

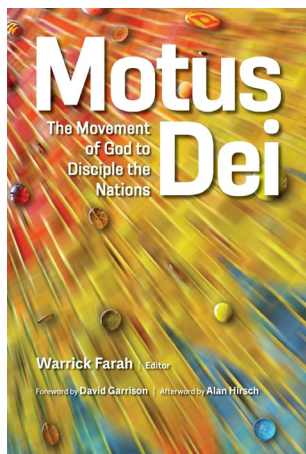
Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations

Edited by Warrick Farah

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By Dave Miller

Dave Miller, an American from Oklahoma, currently engages UPGs in Oklahoma City, USA, while supporting the work through a network of small businesses. Along with his wife Ann and five children, he takes advantage of every mundane moment where they live, work and play to multiply disciples and churches. Dave has a Doctor of Ministry from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and trains young adults in graduate studies and through business and ministry residencies. He writes occasionally at sentergy.us and discusses the head, heart, and hands of the multiplying church and her leaders with his co-worker Mark Georing at h3xpodcast.com.



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Gospel movements spark conversation. Whether you are an emerging disciple maker looking for tools and mentoring, a movement practitioner with both hands to the plow in seasons of multiplication or endurance, or a skeptic of the accounts that seem to be exaggeration at best, movement practice for kingdom growth elicits strong opinion. Motus Dei introduces the conversation from the vantage point of research and academic discussion. The book draws upon the experience of practitioners, researchers, and academics from around the world in multiple contexts with multiple movement methods to form a foundation for understanding gospel movements.

Many notable and experienced academics, researchers, and practitioners contributed chapters to this book. Warrick Farah, the editor of the volume, serves with One Collective as a missiologist and theological educator in the Middle East. He holds a doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary, and his research interests include Muslim studies, frontier missiology, integral mission, and movements. He has published in journals such as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, and *Global Missiology*; he also coedited *Margins of Islam: Ministry in Diverse Muslim Contexts* (2018). Farah is the founder and a facilitator of the Motus Dei Network, which gave rise to the chapters of this book.

I have observed that movement proponents tend to be practitioners influenced by the church planting contexts in which they serve, while critics tend to be those whose Christian experience is focused in a highly developed, centuries-old, reformation-influenced theology and practice. The tension between what we might call frontier contexts and “legacy” contexts leads to differing fundamental church planting methodologies which are primarily based on differing experiential perspectives. *Motus Dei* fills in this perspective gap by addressing many of the issues that consistently arise within this tension. The book attempts to explain these differences while also providing nuanced conversation rather than dichotomies commonly made for rhetorical reasons which often frame conversations in unhelpful ways and inhibit collaboration. The exponential growth of population, particularly among unreached peoples, necessitates the universal church to find as many avenues of partnership and collaboration as possible. Considering this growth, multiplicative methods are the most pressing option for Great Commission progress.

As one contributor wrote, “The goal of *Motus Dei* is to encourage robust academic dialogue concerning the gospel movements being reported around the world (66).” The academic nature of the work, especially at the start, may seem too intellectual for the action-oriented tendencies of movement practitioners. However, the reader will find

the diversity of contributors to be a refreshing balance between strong academic research and field knowledge that comes through practical experience.

The book's content is arranged around several topics: Big Picture of Movements, Missional Theology of Movements, Movement Dynamics, Case Studies, and Movement Leadership and Next Steps. The big picture of movements provides the overview of the work including multiple movement methodological perspectives, a helpful list of characteristics observed among gospel movements, common theological and missiological objections, and a basic understanding of the proof and accounting of movements.

The missional theology of movements addresses some of the core arguments from Scripture that support and develop movement methodology. David Lim addresses the effect of the focus on kingdom, Craig Ott builds on the journeys of Paul and the extent to which the early Christian movement spread, and Trevor Larson frames the nature of the early church specifically as it relates to defining polity and understandings of ekklesia (church). James Lucas tackles the oft-debated house-of-peace discussion and practice. As in any discussion of theology and missiology, two people might never fully agree, and so it is with this section of the work. However, putting aside my particular differences, the larger arguments are in line with field knowledge that has developed over the last few decades and represents a solid footing for the core beliefs that drive the movement way of ministry.

