



Doubling

By Andrew Heard

This discussion paper was originally prepared as a paper for The Gospel Coalition Australia's National Christian Leaders Mini-Summit [on the topic 'The Future of the Gospel in Australia'](#) held at Moore Theological College on 19th June 2025.

The ideas explored and the vision cast in this paper [were warmly received at the Mini-Summit.](#)

Andrew subsequently delivered a condensed version of the same material at the EV Church Staff Conference at Caves Beach on 20th October 2025.

In this paper, I offer four principles followed by a theory for pursuing gospel growth among Australian Reformed evangelicals. These ideas emerge from decades of observing church leadership and ministry patterns, with a particular eye toward the next twenty years. The goal is straightforward: to see twice as many Reformed evangelical churches or congregations as we have today—through numerical doubling existing churches, new plants, or both. This ambition is not mere optimism, but a response to the urgency of the Great Commission in a secularising context.

These principles build on two foundational convictions: first, that our ministry actions genuinely influence spiritual outcomes, even under God's sovereignty; and second, that the paramount outcome is conversion—true, transformative faith in Christ, not mere attendance or programs. From there, we turn to opportunities, problems, and the role of tested theories in navigating complexity.

First Principle: What We Do and How We Do It Makes a Difference to Outcomes

What we do and how we do it makes a difference to the outcomes—specifically, to spiritual outcomes. To make sense of this, let me introduce two concepts: inputs and outputs. By

inputs, I mean the things we do—the ministry activities we personally engage in. By outputs, I mean the changes that happen outside of us, in the lives of other people, as a result of our inputs. Outputs can sometimes correspond to the New Testament’s language of fruit, when fruit refers to the impact of gospel ministry in the lives of others. For example, Paul in Romans 1:14–15 speaks of the desired fruit of his work among the Gentiles—conversion.

So, restated: our inputs make a difference to outcomes. They affect outcomes. In sharper terms, our ministry inputs make a difference to spiritual outcomes. This remains true even though God is sovereign over all things—over inputs, outputs, and everything else. He gives the growth. Yet under his sovereignty he uses us to achieve his outcomes. He has created a world in which we are genuine agents whose actions effect real change. This is sometimes called the theology of compatibilism—all of God, and yet really me. Importantly, although we are real agents of change, we don’t control the outcomes. Only God controls outcomes. But we do influence them—in real ways.

This makes any discussion about our part in God’s future purposes deeply serious. What we do today, the decisions we make, may have a lasting and real impact on the eternal spiritual outcomes of people across our country. As Paul says in Romans 10:14–15, a person will not come to faith unless someone preaches, unless someone is sent. James says that we do not have because we do not ask (Jas 4:2b–3). Under God’s sovereign hand, we make a difference to spiritual outcomes.

Second Principle: The Outcome That Matters Most Is Conversion

The outcome that matters most among us is conversion—where conversion is not the mere profession of faith, church attendance, or a number in a building, but a genuine rebirth into a life lived under the lordship of Jesus. I assume this conviction is shared among us, so I won’t offer a full defence here. But two evidences suffice. First, the reality of God’s righteous judgment means that the unsaved will face eternal separation from him. Second, Jesus’ final charge to his disciples—after conquering sin, Satan, and death by his death and resurrection—was to make disciples (Matt 28:18–20). Jesus’ priority was clear: he came to save the lost for the glory of the Father. His last words were not “Go and build wells in Ethiopia” or “Go and heal all the sick”—both good things in their place—but “Go and make disciples.” That involves two tasks: bringing people to become disciples and deepening them as disciples.

If I could have one “wish”—one “free swing”—for what might be achieved in the next twenty years, it would be a vast increase in the number of people saved. That’s the priority. Buried beneath it are many other good desires—more love, prayer, intergenerational ministry, thriving kids’ ministry—but if given one wish, I would wish that great numbers across our country would be saved. Anything less would be strange for one who believes in heaven, hell, and the Great Commission. Let me make that more concrete: over the next twenty years, I would love to see twice as many saved people as we have now—particularly, twice as many Reformed evangelicals. That’s not an arbitrary goal; it’s a convictional one.

