

The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders

On the back cover of this latest release Addison describes a movement as “what God can do when you let go of control and multiply disciples and churches.” With just over 200 pages, the book is organized around eight chapters using what Addison identifies as “the lifecycle of a movement.” He summarizes his central premise, “at every stage of the movement lifecycle the way forward begins with returning to Jesus, the apostle and pioneer of our faith. His example is foundational. His leadership was centered on obedience to the living Word, dependence on the Holy Spirit, and faithfulness to His Mission.” (34) In his introduction Addison makes the point that all of human history is dotted with movements that, “for good or for ill,” have gone through common phases: birth, growth, maturity, decline, decay and in some cases, re-birth. (23)

« Chapter one of the book, *Why Movements Rise and Fall*, sets the stage by highlighting what Addison has identified as “seven characteristics of multiplying movements.” »

Chapter one of the book, *Why Movements Rise and Fall*, sets the stage by highlighting what Addison has identified as “seven characteristics of multiplying movements.” These foundational characteristics are taken from Jesus’ example of how His **identity** was grounded in obedience to the *Word*, empowerment by the *Spirit*, and faithfulness to the *Mission*. Subsequently, **strategy** builds upon that identity and depends upon *pioneering leaders*, *contagious relationships*, *rapid mobilization*, and *adaptive methods* that are “simple, reproducible, sustainable and scalable.” (57)

« Because each of Addison’s historical case studies go through the entire life cycle, they collectively serve as a potent reminder for us today as to what we must prioritize. »

Chapters two through seven are each devoted to a phase of the lifecycle and illustrated with a historical case study. Highlighting movements started by Francis of Assisi and his monastic order (Birth), John Wesley and the Methodist movement (Growth), George Fox and the Quakers (Maturity), the Roman Catholic Church in the Reformation Era (Decline), the rise of theological liberalism on the heels of the Modern Missionary Movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Decay), each emphasizing a different phase. The final phase follows the Moravians’ impact on the Reformation by providing somewhat of a re-birth that was built upon century long prayer and missions movement. Because each of Addison’s historical case studies go through the entire life cycle, they collectively serve as a potent reminder for us today as to what we must prioritize. For this reason, Addison chose to close his book with what he refers to as a “rebirthing” missionary movement among declining and decaying Western churches in our day. His case study for that chapter centers on the “No Place Left” movement that transcends organizations and denominations. This movement is emerging and catalyzing growth by its return to the seven characteristics highlighted earlier in the book. The Appendices include sample resources utilized by the “No Place Left” network that emphasize the foundational Identity that yields their Strategy and Methods.

<p>BOOK BY STEVE ADDISON</p>	<p>Steve Addison has written several books on the theme of “movements,” each with a missiological application. His latest release, <i>The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders</i> (100Movements Publishing, 2019), pulls together the key principles outlined in his other works resulting in a cohesive resource for missionaries and churches alike to take steps toward Kingdom growth and, when necessary, diagnose and recover from decline.</p>
<p>REVIEW BY DR. GEORGE G. ROBINSON</p>	<p>George G. Robinson is Associate Professor of Evangelism and Missions occupying the B.E. Smith Chair of Evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an elder at North Wake Church and author of several books including most recently <i>40 Questions about the Great Commission</i>. He enjoys using his Harley Davidson as a ministry tool to those he meets and rides with who are far from God.</p>

« Movements like those the author writes about tend to be explosive in their influence. This leads many to question them on the basis of a desire to insure that health isn’t sacrificed.

