



GOSPEL *for* LIFE

De-sizing the Church with Karl Vaters Season 6, Episode 1 Transcript

[00:00:00.000] - Announcer

Welcome to the Gospel for Life podcast. We provide resources to help you become more like Jesus. Here's your host, Darryl Dash.

[00:00:19.520] - Darryl Dash

Well, if you're a pastor, be prepared to be asked a question, how big is your church? Now, that is not necessarily a bad question, but it does tell you something about how we see the church. It reveals our obsession with size. We tend to think that bigger is better, and we get proud when our numbers are up and discouraged when our numbers are down. I've been asked that question before, and I've been ashamed when I've been in a small church, which is crazy because there's nothing to be ashamed of. You're a pastor of a small group of people. It's actually an incredible privilege. But I sense sometimes that a lot of pastors and even churches struggle with low grade discouragement because they're not bigger they are.

That's why I'm grateful for the ministry of Karl Vaters. He has served in small church ministry for over 40 years, and so he speaks and writes from decades of hands-on pastoral experience. I've appreciated a number of his books and articles online. His latest book is called Desizing the Church: How Church Growth Became a Science, Then an Obsession, and What's Next. I really appreciated it, and I had high expectations, but it was better than I expected.

[00:01:28.300] - Darryl Dash

I think that you'll benefit from it, too.

So, Karl, good to talk to you today.

[00:01:33.190] - Karl Vaters

Thank you. Well, that's about as nice as an introduction as I've ever heard. High expectations, and I exceeded it. I don't know that I've ever done that in my life with anyone. That was very nice.

[00:01:42.250] - Darryl Dash

Well, that's good. So I have to begin here. I think I posted something, a picture of Toronto one time, and I remember you commenting that you wanted to come back to Toronto. I had no idea that you had a Toronto connection. It actually came up in your book. What is your connection to Toronto and to Canada?

[00:01:59.500] - Karl Vaters

Yeah, I I was actually born in Newfoundland. My whole father's side of the family is from there. My parents met at Bible College in Peterborough, Ontario. My mother was from Northern Ontario, Timmins area. And so they met there. I grew up in Toronto. That was where I spent my early teenage years. We moved to California when I was 16, and I've been there ever since. But I still have a lot of family in the Toronto area. When I dream at night, most of it's still Toronto dreams. Those dreams tend to go way back into those regions of our lives, don't they? So yeah, Toronto has got a very soft spot in my heart.

[00:02:38.690] - Darryl Dash

Well, if there's any part of the states I wanted to live in, at least climate-wise, I think California would be right up there. You've got the best of both worlds, so good for you.

[00:02:47.420] - Karl Vaters

Yeah. We visited Australia a couple of years ago, and it felt really at home because it's got a Canadian feel and background from British Commonwealth to it, but it's got the Wild West of California and the beaches and the surf. So it felt... Australia felt like both parts of my life combined. It was pretty cool.

[00:03:10.550] - Darryl Dash

It's good to talk to you because I talk to a lot of Americans. I love Americans. There's a lot of love about the country. And yet when I ask them, What do you think of Canada? They say, We don't. It never even occurs to us. There's a country up there.

[00:03:22.910] - Karl Vaters

And when you ask Canadians what they think of Newfoundland, it's about the same response.

[00:03:27.040] - Darryl Dash

That's right. You know what I think of? I think of the beauty of Newfoundland. I think of just, I've never been, but I long to go. I also think of the Newfoundland accent, which is a beautiful one. Do you ever revert to that when you're with family?

[00:03:44.640] - Karl Vaters

No. I don't because we moved from Newfoundland when I was two, so I was born there, but I wasn't even vocal when we left. But we can always tell when my dad is on the phone with somebody from Newfoundland, he starts reverting and doesn't even realize. The Newfoundland accent is entertaining. It really, really is. It's a fun accent. It's one of the few accents, but weirdly enough that I can't just put on quickly. I've got to really think through because it's got some edges to it that are very, very different than anywhere else.

