

CHURCH WITHOUT WALLS



Building a Faith That Goes Beyond
Barriers to Reach the World



FAITH IS NOT A BUILDING.
IT'S A MOVEMENT.

TERRY RUFF

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Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version® (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

Dedication

To every believer who has ever gathered under a tree, in a home, beside a river, or in a refugee camp and asked, “Could this simple thing really be church?”

It is.

And to the Church without walls—already breaking out across the nations.

Contents

Introduction

What makes a church a church?

That question has echoed through centuries of Christian history. It has been answered with cathedrals and constitutions, with denominations and doctrinal statements, with committees and congregational votes. And yet, all around the world today, people are encountering Jesus and gathering in ways that look nothing like what most of us grew up calling church.

They meet under mango trees in Uganda. They gather in homes in Iran. They huddle around a single audio Bible player in a South Asian village. They share meals in Kenyan refugee camps and pray together in WhatsApp groups in the Middle East.

And the question rises again: Is that really church?

This book is written to answer that question with a resounding yes—and to invite you into a bigger vision of what the Church was always meant to be.

Church Without Walls is not an argument against traditional churches. It is an argument for simplicity, movement, and multiplication. It is a call to see the Body of Christ as bigger than any building, more powerful than any program, and more unstoppable than any institution.

The eight articles in this book trace a single conviction from Scripture, from history, and from the front lines of Disciple-Making Movements around the world: when the walls come down, the Kingdom spreads.

Read it as an invitation—to see the Church through fresh eyes, to release what may be holding it inside four walls, and to join what God is already doing in the streets, homes, fields, and digital spaces of our world.

The Church Jesus is building has no walls high enough to hold His presence.

Let's join Him where He's moving.

— **Terry Ruff**

Article 1

What Makes a Church a Church?

October 29, 2025

This article is intended to affirm the traditional church while making a persuasive biblical case for the full legitimacy of Disciple-Making Movements.

Many followers of Jesus are inspired by Disciple-Making Movements (DMMs) — yet still quietly wonder, “Are those really churches?”

There are no buildings. No budgets. No professional clergy. Just small groups meeting under trees, in living rooms, in cafés, or beside wells. They read the Bible, obey it, and share it. Could something that simple truly be what Jesus meant by church? Let's look again at what the Scriptures say.

The First Church (Acts 2:42–47 NKJV Excerpt)

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers... all who believed were together, and had all things in common... and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Here is the earliest snapshot of the Church — before cathedrals, pulpits, or committees. It was simple, Spirit-filled, obedient, and multiplying.

They did four things:

Learned and obeyed God's Word.

Shared life and resources together.

Remembered Jesus through meals and communion.

Prayed constantly — and saw new disciples added daily.

That's it. No mention of property, programs, or paid staff — only people filled with the Spirit and devoted to one another.

The Church Has Always Been a People, Not a Place

When persecution scattered the believers (Acts 8:1–4), they didn't lose their churches — they became the church wherever they went. House to house. Village to village.

Paul later greets “the church that meets in their house” (Romans 16:5, 1 Cor. 16:19). Every home gathering where Jesus was worshiped, Scripture obeyed, bread broken, and mission pursued was a legitimate expression of Christ's body.

If that was true then, it's true now.

A group of believers studying the Word, obeying together, baptizing new disciples, caring for one another, and celebrating the Lord's Supper is a church — whether it meets under a mango tree in Uganda or in a living room in California.

The DNA That Defines a Church

Disciple-Making Movements identify ten simple biblical functions that mark the DNA of a group has truly become a church.

Commitment to be a church — a covenant to live as Christ's body together.

Baptism — symbolized by water, showing new life in Christ and public identification with Him.

Bible — a book, representing devotion to the Word and obedience to Jesus' teaching.

Commemorate Jesus with bread and cup — a cup, remembering His sacrifice in the Lord's Supper.

Fellowship — a heart, showing love and unity among believers.

Giving and ministry — a money sign, expressing generosity and service to others.

Prayer — praying hands, depending on God for direction and power.

Praise — raised hands, celebrating God’s goodness together.

Telling people about Jesus — two friends holding hands, one leading another to faith.

