

WHAT OTHER LEADERS ARE SAYING

Dr. Aila Tasse invites us to hear some of the most thrilling stories of what God is doing in the world. From a literal and physical desert of unreached people groups we have seen God do a miracle of filling the land with multiplying disciples and churches. The book is filled with first-person case studies of people in Aila's global team that God is using to multiply disciples and churches in many different religious, ethnic, cultural and social population segments.

Stanley Parks, PhD

24:14 Global Team / Vice President of BEYOND

I have walked with Aila Tasse for almost 20 years in his dual roles as the founder/leader of Lifeway Mission and as one of the Regional Directors for New Generations. Aila is without a doubt one of most effective leaders I have ever met in my 50 years of ministry.

His journey out of Islam and into becoming a global movement catalyst reflects somewhat of a "Saul to Paul" transformation. *Cabbages in the Desert* chronicles that transformation and the enormous kingdom impact that resulted from embracing Disciple Making Movement (DMM) principles.

Harry Brown

President, New Generations

Aila's book is packed full of practical insights and wisdom from years of learning and then unlearning, to build healthy communities of faith that transform the world around us. Aila embodies that rare quality of leadership that multiplies itself into others, giving away power rather than trying to amass it. We can all learn a great deal from his life.

Neil Hart

Executive Head of Mergon Foundation, author of *The Magnificent Exit*

Read *Cabbages in the Desert* if you want to understand and practice disciple making that multiplies!

A key feature in *Cabbages in the Desert* is case studies from Kenya and nearby countries that will inspire all who hunger for the fruit of multiplying disciple-makers.

I will be recommending this book to practitioners both internationally and in North America who need guidance, examples, and encouragement to stay the course!"

Mark Naylor

DMM mentor and trainer; Fellowship International and
Northwest Baptist Seminary

As a professor of missiology and a church-planting practitioner, I could not put this book down once I picked it up. Kenyan catalytic disciple-making practitioner, Aila Tasse, has provided a testimony that displays God's illuminating love, power, and pursuit. Dr. Aila's work is practical, applicational, informative, and missional; a go-to-resource for multiplying disciples.

Matt Fretwell, DMin.

Spiritual Director in Residency, US & International,
World Relief; Lausanne Church Planting Issue Network
Team Catalyst

Aila's new book, *Cabbages in the Desert*, will fire you up! His story has had a tremendous impact on me personally and on our coaching network. This book is a must-read if you are ready to see disciples and churches, not just added but multiplied throughout the areas where you're working. You'll be moved hearing the testimonies of people throughout the book who have humbly and passionately implemented new approaches, which raised their effectiveness in disciple-making.

Chris Galanos

Pastor, Experience Life
Author, *From Megachurch to Multiplication*

WHAT OTHER LEADERS ARE SAYING

In *Cabbages in the Desert*, Aila Tasse and Dave Coles team up to share an abundance of authentic stories. Within the pages of these narratives, readers will easily pick up the practices and strategies that have brought tens of thousands of disciples to the feet of Jesus. What's more, Aila and his coworkers are now training other movement catalysts, thereby multiplying at a very high level. *Cabbages in the Desert* is the story behind all that action.

Dr. Doug Lucas

Author of *More Disciples*, Founder of Brigada.org,
President of Team Expansion, and follower of Jesus

Aila's story is moving and powerful. You see the fingerprints of God in every phase. More importantly you will learn principles that you can apply in your life to experience the same transforming power of the gospel. I strongly recommend this book.

Dr. Markos Zemedé

President, Horn of Africa Mission

Aila Tasse is the gold standard for movement leaders. His quiet passion and deft ability to develop leaders is a joy to watch. The stories of this book are models for how a multiplier catalyzes disciple making and it never depends on him.

Roy Moran

Founder of Shoal Creek Community Church, author of *Spent Matches*,
Chairman of New Generations

Dr. Aila Tasse, an African follower of Christ from a Muslim background, has witnessed significant success in his decades of ministry. Yet only after undergoing a transformative paradigm shift did he discover a path to even greater fruitfulness among least-reached peoples—an uncommon vision symbolized by “cabbages in the desert.” Through compelling stories, Aila and his colleagues urge us to recalibrate mission back to the matchless standards for sprouting disciple-making movements: Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Dr. Warrick Farah

Editor, *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations*



CABBAGES IN THE DESERT

How God Transformed a Devout
Muslim and Catalyzed Disciple
Making Movements among
Unreached Peoples

BY AILA TASSE WITH DAVE COLES

Cabbages in the Desert:
How God Transformed a Devout Muslim
and Catalyzed Disciple Making Movements among Unreached Peoples

By Aila Tasse with Dave Coles

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FOREWORD

Do you know this brother in East Africa named Aila?

Over the past decades, I've been asked this question many times.

No, I do not know Aila, I would reply. But fortunately, this would change.

I have been a student of God's work in Church Planting Movements since the phenomenon first came to my attention in the late 1990s. My 1999 booklet, *Church Planting Movements*, described four movements that God had stirred up in Cambodia, India, Cuba, and China. In the years that followed, my little booklet would be translated into scores of languages and echo back with reports of hitherto unknown (to me) reports of remarkable movements of God that were emerging in virtually every corner of the world.

It was in the course of these echoes that I would often hear the question, "Do you know this brother, Aila?"

So, who is Aila?

First, and foremost, Aila Tasse is a brother in Christ. Born and raised in a devout Muslim family, God drew Aila to faith in Jesus Christ and through him, has inspired one of the largest networks of Church Planting Movements in the world.

Fortunately for us, Aila is both a gifted student of movements, and a gifted communicator of what he has learned. Theologically reflective and practically focused, Aila shares with us the lessons he has absorbed. His rich experiences of successes and failures become the life lessons that he generously communicates with us.

Through *Cabbages in the Desert*, you will come to know Aila. More importantly, you will see how the same Lord that claimed Aila as his own has captivated thousands of other men and women across many countries in Africa and emboldened them to become his disciples. These disciples of Jesus, many of whom come from a Muslim background like Aila, are transforming Africa through the authority of God's word and the power of his Holy Spirit.

Who is Aila? Read, and see!

David Garrison, PhD

December 2023



INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS BOOK?

In the Western world today, many previously vibrant missionary-sending churches, organizations, and ministries are declining as the historical Christian heritage wanes. Meanwhile, the Church in Africa is growing and multiplying. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, millions regularly attend Sunday church services, and new churches are planted daily.