[00:04:14.020] - Darryl Dash

Yeah, absolutely. It's English, but I can't understand it. When they're heavy into it, I don't understand it at all.

[00:04:20.280] - Karl Vaters

Oh, yeah. I was born literally in a small fishing village called Grand Bank. Even Newfoundlanders, not a lot of them have heard of that town. They've got a stoplight. They don't need it, but they've got a stop light. When you're in those kinds of towns, it's really thick. It's a lot of fun. It's a great accent. It's a lot of fun. They know it. Newfoundlanders have an amazing sense of humor about themselves They don't take themselves seriously, and there's a real joy there.

[00:04:48.150] - Darryl Dash

Yeah, absolutely. Well, Karl, how did you begin to think and write about small churches? It's not your typical topic, and yet it's such an important one.

[00:04:57.170] - Karl Vaters

Yeah, I've been in Pastoral Ministry over 40 years, and I was maybe one of the very last graduating classes in the early 1980s of the old-school way of teaching pastors. There wasn't a church growth major. There wasn't a church growth class. I don't think I ever heard the term church growth the entire time I was in Bible College. Then within about five years after I came out, everything had shifted over to the church growth mode. I saw that. I was excited by it. I adopted it, unlearned and relearned, and then just really kept pushing for the whole church growth paradigm. If the church is healthy, it will grow, remove the obstacles, stop, grow, all of those things that we heard. While I learned a lot from it and gained some great things from pieces of it, I never saw the numerical increase that the church growth principle seemed to promise. It wasn't just if you do these things, it'll go well. If you do these things, it's inevitable that you'll get bigger. I now call it the myth of inevitability. After years, in terms of chasing that, I almost left the ministry, almost flung out, and found myself in a pastoral counselor's office trying to figure out what was going on.

[00:06:08.170] - Karl Vaters

And bottom line, at that point, I really started to rethink what success in ministry looks like. And I started realizing I was pastoring a really, really healthy church, and it was doing great missional work, and it was reaching people, and we were discipling people and sending them out. We just simply weren't growing to the numbers that others seemed to think we should grow to. So finally, I just decided, You know I'm just going to accept this, and I'm going to do my best at this size. And then as I started looking around, I found out that something like 90% of churches are in my position. They're not seeing the numerical increase that seems to be promised by the church growth groups, and they're serving about half the body of Christ, these small churches are. And so many of them are doing extraordinary work. And I think we'd do even better work if we weren't burdened with this push to get constantly bigger. So I started encouraging small church pastors. I started finding small church specific resources. I put them out there in a good way that I could, and it just really hit a sweet spot for a whole lot of pastors.

[00:07:06.040] - Darryl Dash

You and I have a similar story. I went to seminary, and I didn't hear... I don't remember hearing anything about church growth. And one of the first churches in Toronto I served at, the pastor handed me some books, see Peter Wagner and some others, and said, here, so very similar to your experience of being exposed very early on in ministry to something that was brand new within the church. Yeah, so help me understand. I mean, I think I understand, but help me unpack If numbers aren't what matters most, why are we so obsessed with numbers when it comes to church these days?

[00:07:37.610] - Karl Vaters

Yeah, well, that's actually the question that I started asking myself about two, two and a half years ago, because I've been creating resources for about 10 years to help encourage small church pastors, to help give them small church specific resources. But I spent so much of my time just trying to get over that pump of it's okay to be small and to encourage them before they're even ready to accept the resources. I thought, what can I do to remove this obstacle? Where did we get this obsession with bigness? Because nothing comes from nowhere. Everything comes from somewhere. And I thought this obsession with bigness is not a natural human condition necessarily. So it had to have come from somewhere. So I did a lot of research, and very long story, very short. I started with researching the Church Growth Movement, which was begun by a guy named Donald McGavran, who was a missionary to India from the '20s to the '40s. He was actually '30s to the '50s. He started seeing things happen in India, and then when he did some study in Africa as well, where entire people movements were coming to Christ at the same time.

