command to go into the whole world and make disciples.

The Twelve apostles' uniqueness in the early church, and down through the ages, is as authoritative witnesses of the resurrection and recipients of divine inspiration. They became guardians of the gospel, which is preserved for us in the writings of the New Testament.

The Twelve were, therefore, pioneering leaders and models of apostolic ministry. They were with Jesus in his pioneering ministry, and they laid the foundations for the church in its (Jewish) infancy. Their uniqueness lay not in their function as apostles and pioneers, but in their unique calling as witnesses and guardians of the gospel. The Twelve were apostles par excellence, but they were not the only apostles.

2. *A wider group of itinerant missionaries and church planters also known as apostles.* Another, wider, group also known as apostles shared the call to go into all the world and make disciples. They were pioneer church planters. However, they did not share the same unique place in God's purposes as witnesses to the resurrection and guardians of apostolic doctrine.

Scripture differentiates between the unique role of the Twelve (and Paul) as the authoritative witnesses to the resurrection and

those who functioned as apostles in spreading the gospel, training disciples and multiplying churches. The Twelve and Paul also shared in this functional ministry of apostleship.

The unique role of the Twelve and Paul as authoritative witnesses ended with them and the writing of the New Testament. Yet Jesus continues to call pioneers to lead his people into the fullness of what it means to be a missionary movement.

WHAT DO MOVEMENT PIONEERS DO?

Following the example of Jesus and the first apostles, movement pioneers communicate the truth about the nature of God and salvation through Christ. They teach followers a new way of life in obedience to Christ's commands. Their purpose is to lead people to accept the message, begin to follow Jesus, share him with others and form new communities of faith that become partners in the spread of the gospel.

What does that look like? What do movement pioneers do? They follow the example of Jesus and the disciples he trained.

1. *Movement pioneers see the end.* They obey God's call to join his mission. They submit to the leadership of Jesus through the Holy Spirit and the power of his living Word.
2. *Movement pioneers connect with people.* They cross boundaries (geographic, linguistic, cultural, social, economic) to establish contact with people who are far from God. They seek out responsive people who have been prepared by God.
3. *Movement pioneers share the gospel.* They communicate the truth about the nature of God and salvation through Christ. They equip new disciples to spread the good news throughout their communities.

4. *Movement pioneers train disciples.* They lead people to faith in Jesus Christ (conversion, baptism, gifts of the Holy Spirit) and teach them to obey all that Jesus has commanded.
5. *Movement pioneers gather communities.* They form new believers into church communities featuring the observance of the Lord's Supper, transformation of behavior, love, service and witness.
6. *Movement pioneers multiply workers.* They equip local church leaders to multiply disciples and churches. In partnership with the churches, movement pioneers form apostolic teams that are launched into unreached fields.

Jesus is our apostle; his mission continues today. At the heart of Jesus' mission is the multiplication of disciples and churches—everywhere. That's why the risen Lord continues to call movement pioneers to his cause.

In chapter three we will look at lessons from the life and ministry of the apostle Peter, the first great pioneer of the Christian movement.

About the Author



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