

Celebrating the Gospel in Disciple-Making

Where: Seoul, Korea

When: 30 October 2025

1. Executive Summary / Abstract

This report provides a comprehensive summary of the plenary session titled, "Celebrating the Gospel in Disciple-Making." The panel, comprising distinguished leaders in global ministry, presented a unified and urgent call for a fundamental re-evaluation and re-centring of discipleship within the worldwide evangelical community. The core argument presented is that the most authentic and enduring celebration of the gospel is the active fulfilment of the Great Commission. However, the speakers contended that current models of discipleship are often imbalanced, over-emphasising church-centric programmes while neglecting the foundational role of the family and household.

The discussion identified a profound crisis evidenced by mass departures from the church in various parts of the world, a phenomenon described as "The Great Dechurching." The panellists argued that this trend is directly linked to a failure to cultivate authentic discipleship within the home, leading to a dichotomy between public faith and private life and a generational loss of faith.

In response, the panel proposed a multi-layered, integrated strategy for disciple-making that begins in the home and extends to national and international movements. Key strategies included a four-level framework for discipleship (from personal to national), a practical movement for family revival rooted in prayer, the intentional equipping of all family members to disciple their own households based on the principles of Deuteronomy 6, and the recognition of children not as passive recipients but as active participants in God's mission.

The overarching call to action was for church and organisational leaders to pivot their focus from creating programmes to empowering people. This involves equipping husbands, wives, parents, and children to weave faith into the fabric of their daily lives, thereby transforming homes into primary centres of spiritual formation. The session concluded that only by strengthening the "weak leg" of home-based discipleship can the Church hope to stand firm against cultural pressures and build a lasting legacy of faith for generations to come.

2. Detailed Summary of the Plenary Session

The final panel of the day, positioned as a climactic and essential conversation, explored the theme of "Celebrating the Gospel in Disciple-Making." The moderator framed the discussion by asserting that there is no greater way to celebrate the gospel than to carry out Jesus' final command to make disciples of all people. The session's focus was strategically directed towards the practicalities of discipling families, children, pastors, and leaders, acknowledging that these groups represent the vital ecosystem of a thriving global church.

A Four-Level Framework for Holistic Disciple-Making

The first panellist, David Kornfield, immediately challenged the audience with a bold and structured approach to discipleship. He urged every leader present to conceptualise disciple-making across four distinct but interconnected levels, arguing that the failure of any one level compromises the integrity of the whole system.

1. **Level One: Small Group Personal Disciple-Making.** This was presented as the non-negotiable foundation. David emphasised that without intimate, one-on-one and small group relationships dedicated to spiritual formation, all other efforts are destined to fail. He suggested a confronting diagnostic exercise for leaders to conduct in their home churches: to ask congregations to differentiate between being a Christian, being a disciple, and making a disciple, predicting a significant drop-off in affirmative responses with each question. This disparity, he argued, reveals a fundamental weakness in the modern church's understanding of true discipleship.
2. **Level Two: The Healthy Disciple-Making Church.** Moving from the individual to the collective, this level posits that personal discipleship cannot be sustained in a vacuum. It requires the support of a church culture that is intentionally geared towards making disciples. This goes beyond mere programmes and permeates the entire life of the congregation, from the pulpit to fellowship groups, creating an environment where discipleship is the norm, not the exception.
3. **Level Three: Movements of Healthy Disciple-Making Churches.** David argued that the cultural tides are too strong for any single church to resist alone. Therefore, individual healthy churches must link together to form collaborative movements. Such movements create shared momentum, resources, and encouragement, enabling them to exert a greater influence on their cities, regions, and denominations.
4. **Level Four: National Movements.** The final and most expansive level involves the strategic leadership of National Evangelical Alliances. These bodies are positioned to foster and guide multiple, synergistic movements of disciple-making churches across an entire nation. This macro-level leadership is deemed critical for mounting a credible, national response to sweeping cultural changes.

To underscore the urgency of this framework, David cited alarming statistics. He referenced the book *The Great Dechurching*, which documents the loss of 40 million church members in the United States over 25 years, a figure exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and internal scandals. He provided his own estimate for Latin America, suggesting a loss of 39 million church members in just a decade. His impassioned plea, quoting Ephesians 5:14, was for the leaders to "Wake up, oh sleeper," and embrace their critical role in building robust discipleship at all four levels.