[00:08:40.600] - Karl Vaters

What happened was his principles were about how to help people move to increase the percentage of Christians in a community, let's say. But he was concerned that if he presented it to our modern ... he applied for how to make the church get bigger. And so he tried to resist that, but incredibly, the other took over. This culture of trying to buy own thing bigger is where the principles applied, even though that wasn't where it ended. This North American, and particularly, quite frankly, I'll own up to it here as an American citizen. It's a very American obsession where we have a separation of church and state, where the bigger the crowd is, the more money you get, the bigger the church you can build. That's a very American a mindset. We melded these two, these really great new

principles that Donald McGavran came up with, with this whole manifest destiny of the Americans. Then we exported it to a great many places in the world. In fact, there had been a significant number of church historians from other countries to talk about how, yeah, it's really interesting that Donald McGavran took principles from India and Africa, brought them to America.

[00:09:57.840] - Karl Vaters

America then morphed them into bigger better and sent them back around the world again. So that's a really short story of what I think I think about three chapters in *Desizing the Church* to unpack. But yeah, that's the historical basis for it.

[00:10:13.710] - Darryl Dash

One statement that you made in the book that shocked me is you say that numerical growth wasn't a central concern for most of church history, and yet it is our bread and butter now. It's hard to think of church ministry without thinking of numerical growth. So there's been a lot of movements that have come into Christianity. What made that movement that started with McGavran, the Church Growth Movement, what made it such a powerful force within the North American church?

[00:10:41.180] - Karl Vaters

Well, his principles are really strong and really valid. He didn't just build a single big church and then say, Now, let's see if we can duplicate it elsewhere. He looked outside of our cultural context and found what I believe are mostly really universal principles, removing the obstacles growth, investing in places where God is already moving, all kinds of everything, so much of what we commonly ask ourselves. And so when you read it and when you hear it and you go back to the core of what you taught, you go, Oh, this actually does make sense. So it captured our attention because, first of all, it made sense. Secondly, he presented it just at the time in the 1950s, 1960s, and then it really started to take off in the '70s and '80s. But he presented it at the time when in North America, we were building the infrastructure of our countries. When you look at the 1930s and '40s, there's a bigger shift in the infrastructure of our countries from the '30s and '40s to the '70s than there are from the '70s to today. About all you got from the 1970s to today, infrastructure-wise, is now have any of that.

[00:11:51.220] - Karl Vaters

But by the 1970s, electricity, plumbing, highways, automobiles, all of this was in play. But as this was all being laid across North America, he was coming in with a programmatic way of looking at church as well. That was an era where looking at things programmatically and looking at things structurally and looking at how do these pieces fit together, an industrialization and a corporatization that was in the air for us. Now somebody came along and give corporate language to the church, and we jumped on it because that was working everywhere else. We were now creating very inexpensive clothing that you didn't have to make at home for yourself anymore, but you could get off the rack. You were getting food that was already prepared in the box, and all you had to do is heat up, and that never happened before. The most generic thing of all that is slice bread. Donald McGavran gave us slice bread for how to approach church. He gave us principles that adapted the programs, and that was an arrow where that was a big thing for us. We are past that now. Now it's more It's more about niche marketing, and it's more about repurposing and so on.

[00:13:04.030] - Karl Vaters

And this whole idea of institutionalization is actually distrusted now. But back then, institutionalization was having its moment. And so when he brought that in, it clicked with where everybody was.

[00:13:16.930] - Darryl Dash

I really appreciate how... In the book, you take a critical look at the whole Church Growth Movement, but you don't say it was all wrong. There are some things that we benefit from and we can learn from, and yet some things that we need to examine and maybe re examine and let go of. So what are some things that we should hold on to from the Church Growth Movement?