Movement dynamics leads the reader through topics such as the rise and fall of movements (Steve Addison), the perspective and role of women (Pam Arlund and Regina Foard), the effect of culturally driven worship (Paul Kuivinen), the power of media to movements (Frank Preston), and the particular challenges of diaspora work (Bradley Cocanower and Joao Mordomo). Not all articles in this section were particularly relevant to my season of ministry, but each opened up ideas and missed opportunities that could be used for greater effectiveness.

Specifically, the diaspora focus was most useful considering my work among diaspora UPGs in a North American city.

As many practitioners know, culture eats strategy for breakfast, with our best strategic plans often stymied by aspects of our context. For this reason, the case studies in this book are a crucial supplement to the philosophical discussion with practical insights fleshed out in specific contexts. Then to round out the work, the book addresses the characteristics of movement leaders (Emanuel Prinz) and the shifting paradigms of organizations to movements (Eric and Laura Adams). The book concludes with a call to continue growing in maturity for clarity in our biblical understanding and practice of mission, coupled with a call to collaboration for growth, adaptation, and effectiveness for the sake of gospel expansion.

Some of the articles are exactly what the reader needs in the moment. Other articles are suitable for future reference. Still others simply add to one's thinking or fill in gaps in understanding of movements. This article approach allows *Motus Dei* to serve as an accessible resource to serve as a reference for introducing people to the work of movements.

The major misunderstandings I encounter in the North American context were addressed in this book. As movement practitioners, it often feels like there are straw men built by critics in the conversation of gospel movements. Some of these straw men are specifically addressed in chapter three by Dave Coles, which includes the shallow discipleship of rapid reproduction, inadequate ecclesiology, and leadership critiques. As just one example, Coles writes in response to the criticism that "CPMs leave a door for false teaching because of inadequate theological training for leaders:"

The leaders of movements nurture sound biblical faith through interactive study and application of God's Word. Every disciple is trained to grapple with Scripture and its application of themselves. They are also trained to ask one another, 'Where do you see that in the Bible?' This constitutes one of the best preventions for heresy (43).

During my seminary studies and early years of church planting, I asked many of the same questions often posed by movement critics. After years of engagement, however, one will recognize the leadership wisdom passed down year after year, practitioner to practitioner, mentor to disciple contained in this work as one of the best kept secrets of the movement practitioner brotherhood. *Motus Dei* engages these questions by capturing the wisdom of generations of movement learning and distilling it down into a very accessible resource.

Personally, I have observed the greatest barrier to multiplication is the gap between knowledge and practice. I discovered from personal experience that having letters behind your name does not guarantee you can actually make a disciple in the field apart from the classroom context. The failures I experienced trying to multiply disciples drove me to search out fruitful practitioners, whom I found to be, on many occasions, as biblically and theologically sharp as professors. The missing ingredient in my journey was complementing my academic learning with the experience of contextual application. I found patterns recurred among the community of movement leadership, lessons that I now pass on to every disciple and leader within my sphere of influence. These are many of the same lessons contained in *Motus Dei*.

The foundation laid by each contributor creates a wealth of launch pads for further study, thinking, and exploration. The bibliographies at the end of each article are themselves worth the cost of the book. The contributors have outlined the basic arguments and provided pathways for further study, an invaluable reference and gift to kingdom leaders in the movement world. The articles can stand alone, the sections are organized with succinct clarity, and the work in total covers a thorough portion of the crucial arguments for and against gospel movements.

To the practitioner, the brief format of the chapters is most helpful. To the academic who enjoys wordy debates, it may leave many questions unanswered. Those looking for longer treatments of the subjects should be careful to not overlook the true value of this work: the razor-sharp focus on the most pressing needs in the gospel-movement discussion for breakthrough in light of current barriers.