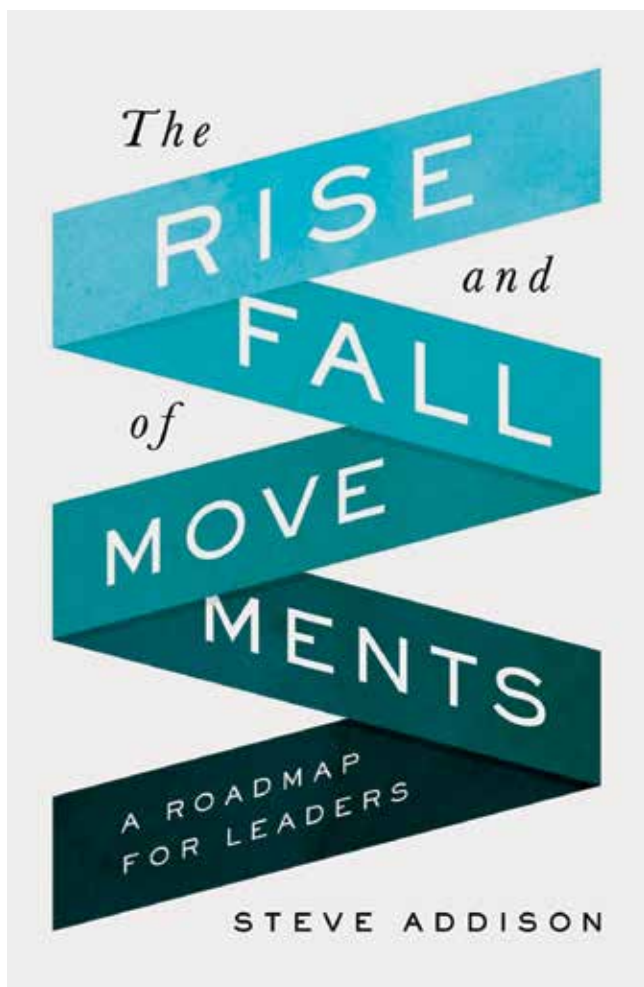


The movement mentality that Addison advocates in *Rise and Fall* is not without its naysayers. As a seminary professor and a proponent of reproducing disciple making that leads to multiplying churches, I constantly find myself in conversations with skeptics. Movements like those the author writes about tend to be explosive in their influence. This leads many to question them on the basis of a desire to insure that health isn’t sacrificed. While it is true that humans grow when cells multiply, when those same cells multiply too quickly the diagnosis is cancer. As a reviewer I don’t want to flippantly dismiss what may be legitimate concerns about possible unhealthy outcomes when movements spread. At the same time, one must concede that the New Testament documents just such an explosive movement and doesn’t shy away from addressing the good, the bad and the ugly.

« Thus, a large number of disciples yields more messes, but also more disciplers to address the mess!



Like Addison seems to advocate, growth is never without risks, whether slow or rapid. What is really at stake isn’t health—it’s our own ability to control people. A movement mentality demands that we release authority and empower every disciple of Jesus to be a disciple-maker. And because we are dealing with fallen image-bearers, the results are sometimes disheartening. Yet I maintain, and I think Addison would agree, that messiness is inevitable. Thus, a large number of disciples yields more messes, but also more disciplers to address the mess! Rather than bottleneck the growth by making every decision gain the approval of a few professionals, Jesus unleashed “uneducated and ordinary men” (and women!) who had spent time abiding with him. Peter made plenty



of mistakes. His doctrine was way off at times (see Matt. 16:22-23); he had to be corrected for being prideful and ethnocentric (Acts 10:34-35); he was hot-headed (John 18:10); he was so fearful of man that he outright denied Jesus (Luke 22:34); and he was prone to discouragement, nearly dropping out altogether (John 21:3). Yet for all of his messiness, Jesus used him and a bunch of other ragamuffins to start a movement that sometimes looked more like Peter in his weaknesses than Jesus in his glory. And I for one am glad that Jesus is building his Kingdom out of “the least of these.”

« Yet for all of his messiness, Jesus used him and a bunch of other ragamuffins to start a movement that sometimes looked more like Peter in his weaknesses than Jesus in his glory. »

Recently I invited Steve Addison to come and conduct a one-day symposium on this book at Southeastern Seminary where I teach. Several things he said there stood out to me. First off, he reiterated that “movements rise because the Word does the work.” So while movements may be messy, they must be Word-focused. And that means that missionaries and pastors must sit under the Word in dependence alongside those we minister to, rather than stand over the Word as its guardians conveying that we alone can interpret and apply it properly. In both the book and in his presentation, Addison emphasized that movements are birthed when a sense of spiritual brokenness leads to desperate dependence upon hearing from God in the wilderness. Movement catalysts turn that desperation into action, which brings renewal and change even in the face of opposition. Movements really spread when the average follower feels empowered to innovate and advance the cause. This is the crucial point in which leaders’ protectionism can neuter the growth and lead to decline. Once the movement mindset is lost, those who advocate for renewal and change are often treated as enemies. This unfortunately leads to splinter groups forming new movements, while what they left behind slowly decays. Neither Addison, nor any of the

movement catalysts that I know within the “No Place Left” network, desires to start anything new and disconnected. Rather, we are praying for and working towards “re-birth” by looking back at our Christian roots found in the New Testament. Addison profoundly stated, “Movements lower the bar on who can be a leader, but raise the bar on who can be a disciple.” That is precisely how both breadth and depth can be achieved.

« “Movements lower the bar on who can be a leader, but raise the bar on who can be a disciple.” That is precisely how both breadth and depth can be achieved. »

I’ll conclude this brief review with a rationale for why Steve Addison’s newest book is so needed in such a time as this: “You need to know where you are on the lifecycle and align yourself with God’s purposes revealed in Jesus Christ. We know how Jesus founded and led an expanding missionary movement. We know how he dealt with declining and decaying religious institutions ... We know how, throughout the biblical story, God renews his people in mission through his Word and the Holy Spirit.” (29) *The Rise and Fall of Movements* is a timely guide to help us self-diagnose and hopefully experience the grace of renewal and rebirth ... until there’s “No Place Left” where Jesus isn’t known and worshipped. MF

« So while movements may be messy, they must be Word-focused. »



FIELD NOTES®

