

THE WISDOM · THE MISSION · THE MOVEMENT

The Jesus Organization

Chapter-by-Chapter Guide

A companion to the book by Kevin & Alma Brady. For each of the twenty chapters you will find the core idea, the leadership categories it strengthens, learning objectives, discussion questions for your team, and a practical step to apply before the next meeting.

Use it to prepare a workshop, lead a staff discussion, or read the book together as a team. Pair each chapter with the Jesus Organization Index assessment at jesusindex.org to see where your organization stands.

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The twenty chapters

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2. The Environment Jesus Entered — Roads, Pax Romana, language and religious institutions shaped the ministry context.
3. Why Jesus Chose a Movement Instead of an Institution — Movements travel through people, ideas, convictions and relationships — institutions do not.
4. The Twelve: Building a Leadership Team — Selecting and forming a core leadership team around the mission.
5. The Inner Circle: Peter, James, and John — Concentric levels of trust and access within a leadership structure.
6. The Seventy-Two: Scaling the Mission — Sending workers ahead in pairs to extend reach beyond the founder.
7. The Women of the Ministry: The Forgotten Infrastructure — The support network that sustained the ministry's daily operations.
8. Funding the Mission — How a traveling ministry was resourced, and who stewarded the money.
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17. Preparing for Succession — Building leaders who could carry the mission after the founder departed.

- 18. Pentecost and Expansion — Multiplication once the mission outgrew a single location.
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- 20. Why the Jesus Organization Still Works — Why the design has endured for two thousand years.

CHAPTER 1

The Mission Came First

Jesus never improvised His purpose. Every decision, invitation and refusal traced back to one clearly held mission.

STRENGTHENS: MISSION CLARITY · SPIRITUAL DEPENDENCE

OBJECTIVES

- State the mission of your organization in one sentence, from memory
- Identify decisions currently made without reference to the mission
- Distinguish mission from activity, programs and tradition

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where did our current mission statement come from, and who still uses it?
- Name a recent decision the mission actually settled. Name one it did not touch.
- What are we doing purely because we have always done it?
- Could a new volunteer describe our mission after one month here?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Before the next meeting, take one recurring activity and write down which part of the mission it advances. If you cannot, bring it to the team for a decision.

CHAPTER 2

The Environment Jesus Entered

Roads, a common language and a stable empire were the conditions Jesus worked within. Context is not an excuse; it is raw material.

STRENGTHENS: COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVES

- Map the conditions your organization actually operates in
- Separate constraints you can change from those you must use
- Find the 'roads' already available to your mission

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the three biggest external realities shaping our work right now?
- Which of them are permanent, and which have we simply assumed?
- What channels, platforms or relationships are already open to us?
- Who in our community is best positioned to move our message?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Choose one 'road' already open to you and use it once this month rather than building something new.

CHAPTER 3

Why Jesus Chose a Movement Instead of an Institution

Jesus built a movement, not an institution. Movements travel through people; institutions travel through buildings, budgets and permission.

STRENGTHENS: MISSION CLARITY

OBJECTIVES

- Diagnose where your organization behaves like an institution
- Identify permission bottlenecks that slow the mission
- Name one structure to simplify this quarter

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where does energy die in our organization — and at which step?
- What would a newcomer need permission for on their first week?
- Which of our structures serve the mission, and which serve our comfort?
- If our building disappeared, what part of the mission would continue?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Delegate one standing approval to the person closest to the work and tell them in writing.

CHAPTER 4

The Twelve: Building a Leadership Team

Jesus prayed all night, then chose twelve ordinary people and spent most of His time on them rather than the crowd.

STRENGTHENS: DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT · SERVANT LEADERSHIP

OBJECTIVES

- Name the people who form your actual leadership core
- Evaluate how your calendar reflects that core
- Define the criteria you use when selecting leaders

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How were our current leaders chosen — by calling, convenience or availability?
- How much of our week is spent with the few versus the many?
- What character traits are non-negotiable for us?
- Who are we developing that nobody would expect?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Schedule one recurring hour per month with each person you named for the next quarter.

CHAPTER 5

The Inner Circle: Peter, James, and John

Peter, James and John saw things the other nine did not. Concentric circles of access are not favoritism; they are capacity.

STRENGTHENS: DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT · COMMUNITY & RELATIONSHIPS

OBJECTIVES

- Understand levels of trust and access as a leadership structure
- Check whether your inner circle is chosen for growth or comfort
- Guard against the resentment that unmanaged access creates

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do we have an inner circle by design or by accident?
- Is our closest circle challenging us or agreeing with us?
- How do we explain access differences without creating a caste system?
- Who has outgrown their current level of access?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Invite one person into a decision they would normally only hear about afterward.