As much as I rejoice in this growth, some questions trouble me. What kind of Christianity is growing in Africa? What kind of foundation do the Christians have? Are they strong enough to withstand trials and temptations? Are they true disciples of Christ or merely church members? Will their legacy of faith endure through the coming generations? Or will Christianity in Africa suffer the same fate we see in much of the Western world?

I am troubled because for more than a century, many African churches have emphasized leading unbelievers to make an initial decision for Jesus, but have not prioritized making disciples of these new believers. The 1980s and '90s were a time of vibrant open-air Christian meetings in stadiums and parks. These were commonly called crusades, featuring famous evangelists from the West. At these meetings, the gospel would be proclaimed and hundreds, even thousands, would commonly indicate they were making a decision to follow Christ.

However, attempts to follow up later revealed that few *if any* of these new “believers” joined a church after the meetings! Three or four months after the crusade, almost no real fruit could be found. Many became nominal Christians. A few did end up becoming strong men and women of faith, and these meetings played a role in gospel proclamation in Africa. For this, I praise God. But that kind of proclamation resulted in very few real disciples of Jesus.

As we have investigated what lay behind these dismal results, we have found at least four significant factors. One factor is people’s motives.

Crusade meetings were and still are advertised with many promises, including healing miracles, deliverance from demons, and financial breakthroughs. Thus, such meetings draw those needing relief from pressing issues, and the merely curious, as well as genuine seekers. We appreciate the miracles and demonstrations of God's power, but it appears that the curious and the miracle-seekers form a significant percentage of listeners who "make a decision for Christ" but never become true disciples of Christ.

A second factor is the limitation of the proclamation model. Along with prayers for miracles, healings, and deliverance, preaching at such meetings tended to present a very basic gospel message. The preacher might briefly explain sin and our redemption in Christ, then give an invitation for people to make decisions for Christ to get salvation. The large crowds also meant that the preacher could not have one-on-one interaction with those truly seeking Christ. While I appreciate creativity in gospel proclamation, lost people most need to truly *meet* Jesus and become his followers. This means much more than just making a decision or even joining a church.

A third limitation of this approach is the physical distance between the preacher and the people. The preacher stands far above the crowd on a platform, while the listeners look up and simply listen. This arrangement creates not only a physical barrier, but also a mental barrier between the preacher and those being reached. Listeners have no way to realize that Christ came to *close* relational gaps; the gospel is a message about the relational intimacy God desires to have with people.

Finally, many open-air meetings feature preachers invited from far-away places, who have no relationship with the people, further restricting opportunities for in-depth conversation about the Christian faith with genuine seekers. Many people made decisions because of gospel promises, but that did not translate into really understanding God's kingdom or truly following Jesus.

Consequently, many have responded positively to the "salvation" call without actually understanding its meaning. When people make a "decision," they're always invited to join a church and become a member.

Churches commonly require a new believer to go through a new believer's class or a class in the church's doctrine, in order to become a church member. But many times, even through this process, attendees don't learn what it means to truly become a follower of Jesus. Many of these people go to church for years and fulfill church requirements, but lack a life of obedience to Jesus and his words.

So, when we evaluated the fruit, we had to ask, "What's the impact? What's the situation of the church in Africa?" I saw a lot of activity, but when I looked deeply, disconcerting questions arose. I saw people being called to conversion: to make a decision for Christ. That pushed me to ask: "Has God called us to decision-making? Or disciple-making?" I see that as a vital question for our ministry strategies.

Sadly, most new believer's classes focus on teaching the church's or denomination's history, the rationale for its doctrines, how to give tithes and offerings, understanding the church constitution, and other secondary matters. Rarely do new believers learn what it means to be a true disciple of Christ. They simply become "converted" into Christian church members rather than transformed, biblical disciples of Jesus. Their allegiance is to a church more than to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ. Too often, the message preached is just a gospel of "salvation"—a partial gospel, not the whole gospel of the kingdom of God.

Also, in communities with an existing predominant religion, joining a church and acquiring a "Christian" name at conversion may actually hinder the spread of the gospel. It tends to reinforce the majority's impression of Christianity as just another religion (often with political and cultural implications rather than any clarity about spiritual transformation). Friends and relatives often feel the convert has forsaken them to join something foreign. They have become "one of them"; no longer "one of us." Many Africans also feel that Christianity was used by colonizers to destroy our cultures and control us.

This situation calls us to ask some important questions:

1. If making a *decision* for Christ does not always result in a sustained and maturing life of saving faith and obedience, how can we best bring about such a life?

2. Are previous evangelistic methods, tools, and efforts sufficient to accomplish the work of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20)?
3. What does Christ's command to "Go and make disciples" mean for the Church today and in the future?

I came from a strong Muslim background, and by God's grace I learned that salvation involves much more than just joining another religion with rules and regulations. It includes a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It involves becoming his disciple through repentance and faith, then following and obeying him. For me, Christianity is *not* a religion; it's a way of life. Jesus didn't come into the world to start a religion; his message was about the kingdom of God—a kingdom that already has come and is yet to come in fullness. Jesus didn't send his disciples to start a new religion; he commanded them to make others his disciples.

The Early Church proclaimed a message of repentance from sin (Acts 3:19) and entering God's kingdom; nowhere do we read that they asked people to convert to the Christian religion. Those who came to saving faith were called believers or disciples or followers of the Way (Acts 24:14). As a result of their lifestyle, following Jesus the Christ and living in obedience to him, they were called Christians by others in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Being Jesus's disciple means finding ways to live out our faith such that it becomes contagious, pointing people around us toward Christ. Then, we can help them become disciples, teaching them to follow and obey him as well.

We see in Scripture that from the beginning God intended multiplication. When he created the first humans in his image, he gave them instructions to be fruitful and multiply. "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number [ESV: "multiply"]; fill the earth and subdue it,' (Gen. 1:27-28a, NIV).

As humanity has multiplied physically, we long to multiply the numbers of those reconciled with God the Father through faith in Christ. In considering ways to better accomplish this, we will take lessons from the Bible, the best disciple-making manual. We will also share 20 years

INTRODUCTION

of disciple-making experiences at Lifeway Mission International (now Lifeway Global, lifewayglobal.org). And we will examine what can be done together to better fulfill Jesus's Great Commission, both now and in the future.

Aila Tasse

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SEEKING ALLAH AND FINDING THE WAY



“My sins are
forgiven,
but I’m not a
Christian!”





