CoMission

WORKBOOK

Coming Alongside DBS Groups

Groups are multiplying near your church. The question is not whether to welcome them — it is when, and in what posture.

Print it, write in it, and take it to the group.

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Contents

CHAPTER		PAGE
1	A problem worth praising God for	2
STUDY SHEET	What a church actually does — Acts 2:36-47	4
2	What the church is actually for	5
STUDY SHEET	Gather together — Hebrews 10:19-25	7
3	Alongside, not over	8
STUDY SHEET	Shepherd the flock — 1 Peter 5:1-11	10
4	They lean toward the light on their own	11
STUDY SHEET	Abide in Christ — John 15:1-12	13
5	What partnership actually looks like	14
STUDY SHEET	The person of peace — Luke 10:1-20	16
6	The danger of bringing them in too soon	17
STUDY SHEET	The four soils — Luke 8:4-15	19
7	Let them wake the church up	20
STUDY SHEET	The weeds and the mustard seed — Matthew 13:24-33	22
8	Timing and posture	23
STUDY SHEET	Begin long-term discipleship — 2 Timothy 2:1-7	25

A problem worth praising God for

> REMEMBER
>
> The Lord added to their number. We were asked to praise, not to manage.

TWO QUESTIONS, IN THE RIGHT ORDER

Get the order wrong at the start and everything downstream goes wrong too. Celebration is not a warm-up for the real conversation. It is the first true thing about it.

1. Praise first, out loud	Say the true thing in front of the person who brought you the worry: this is what we asked God for.
2. Then: will they stay strong?	New believers need worship, teaching and a body wider than eight people. Your church has all three.
3. Then: what happens to the zeal?	The question almost nobody asks out loud. It is the reason this class exists.
4. Both errors are failures of care	Smothering them and abandoning them are the same mistake wearing different clothes.

Somebody brought this to you as a problem. Groups are meeting in houses near your church, people are believing, and the groups are starting groups — and the sentence you heard had worry underneath it.

Before you answer, do something out of order. **Praise God first, out loud, in front of the person who is worried.** People are believing who did not believe. That is what your church has been praying for on Wednesday nights for years.

If you go straight to the concerns, you teach the person in front of you that growth is a management problem, and they will carry that into every conversation afterward.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Then ask the real question, because it is real: how do these disciples stay strong? And the second one, which almost nobody asks aloud: what happens to that zeal when it meets your congregation?

The risk runs both ways. Fold them in too fast and you smother them — quietly, warmly, within a year. Decide they are not your business and you abandon people eight months old in the faith while you are standing right there.

Both are failures of care. The rest of this class is the narrow road between them.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Who first brought this to you as a problem, and what exactly did they say?

2. Write the sentence of praise you will say to that person, in your own words.

3. Which error are you personally more likely to make — smothering them, or abandoning them? Write which, and why.

NOTES

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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What a church actually does

Acts 2:36-47

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   After the three thousand believe, what do they devote themselves to, and what does God add?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which of these marks could a brand-new group of believers practice from day one?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What is the simplest picture you will write this week of what your new church does when it meets — what stays in, and what stays out?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Whom will you show your simple-church picture to for honest feedback?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Lord, the first church devoted itself to the teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. Let the church we plant be that simple and that alive.*

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What the church is actually for

REMEMBER

DBS births faith. The church nurtures it. They were never rivals.

SIX THINGS SCRIPTURE GIVES THE CHURCH

Read the list and ask which items a living-room group does well alone. Some, genuinely. Some, no. That is the whole argument: they are not rivals, they are sequential.

1. Make disciples · carry the gospel	Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8. A healthy group does both of these, often better than a programme does.
2. Worship · fellowship	Acts 2:42-47. Eight people in a living room cannot be a body wider than themselves.
3. Teach doctrine	2 Timothy 4:2. A group where everyone came to faith last year cannot teach what none of them has yet.
4. Hold each other up · go to the poor	Acts 4:32-35 and James 1:27. The group does the second well, usually by name.

There is a version of this conversation where the church and the discovery group are competitors and one has to win. You have heard it from both sides. Both are wrong, and the argument wastes something God is doing.

Read what Scripture gives the church to do: make disciples, carry the gospel, gather for worship and fellowship, teach sound doctrine, hold its people up, and go to the poor and the widow.

Now ask which of those a living-room group does well on its own.

Some, genuinely. It makes disciples — often better than a programme does. It carries the gospel outward. It serves the poor it already knows by name.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

And some, no. Eight people who all came to faith last year cannot teach each other doctrine none of them has. They cannot be a body wider than themselves, because they are not one.

