

MAKING DISCIPLES |

Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples

BY FRANCIS CHAN WITH MARK BEUVING

David C. Cook (2012). 333 pp..

A Resource Review by Jason Saville

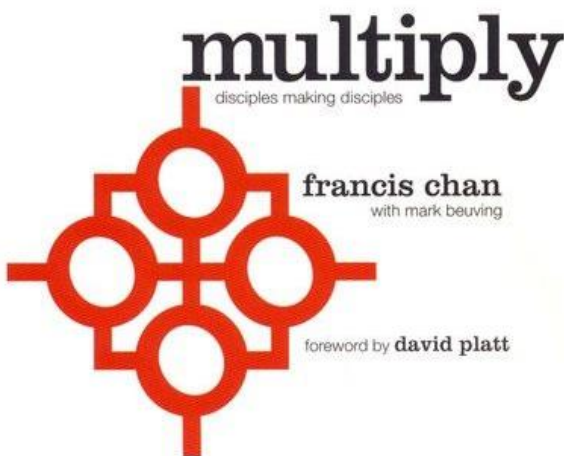
It's difficult to merely read Francis Chan's latest book, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*. That's because the well-known author, speaker, and church planter helps his readers experience the material. Chan grabs the casual passerby and forces him to sit down for a meaningful chat over a cup of coffee. And by the time you've taken the last sip, he's convinced you to personally flag down someone else to keep the conversation going.

If you scanned *Multiply* or only gave it a casual reading, you missed the point and need to return for a second pass.

Chan covers many things you might expect in a book on discipleship, but there are also several elements unique to this genre. I'll consider three such highlights before concluding with what Chan is *not* attempting to accomplish.

Practical, Transferrable Layout

First, *Multiply* isn't just a book about discipleship; it's a tool for discipleship. Chan and co-author Mark Beuving make it clear we fail to use the book to maximum capacity if we're not thinking about pouring our lives into someone else's for the sake of the gospel. Even the language reinforces this aim. *Multiply* isn't referred to as a "book" to be read but as "material" to be used and a "process" to be engaged. Chapters aren't "chapters"; they're "sessions" that together compose the overall "study guide."



“*Multiply* is designed as a simple resource you can use to begin making disciples,” Chan explains. “The goals of the *Multiply* material are to help you understand the Scripture and to give you the tools to disciple others in the process” (9). Chan asks us to do two things: teach what we learn and to share life, not just information.

Multiply consists of five parts: (1) Living as a Disciple Maker; (2) Living as the Church; (3) How to Study the Bible; (4) Understanding the Old Testament; and (5) Understanding the New Testament.

The book also directs readers to free online videos accompanying each lesson. These videos help the reader understand the heart behind the lessons and provide a relevant supplement that will resonate with discipleship in the 21st century.

When you make your way to the [homepage](#), you’ll be able to easily navigate through each session of the book with audio, PDFs, and videos. Along with questions for meditation and discussion scattered throughout each chapter, these online aids make *Multiply* a helpful resource for disciple-makers in the church for years to come.

Strong, Responsible Ecclesiology

Second, one of the most refreshing aspects of *Multiply* is its ecclesiological faithfulness. As a writer and developer of discipleship curriculum, I’m regularly asked to evaluate material in this genre. One consistent disappointment is the dearth of curricula that takes a high view of the local church. Even resources that aren’t anti-church often get stuck in neutral and fail to cast a positive vision for discipleship in the context of a local assembly.

Chan, however, places disciple-making squarely within the context of the congregation. “Let’s make sure we are not guilty of belittling God’s church in any way,” he explains. “It’s not a social club; it’s not a building, and it’s not an option. The church is life and death. The church is God’s strategy for reaching our world” (52).

Moreover, he’s careful not to vaguely throw around the word “church.” He indeed discusses both the universal and local church, but elevates the latter. Regarding the importance of the gathered assembly, he writes:

The Bible says the local church is important. God has entrusted local churches with godly leaders who teach us his Word and care for our souls. God has united us together in local churches to keep one another from sinning and straying from Christ. God has commanded us to gather together in local assemblies where we preach God’s Word, celebrate the Lord’s Supper, baptize new believers, and pray for and encourage one another. Then we scatter to care for believers and to share the gospel with unbelievers. Clearly, being a disciple and making disciples involves committing your life to a local church where you are joined together with other believers under biblical leadership to grow in the likeness of Christ and to express the love of Christ to the world around you. (53-54)

Amen and amen.

Thorough, Understandable Overview of Scripture

Third, *Multiply* leans heavily into the Bible for its vision of discipleship. I don't just mean Chan cites Scripture to validate his claims about discipleship; many books do this—and rightly so. But Chan actually walks the disciple-maker through the storyline of Scripture from beginning to end.

In Part 3, Chan provides helpful guidelines for reading and studying the Bible. In Part 4, he covers the Old Testament, leading the reader on a journey from creation to the exile and promise of restoration. Part 5 picks up in the Gospels and goes all the way to Revelation.

Easily more than three-fifths of *Multiply* deals with studying God's Word. The point is clear: if we're to make obedient disciples of all nations, the main tool we need is Scripture itself. We must be familiar with what God has revealed and learn to rightly handle that which is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. Chan knows what his book is—not the end-all-be-all, but a solid resource to connect believers to the God of the Bible.

What *Multiply* Isn't

Before reading *Multiply*, it's helpful to understand what this book is not attempting to accomplish. These aren't necessarily weaknesses; one can't expect every book on discipleship to cover every possible angle.

Multiply doesn't attempt a biblical theology of discipleship. Three foundational chapters on discipleship provide working definitions for what follows, but the book doesn't exhaust all biblical material on being or making disciples.

Multiply doesn't attempt to provide a laundry list of innovative insights in the disciple-making process. If you've read everything the discipleship genre has to offer, you might feel the book largely reviews the basics with no new angles—unless, of course, you haven't pondered the centrality of the church and the primacy of Scripture.

Multiply doesn't attempt to give the reader a lot of how-to style tips for discipleship. But the whole point is for the reader to take key concepts about discipleship, the church, and the Bible and to pass them on to others.

Chan's book should be in the arsenal of every disciple-maker. If readers engage in the *Multiply* experience as they're meant to, it will prove a trusted resource.

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Jason Saville is the senior pastor of an international church in China, where he lives with his wife, Kim, and four daughters. You can follow him on Twitter @jasoncsaville. This article was first published by *The Gospel Coalition* (TGC) on September 6, 2013. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>