GROWING UP MUSLIM

I WAS BORN IN 1973, into a strong Muslim family in Marsabit, Kenya. Northern Kenya was—and still is—a marginalized part of the country. While I was growing up, we had no road access from Nairobi (Kenya's capital). The first road to northern Kenya opened in 2016.

I started going to the mosque with my father at a young age. I don't remember ever making a decision to convert to Islam because I was considered a Muslim from birth. I had no choice in the matter. My family had no history of anything but Islam, and all were very devout, with daily life centered on the mosque in the afternoons and evenings.

My childhood consisted of attending elementary school in the mornings and Islamic studies (madrasa) in the afternoons. As a pastoralist family, we brought our grazing animals back home in the evenings. We spent weekends taking care of the livestock. We had little time to do other things.

Our community was predominantly Muslim, and other faiths were scorned and rejected outright. Those we thought of as Christians were few and disliked by our community. They were excluded from the community, branded as infidels who had bought into the white man's culture. They were excluded from communal activities such as weddings and funerals, and denied communal benefits. No one sought their opinion on important matters affecting the community. They were visible but considered irrelevant.

While growing up, I took my Islamic studies seriously and like the rest, avoided the Christians. At around the age of nine, I developed a deep desire to know more about my Islamic faith. I started spending time with the elders after the afternoon prayers, listening to them discuss the Qur'an and a variety of community issues. I remember longing deeply for a personal relationship with God. My father, a leader in the mosque, was moved by my steadfast zeal. He said he wanted to give me to Allah. He took the imam aside and told him to keep a keen eye on me. I had a fervent passion to serve Allah, yet an unsettling question was eating at my heart. I wondered: "Who is Allah?"

I loved and wanted to serve Allah; I wanted to know and have a personal relationship with him. But, I only heard about Allah through the preaching and teaching of the sheikhs. We were taught that Allah

has 99 beautiful names. I heard that he is gracious and merciful, but I could not find him for myself. In my imagination, he was so huge and powerful that he filled the earth. But what I wanted most was a God to whom I could relate. While watching my father's cows, I would often look up at the sky and ask Allah, "Can you speak to me?"

An unsettling question was eating at my heart. I wondered: "Who is Allah?" One afternoon, not knowing what to expect, I felt a compulsion to reveal the question that had been hidden in the recesses of my heart. Mustering my nine-year-old courage, I asked my imam: "Who is Allah?" He was very surprised. He told me he had never been asked such a question! He got frustrated with me and asked, "Where did that question come from?"

**An unsettling
question
was eating
at my heart.
I wondered:
"Who is Allah?"**

I answered, "I want to know him better so I can serve him better." In Islam, one does not question Allah. It is considered *shirk* (idolatry), a sin punishable by death. Allah cannot be known and Muslims are never to question, just believe.

I felt this was a very important question that needed an answer. But to my dismay, the imam did not answer. He put the matter to an end with authority: "He can't be known."

Disappointed by the outcome, I walked away but continued studying and praying, yearning to get to know Allah. I felt sad and frustrated that I went to prayer five times a day and didn't know to whom I was praying. The answer eluded me for years, even as my desire to serve Allah grew.

When I was 13 years old, I went to a boys' high school—a Muslim-dominated boarding school in Moyale, about a day's drive from my home.¹ I quickly joined an extracurricular religious group at the school,

¹ In Kenya, all high school students go to a boarding school assigned by the government, which enables them to interact with and become friends with children from tribes other than their own. At that time, Moyale was a full day's drive from my home because there was no road. There is now a paved road, so the drive would take about three hours by car.

the Young Muslim League. A preacher from a very conservative Muslim sect came every Wednesday evening to teach those of us in the group.

He deeply disliked Christians and any kind of Christian teaching. He often made a point of showing the negative side of Christianity. He taught that the primary duty of a young Muslim is to propagate the religion of Allah. A young Muslim must also protect Muhammad, the prophet of Allah; the Qur'an, the book of Allah; and Islam, the religion of Allah.

My searching soul cried out for more of Allah, and the allure of this presentation of conservative Islamic teachings gripped my soul like talons that dug deep. I thought there was no better environment than this for a seeking mind, a hungering heart, and a passion for a personal relationship with Allah. My desire for relationship with God slowly but surely led me to embrace these teachings. My gradual radicalization had begun. It wasn't long until I was ready to pay the ultimate price for my faith: to die for Islam.

I had thought I would find the answer to my aching question at the Muslim Youth League, but it continued to plague my heart: "Who is Allah?" With increased vigor and unrelenting urgency, as if it had its own life, the desperate question would pop into my head whenever I encountered anything concerning faith. Every time I bowed down in prayer at the mosque (five times daily), it would arise, again and again. Like a shadow, it followed me: "Who is Allah?" But I never felt any closer to making that elusive personal connection with him.

That year, in the school's second term, an intern teacher, named Teacher Francis, from a university in southern Kenya came to our school for three months. His arrival was a novelty because at that time we rarely had non-local teachers in northern Kenya. Due to marginalization and underdevelopment by successive Kenyan governments, northern Kenya was not an easy place to visit. Thus, non-locals (as we called them) had limited interaction with our citizens. This was especially true for the children. The few non-locals who taught in the schools found themselves separated from the community, just like the other non-Muslims. Outside of school, they had limited interaction with local people.

**I remember
longing
deeply for
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relationship
with God.**

Teacher Francis had come to teach biology and agriculture, which included my class (biology as a required class and agriculture as an elective which I took). I remember the day the school principal introduced Teacher Francis to the class. After the principal left, Teacher Francis turned to the blackboard and wrote in large letters: “My name is Francis. I’m a born-again Christian.”

This combination of words sparked our interest. “Christian” was nothing new; it meant our community viewed him as an infidel. However, the term “born-again” provoked curiosity among the entire class. We thought it was very strange and asked him how many times he had been born. He wisely did not try to explain or argue about it. He just erased it and left it at that, because the class was full of Muslim young men.

Long after the end of that lesson, his self-description as “born again” caused much discussion and became a way of mocking him. We’d say “Born again, again, again.” When we’d see him, we’d say, “Again, again, again.” We conjectured about what he might have meant, and subsequently nicknamed him “nymph.” He had arrived when we were learning about butterfly life stages, and he claimed to have been born more than once, so . . . the nickname stuck throughout his stay at the school. He did not talk openly about his faith in Christ, but he was more friendly, polite, and patient with us than the other teachers. His character and gracious manner earned him esteem among the students, not only in relatability but also in academic matters.