Reviving the Family Altar: Discipleship in the Home

The conversation then transitioned from the macro-structure to the micro-heart of discipleship with Dr. PC Matthew, who focused on the family. He described the family as the primary and "best place of authentic discipleship," a place of vulnerability and honesty, much like the "scandalous WhatsApp group" mentioned in a previous session. He lamented that families within the church are in as deep a crisis as those outside it, struggling to live as true disciples amid contemporary pressures.

Dr. Matthew identified a core problem in the "dichotomy" of modern Christian life: "Sundays are sacred, Monday to Saturday is secret." This disconnect, he argued, has severely damaged the church's witness and caused subsequent generations to walk away from faith. His central thesis was unequivocal: "Strong families can only make strong churches."

In response, he introduced the **Family Revival Movement**, a global initiative aimed at rebuilding, repairing, and restoring homes, drawing inspiration from Isaiah 58:11. He proposed a simple, accessible starting point: a three-phase plan beginning with the restoration of the "family altar."

- **Phase One:** A call for families to commit to praying together for just seven minutes a day, for seven days a week, over seven weeks. This 49-day period of consistent prayer is designed to till the soil of the family's spiritual life. On the 50th day, churches are encouraged to host a celebration, a "Day of Pentecost for every family," where they can share testimonies of how God has worked.
- **Phase Two:** Following this period of prayer, the movement provides a seven-month curriculum for pastors to preach on seven foundational pillars of a godly family, addressing practical topics from scripture that many people have never been taught.
- **Phase Three:** The final phase focuses on moving families from being inwardly focused to becoming missional, equipping them to be a "lighthouse" for Christ in their communities.

He shared a powerful story of a young man who, after being convicted of neglecting his fatherly role at a camp, catalysed a movement of repentance and prayer among the fathers in his 600-family church, leading to a genuine family revival.

Intentional Equipping for Generational Impact

Greg built upon this theme, advocating for the church to become "intentional in equipping every member to disciple their home." He argued that discipleship fundamentally "pivots on relationship," and God's original design, outlined in Deuteronomy 6, was for this relational transfer of faith to happen primarily in the home. The modern church has, to its detriment, largely outsourced this responsibility to Sunday schools and youth groups.

He spoke of the D6 Movement, which partners with churches to realign their ministries to equip the home. He shared transformative testimonies from this work: a pastor convicted to start praying with his wife for the first time; another pastor moved to repent and seek forgiveness from his son. In Korea, he noted, many churches have aligned their weekly sermon, small group material, and family devotionals around a single theme, creating a powerful synergy. The Word "no longer stops at the pulpit; it comes alive at home." The fruit, he reported from one Korean pastor, was improved communication between parents and teens and a stronger biblical worldview among young people after just four years.

Greg concluded with a poignant analogy. He asked the audience to imagine being forced to hop on one leg for a year. That leg would become very strong, but the other would atrophy, leading to a crippling imbalance. This, he stated, is a picture of the church today: "Our churches are very strong, but our homes are not so." The work of re-strengthening the family is the critical task of this generation of leaders.

Recognising Children as Active Kingdom Participants

Finally, Alan Charter from the Global Children's Forum brought the focus to the youngest members of the church. He acknowledged that in a rapidly changing world, parents often feel ill-equipped to disciple their children, and churches frequently treat children's ministry as a secondary concern or an "afterthought."

He highlighted a significant cultural opportunity from the Patmos survey, which found that 71% of people across cultures agree it is a "good thing for children to know Bible stories." However, he challenged the leaders to move beyond this baseline to the psalmist's vision: "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord... so the next generation would know them... and they would put their trust in God." This is a call to an "incredible generational adventure."

Citing research that a person's core beliefs are largely formed by age 13, Alan stressed the lifelong impact of laying strong foundations in childhood. He passionately refuted the common view of children as passive learners, labelling them the "least deployed kingdom participants." He reminded the audience that "God has no grandchildren; we are all his children," and there is "not a junior Holy Spirit." Children are best placed to reach their peers and must be affirmed and equipped as "fellow kingdom builders."

He powerfully distinguished between the "gathered church" (our corporate meetings) and the "scattered church" (our daily lives in homes, schools, and workplaces). It is in the context of the scattered church that families, in all their diverse forms, function as critical agents of mission. He shared inspiring stories of this principle in action: a baby in a girls' hostel opening new doors for ministry; children asking their parents for extra sandwiches to share with classmates who have no lunch; and a teenager named Josh who, stirred by God, started a weekly Bible study with 17 of his football teammates. These examples served as a powerful reminder to never underestimate how God is at work in and through children.