Leaders — two smiling faces, representing shepherds emerging from within the group through faithfulness and character.

When these ten functions are present, a group is not merely meeting — it is being the Church Jesus envisioned. Whether they gather under a tree, in a home, or in a hall, they display the same essential DNA the apostles lived out in Acts 2. When those elements exist, we don’t have a Bible study group. We have a church.

Real-World Example — South Sudan

In South Sudan, believers in a refugee camp began meeting nightly to read stories of Jesus and ask three simple questions: “What does this teach us about God? About people? What will we do to obey?”

They baptized new believers in a plastic basin, shared meals, cared for the sick, and pooled what little food they had to help widows.

A visiting missionary once asked, “When will you start a real church?” They smiled and replied, “We already are one.”

Within a year, twenty-three similar fellowships had formed — multiplying through obedience, not construction. Every mark of Acts 2 was present. The only thing missing was a building — and heaven didn’t seem to mind.

Voices Affirming Simplicity

David Garrison writes, “House churches are not a stepping-stone to something bigger; they are the very fabric of how the gospel spreads most rapidly.”

Ed Stetzer observes, “When we rediscover church as a mission-shaped people rather than a place, multiplication becomes natural.”

Curtis Sergeant reminds us, “Church is what happens when followers of Jesus come together and do all He commanded — nothing more is required.”

Why This Matters

This article is not written to minimize or criticize traditional churches. The gathered church in buildings around the world has nurtured faith, trained leaders, and sent missionaries for generations — and we thank God for it.

But many today are discovering that the same Spirit who moves in cathedrals and sanctuaries also moves in courtyards, kitchens, and refugee tents.

Disciple-Making Movements don't replace traditional churches — they extend them. They take the same DNA of worship, Word, fellowship, prayer, generosity, and witness and multiply it where buildings can't go.

So the question isn't "Which form is right?" The question is "Where is Jesus present and obeyed?"

When His people gather in His name and live out His commands together, whether in pews or under trees, that is church.

Reflection

Do I think of church as a building or as a body?

Could the Spirit be inviting me to see smaller, simpler gatherings as equally sacred?

What if multiplication isn't about size, but obedience?

Call to Action

Let's return to the simplicity of Acts 2 — believers who gather, love, obey, give, and go. Let's recognize and bless every expression of Christ's body that carries His DNA, no matter how small or informal.

The question isn't "Is it big enough to be a church?" The question is "Is Jesus present — and are His people obeying Him together?" When that happens, heaven calls it church.

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Article 2

The Power of Simple

October 30, 2025

Across the centuries, God has used many beautiful forms of His Church — cathedrals filled with song, sanctuaries filled with prayer, and living rooms filled with Scripture. Each has carried the gospel forward in its time.

But around the world today, something fresh is stirring. Simple gatherings of believers — meeting in homes, under trees, and beside rivers — are multiplying faster than ever before. There are no budgets,

buildings, or clergy titles, yet they are baptizing new believers, sharing communion, and sending out leaders.

These simple, reproducible churches are not a reaction against the traditional church. They are a recovery of something ancient — the kind of church Jesus and the apostles practiced from the beginning.

The Simplicity of Jesus' Strategy

When Jesus sent out the seventy-two (Luke 10:1–9), His instructions were profoundly simple:

Go in pairs.

Enter homes.

Eat what's given to you.

Heal the sick.

Announce the Kingdom.

No buildings. No budgets. No program manuals. Just Spirit-filled obedience that anyone, anywhere, could do.

After His resurrection, Jesus repeated that simplicity:

“Go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
(Matthew 28:19–20)

He didn't assign titles or construct systems. He empowered ordinary believers to make disciples who obey and multiply.

The power was not in the complexity of the structure — but in the simplicity of obedience.

The Early Church Kept It Simple

The believers in Acts 2–4 modeled a way of life that was beautiful in its simplicity:

“They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

They met in homes, shared meals, prayed, gave, and proclaimed Christ. Because their gatherings were simple, they could spread everywhere — rich and poor, free and persecuted, city and village alike.

Paul later greeted “the church that meets in their house” (Romans 16:5). These were not smaller versions of church; they were the church — full expressions of Christ's body wherever disciples gathered and obeyed.