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT term, a deadly malaria and yellow fever outbreak occurred in our area. Medical services were poor: just one small, ill-equipped health center served the whole town. There was no doctor on site; just nurses and an administrator. In those days, the nearest medical facility with a doctor was almost two days' drive away.

Many students, including myself, became infected and so ill that we had to be admitted to the health center for treatment. Some students and many from the local community died in the following weeks. This cast a somber cloud over the whole town.

I was diagnosed with *both* cerebral malaria and yellow fever. One day, I lifted my aching body to peek out the window next to my bed. I saw numerous dead bodies with their faces covered. Every day, more dead bodies were wheeled through the hall outside my room. This birthed in my heart a great fear of death. “Will I die? Where do people go when they die? Where will I go if I die?” These unsettling questions became my constant unwelcome companion.

Besides those who died, I also observed those so gravely ill that they were not expected to survive. Their despairing relatives brought imams to recite the Qur'an over them. I saw despondency all over the relatives' faces; palpable pain emanated from their eyes. It was a reflection of the states their hearts were in. The choice of the qur'anic chapter recited clearly indicated whether or not they had already given up hope. Many Muslims believe a person goes to paradise if they die while reciting or hearing a certain qur'anic chapter: Sura Yasin. When I heard that chapter recited, I knew the family expected imminent death.

In Islam, the dead must be buried within a few hours of death, so burial may sometimes occur in the absence of one's family. This fact, playing out in front of me every day, sent a shiver through my weak and feverish body. My parents and relatives lived far from my school, and cell phones were not yet available. So, my family did not know I was alone and near death. I feared that if I died they would only be shown my grave. I imagined them being told: “This is where we put him.”

Islam offers no assurance of salvation, so I grappled with fear of eternal judgment. Islam teaches that Allah keeps two angels on the shoulders of every person. The angel on the right shoulder records the good deeds done. The angel on the left shoulder records all the bad and evil deeds committed.

I believed that when I died, Allah would weigh my deeds on the *Mizan al-Hikmah* (Scale of Wisdom). If my evil deeds outweighed my good deeds, hell would be my portion. If my good deeds outweighed my bad ones, Allah would send me on the journey to paradise.

However, even such a positive outcome at the *Mizan* would not guarantee entering paradise! Terror still awaits the soul sent on toward paradise. In the hadith (sayings of Muhammad), Muslims are taught that to reach paradise, they must cross a bridge known as *As-Sirāt*: sharper than a razor blade and thinner than a strand of hair, with flames of fire burning underneath and great thorns on the sides. This bridge must be crossed in utter darkness. I believed this terror to be the most *positive* scenario awaiting me after death.

When Muslims consider the Day of Judgment, their only recourse is an appeal to Allah to save them. Dread of that judgment often motivates many pious Islamic practices such as the five daily prayers, observance of Ramadan, and giving of alms.

About a week after I entered the health center, the infection caused my brain to swell and my vital organs to slow down, further complicating my situation. Medical personnel informed the school administration that they did not expect me to survive. There were no phones there, or any way to communicate to my family about my situation.

So, I lay gravely ill, in despair and great fear, knowing that my scale was very far from balancing on the good side and only hell awaited me should I die!

Then Teacher Francis came. As I lay on my bed looking up at the corrugated iron roof, I heard a familiar voice greeting some of the students in my ward (a room with dividers separating 12 beds). I recognized that voice as Teacher Francis. Not long after, he approached my bed. As I watched him come, I thought: “Yes, he is an infidel, but he is the first and only visitor I have had since I was brought to this hospital.”

He had heard that I was the next one likely to die, and he felt led to come to the hospital and share Christ with me. He had brought milk and bread, and he asked how I was doing as he poured milk into a cup. I felt conflicted as he handed it to me. An infidel was doing this for me! My pride as a Muslim would not allow me to accept his offer, yet I also could not muster the courage to turn it down. Although I didn't want to, I accepted the milk.

He chatted with me a while, with him doing most of the talking. As he stood to say goodbye, I could see concern in his eyes. He called me by my Muslim name: "Ibrahim Ali, if you die today, where will you spend your eternity?"

I instinctively responded (as any Muslim would), "*Inshallah*" ("Allah knows"). The Qur'an states that only Allah knows a person's ultimate fate. No one receives any assurance whatsoever.

"You know, Ali, your sins can be forgiven," he told me.

This was the first time I had ever heard this! Intrigued, I asked, "Sins forgiven? How?" Momentarily forgetting my physical pain, I pursued this conversation about forgiveness of sin.

He explained that through Jesus, my sins could be forgiven if I believed in him. As he spoke, I realized that he wanted to convert me to Christianity. "I don't want to be Christian," I told him. I wasn't ready to become an infidel! I already had my own religion. Becoming a Christian would get me branded a renegade among my people, and treated as an outcast. My community viewed Christians as people who ate pork, drank beer, destroyed culture, and followed the white man's religion! I was not ready to be like some Christians I had seen in the border town of Moyale, where the school was located.

Moyale sits on the border of northeastern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. Though the two border towns shared the same name, they were utterly different in social life. The Ethiopian side had a very open community, with numerous night clubs and a lot of prostitution and alcoholism. The Kenyan side had nothing like that, because the community practiced a deeply Islamic way of life. On many Sunday mornings, we

When Muslims consider the Day of Judgment, their only recourse is an appeal to Allah to save them.

watched so-called-Christian security officers and civil servants attend a Sunday church service then rush over the border, only to come back drunk—some to the point of falling down. Or they might return with a prostitute. We could not understand how they could attend church in the morning, then become a different person in the afternoon. Their “testimony” greatly damaged the Muslim community’s perception of Christians—immoral people who went to clubs and drank a lot of alcohol.

But Teacher Francis responded wisely to my objection: “You don’t have to be a Christian for your sins to be forgiven, you just have to believe in Christ through whom sins are forgiven.”

I looked at him intently, and after a few moments I responded: “I believe in him as a prophet but cannot believe that sins can be forgiven through him.”

As he turned to leave, he promised to come back so we could continue to discuss these things.

Teacher Francis’ visit set in motion a severe torment for me. My pain was no longer just in my body but now also in my heart and mind. It seemed to me that the pain in my body was more tolerable than the pain in my soul. That night I began to hear a male voice in my sleep repeating, “Your sins can be forgiven.” I dismissed it as just a thought in my head, since I was still sick enough to be in the hospital. My street knowledge of cerebral malaria reminded me that the sickness can cause hallucinations, so I assumed that was what was happening. When the voice persisted in the days following Teacher Francis’ visit, I concluded that it had nothing to do with my being sick. I became convinced that Teacher Francis had sent a “Christian spirit” to torment me! I couldn’t sleep or sit still without hearing the voice in my ears saying, “Your sins can be forgiven.”

