

## Small start, big impact

by Rev. Dr. Steve Cordle

Do you realize that you have all that it takes to start a church? We might imagine that it takes a lot of money, advanced theological training, or a powerful personality. But that is not so.

Acts 16 tells the story of how the Gospel came to Europe. The Holy Spirit directed the Apostle Paul to the town of Philippi, in Macedonia. There Paul and his team led a woman named Lydia to faith in Christ. As a result, she and her whole household were baptized. (The household included more than immediate family.)

Later, Paul and Silas were unjustly jailed. God miraculously freed them, resulting in the conversion of the jailer. He and his whole household were also baptized.

Now there were two extended family groups in town who were followers of Jesus. Did they get together to worship? Almost assuredly. Those two groupings became the church at Philippi, which was the recipient of the great book of the Bible - the book of Philippians.

You are able to do something similar, even if you are not freed from jail by an earthquake. You can start a small group that becomes two, or even three groups. Then you can gather them together for worship.

It will be important to keep the group you start focused on becoming disciples. One format that is structured for this is Discovery Bible Study, or "DBS". (See [dbsguide.org](http://dbsguide.org) for more information and resources.) The DBS format is quite simple, so that almost anyone can lead it. That allows it to multiply easily. People with no faith or Bible background can participate in DBS the same way long-standing believers can.

DBS uses a series of questions which prompt people to hear from God through the scripture. It then asks participants to share what they will do to obey what God is showing them. The following week, it asks, "how did it go when you acted on what God said?" No matter where people are spiritually, this process moves people to follow Jesus as Lord, because hearing and responding to Jesus is the essence of discipleship. DBS gives you a tool to use to help people encounter and respond to God.

If you start a church, you might make some disciples. If you begin with making disciples, you will always end up with a church. It may or may not end up looking like a traditional church, but it will be the family of God on the mission of God.

The River Network International offers an 8-week online practicum that walks you through the steps of starting and leading a DBS group. Right now, there is a Monday night cohort for Americans, Wednesday afternoon in French with West Africans, and Thursday evenings for Europeans. We will offer it again in April. For more information, see [Multiplying Disciples](#)

If you have faith in Christ, a Bible, and a willingness to help others know Jesus better, you can start a church. You have what it takes, and The River Network is here to help you.

**Suggested Resource:** *Contagious Disciple Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery* by David Watson

## SPOTLIGHT ON PLANTING



Sublime Gracia/Amazing Grace Church started 3 years ago in a living room in Port St. Lucie, Florida. Led by Pastor Nena Bonilla, worship was in Spanish. Then, when some English-speakers joined in, the church became bilingual. Their vision is to become a multicultural and multi-generational church which helps all people to encounter Jesus.

Many people have moved to Port St. Lucie from other countries. Perceiving an opportunity, the church decided to offer free lessons in English as a second language using the bilingual multicultural Gospel of Mark. Many of the students are now participating in worship, activities, and serving in the church.

Sublime Gracia/Amazing Grace Church seeks to preview the fulfillment of Revelation 7:9, "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

## ONLINE MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES PRACTICUM

**Are you ready to make disciples who make disciples?**

**Multiplying Disciples** is an 8-week interactive online "practicum" that will equip you to be making disciples by the time the course is done.


You will work with others to:

- ✓ Deepen your own discipleship
- ✓ Practice a simple, tested disciple-making approach
- ✓ Instill the DNA of groups that multiply
- ✓ Reproduce disciple-making leaders

Recommended for a church team of a Pastor and two church leaders (though individuals are welcome)

**Starting Date: • 04/20/26 at 7pm EST**

[therivernetwork.org/EVENTS](http://therivernetwork.org/EVENTS)



# EXPONENTIAL<sup>7</sup> CONFERENCE 2026



JOIN THOUSANDS OF DISCIPLE & CHURCH MULTIPLIERS AT EXPONENTIAL  
**MARCH 16 - 19 | ORLANDO, FL**  
 YOU ARE MEANT TO BE A MULTIPLIER!

The Kingdom Advancement Commission invites You to the **GMC Pre-Conference Rally at Exponential!**

**GMC Rally: Tuesday, March 17 | 8 - 11:30AM**

Tickets are sold out with Exponential, but a limited number are available through The River Network - Get them now!

In addition, plan to attend the GMC Lunch on Wednesday. Once registered via The River Network, watch for RSVP details. Lunch space is limited and advance registration is required.

**FOR TICKETS, USE THE QR CODE:** 

or access: [therivernetwork.org/events](http://therivernetwork.org/events)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EXPONENTIAL: [Exponential.org/global-2026/](http://Exponential.org/global-2026/)

## PLANTING HEALTHY CHURCH

March 3-4th, 2026  
 Lake Magdalene Church, Tampa

[Register here](#)

For more information, please contact Ricc Conner at [ricc.conner@lmctampa.org](mailto:ricc.conner@lmctampa.org)