[00:13:36.580] - Karl Vaters

Yeah, there are several things that I really appreciated about the Church Growth Movement. For instance, before Church Growth Movement came along and was really strong, and basically the '80s and '90s was really its heyday. Most things that we got from congregations, when congregations shared things with each other, it was almost exclusively through denominations. Back then, when the denomination came up with an idea, They put it through their printing press, and then they sold it to their own people,

and it was pretty much locked into only that denomination. You could go to the smallest and the biggest church in a town of the same denomination, and it felt the same. You can go to two churches of the same size with different denominations, and it felt very, very, very different. A lot of the denominational walls dropped in some good ways. I think there are theological distinctives that are still there and that are important. But the idea that he can't run a kids program or a youth program that was created in another denomination, that's gone now. Those walls came down. And along with those walls coming down, a great generosity of sharing of ideas opened up.

[00:14:40.810] - Karl Vaters

So I remember, I'm old enough to remember, if we were going to use it in our denomination, our denomination had to think it up, we had to organize it, we had to print it up, and we only distributed it among our churches, and you had to pay a good bit of money to get the book. But today, that's gone. Now, if anybody comes over the great idea of how to do church better, our church growth opponents, and quite frankly, our mega church friends are extraordinarily generous. They share it as quickly as they can on a free podcast, in a free article. They put it in a book, they'll speak it at a conference, and nobody's trademarking church ideas anymore. They really aren't. So there's an openness and a generosity that I find very, very encouraging.

[00:15:23.970] - Darryl Dash

So help us try to figure out this. We've been living in this culture where bigger is better, and we've got to just feel inadequate about our church if it's small and not growing numerically and becoming... I remember the days when if your church wasn't becoming Willow Creek, none of our churches were becoming Willow Creek, but we had this sense of, we got to make it happen. We got to try to make it happen. How do we begin to move away from this unhealthy obsession and actually find better ways to measure church?

[00:15:54.220] - Karl Vaters

This is the challenge of the ministry that I do in Helping Small Churches Thrive, is helping get people off of that one track because we're so ingrained with it as you open the podcast with the question of, what's your church running? These are the kinds of questions you're asked on a regular basis. This is the big challenge is we've got to get off of that. The only way I know to get off of that is that we've got to refocus on, Okay,

who did Jesus call his church to be? How has Jesus been building his church for 2,000 years encountered? I can't see how anybody, for instance, could read the Bible through from cover to cover, close the cover, sit back and go, Oh, we're supposed to get as many people in the building as possible. That's what Jesus was all about. You can't get that from the text. So we've got to We're going to ask ourselves, what does flow naturally from the text? And I know already there are church book appointments out there going, But what about this? But what about this? I get that there are Jesus fed the 5,000, 3,000 saved on the day of Pentecost.

[00:16:59.490] - Karl Vaters

I I've heard all of those arguments. I get it. But you've got to really impose a church book mindset onto those. When you read the entire text of the Bible, getting more people in the room doesn't come from the text itself. So we need to go back to scripture. We need to ask, what happened when Jesus said, I would build my church? I've got this comical conversation in my head. It comes from the ideas in scripture, but the conversation is not in scripture, so I want to make that separation. This is all in Karl's brain, okay? Which may or may a good thing. But I've got this thing in my head where there's this conversation with Jesus and the disciples, and I can see Jesus looking at his disciples and going, Okay, I'm allowed to leave, but here's the deal. I'm going to build my church. I want you to go make disciples. And the disciples look at him and go, Got it. We're going to go build the church. And he goes, No, I'm going to build my church. You go make disciples. And they go, Oh, okay, we got it. We'll go build the church.

[00:17:56.580] - Karl Vaters

No. We keep When we're obsessing with numbers, it's like we're trying to take Jesus' job from him. Don't take Jesus' job from him. He's better at it than we are. So let's figure out what Jesus said he would do, build the church. Let's do what he called us to do, which is make disciples. Yes, if you make disciples, that will build his church. It may not make bigger congregations, but it will build the Kingdom of God.

[00:18:23.660] - Darryl Dash

Man, I found the chapter you wrote on that very refreshing. Discipleship is really the solution to every problem the church faces. And I couldn't have put it better. You just say so many good things in the book. I've highlighted a quote here, We should prepare for growth. We should be ready for growth, but we should not pursue growth. I had to

reread that because for years I've been taught So you've got to not just prepare and be ready, but you got to pursue it. And then you write, We should pursue Christ, his mission, his glory, and the making of disciples. That sounds so basic and yet so radical these days. Could you unpack a little bit It is weird that it sounds radical, doesn't it?