This continued for a whole week before Teacher Francis came back. By then I was desperate for him to come and take away this “Christian spirit”! My illness was also worsening, and I had become even more afraid of dying. I felt sure I was close to slipping into eternity, which filled me with uncertainty and dread. But I wanted the tormenting voice to leave, so I was relieved to see him. He again brought me milk and bread. I thought to myself, “He is an infidel, but very generous!”

As before, he visited for a while, then asked, “What do you think about the issue we discussed last time?”

My mind rushed to all I knew about eternity from the Islamic perspective, and the inevitability of my death. Fear of death’s approach led me to reply, “You know, I don’t want to be a Christian, but I want my sins to be forgiven. Just tell me how, since you say this is possible.”

He reminded me that I could have my sins forgiven by believing in Christ.

I decided to volunteer information that I knew to be our common ground in religious matters. I said, “I know of *Isa bin Mariam* [Jesus, son of Mary] and his sinless birth. He is the superior prophet, according to the Qur'an. Tell me who Christ is.”

He explained, “Jesus Christ is not only the superior prophet, he is the One who died. He paid the ransom for our sins through his death. If you believe in him, your sins will be forgiven.” He also read a few Scriptures such as “the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“But that is a Christian book!” I protested.

“This is *Injil*!” He replied, knowing I would understand what he meant. (Muslims believe Allah sent down four Holy Books. The *Tawrat*—the Torah revealed to the prophet Musa {Moses}, the *Zabur*—Psalms revealed to the prophet Daud {King David}; the *Injil*—the Gospel revealed to the prophet Isa {Jesus}; and the Qur'an—revealed to the prophet Muhammad. The three earlier books do not correspond precisely to material found in the Bible; Muslims only know the names of the books and the prophets, but are generally taught that Jews and Christians have corrupted the earlier books, so the Qur'an is now the only revealed book needed.)

My upbringing as a Muslim, plus my passion to be devout, told me which books I should interact with. Clearly the book of the Christians was not among them. Up until that moment, I had never seen a Bible. However, as he read, I had a conviction in my heart that he truly was reading from the *Injil*.

When he finished explaining, I told him again, “I don’t want to be a Christian, but I want my sins forgiven, so I die without sin.” This was

my overriding concern as I faced death. I needed an assurance I would be accepted by God.

“I don’t want to be a Christian, but I want my sins forgiven.” He listened, then asked with concern: “Are you willing to pray for your sins to be forgiven?”

I considered the picture of my deeds being weighed on a scale, and felt sure the scale tipped toward hell. I said “Yes!”

Teacher Francis quietly led me in a prayer of salvation.

“Lord Jesus,” he said.

“Lord Jesus,” I repeated.

“Forgive me of my sins,” he continued.

I started counting in my head how many there were. I began to realize I could not remember some. I stopped counting, as I realized that it was futile. In my heart, I knew I had so many! Then, from the depths of that desperate place, I said, “Forgive me my sins, don’t leave any out, Lord! You know them all; forgive me of all!” I could not risk even one remaining unforgiven! I then continued repeating the rest of the prayer of salvation. Teacher Francis kept it quiet and short, so as not to attract others’ attention to what was happening. He left soon after, promising that we would continue to talk.

**“I don’t
want to be
a Christian,
but I want
my sins
forgiven.”**

I remember feeling peace! Complete peace, as the fear of death evaporated and my heart was at rest. That night I slept soundly for the first time in three weeks. Not only did the fear disappear, the voice also stopped!

My newfound peace was so profound that I didn’t notice the rapid changes taking place in my body. I saw a flurry of activity around me with doctors consulting with nurses and taking notes. They suddenly showed a renewed interest in my case, unable to make heads or tails out of what was happening. I later learned that my condition had already been written off as critical, with death surely imminent. Then, to the astonishment of the doctors, my health had taken a dramatic turn and I was undergoing a rapid and noticeable recovery! From being near certain death, I was discharged within a week! God had healed me.

Upon my discharge from the hospital, I chose not to go home, but back to school. I figured it would be the best place to get rest as I continued to catch up with my studies. I arranged to meet with Teacher Francis in his office at 4:00 pm every day. This location proved very advantageous, as it was set apart from other offices. As an agriculture teacher, he stored some gardening tools in his office, which was more like a storage closet for tools than an office. To ward off prying questions, he told the other teachers he was helping me catch up with studies after my long illness. This was a perfect setting for discreet discipleship.

Through our daily meetings, I continued to grow in my knowledge of and faith in Christ. As I had told him, I wanted my sins to be forgiven, but I didn't want to become a Christian. So, he didn't tell me how to "become a Christian." If he had used those words, I would not have been interested. He just used the Bible to explain forgiveness of sin and how to follow Jesus, who forgives sin. That was the point at which I really understood what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and to follow him.

I had a great hunger for the word of God, and always looked forward to hearing Teacher Francis read and explain the Scripture to me. During our interactions, Teacher Francis, who was involved with Campus Crusade (in Kenya it's called "Life Ministry"), emphasized to me what it means to follow Christ, using the Four Spiritual Laws. Using Scriptures, starting in the Old Testament, he continued to show me who Christ is. His invaluable discipleship built in me a strong foundation as a disciple of Christ, preparing me for the journey I didn't know lay ahead.

At that time, I kept my new faith secret out of fear, and continued my involvement in the Muslim Youth League. I also continued going to the mosque. However, whenever I went to prayer, I would quietly plead with God to understand: "God, you know my heart; I'm following Jesus now. I'm bowing before you."

Teacher Francis left at the end of his internship. I remember him praying over me the night before he left. He told me (in a way that sounded

**I had a great
hunger for
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and always
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hearing it.**

more like a command than advice), “We may not meet again. But to grow in faith, do these three things: Pray every day to God in Jesus’s name. Second, (giving me his Gideon’s pocket Bible), read the Bible, don’t forget to read the Bible. Read one Psalm, one Proverb, and the Gospels, starting with the Gospel of John. And third, when you get the opportunity, share with others what happened to you.”

I was obedient to follow his advice and daily read my Bible and prayed in secret. The only thing I could not bring myself to do at that time was to tell anyone about my new faith in Isa. I was still afraid of the repercussions, especially from the Muslim Youth League and my family members.

