



# FROM GREAT CHURCH TO EQUIPPING CHURCH

**W**here believers are already present, effective missionaries:

- model effective witness among the lost to find Persons of Peace (POPs)
- train existing believers to share in the harvest (starting with each one’s sphere of influence).

Jesus’ and Paul’s pattern of training new disciples to obey all Jesus commanded is not only critical on the field. It can also turn stable churches into “birthing” churches that multiply laborers for the harvest.

One breakout church in the most “never-churched” city in the U.S. exemplifies this.

## ONE BREAKOUT CHURCH

At 17% “never-churched” residents, West Palm Beach, Florida tops Barna’s list. The city also ranks 11th (48%) for total unchurched.<sup>1</sup> It’s the last place you’d expect a stable church to see sudden growth through new believers. And when Jimmy Scroggins accepted the role of Lead Pastor in 2008, the 107-year old Family Church had been without a senior pastor for five years.

AS TOLD BY **STEVE WRIGHT**

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## Training for Obedience-to-Jesus

(Break into smaller groups as necessary for full participation within available time.)

1. Share highs and lows from the past week.
2. Each retell the memory verse and story from before.
3. Each report how they shared and obeyed the story, and what happened.
4. Assess with the group, based on overall *obedience*, whether to repeat the previous lesson or proceed with the next.
5. Storyboard the appropriate lesson.
6. Each list or map lost individuals in their sphere of influence and pray for them in pairs.
7. Homework: Daily read/rehearse the memory verse and story aloud, pray for opportunities and share the story. Then tell another group member how it went.

## Storyboarding for Faster Learning

(Break into smaller groups as necessary for full participation within available time.)

1. Read the story as a group and outline it.
2. Each draw six boxes and read the story again together, with each writing and/or drawing it in the boxes.
3. Each retell the story to a partner, referencing only their own boxes; then swap roles and repeat.
4. Discuss the story with these SOS questions:
  - What does it *Say* about God?
  - What should I *Obey*?
  - What should I *Say* to others?
5. Each share what they will personally obey from the story.
6. Each identify with whom they will share this story and the 3 Circles gospel presentation in the coming week.

Yet instead of beefing up services to attract new members, Scroggins began to cast vision for more gospel conversations and congregations.

▲ ***Take-away #1: Seek God for a vision bigger than growing your own church!*** ▲

Family Church made a key decision to drop many other good things and focus on the vision of reaching the Six million South Floridians who are still far from God. They are intentionally training their members to turn everyday interactions into gospel conversations. Family Church summarizes this as “abandoning the regional mega-church model” to focus on “equipping their members as missionaries.”

▲ ***Take-away #2: Focus NOT ONLY on ministry to members, but on equipping members to minister!*** ▲

Just like in the book of Acts, Scroggins knew that focused prayer precedes any movement of God. Pastor Steve Wright, Family Church Pastor of Discipleship and Church Planting says, “The movement of God we are seeing is a testimony that God delights in blessing weakness, and His arms really are long and mighty to save!”

▲ ***Take-away #3: Rely continuously on the Holy Spirit rather than principles, tools or strategies.*** ▲

**They are intentionally training their members to turn everyday interactions into gospel conversations.**

There is no master plan at Family Church. Scroggins came with a vision to reach South Floridians with the gospel. Through prayer and obedience, they have launched church planting residency programs in both English and Spanish where they are training bivocational pastors and ministry leaders. They have planted seven campuses (so far) and partnered with five other churches. And, according to Wright, they are “training everyday people to be sent in Jesus’ name and on his mission.” Tools and strategies are being developed, but the movement is God’s.

▲ ***Take-away #4: Train members to win the lost.*** ▲

Through 2013, most of Family Church’s baptisms came from transfer growth or members inviting others to events and programs. Then interaction with “never-churched” Floridians led to training members in a simple, reproducible 3 Circles gospel tool. The following year baptisms tripled to 240 and spread

through multiple generations (new believers winning others). And in 2015 the church recorded 336 baptisms! Many of these baptisms are from one-on-one gospel conversations using 3 Circles, and other churches and missions agencies worldwide are using their own adaptations of this 3 Circles gospeling tool.

▲ **Take-away #5: Seek or develop simpler and more reproducible evangelism tools** ▲

As in effective movements around the world, Family Church is eagerly learning from others. They adopted storyboarding to engage a variety of learning styles in sharing “The Seven Commands of Christ” and “The Seven Stories of Hope.” They have focused initial discipleship on obeying seven commands of Jesus. Through such discipleship, Family Church is seeing 4th and 5th generational growth, with new believers quickly leading others to Christ and discipling them.

▲ **Take-away #6: Learn from others to tie evangelism to obedience-oriented discipleship.** ▲


Recognizing the role metrics play in shaping behavior, Family Church has started tracking “obedient disciples” in addition to counting “baptized believers.” They are intentionally engaging those they baptize in one-on-one discipleship, getting them in

a Bible study group for long-term discipleship and moving them toward serving.

▲ **Take-away #7: Measure disciples by obedience.** ▲

Family Church continues pressing in to Jesus, noting that even 14,000 baptisms would only reduce the unchurched in their county by one percentage point. Thus they are using every opportunity to train people to be disciple-makers. They have preached through “Seven Commands of Christ” and “Stories of Hope” at all of their campuses, and they are using their bi-annual Leadership Rally and quarterly leadership trainings to equip leaders to turn everyday interactions into gospel conversations.

▲ **Take-away #8: Develop and release those with leadership giftings.** ▲

As of late 2015, Family Church has built a network of neighborhood churches with seven campuses. Several of these are led by bivocational pastors trained through their residency program. And one campus has planted another. Last fall *OutReach Magazine* featured Family Church as 9th among the 100 fastest-growing U.S. churches. 

<sup>1</sup> [cities.barna.org/barna-cities-the-top-churchless-metro-areas](http://cities.barna.org/barna-cities-the-top-churchless-metro-areas)

# STORY

## Seven Stories of Hope

(as taught at Family Church)

1. Hope for the Rejected: Luke 7:36-50 (The Woman Weeping at Jesus' Feet)
2. Hope for the Non-Religious: Luke 18:9-14 (Pharisee & Tax Collector)
3. Hope Changes Things: Luke 19:1-10 (Jesus & Zacchaeus)
4. Hope Forgives: Matthew 18:21-35 (The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant)
5. Hope Through Death: Luke 23:26-43 (Thieves on the Cross)
6. Hope Rose from the Dead: Luke 24:1-20 (Resurrection)
7. Hope is Waiting for You: Luke 15:11-32 (Prodigal Son)

See Web-only article *Sharing Stories of Hope*

## Seven Commands of Christ

(as taught at Family Church)

1. Repent & Believe: Mark 1:15, Luke 7:36-50 (The Woman Weeping at Jesus' Feet)
2. Baptism: Matthew 28:19, Acts 8:26-39 (Philip and the Ethiopian Official)
3. Gather: Hebrews 10:24-25, Acts 2:41-47 (First Church Formed)
4. Love Neighbors: Matthew 22:37-39, Luke 10:25-37 (The Good Samaritan)
5. Make Disciples: Matthew 28:18-20, John 4:4-42 (The Samaritan Woman at the Well)
6. Pray: Matthew 6:9-13, Matthew 6:5-15 (Jesus Teaches about Prayer)
7. Persevere: John 16:33, Luke 22:39-47 (Gethsemane & Crucifixion)