[00:19:03.600] - Karl Vaters

Yeah. Here's what's behind that. Most of the time when we pursue Christ and his kingdom, that will lead to, all the time, that will lead to people coming to know Christ and the disciples being made. And quite a lot of the time, that will lead to increase in the size of our churches. So you can pursue Christ and see numerical church growth happen at the same time. But we have to always We have our minds on we are not pursuing church growth pursuing or pursuing Christ. Because the moment we say, Okay, I'm pursuing Christ in order to get my numbers up, or I want a church to be healthy because we've noticed that healthy churches get their numbers up, or we want to spend time in worship because we've noticed when we spend more time in worship, we get our numbers up. The moment any of those things that should be an end in themselves become a means to the end of numerical increase, we put ourselves in a dangerous place. Because at some point, not a lot, but at some point, They are going to come in conflict. There will come a point where you can look at it and go, Okay, either we can do what Jesus says, and we might lose some people, or we can compromise a little bit on the message to keep our numbers up.

[00:20:15.200] - Karl Vaters

If numbers are the goal, then that temptation becomes more than we can bear. But if pursuing Christ and his kingdom is always the uppermost goal and everything else is secondary, then there's less likelihood that we will be tempted to get our numbers up. That temptation will never disappear entirely, but we can reduce its strength. If we're not seeing honor in Christ and worshiping and fellowship and all of the functions of the church, when we're not seeing them only as a means to an end, but as an end in yourselves, we can lower the temptation risk of compromising on our value system.

[00:20:49.530] - Darryl Dash

How do we measure the health of a church, therefore? If we're not going to rely on numbers, what are some good alternative metrics that we can use to try to just even measure the effectiveness of what we're doing?

[00:21:02.720] - Karl Vaters

Yeah, that's one of the most frequent questions that I have been asked over the 11 or so years that I've been doing this is that. It's a valid question because we are used to looking at things with metrics. We're used to looking at things with numbers attached to it. So I started thinking through this and I actually created what I call the Church Health Assessment Tool, and I put it in the appendix of the book. And what it does is it goes through 16 statements under four key categories of church health. And what I do is I make the statement that I say, write down a number, zero, our church is not doing this at all, all the way to five, our church is doing this really, really well. And so a couple of them, for instance, are under the main category of theology under scripture, it says, The eternal truths of the Bible are taught well and applied to our lives in practical ways. Zero, our church doesn't do that well at all. Five, our church is doing that awesomely. That is a non-numerical way of judging whether or not a church is healthy.

[00:21:58.030] - Karl Vaters

Every church should be doing that. The next The next question is, Worship through song, prayer and action is an essential focus of our congregation. You can write down, No, we think of that. That's a zero. Oh, yeah, we're doing that awesomely. That's a five. There are 16 of those statements, and they all go to the essential aspects of what it is that Jesus has called his church to be and what he's called his church to do and who he has called his church to be. Since we have a hard time assessing things without numbers attached to it, I attach numbers where you can look at it and go, Okay, it turns out that on these three aspects of scripture or on these two aspects of leadership, we're doing really well, but on the other things, we're not doing so well, and it's all non-numerically based. It really just goes back to the things that Jesus says his church should be and the things that he says his church should be.

[00:22:48.330] - Darryl Dash

Yeah, that's really helpful. It's a great tool. I appreciate you made it free and included right in the book for churches to use. Very valuable. Well, Karl, I want to switch a little bit to thinking about pastoring because I feel like a lot of us pastors, we've again been influenced by our current North American model of pastoring, which is usually about... I remember thinking, I want to do great things for the Lord, but the big things for the Lord that I wanted to do involved me also becoming a big deal, pastoring a big church, my

name becoming well known, a household name, writing books that would sell well, all these things. In the book, you elevate some of the dangers around elevating leaders to the status of celebrity. And yet I think there's an element which every, not every pastor, but a lot of us pastors struggle with this temptation to try to be a big deal. What are some of the dangers we face in trying to be more than just a pastor? I mean, a pastor, when I say just a pastor, what am I saying? A pastor is a great thing. But why are we content with that?

