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## Introduction Spring 1998

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## Introduction

**Gary L. McIntosh, Editor**

The Church Growth Movement relies heavily on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) for much of its passion and theological foundation. Yet there is confusion among various writers in the movement as to what specifically the command to “make disciples” implies. Dr. Robert Hopper wrestles with this issue in his two articles “Historical Clarity: Disciple-Making and the Church Growth Movement” and “Theological Clarity: Disciple-Making and the New Testament.” These two articles will challenge your thinking about McGavran’s view of disciple-making and provide fresh insight into the process of making disciples today.

Counting disciples, tracking trends, and keeping good records have all been criticized aspects of the Church Growth Movement since its founding. While several writers have spoken to these criticisms over the years, you’ll find the article, “Church Growth, Numbers, and Record Keeping” by Dr. John W. Ellas to be one of the best responses ever written. He carefully presents the biblical foundations, answers the major criticisms, and offers six values for counting disciples.

Dr. Elmer Towns discusses the biblical mandate for reaching entire cities for Christ. And, after carefully outlining the challenges of completing this task, he offers thoughts on developing a strategy for urban church planting. This article is from his address at the American Society for Church Growth meetings held in Orlando, FL last November 1997.

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Small group ministry continues to be actively promoted as a key aspect of church growth in every culture. Dr. Gregory Lawson expounds on the continuing need for small groups in “Cell or Small Group Ministry: An Essential Foundation for Christian Education, Discipleship, Leadership Development, and Church Growth.” His article reminds us once again of the impact cells have on evangelism, pastoral care, and spiritual growth.

A second article by Dr. Lawson reviews the legacy of Frank Charles Laubach (1884-1970). Laubach pioneered an evangelistic approach often called “literary evangelism” whereby churches taught illiterate peoples to read and thereby witnessed for Christ. This approach has been effectively used on the mission field and may be an effective way to win people to Christ in the urban centers of North America. Laubach believed that a church should teach numerous kinds of illiterates (people groups), i.e., illiterate adults, foreign peoples, school drop-outs, children needing remedial reading, prisoners, and juvenile delinquents. Many of these people groups are found in our cities.

Multiple worship services are a topic of consideration among most churches today. Some churches offer numerous services throughout the week, while others continue to struggle with the need for more than one. Dr. Donald E. Ross, Senior Pastor of North Seattle Christian Fellowship, shares six reasons for beginning a new worship service and a few insights on how to do it from his own ministry.

—Editor