

D I G I T A L

Discipleship

Reimagining the Great
Commission in a Digital World

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Introduction by Jacob Bosarge

DEDICATION

To my amazing co-founders, Sara and Jacob, who have been there from the start. You didn't give up when many others would have.

Thank you for building this community with me.

To my global leadership and family: Josh, Kevin, Rosine, Erick, Martha, Godwin, Sarah, Teo, Joel, Stephanie, and Joeli. You have forever blessed me and I am changed.

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Introduction – A Car Full of Guitars

By Jacob Bosarge

In 2016, I was living the simple life of a 13-year-old: go to school, come home, do homework, and dread doing the weekly chores posted on the fridge. However, there was one day of the week that began to surpass all others in my schedule: Sunday. As all Pastors, Children’s Ministry Directors, and other church leaders know, Sunday can be anything but a day of rest. On a day that our Creator calls holy and invites us to Sabbath rest, we can spend much of our day exerting ourselves, pouring out, and doing things that make us long for an afternoon nap by the end of the final worship service.

As a “PK” (Pastor’s Kid), I quickly found myself taking responsibility in the church: not from the pulpit, behind a kids’ snack table, or in the church coffee shop. I learned to serve God from behind a guitar. As someone who has what I consider a heavenly (yet sometimes earthly and exaggerated) desire to work and serve, the moment I realized I could turn my love of music into a responsibility and role at church, I aspired to it. I loaded my guitars and gear in my mom’s car each Sunday, and I gradually started filling in when other volunteers couldn’t. Is the drummer out sick this week? I could manage by playing some percussion. The sound person is on vacation? I faked it until I made it. Slowly but surely, I began taking on various roles and jobs in the worship ministry at my local church.

My journey through different aspects of worship ministry continued over the next two years. Not only had I started playing guitar and bass regularly, but I also learned enough about A/V to run a service without causing complete sound or lighting chaos. Like many large churches, this one hosted three services. The first was held in a smaller, more intimate worship space. That early 8:30 am service became my musical haven, like a creative home. Every week, three or four others and I would play acoustic worship while a separate band rehearsed in the main sanctuary for the latter two services. This allowed me to play from 8:30 to 9:30 am and still have time to sit in on one or both of the next services without the responsibility of leading them. That is, until things changed.

In 2018, a new campus of our church opened in a quiet part of Brunswick, Georgia, called Blythe Island. It was a small building with a worship area no larger than the youth room at the main campus. However, this new space brought with it more volunteer roles to fill. Suddenly, we needed another band to perform at the 9:45 service at this new campus. So, being the brave volunteers we were, our small 8:30 band took on the challenge.

By this time, I was driving, and right after the closing prayer at the 8:30 service, I loaded my old Jeep with everything we needed and rushed down the road to arrive at the new campus just minutes before the service started. There were many days of stressful red lights and having to turn back because I forgot to pack something in the car.

In this season, no longer having the opportunity to sit and receive teaching, worship, and prayer in other services revealed an inadequacy in my walk with God. God was calling me to go deeper. I began to see the importance of independent Bible study and seeking God's face on my own. But most importantly, I began to realize how much more effective I could be in leading others to the throne of Jesus through worship if I regularly sought to be there myself.

With this newfound understanding of what it looks like to be an emotionally healthy worship leader (as much as a teenager can be), I began pouring myself into the 20-30 people who chose to attend church at the new Blythe Island campus. We stopped recycling all of our songs from the 8:30 service to the 9:45 service at the main campus down the road. We learned which songs this group responded to and tailored the worship experience accordingly. We spent Saturday nights in the building improving the sound system to make the service more enjoyable to listen to and the pastor easier to hear. I began to see the joy in serving others with a fierce passion.

This fire for service was nearly extinguished at the start of the 2020 pandemic. Doors closed, parking lots emptied, and connection cards, along with mini golf pencils, sat gathering dust. My empty jeep sat in the driveway on Sunday mornings. Like many other churches at the time, we decided to move our church online. Fortunately, my mom, her administrative assistant, and I had some experience with online ministry (more on that in the upcoming chapters). What we didn't

realize was that we were about to make a decision that would forever change the lives of not only my mother and I but people all over the globe.