3. Main Topic and Core Message

Main Topic: The Re-Centring of Christian Discipleship in the Family.

Core Message: The global evangelical church is at a critical juncture, facing significant decline due to a systemic failure in its approach to discipleship. The core message of this panel was an urgent and unified appeal to leaders to shift their primary strategy from building church programmes to intentionally equipping and empowering the family unit as the central and most effective environment for spiritual formation. True celebration of the gospel is not found in events, but in the faithful, daily, generational transfer of faith that begins in the home. This requires a radical rebalancing of ministry priorities, viewing the home not as a target for ministry but as the engine of ministry, essential for the health of the church and the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

4. Primary Arguments, Key Principles, and Theological Points

- **Argument: The Crisis of "Dechurching" is a Crisis of Discipleship.** The alarming rate at which people are leaving the church is a direct consequence of a shallow, programme-based approach to faith that fails to produce resilient disciples.
- **Principle: Discipleship Must Be Multi-Level and Integrated.** Effective disciple-making requires a holistic strategy that connects personal devotion (Level 1), healthy church culture (Level 2), collaborative church movements (Level 3), and strategic national leadership (Level 4).
- **Theological Point: The Family is God's Primary Design for Discipleship.** Based on the model in Deuteronomy 6, the home is the original and most vital context for the life-to-life transfer of beliefs, values, and spiritual disciplines. The church's role is to equip the home, not replace it.
- **Argument: The Dichotomy Between Sunday Faith and Weekday Life is Damaging our Witness.** The separation of sacred and secular life within Christian homes has created a crisis of authenticity, leading to a loss of credibility and the departure of younger generations.

- **Principle: Revival Begins with Prayer at the Family Altar.** A genuine, Holy Spirit-led revival in the church must be preceded by a revival in the home, starting with the simple, consistent act of families praying together.
- **Theological Point: Children are Full Participants in the Kingdom of God.** There is no "junior Holy Spirit." Children are not merely the church of the future but are active participants in God's mission today. They must be equipped and empowered, not just entertained or babysat.
- **Principle: Discipleship is Transformational, Not Just Informational.** True discipleship results in changed lives, which is best modelled and cultivated in the day-in, day-out reality of family life, where beliefs are lived out authentically.
- **Argument: The Church is Imbalanced, Over-Developing Programmes While Homes Atrophy.** Like a person hopping on one leg, the church has built a strong "leg" of institutional programmes while allowing the "leg" of family-based discipleship to weaken, resulting in a critical and unsustainable imbalance.

5. Conclusion and Main Call to Action

The session concluded with a powerful and unified appeal to the global leaders assembled. The panellists made it clear that the future health and vitality of the church do not depend on finding a new innovative programme, but on returning to an ancient, foundational principle: discipleship is nurtured in the home.

The main call to action is for every pastor, leader, and head of an organisation to commit to a strategic pivot. It is a call to move from seeing families as consumers of church services to empowering them as the primary producers of disciples. This involves a conscious shift in resources, training, and emphasis away from purely church-centric activities towards equipping husbands and wives, parents and grandparents, to build spiritually vibrant households. It is a call to make the family, not the programme, the "heartbeat of every discipleship" strategy.

Leaders were urged to go back to their spheres of influence and champion this reawakened church-and-home vision, weaving faith back into the fabric of everyday life. By strengthening the family, we strengthen the church, ensuring a lasting legacy of faith that can withstand cultural pressures and be passed down effectively to the generations yet to be born.

Invitation for Further Contribution

Your voice is a vital part of this global conversation. We invite you to add your reflections, insights, and questions to this discussion by visiting the following link: <https://weafeedback.com/thursday-30/>

1. Scroll down to the Panel session titles,
2. When ready, select 'Start Recording' and provide your input (responding to the questions below.
3. When done, select 'Stop'
4. No need to provide personal details
5. When ready, select 'Send'.

To engage with the report and contextualise the content for your ministry, access Spock.chat (if you have not yet registered, click here - <https://app.spock.chat/conference/wea>) It is highly recommended that you personalise your AI before engaging with the reports. To do so, select the 'Personalise your AI' agent in the Menu Bar and follow the instructions.