[00:23:51.170] - Karl Vaters

It is interesting, though, because all of us have used the phrase like that. So it does tell you where we are on that. Yeah. I originally, when I wrote the book, I was only I'm going to do a paragraph or two about the danger of celebrity. But the more I started looking at it, the bigger and more important it got until it ended up being a chapter on its own. The chapter is entitled Inevitable: Why the Christian Celebrity Culture Guarantees Moral Failure. I wrote that title out I thought, That's a really strong title. Guarantees Moral. Then as I thought about it, it's true. Now, I'm not saying that every pastor who gets famous will fail morally. It's not what it says. But the Christian celebrity culture, that culture will Absolutely increase the amounts of moral failure for a couple of very simple reasons. One, if you elevate the spotlight, then people who want the spotlight are going to chase it. If you elevate what happens from stage over what happens in the church lobby, then people who want to be on stage and want the attention are going to seek it. When you increase the value of the Christian celebrity culture, you attract narcissists.

[00:24:52.430] - Karl Vaters

You just do. And so there's an inherent danger in that, that the people who are the most desirous of their own platform rather than the glory of God, are going to find themselves on the biggest platforms and the biggest spotlights because that's what they're seeking. Now, you do have others. You have great pastors who are very well known, many of whom I could name right now, that appear to me to have found themselves in a place of spotlight simply because the quality of the work and the character of their lives is so exemplary, and for some reason, they are in a situation, and I believe God put some of them in a situation where their name, along with their message, is really well known. Others who have just as much character, who are doing just as much work for God, are never known outside of the small town that they'll spend most or all of their lives doing ministry in. I absolutely refuse to believe, in fact, I know for sure, that God does not

value one over the other. We do. We see the celebrity pastor and think they must be doing something extra special, but I I can't believe that God sees it that way.

[00:26:01.880] - Karl Vaters

What's amazing, Darryl, is this. As pastors, we know this because we tell our congregations this all the time. The person who serves behind the scenes is just as important as the person on the platform. We need you who are part of the cleanup team. We need you who are part of the setup team. We need people who are working in the nursery just as much as we need musicians on the stage. We tell them this, and we believe it when we say it, and then we don't apply the same principles to our own lives. And it gets very dangerous when we do that.

[00:26:32.050] - Darryl Dash

I'm writing an article right now on a pastor in Saskatoon who's not very well known at all, but the people who know him best say that this guy is just going to go from here till death, serving the Lord, whether it's two people or 200 people. But this guy has been so effective in ministry and raising up other leaders and planting churches, and actually have just had their first grandchild church. So multiple generations of is being planted. And this guy, when you talk to him, he is, as somebody said of him, he's almost boring and yet spectacular at the same time. I aspire to be like that, just to be faithful and to make a deep impact, but maybe not be known by anybody beyond my local church. Those guys are my heroes.

[00:27:19.350] - Karl Vaters

Yeah, I agree. I think the chasing of legacy is often a very, very dangerous thing. Of all places, something came across my online screen the other day, one of all people playing Zappa, the weird rock and roller from the 1970s and 1980s. Somebody at one point asked him, What do you want to be remembered for? He says, I don't want to be remembered at all. I was like, You took the interviewer back. What do you mean? You're putting out this music. You obviously want to be remembered. No, I'm putting out this music because I love doing this music, and I record it because I want other people to hear this music. If my music survives, that's fine, but I don't care if anybody remembers my name.

[00:27:58.650] - Darryl Dash

That's not the point.

[00:28:00.290] - Karl Vaters

It's weird to be quoting Frank Zappa as an example to pastors, but I think if we had that attitude more often, I think the church would be happy.