CHAPTER 6

The Seventy-Two: Scaling the Mission

Jesus sent seventy-two ahead of Him, in pairs, to towns He intended to visit. Scale came from sending, not from doing more Himself.

STRENGTHENS: DELEGATION & EMPOWERMENT

OBJECTIVES

- Identify work only the founder currently does
- Design a simple sending model with pairs and a debrief
- Set the boundaries a sent team needs to succeed

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What work are we hoarding that someone else could carry?
- Why do we send people alone when pairs are stronger?
- What instructions would a sent team need from us in writing?
- How do we debrief people when they return?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Send one pair this month with a clear assignment and a scheduled debrief.

CHAPTER 7

The Women of the Ministry: The Forgotten Infrastructure

The women of the ministry funded, hosted and sustained the daily work. The infrastructure that carries a mission is rarely the part that gets named.

STRENGTHENS: COMMUNITY & RELATIONSHIPS

OBJECTIVES

- Identify the unnamed people your mission depends on
- Examine who receives recognition and who does not
- Strengthen the support layer before it breaks

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which roles here are essential but invisible?
- Who has carried a load for years without being asked how they are?
- Does our recognition follow visibility or contribution?
- What support role is currently held by exactly one person?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Thank one unnamed contributor this week, specifically and in front of others.

CHAPTER 8

Funding the Mission

A traveling ministry was funded by supporters and stewarded by a treasurer. Money followed the mission; it did not set it.

STRENGTHENS: STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

OBJECTIVES

- Compare your budget against your stated priorities
- Review who handles funds and what accountability exists
- Name one resource decision that needs revisiting

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What percentage of our resources goes to maintenance versus mission?
- Who can spend money here without a second signature?
- When did we last stop funding something?
- Do our givers know exactly what their giving accomplishes?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Reallocate one line item toward a stated priority before the next budget cycle.

CHAPTER 9

Hospitality: The Network Behind the Movement

Homes were the operating system of the movement. Hospitality was not a nicety; it was logistics, funding and relationship at once.

STRENGTHENS: COMMUNITY & RELATIONSHIPS

OBJECTIVES

- See relational networks as operational capacity
- Assess how easily a newcomer enters your community
- Activate homes and tables as mission infrastructure

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How long does it take a newcomer to be invited into someone's home?
- Do our gatherings create relationship or just attendance?
- Who opens their home regularly, and are they supported?
- What relational network could carry our next initiative?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Host one meal for someone outside your usual circle within 30 days.

CHAPTER 10

Travel Logistics and Mobility

Moving a team on foot across a region takes planning, pace and margin. Logistics is a spiritual discipline when people are involved.

STRENGTHENS: STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

OBJECTIVES

- Audit the real cost of how your team moves and meets
- Build margin into the calendar deliberately
- Reduce friction that drains volunteer energy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where does our schedule assume unlimited energy?
- What logistics repeatedly break, and who absorbs the failure?
- How much travel or setup time do we count as ministry time?
- What could we simplify without losing anything essential?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Cut one recurring logistical burden from a volunteer's plate this month.

CHAPTER 11

Communication Without Technology

Without printing or broadcast, the message spread through repetition, memorable form and trusted messengers.

STRENGTHENS: COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVES

- Test whether your core message is repeatable
- Identify who actually carries information in your organization
- Replace announcements with transmission

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How many times has our team heard our priorities stated this quarter?
- Who do people actually believe when they hear news here?
- Where does information get stuck?
- Is our message memorable, or only accurate?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Say the same priority sentence in three different settings this month, unchanged.

CHAPTER 12

How Jesus Handled Crowds

Jesus drew crowds but never let scale remove access to the individual. Growth without access becomes performance.

STRENGTHENS: COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate whether growth has cost you personal access
- Design rhythms that protect one-to-one contact
- Decide what only the leader can do at scale

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Has our growth outpaced our care?
- Where do individuals still get heard here?
- What do we do publicly that should be done personally?
- Who is quietly falling through the gap?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Book three individual conversations before the next gathering.

CHAPTER 13

Feeding the Five Thousand: An Organizational Case Study

Five thousand fed: inventory taken, crowd grouped, work delegated, distribution supervised, leftovers collected. Compassion executed as operations.