Do We Really Want Growth?

These first two principles are what bring us together—though for some, I fear they remain vague or only occasionally felt. Yet clarity here matters deeply for growth. Do we really want growth, numerical growth? Do we feel the burden of our part in it? If we aim to double, that would mean every church becoming twice as large, or twice as many churches. But too few of us truly want that kind of growth, or we want it without cost. We might long for more people to be saved but resist the changes or sacrifices that would make it possible. Sometimes, we even use prayer as a way to avoid change, hoping God will act without requiring anything from us. But if we truly want growth, we must be prepared for costly change.

Third principle: Progress Requires Attention to Opportunities and Problems

Any progress requires attention to at least two higher-order things: opportunities and problems.

Opportunities are the new possibilities that, if embraced, could lead to new growth. The challenge is that they’re not always obvious. I think of opportunities like a dragon emerging from a cave—an image borrowed from one of the ABBA songwriters. Inspiration, he said, was like a dragon hiding in a cave; you had to sit and wait for it to emerge. If you weren’t there when it came out, you’d miss it. Likewise, we must be together, alert and ready to recognise and act on the opportunities God might bring.

Problems, on the other hand, are the headwinds that impede growth. If left unaddressed they can sabotage our best efforts. Often there’s not just one problem but many, like the animals in the children’s book *Who Sank the Boat?* Each one adds weight until the

boat goes under. So too in ministry, multiple issues, big and small, combine to limit fruitfulness.

Fourth Principle: We Must Also Pay Attention to Uncertain Theories

Some things we do simply because they are right: preaching, praying, loving God and one another. But other things we do because they might make a difference to growth. These are matters of theory—educated hypotheses about what inputs might affect which outcomes.

We form theories and test them with wisdom. For example, some say the key to renewal is repentance; others say it's better apologetics; others, freeing people from overcommitment. Each is a theory to be tested. The question is, would it truly make the difference we long for?

Many people hold strong theories but rarely have the opportunity (or humility) to test them. Yet if we believe that what we do makes a difference (first principle) and that conversion matters most (second principle) then we must wrestle with these theories carefully.

My Theory

Here's mine, offered humbly for testing. My theory has two main pieces. First, we will see greater gospel fruit if we align more fully, deliberately, and intentionally around wanting that fruit, and if we speak in a more united way about it. My sense is that we operate with many different agendas, diluting our collective power. When churches or networks clarify and unite around a single, compelling gospel goal, momentum follows. We have that opportunity now—leaders from many contexts who could, together, sing the same song.

Second, the key to this is leadership—particularly the senior leader (and his wife), or those who function in that role. If doubling is the goal, the main lever we can pull is leadership. God often brings growth through godly and gifted leaders. As the Pastoral Epistles emphasise, the church rises or falls, humanly speaking, with its leadership. We can provide training, materials, and programs—but if leadership is weak, these efforts falter. Conversely, strong leadership can transform even struggling churches.

This raises the question: what makes for an effective leader, a godly and fruitful leader? We must face the reality that while much is good, we also see real deficiencies in character, conviction, and competence among Australian Reformed evangelical leaders. We have patterns and assumptions that produce capable but not always missionally clear leaders.

Some are unclear on the mission itself. I once spoke with a pastor whose vision was to have a ministry centre within walking distance of everyone nearby. Having achieved it, he was unsure what came next. When I suggested shifting toward reaching everyone within thirty minutes, he resisted—it wasn't who they were. They were “Bible guys”, not “mission guys”. I was stunned. How can we be Bible people and not mission people?

We have drifted into a culture where mission has slipped down the priority list. Even among leaders gathered to address evangelistic decline, mission often ends up in the middle of the list of priorities. Something has happened in our leadership culture—an erosion of conviction, clarity, and heat.

But if we could regain alignment around one great gospel priority—say, doubling Reformed evangelicalism in Australia over the next twenty years—and renew our focus on developing godly, urgent, clear-minded leaders, then under God, we might see remarkable change. If we did this together, we might truly see a difference in outcomes.