[00:28:10.410] - Darryl Dash

Absolutely. Let me just ask you one more question, then I want to ask you a couple of personal ones. Would encouragement would you give to a pastor who might be listening right now who's felt discouraged, maybe that the ministry that they thought they would have has never materialized and things are smaller and they're unknown? What encouragement would you give to them?

[00:28:27.500] - Karl Vaters

You are probably You are certainly a much better pastor than you think you are. You are probably doing a much better job than you think you are. I know that because I've met so many pastors like that who are laboring, they're faithful, they're godly, they are having great impact on the people within their circle, but the circle just happens to be small. But have the impact in the circle God gave you, if he expands the circle, then you're going to have to adjust the way the impact What happens to it. Because when a circle gets bigger, here's what's weird, it gets... You impact more people, but you don't impact them as deeply. So we have to make choices. And sometimes those choices are made by the size of the audience God gives us. The smaller the group of people, the deeper we can go in the impact that we have upon them. But why do we go the more people we're impacting? Quite frankly, the shallower the impact is. And don't think that you need to trade wide, but shallow impact, but stay with the smaller but deeper impact. I believe that is closer to the heart of God than the other.

[00:29:37.740] - Darryl Dash

That's so good. I appreciate that. Well, I try to ask every guest I have on here these same two questions. So here we go. Let me see how this goes. What has God been teaching you lately?

[00:29:49.140] - Karl Vaters

Oh, he has been teaching me gratitude. In the last three or four years, especially, there's been no thought, there's been no attitude there's been no character trait that has been elevated higher than that in my own heart. I am at a point where, as I look at my life right now and where God has placed me, and we have the same challenges everybody else has. We got aging parents, and we've got financial issues that we're trying to figure out. We've got medical issues. We got all the stuff that anybody else has got. But I got to tell you, if Jesus never did one more thing for me ever again in my life, if at this on, I was Job and everything collapsed beneath me and I lost everything, I would still stand with tears in my eyes as the most grateful person ever for what God has already done. That gratitude alone will take you through difficult things that we tend to fuss over the small, but if you got a heart of that gratitude, you can go through big stuff, and it just doesn't have the impact that it used to have. Gratitude will has been my huge moment.

[00:31:02.160] - Darryl Dash

Amen. Amen to that. And what's been encouraging you lately?

[00:31:05.860] - Karl Vaters

I am really encouraged as I travel around. The Lord has given me this really interesting ministry for this probably closing period of my ministry life. I don't know how long that close will be. Hopefully a couple more decades of it. But for this season of my life, I have been extraordinarily encouraged as I've traveled, and especially as I've gone to so many small churches in so many countries, in so many denominations from so many different theological backgrounds to see God's faithful people everywhere. It is really easy in the North American church to get discouraged by the dwindling numbers and to think that everything's collapsing around us. But I got to tell you, if you were able to spend time in the churches that I get to go to and spend time with the pastors that I get to spend time with who are ministering faithfully in these small places, you would have a much greater encouragement about the of the church than you do right now. The churches in my hands have some very, very faithful people. Don't let the very, very loud voices on the fringes get you to believe otherwise because the middle is strong and healthy and faithful, and it comes from all kinds of background in all different countries.

[00:32:16.440] - Karl Vaters

That picture and revelation of every tongue, nation, and tribe, yeah, that's the real deal. That's going to happen because I'm seeing it in a very small way in here, and now it's wonderful.

[00:32:27.520] - Darryl Dash

Yeah, I agree. Totally. Karl, how can people find out more more about you and this book and your ministry?

[00:32:33.580] - Karl Vaters

Yeah, my website is karlvaters.com. So if you can figure out how to spell both of my names right, you can find me. And I'm @karlvaters on all the social media places. But you can buy *De-sizing the Church* wherever you buy a book.

[00:32:47.660] - Darryl Dash

Karl, I've appreciated your ministry for a long time now. I've spent a good chunk of my ministry in very small churches and medium-sized churches, and you've just been a solid voice of encouragement along the way. So I'm deeply grateful for you and really grateful for this book as well.

[00:33:02.680] - Karl Vaters

Oh, thank you, Darryl. I appreciate it.