BRINGING MY FAITH HOME

WHILE AT SCHOOL, I KEPT my precious Bible wrapped in plastic and hidden in a bush at the end of the soccer field. I played soccer, so it was not strange for me to be seen there. I would secretly take it out to read and pray. But one day was different.

Prior to the school closing for the holidays, I walked to the special spot where I kept my Bible. I had to take my Bible with me. I did this without raising any unwanted attention. When I got home, I hid the Bible in the bush (uncleared land with trees and grass) a little over 400 yards from our home. In the morning, I would take my father's oxen out to graze there before they went to the farm (which was two hours' walk from our house); also in the evening when they came back from the farm. My job was to take them to the bush and look after them while they grazed. And nobody would come there to look for me. So that's where I could read my Bible without being interrupted.²

But it rained heavily one night. Fearing that my Bible would be damaged, I went out and brought it into the house. I hid it under my shirt and went straight to my bed, so no one would notice the bulge on my abdomen. I hid the Bible under my mattress, and for a season I relaxed and continued to read my Bible in secret. Each time I finished reading, I carefully tucked it back under the mattress. I didn't consider the possibility of it being found, not thinking of the times we would go out.

But one day, when I was 14 years old, my mother gave the house a thorough cleaning, and she was stunned to find the Bible under my mattress. She took it, but did not say anything—not even to my father, who was respected at the mosque and very stern. When I got home, I noticed her watching me closely, from the moment I entered the house. She later noticed me searching under the mattress. She asked what I was looking for, but I was too scared to tell her. I broke out in a cold sweat and my whole body felt a surge of heat. I was tongue-tied with fear and said, “Oh,

² While the majority of that village still follow a different faith, we now have a training center on that land, where we train missionaries.

nothing. I was just looking . . .” To my surprise, she said nothing about the Bible. She did not tell me she had taken it, but I noticed she started keeping a close eye on me. She never gave it back.

The events of that day shook me to the core; I had risked being found out. Thinking of my next move to avoid further discovery, I went to the farm (much farther away from our house). I quickly developed an interest in going to the farm, where I could find solitude and a place to pray. I would often kneel and raise my hands in prayer, and talk aloud to God. Any time I started praying when my younger sisters were with me at the farm, they got scared and cried, thinking I was going mad.³ They knew about Islamic prayers, but this was something very strange to them. They thought I was talking to myself or wondered who I thought I was talking to!

Up to that time, the only other believer with whom I had ever had fellowship was Teacher Francis, and he was long gone. A number of small house fellowships met in our area, attended by some civil servants, missionaries, and the few local Christians. I yearned for Christian fellowship, like a person thirsty for water. I wanted at least a sip, not intending to gulp too much. One Wednesday, I took the great risk of going to a fellowship. But I was afraid, so I didn’t plan to stay long.

To avoid arousing suspicion, I walked (much earlier than the usual meeting time) toward a house where I knew a handful of people met for fellowship. When I made my decision to go to the meeting, I hadn’t considered one challenge. My town of Marsabit was small enough that one couldn’t cross a street without meeting someone they knew. But I longed for a place where I could gather with other believers.

Within the Christian group that day was a colleague of my father, who quickly recognized me. I didn’t know what to do, so I kept my mouth shut and left. Unfortunately, when he went to work the next day, this gentleman happily told my dad, “I was so happy your son visited us!” My father, not believing what he had just heard, protested

³ I have four sisters and six brothers. One sister is older than me and I’m the second child. One sister is just three years younger than me; she’s the one who got especially upset when I prayed at the farm. She’s still a Muslim.

passionately: “No! He could not have been my son, my son is a Muslim!”

That evening, he asked my mother about my faith, telling her what the man had said. She did not answer, but in her mind connected the Bible and my attending the fellowship.

I could see that my dad, unlike his usual calm, was unsettled and deeply disturbed. He didn’t ask me anything that night. He may have wanted to get confirmation or more information before confronting me. But the next morning at breakfast he asked me, “What did I hear? Did you go to the fellowship?”

I knew this conversation had been long in coming, and so many thoughts ran through my mind. I didn’t know where this conversation might lead, and I was terrified. But I resolved that I could not lie, so I confirmed that I had attended the fellowship.

“How could you do that?” he asked, shocked. Pain and disappointment covered his face.

I had no answer. Not only did nothing come to mind, but no words could have come through my lips even if I had tried. Turning to my mom, who was listening silently, my father said, “We will talk about this in the evening,” and he left for work.

The day sped by quickly, despite my wishing to delay the dreaded conversation. That evening after prayers, my father called the family together to discuss the issue. Looking straight at me, he demanded: “What happened? How did you go there?”

I had been thinking all day about what answer I should give when my dad returned. I had prayed that God would give me courage, strength, and the right words to answer. Then, in that moment at the table, I decided to confess everything. I told him about Teacher Francis, about the Bible, and about what had happened when I was ill. Dad was stunned. He said he could not believe I had been brainwashed!

“You have shamed me, shamed my family, and shamed our community,” he said with a voice constricted by anger and disapproval.

Since this was a religious issue, my father chose not to handle it alone. After four days of pressure from my family, my father went to get assistance from the imam at our local mosque. They had to find a way to “reconvert” me from the brainwashing.

The imam came, accompanied by a few elders from the mosque. I told them the same story and revealed that I already had been following Jesus for nine months: three months at the school in Moyale and six months at home, where I now attended a high school much closer to home.

This sent my father into a rage. The mosque leaders, whom he had invited to help him reclaim his son back to the faith, soon turned against him, blaming my father for what had happened to me. The house was filled with tension and anger. They accused me of betraying my religion and bringing shame on my family and on the community. They assumed I had been bribed by Teacher Francis, because of a common belief that Christians entice people to convert to Christianity, using money or education. They said, “If this teacher gave you money for converting, we can pay back his money!”

I tried to explain: “I did not become a ‘Christian,’ I had my sins forgiven!” But they could not understand the talk about forgiveness of sins. They told me that in Islam sins are not forgiven, they are recorded for the Day of Judgment! This pressure continued for two days.

Finally, the imam ordered me not to leave the house, and instructed three young men from the mosque to bring a tape recorder and keep watch over me while playing continuous recitations of the Qur'an. They hoped this would “reorganize” my faith and reconvert me. The khat-chewing young men stayed with me for days, but I was not swayed from my trust in Jesus who had forgiven my sins.