STRENGTHENS: DELEGATION & EMPOWERMENT · SERVANT LEADERSHIP

OBJECTIVES

- Walk a real operation through the same five steps
- Practice delegating distribution rather than doing it
- Build accountability into the end of a task, not the start

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What resources do we already have that we have not counted?
- How do we break large needs into manageable groups?
- Who supervises quality once the work is handed off?
- What do we do with the leftovers — the follow-up nobody wants?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Run your next event using the five steps and debrief the group afterward.

CHAPTER 14

Time Management and Personal Discipline

Jesus withdrew before major decisions and after major success. Solitude was the engine, not the reward.

STRENGTHENS: STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES · SPIRITUAL DEPENDENCE

OBJECTIVES

- Audit the rhythm behind your output
- Protect withdrawal time as a leadership practice
- Notice which decisions were made while depleted

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is our pattern before big decisions?
- Does our culture reward exhaustion?
- Where in the week is silence actually possible?
- Who would notice if a leader here burned out?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Protect one half-day of unscheduled reflection in the next 30 days.

CHAPTER 15

The Apprenticeship Model

Formation happened by proximity: they watched, participated, attempted, were corrected, then were sent.

STRENGTHENS: DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES

- Place each emerging leader on the apprenticeship ladder
- Practice correction that develops rather than discourages
- Replace training events with shared work

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Are we teaching content or forming people?
- Who have we let attempt something and fail safely?
- How do we correct people here — privately, promptly, kindly?
- Who is stuck at 'watching' because we never let them try?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Take one person with you to something you would normally do alone this month.

CHAPTER 16

Delegation and Empowerment

Delegation without authority is errand-running. Jesus gave real authority, accepted real risk and debriefed the results.

STRENGTHENS: DELEGATION & EMPOWERMENT

OBJECTIVES

- Distinguish delegating tasks from delegating authority
- Define decision rights clearly for each role
- Establish a debrief habit after delegated work

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where have we delegated the work but kept the decision?
- What happens here when a delegated decision goes badly?
- Do people know the limits of their authority in writing?
- What are we afraid would happen if we let go?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Hand over one decision this week and resist reversing it; debrief instead.

CHAPTER 17

Preparing for Succession

Jesus spent His final season preparing people to continue without Him. Succession was the plan, not the emergency.

STRENGTHENS: MULTIPLICATION & SUCCESSION

OBJECTIVES

- Name a successor or successor pool for every key role
- Identify knowledge that exists only in one head
- Begin a written handover for the founder's role

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which roles have no identified successor?
- What do we know that has never been written down?
- Are we preparing people, or just hoping they stay?
- What would we need to start today for a smooth transition in two years?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Write one page of what only you know and give it to someone else.

CHAPTER 18

Pentecost and Expansion

At Pentecost the mission outgrew one location in a single day. Multiplication requires structures prepared before the growth arrives.

STRENGTHENS: MULTIPLICATION & SUCCESSION

OBJECTIVES

- Test whether your structures could absorb sudden growth
- Plan the second location, group or team before it is needed
- Decide what must stay central and what must not

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What in our model does not scale past its current size?
- What must be identical everywhere, and what can vary?
- Who would lead a second site or group tomorrow?
- Are we protecting quality or protecting control?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Start one new group, team or site with a leader you have developed.

CHAPTER 19

Organizational Lessons from the Early Church

The early church created structure in response to real problems — complaints, distribution, disputes — without losing the mission.

STRENGTHENS: MULTIPLICATION & SUCCESSION · SPIRITUAL DEPENDENCE

OBJECTIVES

- Handle conflict as an organizational signal, not a nuisance
- Add structure only where a real problem demands it
- Keep stewardship transparent as you grow

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do disputes actually get resolved here?
- Which of our policies exists because of one bad experience?
- Who is overlooked in how we distribute attention and resources?
- What structure would solve a current recurring problem?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Resolve one long-standing complaint with a written process this month.

CHAPTER 20

Why the Jesus Organization Still Works

The design has lasted two thousand years because it was built on mission, people and multiplication rather than buildings and control.

STRENGTHENS: MISSION CLARITY · SERVANT LEADERSHIP

OBJECTIVES

- Summarize the whole curriculum in your own words
- Choose the three changes your organization will actually make
- Set the review date that keeps them alive

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which chapter exposed our weakest point?
- What have we already started changing?
- What will pull us back to old habits?
- Who holds us accountable to these commitments?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Retake the Leadership assessment in 90 days and compare your category scores.

NEXT STEP

Reflect on your own organization

The Jesus Organization Index turns these chapters into a measurable reflection across nine categories. Take the assessment, invite your team, and revisit it as you work through the chapters together — jesusindex.org