A Modern Picture — The Carpenter from South Asia

In one South Asian village, a humble carpenter named Rafiq began listening to Bible stories on an audio player. Soon, neighbors joined him under a mango tree to listen and discuss. They asked three simple questions each week:

What does this teach us about God?

What does this teach us about people?

What will we do to obey?

As they obeyed, transformation followed. Rafiq baptized new believers in a nearby river and taught them to start new groups using the same questions.

No funding. No formal training. No outside leader. Just Scripture, obedience, and the Spirit.

Within three years, sixteen house fellowships were thriving — multiplying through ordinary believers.

When asked how he did it, Rafiq smiled and said,

"Jesus didn't make it hard for poor people to obey Him."

When Simplicity Multiplies

Simplicity doesn't threaten traditional churches — it complements them. While established congregations provide depth, teaching, and stability, simple churches extend that same DNA into places traditional models can't reach.

Complexity tends to slow multiplication.

If a church requires a building, it can't meet everywhere.

If it requires a budget, it can't thrive in poverty.

If it requires professional training, few can lead.

But when church means followers of Jesus gathering to obey Him together, it becomes possible anywhere — in apartments, villages, prisons, refugee camps, or coffee shops.

Paul understood this when he told Timothy:

"The things you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit to faithful people who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

Four generations of discipleship in a single verse — because the pattern was simple enough to repeat.

Voices Affirming the Power of Simple

George Patterson, a missionary in Central America, discovered this firsthand. He taught new believers to start “obedience groups” using Bible stories and one rule: don’t move on until you’ve obeyed the last thing Jesus said. Within ten years, more than fifty house churches had formed — all led by locals with no outside funding. Patterson later wrote,

"Teach them to obey, not merely to know."

Neil Cole, founder of the Organic Church movement, captured the same vision in modern contexts:

"Small things done in love will change the world."

He saw hundreds of simple fellowships emerge from coffee shops, gyms, and living rooms across California — not because of strategy, but because ordinary people took responsibility for the mission.

Alan Hirsch, in “The Forgotten Ways,” explained why simplicity is essential for movements:

"Every believer carries the potential for the full expression of church life and mission within them."

The same Spirit who filled the apostles fills every believer today. When the design is simple, the mission becomes unstoppable.

Reflection

Have I ever confused complexity with maturity?

Could God be inviting me to see that smaller, simpler gatherings are equally sacred?

What would happen if every believer around me felt released to live and multiply the church where they are?

Call to Action

Let’s honor all expressions of Christ’s body — cathedrals and courtyards, sanctuaries and sitting rooms — where Jesus is present and obeyed.

Let’s also make room for more expressions of church — forms that can travel as freely as the gospel itself.

When we keep church simple, it becomes unstoppable. Buildings can’t contain it. Budgets can’t restrict it. And barriers can’t hold it back.

The same Spirit who fills sanctuaries also fills kitchens, courtyards, and refugee tents. The same Jesus who walks the aisles of cathedrals also walks the dusty paths of villages.

The Church is alive — wherever His people gather, obey, and go. That is the power of simple.

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Article 3

Why Multiplication Matters

October 31, 2025

(Honoring both traditional and simple churches as vital parts of one multiplying movement)

Many churches measure success by how many gather. Jesus measured it by how many go.

This isn't a critique of traditional churches — it's a call to rediscover the multiplying heartbeat that's been there all along.

The Kingdom Was Designed to Spread

When Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19), He wasn't forming an institution — He was launching a movement that could spread anywhere.

From temple courts to village homes, Jesus' Church has always been both gathered and scattered — expressing His presence in sanctuaries and on street corners.

Both matter. Both are biblical. Both are part of His plan.

The Early Church Multiplied — and So Can We

Acts 2:46 tells us believers met in the temple and from house to house. The large gatherings brought unity. The small gatherings brought intimacy — and rapid reproduction.

Alan Hirsch writes,

"When the church rediscovers its simplest, most reproducible forms, it doesn't lose its power — it releases it."

The goal isn't to replace the traditional church but to revive the movement DNA that Jesus placed in all of us.