When my father and the religious leaders realized I was not going to recant, the already-tense situation got worse. The day before the last reconversion session, the mosque leaders increased their pressure on my dad. He finally gave me an ultimatum to recant or leave. This moment was like none other in my life. In the presence of all my family members, my dad told me: “You have to choose now between your new religion and your family!”⁴ Since I refused to recant, my father had no choice but to throw me out of the house.

⁴ See Appendix A for the story of God's work in my family after this time.

I was scared and sad but could not recant my heartfelt faith in Christ. I had experienced real peace. I had lost my fear of death. In Islam I was willing to die for the god I didn't know, so why would I not be willing to die for the One I do know? I had assurance that my sins are forgiven. I had hope and the personal relationship with God that I had been yearning for! It was not just another religion. I was resolved in my decision to continue trusting Jesus.

My dad had never encountered sincere Christians,⁵ and based his judgment of Christianity on what he knew of the terrible drunken Christians, so he was brutal toward me. My mom was gentler, because she remembered having a positive encounter with Lutheran missionaries as a young girl, when she was growing up in Ethiopia. The missionaries had prayed for a neighboring family, casting out demons and burning witchcraft paraphernalia.⁶

Since I refused to recant, my father had no choice but to throw me out of the house—the only home I had ever known. He said, “Because you chose something else besides your family, I pronounce you dead today. You are dead to me and dead to this family. You have no inheritance in this family. Because you have chosen something else, now you must go.” That was the last time I would see my family for many, many years.

Since I refused to recant, my father had no choice but to throw me out of the house.

⁵ His coworker, who told him I had attended the Wednesday fellowship, could be described as a nominal Christian.

⁶ The people in her town used to worship a spirit that had killed children, including children in a neighbor's family. One night, the father had become desperate enough to call for the missionaries to help. They burned the spirit's worship place, and all the sacrifices. They made a big fire, and sang a song while they burned all the spirit's paraphernalia. (The song was “On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand,” translated into the local language. My mom still remembered the song. She never sang it during all her life as a Muslim, but after coming to Christ, she sang it often.) After that night, the children in that family all grew up healthy. So she remembered positive experiences like that with Christians in her past.

Fearing violent repercussions, I walked out and went directly to the home of a policeman, who was a Christian. The policeman put me up and fed me. The news that I had been sent away filtered out into the community more quickly than I would have imagined. The next morning, the Muslims sent Muslim League youths to the house, and they brought accusations against the policeman. He then took me to his brother's house, three hours away, where I spent the next eight years with this Christian family.

The Lord took good care of me. From this new home, I could freely attend church and meet with other Christians. My faith grew steadily. My parents stopped paying my school fees, but God provided through some kind believers, so I was able to continue my education.

I strongly felt the call to serve the Lord, and seriously contemplated abandoning formal education in favor of Bible school. I actually sent in an application. But before dropping out of school, I had a talk with my pastor about my desires. I felt sure of getting his support and was surprised when he disagreed with me. His disappointing response was, "If God is calling you, he'll continue to call you, but you have to finish school. That's the first thing."

I left his office with a heavy heart and head hanging low, but I heeded his advice to continue formal studies. Now I look back and thank God for his mentorship and wisdom! After I finished my secondary education, I again applied to the same Bible school, and began attending in 1993.

CAN CABBAGES GROW IN THE DESERT?

I COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL IN 1989, after which I decided to seek God's direction for my life. Feeling the importance of this, I dedicated myself to prayer. At the same time, the separation from and continuing tension with my family grieved my heart. I missed them and prayed that they, too, would find hope in Christ. I kept fasting and asking God, "How can I go to heaven alone? I want my family to go as well."

One day, I summoned my courage and boldly asked the Lord, "God, I want to have an appointment with You. I want to hear You, I want You to lead me." A week later, I went to a campsite in the Marsabit forest to pray in solitude. I sat on the ground and leaned against a tree. I put my Bible on the ground next to me and closed my eyes to pray. Suddenly, I felt such a strong presence of God that the environment around me totally changed. I thought to myself, "God is here!"

I was terrified and didn't dare to open my eyes. I thought, "I asked God to give me an appointment and now he's here! I can't open my eyes because if I see him I'll die!"

As I started praying in his presence, I went into a dramatic vision that lasted for many hours and came in three parts.

First was like a slideshow. A screen opened up before me and to my astonishment, I saw the imam of our home mosque. As I fixed my eyes on him, a kind strong voice said to me, "Forgive him. Bless him and pray for him."

He had hurt me the most when I was persecuted and banished from my family. Now I was being asked to forgive, bless and pray for him! I couldn't understand the purpose of it. I struggled in my thoughts and weighed whether or not to obey the command of that clear voice. I finally chose to obey. I prayed for and blessed the imam until I had no words left. Then his face disappeared and another took its place. One by one, all who had hurt me appeared on the screen and I repeated the process for each one. Each time I did, I felt like an arrow that had been buried in my heart was removed and with it, bitterness and hatred evaporated.

When this ended, the second part of the vision began, like scenes in a movie theatre. But I wasn't just watching; I was a key actor in the drama.

I watched the back of a person walking down the road. He turned right, then sat down near a potter at work. I didn't see the potter's face, only his hands working the clay. The clay broke in his hand as he worked and a voice said to me, "You see that? You are the one sitting there watching the potter." He told me, "I am the Potter, you are the clay, and I will make you."

The vision then moved to the third part, where I saw myself in a place I recognized as the Dida Galgalu Desert, which is part of the Chalbi Desert in northern Kenya, between Moyale and Marsabit. This desert is so barren that it has only one small tree nicknamed *Tigo*. This is a point of reference when crossing the desert. In my vision, I saw the vast emptiness of this dry and rocky desert. Then, I heard a question in my ears: "Can cabbage grow in this desert?"

I said to myself, "How could cabbage grow here? There's no grass, nothing! Nothing grows in this desert!"

At that point, the vision seemed to stop. I stood up to stretch and realized almost three hours had passed. I sat back down to pray, and suddenly the vision resumed.

Again, I saw Chalbi Desert. This time the voice did not ask. He made a statement in my ears: "Cabbage can grow in this desert." Suddenly, I saw rows of healthy cabbages growing in it! I saw cabbages popping up between the rocks, until the desert became all green with cabbages.

Along with this, Isaiah 43:18-20 came to mind:

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland . . .

The Lord's prophetic application stated:

"I will cause these rivers
to grow cabbages in
the desert."