So they are not rivals. They are sequential. **A discovery group is very good at bringing a person to faith and first obedience. A church is very good at what comes after.**

That reframe costs you something both ways. The groups are not a threat to manage — and your congregation is not an optional extra that mature believers outgrow.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Of the six, which does a group near you already do well without your church? Write the ones you can evidence.**

2. **Which of the six does your congregation genuinely offer that a young group cannot? Name them honestly.**

3. **Finish honestly: "In private, I have been treating these groups as ____."**

NOTES

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Gather together

Hebrews 10:19-25

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does the writer urge believers to keep doing, and what did the early church do together?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What keeps you from gathering with other believers?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   How will you meet with and encourage other believers this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you invite into this kind of community?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, thank you for your people. Help me not to give up meeting together, but to spur others toward love and good works.*

This study online

Alongside, not over

REMEMBER

> Strengthening leaves them freer than you found them. Absorbing leaves them tidier.

HOW A TAKEOVER ACTUALLY HAPPENS

Both postures feel like care from the inside. Only one of them leaves the other person with more freedom than they had before you arrived.

1. It never announces itself	Nobody decides to take over a movement. It arrives as a series of defensible steps.
2. The sequence	Come to a training. Then report monthly. Then be listed in the bulletin. Then sit in a classroom as students.
3. The test	Ask who the group answered to at the beginning and who it answers to at the end. If that changed and nobody chose it, you went over.
4. Three who did it otherwise	Barnabas vouching for Saul. Priscilla and Aquila taking Apollos aside. The council refusing to add a burden.

Every instinct you were trained in pushes toward *over*. That is not a character flaw — it is what oversight feels like from the inside, and usually it is right.

But these groups are not in your church's name, and the instinct misfires here.

A takeover never announces itself. It arrives as reasonable steps: come to a training, then report monthly, then be listed in the bulletin so we can pray, and now there is a committee and the facilitators who were leading are students in a classroom. Each step was defensible. The pattern is a takeover.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

The test is simple: **ask who the group answered to at the beginning, and who it answers to at the end.** If that changed and nobody chose it, you went over.

Three people in Acts did it the other way. Barnabas spent his own credibility vouching for Saul when the institution was afraid of him. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside privately and left him preaching — no demotion, no curriculum. And the Jerusalem council, holding every card, deliberately declined to load its culture onto disciples God was already growing.

Before any contact, ask: **am I about to strengthen them, or absorb them?**

Reflect and Discuss

1. **List every current point of contact between your church and any group or facilitator nearby.**

2. **Mark each one "alongside" or "over". Write the one you are least comfortable marking.**

3. **"I will convert ____ from over to alongside by ____." One touchpoint, one concrete change.**

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Shepherd the flock

1 Peter 5:1-11

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does Peter tell the elders to shepherd — and how are they not to do it?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What kind of shepherd are you becoming — willing and eager, or pressured and controlling?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Whom in your group or future plant will you begin developing as a shepherd this week, and what is the first step?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Whom will you tell the names of the future shepherds you are praying over?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Chief Shepherd, the flock is yours, not mine. Make me an example rather than a lord, and raise up shepherds from among the very people we reach.*

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They lean toward the light on their own

> REMEMBER
> Attendance is fruit, not door.

WHAT GROWTH PRODUCES WITHOUT BEING ASKED

A plant does not need to be forced to turn toward the sun. Which puts the uncomfortable question back on you: when someone shows no interest at all, is there something there to lean toward?

1. Worship	A maturing group starts wanting something bigger than eight voices in a living room.
2. Doctrine	Questions arrive that the passage in front of them cannot answer — suffering, the Trinity, what happens when someone dies.
3. The wider body	Other believers. Older ones. People who have walked this longer than a year.
4. Never a funnel, never a fence	We do not use attendance as evangelism, and we never prohibit. Both halves, or the first sounds cold.

Underneath a lot of premature integration there is a fear worth naming: *if I don't bring them in, they will never come.*

What actually happens does not support it. Watch a group that is genuinely maturing — obeying, telling people, multiplying — and three appetites appear without anyone engineering them. They start wanting worship bigger than eight voices. They start asking doctrinal questions the passage cannot answer. They start wanting the wider body.

Nobody has to be argued into any of that. It is what growing looks like. A plant does not need to be forced to turn toward the sun.

Which puts a question back to you. When a mature disciple shows no interest whatsoever in your congregation, the first thing to examine is not their loyalty. It is whether there is anything there to lean toward.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Two convictions follow, and they need each other. **We never use attendance as an evangelism strategy** — the group is already doing the work that brings people to faith. **And we never prohibit.** If a seeker asks to come, they come, and you go and sit with them.