Story: Honduras — A Chain Reaction of Churches

Missionary George Patterson realized that complex structures often slowed disciple-making. So he trained believers to start new churches that stayed connected to existing congregations.

Within a few years, hundreds of small fellowships were born — each discipling and planting others.

"When disciples reproduce disciples and churches reproduce churches, the movement becomes self-sustaining."

— Church Multiplication Guide, 1993

Story: California — From Coffee Shop to Network

Neil Cole began with a few friends meeting in a coffee shop and a living room. Their focus was obedience and multiplication, not size.

That beginning grew into thousands of “organic churches” that complemented local congregations rather than competing with them.

"We lower the bar of how church is done and raise the bar of what it means to be a disciple."

— Organic Church, 2005

Story: East Africa — Ordinary People, Extraordinary Impact

In Kenya, Aila Tasse began equipping everyday believers to make disciples and gather simple fellowships. Many still partner with traditional churches for training, mentoring, and celebration.

The result? Tens of thousands of new disciples and multiplying groups.

"Movements grow when disciples take responsibility for the Great Commission — not as an event, but as a lifestyle."

— Global Frontier Missions Case Study, 2020

The Biblical Pattern of Multiplication

From Genesis 1:28 (“Be fruitful and multiply”) to 2 Timothy 2:2 (“Teach others who will teach others”), multiplication is in God’s DNA.

Healthy churches multiply disciples, leaders, and gatherings — whether in sanctuaries or living rooms.

Multiplication isn’t new. It’s ancient — and essential.

Together for the Harvest

Traditional churches bring heritage, depth, and public witness. Simple churches bring flexibility, proximity, and speed. Both are needed.

When every believer becomes a disciple-maker, every home and congregation becomes part of the same harvest movement.

"The future belongs not to one model of church, but to the whole Body of Christ multiplying together."

Call to Action

Let's honor the beauty of the traditional church while rediscovering the simplicity of multiplication. What could happen if every believer saw themselves as both disciple and discipler — right where they live?

The Church without walls is the Church without limits.

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Article 4

Church Everywhere, All the Time

November 1, 2025

(Seeing the Church as a people, not a place)

What If Church Was Never Meant to Be a Time Slot?

Every week, millions gather to “go to church.” But what if Jesus never meant church to be a place we go, but a people we are — wherever we go?

The early disciples didn't leave church after a service. They were the Church — in homes, fields, prisons, marketplaces, and city streets. Everywhere they went, Jesus went with them. As Alan Hirsch reminds us:

"The Church is not the building you meet in, but the people who go out from it."

The Church That Can't Be Contained

When persecution scattered the believers in Acts 8:1, the movement didn't die — it multiplied. Those who fled Jerusalem “went everywhere preaching the Word.”

They didn't have sound systems, pulpits, or stages. They carried something far more powerful: the presence of Jesus and the message of His Kingdom.

Neil Cole calls this the “distributed church” — one that cannot be stopped because it exists in the lives of believers 24/7.

"The church is only as strong as her disciples, and disciples are made in everyday life — not in a classroom."

— Neil Cole, Organic Church, 2005

Story: A Family on Mission in the Philippines

When George Patterson trained believers in Central America and later in Asia, he emphasized that the Church doesn't stop when you close the door on Sunday.

One family he coached in the Philippines began leading Bible discussions with their neighbors under a mango tree. Within months, several came to Christ.

Soon, one of those new believers began hosting a gathering in her own home — and the pattern continued.

Patterson later wrote,

"When the Church sees itself as a people on mission, it fills the community like yeast in dough."

— Church Multiplication Guide, 1993

Story: A Church on the Move in East Africa

A DMM leader in Tanzania named Joseph discipled new believers who meet under trees, in cafés, and at bus stops. When asked how many churches they have, he smiled:

"Everywhere we meet in Jesus' name — that's church."

Those gatherings now stretch across several regions, led by everyday believers who see their jobs and homes as ministry outposts.

(Source: East Africa DMM field interviews, 2023)

The Biblical Picture of “Everywhere Church”

The New Testament never restricts the Church to a building or event.

Romans 16:5 – “Greet the church that meets in their house.”

1 Corinthians 3:16 – “You are God's temple.”

Matthew 18:20 – “Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there.”