In the early days of the pandemic, other members of the church worship team and I recorded ourselves playing our instruments. We then stitched the videos together with a sermon to create a church "service" that was ready to go live on Sunday mornings. As primarily a bass player during this time, I would usually record my part from the comfort of my bedroom. When I saw the final product with piano, guitars, and vocals on Sunday morning, it was just as new to me as it was to everyone else gathered around a laptop or TV watching the service.

As the months went by and distancing measures slightly eased, a large tent was set up in the church parking lot. This served as the new location for all church services for the next few months. While some people were excited about the return of in-person worship, others remained hesitant to face the public during these uncertain times. We were granted permission to expand our online ministry through a fully functional digital campus, The Online Chapel. Since the doors at our Blythe Island campus were still closed for services, we transformed the worship center into a recording studio. My jeep was once again loaded up with guitars and gears and going to do the work God had called me to, just in a different way than I originally imagined.

Tuesday night recording sessions, along with in-person worship on Sunday mornings, became our new rhythm during this season. We found our new normal providing worship and discipleship for this new digital campus, until we noticed things were changing in our small corner of the internet. Suddenly, we saw people with no connection to our church, who did not live in Brunswick, clicking on our page. While it started with just a few people, it gradually grew to a few dozen who regularly tuned in to our weekly online service. Whether they were people without a church family, those who didn't want to return in person, or were part of churches lacking an online option, we began to see a small community of new faces come to know Jesus more closely through our efforts on Facebook and YouTube.

What initially seemed like a novelty to us became a significant shift in how my mom and I would do ministry in the future. We discovered there are people in their homes or workplaces who don't feel the desire or have the ability to spend their Sunday mornings in a church. We connected with people around the globe who were looking to enhance their spiritual growth with focused discipleship. When I think back to those days of cramming guitars into the back of a car and racing between campuses, I see them differently now. Those days were training for me, practice for what God was about to do next, teaching us how to pack up our gifts and take them wherever people are, whether that's down the road or across the world through the internet.

Unexpectedly, we encountered a small group of individuals who allowed us to serve them for 30 minutes each week through a Sunday video. They also eagerly engaged in ongoing study and communication throughout the week. We connected with people from the West Coast of the US, the United Kingdom, Africa, and other locations both domestically and internationally. Suddenly, these individuals transformed from mere names on a screen into real people who were using our resources to deepen their understanding of the Creator.

We started talking with them, praying for them, and doing life with them. Moreover, it became a community of people pouring into each other's lives. We heard stories of how our efforts impacted people's lives, which motivated us to keep going. The financial rewards were nonexistent, but it was clear that the heavenly rewards were abundant. Because we embraced Jesus's Great Commission to go and make disciples, we had the opportunity to minister to others and be ministered to in the process. I have been encouraged by people I never would have connected with otherwise. I've heard stories I never would have heard, and I have met people I never would have met.

The rest of the story that began in that little coastal Georgia town will unfold in the upcoming chapters, but sitting here today, I can't help but be thankful for all the people we have met, served, laughed with, cried with, and shared life with over the past 5+ years. Let me be clear: the people we met online were not in any way better or more important than those 20-30 people who drove out to Blythe

Island every Sunday for those few years. But what I do want to emphasize is that the people we met on Facebook or YouTube are no less real than the in-person attendees, and they don't need Jesus any less. While we have had to (and still do) navigate scam accounts and fake profiles, behind all of that are people who genuinely long for connection in a faith-based community; people who may not be able to or confident enough to step into a physical church setting.

Digital platforms are not a replacement for the Church—they serve as a “Blythe Island Campus” for the existing kingdom that God and His people have been building for thousands of years. It is a new mission field, a place where people are already living and seeking meaning. When we are willing to pack up our metaphorical cars and travel to new locations and, using new methods, see that God has given us tools the Church has never had before. There were only so many churches my old Jeep could visit on a Sunday morning (two to be exact). Now, we have the exciting chance to join the physical church and use the tools of the digital world to impact the kingdom.

So the question is: will you go? Will you pack your car with the gifts God has given you and go where He sends you?

This book invites you to take your gifts and services—whether it's your guitar, notebook, paintbrush, or whatever else that already helps make disciples in the physical church—and bring them to where the world is gathered on digital platforms. Don't just wait for people to come to you; go and make disciples. My prayer is that as you read, you'll discover a vision for digital discipleship that stays faithful to the Great Commission, is grounded in the gospel and the Father's mission, and is open to the Spirit's creativity in this digital age.