What we decline is treating assimilation as the goal.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Write the fear in your own words: what do you believe will happen if you do not bring them in?**

2. **If a mature disciple visited your gathering this Sunday, what would they find worth leaning toward? Be specific.**

3. **Where does your church currently use attendance as a step toward faith rather than as fruit of it?**

NOTES

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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Abide in Christ

John 15:1-12

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus say happens to the branch that abides in the vine, and to the one that does not?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What helps you stay connected to Jesus, and what pulls you away from him?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What daily habit — his words, prayer — will you practice this week to remain in him?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you tell what has changed in you since you were joined to the vine?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you are the vine and I am a branch — apart from you I can do nothing. Keep me close to you, and let your joy be full in me.*

This study online

What partnership actually looks like

REMEMBER

Doing one of them well beats announcing all five.

FIVE THINGS, NONE OF WHICH REQUIRE OWNERSHIP

A menu, not a programme. Peter keeps the oversight and forbids the lording, and puts example in its place — which is something you do where people can see you.

1. Encourage facilitators by name	Most are ordinary people leading something they have never led, quietly wondering if they are ruining it.
2. Offer help, and let them decline	Make the offer genuinely refusable, then accept the refusal without cooling toward them.
3. Open the worship without obligating	An invitation repeated with increasing warmth has stopped being an invitation.
4. Serve the poor together	The one that does more than the other four combined. Nobody is host, nobody is guest.
5. Use the method in your own ministries	Run a discovery study inside your church — to learn from inside, and to start more.

Everything so far has been posture. This is the week's work: five things a congregation can do for multiplying groups nearby, none requiring the groups to become yours. A menu, not a programme.

Encourage the facilitators by name. Most are ordinary people leading something they have never led, quietly wondering whether they are ruining it. Learn their names. Tell them the specific thing you noticed.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Offer help, and let them decline it. The whole art is in the offer. *"If you ever want a hand, I'm here, and I won't take it over"* is an offer. *"You should let me sit in on one"* is a request in disguise.

Open the worship without obligating anyone. Say the door is open, that nobody is expected, and that no one is counting. Then leave it open.

Serve the poor together. This does more than the other four combined. Working on something neither of you owns builds the relationship everything else depends on. Nobody is host and nobody is guest.

Use the method in your own ministries. Run a discovery study inside your own church — to learn from the inside what they live in, and to start more.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Name one facilitator near you. Write what you would say to encourage them specifically this week.**

2. **Write your offer of help as you would actually say it, so that it can be refused without awkwardness.**

3. **"We will work alongside ____ on ____ before ____." One shared job, one date.**

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The person of peace

Luke 10:1-20

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus tell the seventy-two to look for, and what should they do when a house welcomes them?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Why do you think Jesus said to stay in one house instead of moving from house to house?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Where will you go this week to look for a person of peace, and what will you say?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Which partner will you take with you when you go — Jesus sent them out two by two?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you send workers ahead of you and prepare houses of peace before they arrive. Lead me to the person of peace in the place you are sending me.*

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The danger of bringing them in too soon

REMEMBER

A quarantine of a culture, not of people. The person is always welcome.

WHY THE YOUNG GROUP LOSES

Neither seed in Mark 4 was a bad seed. One had no root yet; the other went down where something was already growing. Both were placed before they were strong enough for what was there.

1. Sleepy is not wicked	They were faithfully taught that attendance was the scorecard, and they believed it for thirty years.
2. It wins by atmosphere	A group that started following Jesus last year has no settled expectations. It learns the room faster than the room learns from it.
3. The distinction that saves this	The person is always welcome. What we decline is folding a whole young group into an older culture.
4. Faith plus desire, per person	Real faith, and their own wanting. Assessed one person at a time, never group by group.

This chapter asks you to say something about your own congregation that no outsider has the right to say about it.

Not that it is wicked. Something quieter: that there may be a season in which your Sunday gathering is not yet the safest place for an eight-month-old disciple who has started obeying everything he reads.

Most congregations are full of people who have grown complacent — who treat obedience as optional, or as something for the especially spiritual. That did not happen through rebellion. They were faithfully taught that attendance was the scorecard and they believed it. But it has an effect: **complacency is contagious.**

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Put a new group into an old culture and the old culture wins — not by argument, by atmosphere. People who started following Jesus last year have no settled expectations yet. They learn that room faster than it learns from them.

Hold this sentence: **a quarantine of a culture, not of people.** Nobody is kept out. If a person from one of those groups wants to be at your gathering, they are welcome and you go and sit with them. What we decline is wholesale absorption.

The marker is two things, per person: real faith, and their own desire.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Write honestly about your own gathering: what would a zealous eight-month-old disciple learn from it?

2. Name one person or group you have wanted to fold in. Is it their faith and desire driving the timing, or your eagerness?

3. "I will wait to connect ____ until ____." A condition that has to be true, not a date that is convenient.