The Church gathers in places, but it isn't about places. It's about people — sent into every place.

When Church Is Everywhere, Mission Is Unstoppable

When we realize we are the Church 24/7:

Workplaces become mission fields.

Homes become centers of worship.

Cafés become disciple-making spaces.

Neighborhoods become networks of Kingdom light.

It's not a smaller vision of church — it's a bigger one.

A Church Without Walls

The Church without walls isn't anti-institutional. It's pro-missional.

It honors the gathered church while activating the scattered church. It celebrates Sunday while mobilizing Monday through Saturday.

As Alan Hirsch says,

"The church is at her best when she's sent."

Call to Action

Wherever you live, work, and walk — that's your church field. Gather small, love deeply, obey quickly, and multiply freely.

Let's fill every street, every home, and every heart with the presence of Jesus — until the Church truly is everywhere, all the time.

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Article 5

Walls Come Down, the Kingdom Spreads

November 1, 2025

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house..." — 1 Peter 2:5 (NKJV)

When Jesus spoke of His Church, He didn't picture walls or stained glass. He saw people — ordinary followers filled with His Spirit — carrying His presence everywhere. Over time, though, we built walls: physical, cultural, even mental ones. Walls meant to protect sometimes end up confining.

So... what happens when the walls come down?

The Gospel Finds New Pathways

Acts 8:4 says, “Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” No building program. No budgeted campaign. Just everyday disciples taking Jesus into homes, cafés, markets, refugee camps, and WhatsApp chats.

When believers see themselves as the church on mission rather than attenders of church programs, new pathways open and witness spreads.

Every Home Becomes a Lighthouse

George Patterson used to say,

"Don't build a big church. Build a lot of little churches — in homes."

He watched movements multiply as believers met where they already lived. When worship, prayer, and Scripture filled homes, neighbors noticed. Each simple gathering became a lighthouse shining into the darkness.

Every Disciple Becomes a Messenger

Alan Hirsch reminds us, “The Church is a movement before it is an institution.” Neil Cole saw that when ordinary believers started simple discovery groups. They didn't wait for permission — they obeyed. In one city, over a thousand groups met in homes, parks, and workplaces.

The Kingdom advanced because the message moved through messengers who believed Jesus meant them too.

The Kingdom Multiplies Naturally

When the walls come down, the Church looks less like a cathedral and more like a mustard seed — small, organic, alive. Each seed carries the DNA of the whole plant. Each disciple carries the DNA of Jesus' mission.

Walls can't contain that kind of life. It spreads — heart to heart, home to home, nation to nation.

A Call to Open the Gates

If you serve in a traditional church — keep building faithfully! But also ask: what walls could we lower so more people can be reached? Could we release micro-churches in neighborhoods? Empower believers to lead simple gatherings where they live? Mentor new disciples to disciple others?

When walls come down, the Kingdom doesn't weaken — it multiplies.

Final Thought

The Church Jesus builds has no walls high enough to hold His presence, no limits strong enough to stop His love, and no boundaries wide enough to contain His Kingdom.

It's already breaking out — in homes, villages, and cities everywhere. Let's join Him where He's moving and show the world: the Church without walls is unstoppable.

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Article 6

Empowering Every Believer

November 3, 2025

For too long, many followers of Jesus have seen “ministry” as something done by professionals — pastors, missionaries, or those with titles and training. But Jesus never designed His Church to have spectators. He designed a priesthood — a body where every believer carries His presence, speaks His Word, and serves His mission.

The Priesthood of All Believers

In the Old Testament, only priests could enter God's presence. But through the cross, Jesus tore that veil in two. Now every disciple has direct access to the Father — and is called to represent Him to the world.

“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...” — 1 Peter 2:9 NKJV

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“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...” — 1 Peter 2:9 NKJV

When ordinary believers realize they carry the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, church can happen anywhere: in homes, cafés, workplaces, schools, or under a tree. The presence of Jesus in His people — not the presence of clergy in a building — makes it church.

Every Disciple a Minister

Ephesians 4:11-12 says leaders are called “to equip the saints for the work of ministry.” That means ministry doesn’t belong to a few; it belongs to all. Movement churches thrive when believers discover they don’t need permission to obey Jesus — they already have His command.

