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A Great Future Together

“So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.” (Ezekiel 37:10)

We hear the sounds of a new movement coming! The sounds are not that of congregations that continue to “do church” as they have always done before. The sounds we hear are the marching of those who

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hear the beat of a different drum. They are the innovators, the risk-takers, the ones anxious for adventure.

Many of them are new to the Church of the Nazarene.

They know they are called, spiritually gifted and led by God. They include both clergy and lay leaders. They are a growing group of people within a global movement. They are a movement of servant leaders scattered in 30,000+ Nazarene churches throughout the world.

The people in this movement are different from members of status quo churches. They never stop learning, are mentally growing, and changing. They are beginning to understand what is crucial to the long-term health and growth of Christ’s church. **They believe every Nazarene church can become a healthy, multiplying church regardless of size.** Like Jesus, they have a heart for outsiders. Some of them are developing a distinctive mix of spiritual gifts that God has uniquely given them, in order to multiply the entry points into Christ’s Kingdom.

They have a heart for evangelism, church planting, mentoring new leaders, multiplying new campuses, new churches, etc. Their thinking and actions help create the culture that fuels the Nazarene movement.

Discontented with status quo and ordinary church routine, they feel the same urge as was felt in the heart of the apostle Paul. “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (Romans 15:20). They focus on those outside the Kingdom. They keep encouraging their local church to focus on outsiders, people beyond the four walls of the church (Matthew 18:10-14) who have not yet come to faith in Christ. They “have a deep love for unbelievers,” believing they are lost and need to be found.¹

Another characteristic of people in this movement is that they understand their work often goes unnoticed. When the gospel made its greatest advance in the book of Acts, non-Jews (men from Cyprus and Cyrene) went to Antioch and spoke to Greeks about Jesus (Acts 11:20). Many people have heard about Paul and Barnabas being sent as the first church planting leaders from Antioch (Acts 13:2-3). But who started the Antioch church? We do not even know their names. But

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we do know “the Lord’s hand was with them and a great number of people in Antioch believed,” so the “Jerusalem ministry center” sent Barnabas down to find out what was going on (Acts 11:21-22).

Where multiplying movements happen, there are always scores of unnamed people working behind the scenes. They get little credit or recognition for their labor. But when they see the Savior, they will hear him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21,23). For them, that is enough because their ultimate purpose in life is to

bring glory to God (Romans 5:2, 8:17).

Whether you are reading this book individually or discussing these ideas within a group, you will soon discover the attitudes, spirit and heart of everyone involved. Paul instructs us, “So ... whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). God created everything to reflect his glory.

Jesus’ great desire was to bring glory to God. The night before Jesus died, he prayed to his Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). As a team, our desire is to do the same—to complete the work God has given us to do. “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... **to him be glory in the church** and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21). We believe the ultimate purpose of our lives in the church is to bring glory to God.

This is a book about how we can better fuel our Nazarene movement. There are numerous books today on church theology and strategies. We have training programs that highlight starting new churches, revitalizing existing congregations, etc. New strategies continue to emerge as the church finds better ways of fueling the movement of God through the people of God. As a team of 480+ districts, we are getting better at providing specialized training for church leaders. The premise of this book, however, is that to keep fueling the Nazarene movement, we need more than strategies and training.

We believe the Holy Spirit is bringing us together. We share a common agenda. We enjoy a spiritual unity that Jesus talked about (John 17:21-23). We know multiplying movements require church leaders to work closely together. The **desire** to fuel the movement, the **resources** needed, and the right **climate** are being created among us.

Our movement aims to plant all kinds of churches in all kinds of places to reach all kinds of people. Our movement believes EVERY church can participate! This is the objective this book seeks to support.

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As Nazarenes, we know what we believe about the church will affect how we behave within the church. Our movement operates with a biblical understanding of the church. We choose to love the church as Jesus loves it (Ephesians 5:25-27). We understand for any

multiplying movement of God to be sustained, we must regularly clarify our theology and understanding of the church.

God is glorified and **his mission in the world advances greatly** when groups of churches lock arms together in his name to multiply his Kingdom. When God's people enjoy unity and agenda harmony, they are unstoppable! David writes, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). "For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore" (Psalm 133:3). Our churches and districts throughout the world are gaining agenda harmony! What is agenda harmony? Let's define it.

Agenda: "an outline or plan of the things that must be done"

Harmony: "a unified arrangement of parts with a common focus"

Putting these two words together, **agenda harmony** occurs when the members of a local church, district, field, or region work together for a common objective, with a common purpose, in a common spirit.

The apostle Paul knew the importance of agenda harmony within the church and wrote, “If you have any fellowship with the Spirit... then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Philippians 2:1-2). How good and pleasant it is when churches have these four characteristics. They

The Lord bestows his blessing where there is unity and agenda harmony.

are: 1) like-minded, 2) have the same love, 3) one in spirit, and 4) one in purpose.