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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The four soils

Luke 8:4-15

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What happens to the seed in each of the four soils, and who does Jesus say the good soil is?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which soil best describes how you have been receiving God's word lately?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What one thorn — a worry, money, a pleasure — will you name and hand over to God this week so it can't choke the word?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you retell this parable to this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, make my heart the good soil — honest and good, holding on to your word and producing a harvest through perseverance.*

This study online

Let them wake the church up

REMEMBER

They do not just reach the lost. They can revive the found.

FOUR THINGS THAT MOVE A ROOM

Barnabas was sent to inspect something irregular that had started without permission. He arrived, saw grace, and was glad — and Antioch became the church that sent Paul.

1. A testimony on Sunday	Not a report about a programme. A person, three minutes, saying what happened when they obeyed something frightening.
2. The obedience question after the sermon	How will you obey this, this week? Who will you tell? Two sentences at the end of what you already preach.
3. Retrofit one existing group	Not a new ministry. Change what happens in an hour that already meets. Start with the one that is restless.
4. Mobilise the willing few	Some of your members have waited years to be asked to do something real. Ask three of them.

Everything so far has been protective, and if the class stopped at chapter 6 you would have the wrong idea about what protection is for.

Protection is a season with an exit. This is the exit — and the whole argument turns over here, because the thing you have been carefully keeping away from your congregation is the thing your congregation most needs to meet.

Stop asking how to bring the groups into the church. Ask what happens if the church catches what the groups have.

You have people who have believed for forty years and never opened a Bible with someone who does not. They are not resistant. Most have simply never seen it done by anyone who looks like them. Ten miles away, people eight months old in the faith do it every week, badly and joyfully.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Four things move a room, and none require the groups to join anything. Share a testimony on Sunday. Ask the obedience question after the sermon. Retrofit one group that already meets. Mobilise the willing few to start their own.

This is what a change agent is: not a critic, but someone who arrives with a living expectation of obedience and keeps having it in a room where it had gone quiet.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Name one member who has believed for decades and never opened a Bible with someone who does not. What has been missing?

2. Which of the four will you start this month, and what is the first concrete step?

3. Who is the first person you will ask — by name — and when will you ask them?

NOTES

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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The weeds and the mustard seed

Matthew 13:24-33

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does the farmer tell his servants to do about the weeds, and what does the mustard seed become?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Where are you tempted to give up on something of God because it still looks small?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What small act of faith will you plant this week, trusting God to grow it?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who feeling small or discouraged could you retell the mustard seed story to this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, thank you that your kingdom starts as small as a mustard seed and still grows into something great. Give me patience like the farmer who waited for the harvest instead of tearing up the field.*

This study online

Timing and posture

> REMEMBER
>
> Neither half rescues the other. Right posture at the wrong time still breaks something.

THE TWO HALVES, AND WHAT YOU ARE AIMING AT

Acts 15:28 is the established church, holding every advantage, deciding what not to require. Nothing in church life rewards a leader for the burdens he declined to impose.

1. Posture — chapter 3	Alongside, never over. Ask who they answered to before and who they answer to now.
2. Timing — chapter 6	Faith plus desire, one person at a time. Never a group decision.
3. The temptation is love	Very few church leaders set out to absorb a movement. Delight is a bad clock, and it does the same damage ambition does.
4. What you are aiming at	Groups still multiplying. People arriving one at a time as partners. A church changed by receiving them.

Two things decide how this goes, and neither rescues the other.

Posture is chapter 3: alongside, never over. **Timing** is chapter 6: faith plus desire, one person at a time. A church with a beautiful posture that moves too early still smothers a young group — gently, warmly, completely. A church with perfect timing that comes over the top gets a group that complies and stops multiplying.

The temptation is worth naming, because it is not what leaders expect to be warned about. Very few church leaders set out to absorb a movement. What happens is that a leader meets someone who came to faith six months ago, is delighted, and wants everyone he loves to meet them now. That is affection, not empire. But delight is a bad clock, and eagerness does the same damage ambition does.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What you are aiming at is not a merger. It is groups still multiplying, with facilitators who know you are for them. People arriving one at a time, when their own faith and desire bring them, and arriving as partners because nobody trained the obedience out of them on the way in.

And a church that has been changed by receiving them.

Pray for the timing. It is the part you cannot manufacture.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What dangers do you see in connecting these groups to your church too soon? Answer about your congregation, not churches in general.

2. How will you prepare these disciples to be change agents rather than to be assimilated — and prepare your people to receive them?

3. Which single practice from chapter 7 starts this month, who is the first person you will ask, and by when?

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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Begin long-term discipleship

2 Timothy 2:1-7

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Paul tell Timothy to do with what he has heard?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which picture — soldier, athlete, or farmer — best describes your walk with Jesus?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Who is one faithful person you will begin to pour into this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who taught you, that you could thank — and who could you now teach?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Lord, help me pass on what I have received to faithful people who can teach others. Make me a disciple who makes disciples.*

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