Across Africa and Asia, house churches are multiplying because ordinary disciples are stepping into ministry. A farmer baptizes new believers in a river. A shopkeeper leads a Discovery Bible Study with her customers. A young man shares the gospel with his soccer teammates. None of them waited for a title — they just obeyed.

What Happens When Everyone Is Empowered

When the Church releases every believer:

The lost are reached faster.

Disciples multiply generationally.

The burden on leaders becomes lighter.

The Kingdom spreads into every sector of society.

George Patterson, who trained thousands in New Testament church planting, often said, “Obedience-based discipleship multiplies leaders faster than education-based discipleship.” The goal isn’t to fill classrooms but to fill the harvest.

The Spirit Still Empowers

The same Spirit who empowered Peter at Pentecost empowers you. The same mission Jesus gave the Twelve, He gives today’s disciples — to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach obedience.

Alan Hirsch writes, “Movements begin when the people of God rediscover who they truly are — God’s missionary people.” When that truth grips our hearts, every believer becomes a priest, every home a church, every workplace a mission field.

A Call to Action

You don’t need a title to obey Jesus. You don’t need a budget to make disciples. You only need His Spirit — and the courage to start.

This week, ask God:

Who can I disciple?

Where can I start a simple gathering?

How can I empower others to do the same?

When every believer sees themselves as sent, the Church no longer fits inside walls — it fills the world.

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Article 7

The DNA of a Movement Church

November 4, 2025

Every living thing grows according to its DNA. The same is true for the Church. If we want churches that multiply — generation after generation — we must build with the same spiritual DNA that Jesus and the apostles planted.

Movements don't begin with grand strategies. They begin with the right spiritual genetics.

The Seven Sails of a Movement Church

Just as a sailboat moves when the wind fills its sails, the Church moves when the Spirit fills certain biblical patterns — what we call the Seven Sails. These aren't programs or techniques. They're the DNA of a healthy, multiplying church.

“The wind blows where it wishes... so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” — John 3:8 NKJV

When each of these sails is raised, the movement moves.

The Core DNA – The Seven Sails

Extraordinary Prayer – Everything begins and is sustained in prayer. The early Church devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42). Prayer is not preparation for the work — it is the work.

Cast Vision – Jesus constantly spoke about the Kingdom coming to every people and place. Movement churches keep that vision alive: everyone can be a disciple-maker, and every place can have a church.

Focus on God's Word – Scripture, not sermons, drives transformation. Through obedience-based discovery, believers hear, obey, and share the Word — simple enough to multiply anywhere.

Go Out Among the Lost – Movement DNA sends believers out, not just in. They go where lost people live and work, looking for Persons of Peace who open new doors for the gospel.

Train Believers – Everyone is trained to make disciples who make disciples. The goal is not to create attenders but trainers — multiplying capacity through mentoring and modeling (MAWL).

See Groups Start – Every disciple is equipped to gather new believers into simple churches that meet regularly to learn, obey, and share together — the same pattern seen in Acts.

Ongoing Coaching – Movement churches don't leave new leaders alone. They provide relational coaching to keep the DNA healthy and the sails trimmed for the next wave of multiplication.

The Power of Healthy DNA

These Seven Sails aren't just theory — they're what thousands of multiplying churches around the world already share in common. When these sails are up:

The Church grows without buildings.

Leadership rises from within.

New generations are born rapidly.

The Kingdom advances to new places.

This is the DNA that makes a Church Without Walls unstoppable.

Guarding and Passing on the DNA

Every generation must protect the DNA from drift. When prayer fades, power fades. When the Word is replaced by opinion, truth fades. When coaching stops, movements stall.

Paul told Timothy:

“The things you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” — 2 Timothy 2:2 NKJV

That's four generations — the heartbeat of multiplication.

A Call to Action

Ask yourself and your team this week:

Which of the Seven Sails are catching the wind of the Spirit in our church or network?

Which ones need to be raised again?

How can we model and multiply this DNA in others?

Because when the Church raises every sail, the Spirit fills her — and she moves powerfully toward the nations.