As a team of leaders, we believe this is not just a suggestion or an option to God. “The Lord bestows his blessing, even everlasting

life” (Psalm 133:3), **only** where there is **unity** and **agenda harmony**. Only where people are one in spirit and have the same love will we see lost and broken people come to Christ. It is when local churches, districts, fields and regions are “brought to complete unity that the world will know” Christ’s church as he designed us to be (John 17:23). We do not contend for unity in local style or strategy, but unity through our shared commitments to interdependence and the agenda of Jesus.²

Paul urges church leaders to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:2). Unity of the Spirit does not mean uniformity. We can walk hand in hand without always seeing eye to eye. We operate locally and interdependently within districts to build healthy, multiplying Nazarene churches. The health and mission of God’s church always **begins** with our local church. But at the same time, the vision of Jesus is much bigger than each local church. What is at stake is the salvation of the planet—“Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jesus gives **every Christian** the commission to “go and make disciples of **all nations**” (Matthew 28:19). This includes both the people who live around us and those who

live around the world. The Nazarene multiplying movement is a movement of God through the people of God. From humble beginnings, it now spans 160+ countries globally, with 480+ districts, on 41 fields, in 6 world regions. Through a combination of unity and agenda harmony, Nazarenes have become a global community of believers that has led hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world to faith and holy living. Fueling this movement of God has required agenda harmony

Fueling the movement of God requires agenda harmony among local congregations and the districts with which they are connected.

among local congregations and the districts and fields with which they are connected.

We desire the following four ideas to shape the spirit of the **MULTIPLYNAZ** series: 1) God is at work raising up a new movement of church leaders who focus on those outside the church. 2) Much

of their work will go unnoticed. 3) Their ultimate purpose is to bring glory to God. 4) Agenda harmony is required for God's continued blessings on a local church, district, field or region.

Discussions about church multiplication quickly lead us into a discussion of strategy. This book will deal with some lessons we are learning about effective strategy. We need solid strategies for starting new churches and revitalizing existing churches. But we are learning that no matter how good the strategy, it will never make its desired impact unless we keep fueling agenda harmony.

A healthy new church, revitalized church or revitalized district happens when leaders of the church are able to gain agenda harmony. **Gaining agenda harmony is where every healthy church or district experiences their breakthrough.** We believe this is what happened to the disciples of Jesus through believing prayer on the day of Pentecost.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). We believe great agenda harmony is never gained through strategy. Churches struggle when strategy alone is their focus. We are

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learning that agenda harmony is gained “as the Body of Christ is called together by the Holy Spirit” through the power of Scripture. As Nazarenes, we declare, “We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord...the Body of Christ called

together by the Holy Spirit **through the Word**” (Articles of Faith, Manual, par 11). We believe the Holy Spirit alone creates, sustains and unifies the church.

Agenda harmony grows when we share a biblical understanding of the church. Spiritual power and spiritual results come through the work of the Holy Spirit as he reminds us of the Word among us (John 1:1,14, 14:26). It is the power of Scripture, not just strategy, which shapes the culture of leaders’ hearts and fuels agenda harmony bringing transformation in people’s lives, both inside and outside the church.

This book is about the foundations of spiritual movements. What we believe greatly impacts how we behave. The prayer of our team is that as you read this book, you will see and love the church as Jesus does in fresh, new ways. He literally “gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). He expects us to do the same. Our desire is that God

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will take these pages and use them for the multiplication of his church, “until the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,” (Habakkuk 2:14) and “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he reigns for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). Our prayers are with you.³

Questions for Reflection—Chapter 1

1. Do you feel you are part of the movement the book talks about where people never stop learning and are mentally growing and changing? Do you want to be? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe every Nazarene church can become a healthy, multiplying church regardless of size? Why or why not?
3. Are you the kind of person that likes the “status quo” and “ordinary church routine” or are you the kind of person who would like to see the church change in some ways? Why or why not?
4. Before reading this book, how familiar were you with “the Nazarene movement” that now has 480+ districts around the world?
5. How does being part of this kind of a movement make you feel? Do you believe the church you attend can participate in and become a more active, vital part of the Nazarene movement? Why or why not?
6. Before reading this book, have you ever heard of the term “agenda harmony?” When?
7. Have you ever read or thought deeply about the spiritual truth behind Psalm 133:1,3 and Philippians 2:1-2? How does unity and agenda harmony make God’s church unstoppable? Discuss your thoughts with a cohort, small group or class.

8. How would your church act differently if everyone in the church experienced agenda harmony? What would look different? What would be different? What would probably need to change? How would you know when agenda harmony had happened?
9. The book states, “It is the power of Scripture, not just strategy, which shapes the culture of leaders’ hearts and fuels agenda harmony bringing transformation in people’s lives.” Do you believe this statement? Share your thoughts about this with others in the group.
10. Have you ever been part of a “spiritual movement?” Do you believe it is possible that “the earth can be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14)? What would this look like?