Motus Dei is best utilized by those sympathetic to or actively promoting and engaged in gospel movements. The contributions clearly take into account a working knowledge of movement contexts, culture, and experience. Other audiences may include those who are cautiously open to gospel movements but have reservations. These include those who are in their first years of movement practice with many questions as well as experienced practitioners looking to facilitate paradigm shifts among legacy (traditional) churches. Someone critical of gospel movements will likely find the treatment of the subjects too concise, but will also find the *Motus Dei* references valuable for further research.

Should one embrace every particular point in this book, confusion would be the result because of the diversity of viewpoints. The common thread is multiplication-oriented disciple making and the need for reproducing churches. It would not be wise to treat this work as a ready-made primer for a specific network of leaders. The perspectives are too diverse to bring the clarity needed for big picture, clear paths, and simple tools. The nuances needed for clarity and close cooperation within a network would require the ideas be discussed in order to make unified decisions on specifics. However, the diversity of the book is also a strength because it leads to cross-pollination, which is a value for movement-minded practitioners. Used in this way, the work creates collaboration which could lead to breakthroughs in common stuckages and barriers to multiplication.

We are confronted with the reality of gospel movements happening around the world today. As missiologists, theologians, and practitioners study the Scriptures to learn the message, model, and character of gospel movements, *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations* is a tremendous resource. It curates and distills years of practitioner wisdom passed down for generations. It outlines exciting insights into how God is transforming people from every, tribe, tongue and nation in miraculous ways through movements. Thank you to the contributors for sparking more conversation about the movement of God to disciple the nations.

Table of Contents

Part One: The Big Picture of Movements

1. Movements Today: A Primer from Multiple Perspectives (by Warrick Farah)
2. Observations over Fifteen Years of Disciple Making Movements (by Samuel Kibreab)
3. Addressing Theological and Missiological Objections to CPM/DMM (by Dave Coles)
4. How Exactly Do We Know What We Know about Kingdom Movements? (by Gene Daniels)
5. How Movements Count (by Justin D. Long)

Part Two: Missional Theology of Movements

6. A Biblical Missiology of Kingdomization through Disciple Multiplication Movements of House Church Networks (by David S. Lim)
7. The Word Spread through the Whole Region: Acts and Church Planting Movements (by Craig Ott)
8. God's Expanding Family: The Social Architecture of Ekklesia Movements (by Trevor Larsen)
9. John's Missiological Theology: The Contribution of the Fourth Gospel to the First-Century Movement in Roman Asia (by Michael T. Cooper)
10. Households of Peace: Relationships, Boundaries, and the Gospel (by James Lucas)

Part Three: Movement Dynamics

11. Why Movements Rise and Fall (Steve Addison)
12. From Her Perspective: Women and Multiplication Movements (by Pam Arlund and Regina Foard)

13. How Ethnodoxology Drives Movements (by Paul Kuivinen)
14. Media to Movements: A Church Planting Fusion (by Frank Preston)
15. Terra Nova: Opportunities and Challenges of Movement Work in Diaspora Contexts (by Bradley Cocanower and João Mordomo)

Part Four: Case Studies

16. The Way of Life: Transference of Spiritual DNA within Movements in East Africa (by Aila Tasse and L. Michael Corley)
17. Bhojpuri Case Study (by Victor John with Dave Coles)
18. A Thai Multiplication Movement (by Stephen Bailey, with Dwight Martin and Pastor Somsak)
19. Movements in Iran and Algeria: The Second-Generation Challenge (by Rania Mostofi and Patrick Brittenden)

Part Five: Movement Leadership and Next Steps

20. The Profile of an Effective Movement Catalyst (by Emanuel Prinz)
21. Pursuing Movements: An Organizational Paradigm Shift (by Eric and Laura Adams)
22. Maturing the Missiological Discourse on Discipleship Movements (by Richard Grady, with the Symposium Listening Team)

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