The Church Without Walls isn't an organization to join — it's a movement to multiply.

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Article 8

A Vision for the Future Church

November 5, 2025

The world is changing fast. Institutions are shifting. Many are asking what the future of the Church will look like. Will it survive? Will it stay relevant?

The answer is yes — but not by becoming bigger or flashier. The future Church will be simpler, smaller, and stronger. It will thrive wherever disciples obey Jesus together — in homes, online, under trees, and across networks of ordinary believers. It will depend not on buildings or budgets, but on Jesus' presence and His people's obedience.

The Global Church Is Moving Outside the Walls

In every region of the world, the Church is rediscovering its original DNA.

In the Middle East, quiet house fellowships multiply under persecution.

In Africa, village believers baptize new disciples in rivers and plant new groups before buildings exist.

In Asia, digital Discovery groups multiply on smartphones faster than anyone can count.

In the West, living-room churches are rediscovering Acts-style simplicity and purpose.

These are not fringe expressions. They are the Church — ordinary disciples carrying extraordinary obedience.

The Ten-Year Multiplication Vision

Imagine beginning with just one simple house-style church: four family units — two couples and two singles, plus children — about six adults who meet weekly to learn, obey, and share God's Word. Each year, every family unit starts one new house church while continuing their own.

If that DNA continues for ten years, the growth looks like this: 1 → 5 → 25 → 125 → 625 → 3,125 → 15,625 → 78,125 → 390,625 → 1,953,125 churches. That's almost two million gatherings of believers

— without buildings, without budgets, and without barriers — each one reaching new communities with the gospel.

It's not fantasy. Movements around the world are already seeing this level of multiplication when obedience, simplicity, and the Holy Spirit align.

“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.” — Matthew 13:33 NIV

Built to Multiply, Not Maintain

The Church of the future will measure success not by attendance but by obedience. Not by programs but by generations of disciples made. Not by how many come, but by how many go.

Ralph Moore said it well:

"Healthy churches plant churches — because healthy disciples make disciples."

This ten-year vision isn't about numbers; it's about faithfulness that multiplies.

Empowered, Decentralized, and Spirit-Led

In the future Church, every believer is a priest and a missionary. Every home can be a training hub. Every workplace can become a mission field. Every digital space can become a discipleship space.

Neil Cole reminds us, “The church of the future will be everywhere life happens.” That's what a Church Without Walls looks like — a global mosaic of multiplying disciples.

Completing, Not Competing

This movement doesn't replace the traditional church; it completes it. God is weaving together gathered and scattered expressions into one global body — millions of simple churches filling every gap until there's no place left where the name of Jesus isn't known.

A Call to See and Shape the Future

Ask the Lord for eyes to see what He's doing. Pray for pastors and leaders to empower their people to go. And ask the Spirit how you can help fuel this ten-year vision — one new church, one new disciple, one new obedience step at a time.

Because the future Church isn't something we're waiting for. It's something we're building — now. Together. Without walls.

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About the Author

Terry Ruff is a DMM Catalyst and Zumé Trainer/Coach with over 50 years of ministry experience. He served for more than 25 years in two US mega-churches before answering the call to northern Ghana, where he and his wife Amy lived for 14 years catalyzing a Disciple-Making Movement that grew to over 3,000 Discovery Bible Study groups and approximately 20,000 participants — with zero cost, no buildings, no salaries, and no programs.

Now based in the United States, Terry coaches and trains disciple-makers worldwide through Zumé training classes, peer mentoring coaching circles, and one-on-one discipleship relationships spanning more than 37 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Pacific.

He is the author of multiple books in the Church Without Walls and Disciple-Making Movement series, including “7 Sails,” “From Believer to Multiplier,” “The Modern-Day Book of Acts,” and “The Movement Parables of Jesus.”

Terry’s conviction: “In 50+ years of ministry, I’ve never been involved in something so fruitful.”

To learn more or join a Zumé coaching class, visit: zume.training

Also by Terry Ruff

7 Sails

From Believer to Multiplier

The Modern-Day Book of Acts

The Movement Parables of Jesus

What Slows Movements Down

What’s It Gonna Take

Random Devotional Thoughts for DMM Catalysts

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