As abruptly as the visions had begun, this third vision came to an end. As my mind cleared, I realized it was about 5:00 pm and elephants were grazing close by me! I had not heard them approach. At some distance, I saw two game wardens watching, probably worried for my safety but not knowing how to alert me without alarming the animals, lest they panic and charge toward me. The elephants, however, were not bothered by my presence and continued breaking branches as they ate. So I quietly took my Bible and walked away, choosing a path away from them and toward home.

The vision of cabbages in the desert stuck in my mind, and I prayed about it for weeks. Finally, the Lord opened my understanding concerning its meaning. The arid northern parts of Kenya are home to tribes like the Gabra, Rendille, Borana, Burji, and Daasanach, all classified (currently, or up until recently) as Unreached People Groups (UPGs). Reaching them has been challenging because they live in remote and difficult-to-reach areas. Poor infrastructure in that region remains a great challenge, even up to the present. I later realized that 14 of the 26 Unreached People Groups in Kenya live in *that* desert, the exact desert where I had seen the cabbage growing. I began to pray specifically about those people and tribes. It became clear to me that this was my calling. I knew that bringing these people groups into God's kingdom was the "new thing" God was going to perform. I began reaching out to the Unreached People Groups living in that region.

**"Can
cabbage
grow in this
desert?"**

Islam has deep roots among them, having been introduced via a pre-colonial trade route that extended from Eastern Somalia into Southern Ethiopia through North Kenya, centuries before the arrival of Christianity.

The first Christian missionaries arrived in North Kenya only in 1924. Even then, they did not take into account the tribes' nomadic lifestyle. As the seasons changed, whole tribes would sometimes move away for a year or more, in search of pasture, before returning to the same area. The early missionary methods—establishing mission stations and building church buildings, schools, and hospitals—were not as effective as they had been in other areas.

The European-style structures of the mission station alienated the people, who lived in simple huts. And the missionaries avoided leaving the mission station because of the danger of getting caught in frequent inter-tribal raids and clashes. They also faced severe pushback from the Muslim communities.

The missionaries also had to contend with the language barrier. And instead of helping to biblically redeem the local culture, the missionaries sought to change converts to a more European-oriented culture. This caused the people to view Christianity as a threat to their way of life—a threat to be strongly resisted. This resulted in minimal impact, even after decades-long missionary presence in northern Kenya.

From the vision, I came to understand that God cares deeply about the lost people in the desert, the Unreached People Groups, and was about to bring success in evangelizing them. He was calling me to serve among them, and he would cause the river of his word to bring eternal life and love to them. The growth of the cabbage would not be caused by my effort, I was simply joining God in sowing the seed and watching him ensure the growth.

The seed for Lifeway Global was sown in this “Mount Horeb” experience. In the subsequent years, we have held medical camps at *Tigo*, and the local team recently built a multipurpose meeting place there. We have also raised up active indigenous teams among UPGs such as the Samburu, Rendille, Gabra, Borana, Burji, and Daasanach. After decades of mission efforts, God is now growing his cabbages in the desert of North Kenya!

THE MISSION BEGINS

THE HOPE OF SALVATION I HAD in Jesus and the transformation in my life by faith led me to think more about my people. The desire to evangelize them grew steadily, so in 1991, I joined the outreach team in our church. Knowing that my people (the tribes of northern Kenya) are predominantly Muslim, I wondered how to go about reaching them. I eventually got the idea to secretly distribute gospel tracts.

Our church had copies of an illustrated tract in the Borana language, entitled “*Gara Jillo*” (“*Jillo’s Heart*” literally, stomach). It told the story of a man named Jillo, in whose heart were lions, pigs, and all kinds of wild animals (representing various sins and negative character traits). But when Jesus came into Jillo’s heart, his light drove out all the wild animals. Then the picture shows Jesus sitting in Jillo’s heart.

I saw that our town was busiest during the midday hours (between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.), crowded with Rendille, Borana, Burji, Gabra and Turkana business people buying and selling. I used this time to drop tracts in shops unnoticed. While a lot of people were milling around, I would leave some tracts on the counters. This was my best attempt to evangelize—the best idea I had at that time. Somebody gave me a box full of tracts, each with just a short message about salvation in Christ, so I kept on doing that. I think most of the shops in Marsabit got my tracts. Many times, I heard people wondering who left those tracts that appeared so mysteriously, because the tracts had no contact info written on them.

I never got caught dropping the tracts, but one day I went into a shop that I had never been to before. When I walked in, there was just one customer and the shopkeeper. This immediately became awkward because I didn’t have any money to buy anything. I always tried to go in shops that were full of people, so I wouldn’t be noticed at all. But this time the shopkeeper asked me, “Can I help you? What do you want to buy?”

I didn’t know what to say, so I just handed him a tract and said, “I want to give you this. It’s about Jesus.”

He got very upset and I quickly left. That was my closest call with a problem when I was secretly distributing tracts. I don’t know what response came of all those tracts I dropped, but I’m sure some

people picked them up and read them. The gospel message was out there, even though I had no way to measure any fruit from it. I was so passionate about bringing the gospel to my people that I felt this effort was not enough. I sought the Lord in prayer about this, and in response to this cry of my heart, I felt God clearly leading me to begin a fellowship.

"WHO WILL REMAIN BEHIND?"

During that time (1991), the Lord orchestrated yet another life-changing experience for me during a food distribution. World Vision asked me to help distribute food to the Rendille people in Lontolio village, after rains had failed to come the previous year. Lontolio lies outside the town of Laisamis, home to many pastoralist communities, near a sacred hill locally called "The House of God."



In a food distribution such as this, safety for all present is paramount. This requires good cooperation with local administrative officials. Three of us went ahead to assess the situation, before the rest of the team and the food truck arrived. In the area designated for food distribution, scattered around acacia trees, huddled in small groups, we found about 200 men and women. They seemed engaged in deep conversation, probably about

their predicament. As usual, many children were running and playing around the adults.

As I looked at the small crowd, I saw an opportunity to preach the gospel to them. I was with a friend who was as zealous as I in evangelism. We agreed that I would preach and my friend, a Rendille, would translate the message to his tribespeople. This was an exciting moment, anticipating a harvest of souls for God's kingdom. We were on fire for Jesus and ready to set the place ablaze with the gospel.

I started preaching, but before long I realized they were not comprehending any of the message. In utter confusion, they looked at my mouth then at my friend's mouth, back and forth, but they didn't look like they understood a thing.

I realized that these people had no categories to grasp what I was talking about. They had had no prior contact with Christians or the gospel; even with translation of my words, we might as well have been speaking Greek!

So I stopped preaching and began simply to tell them the Bible message as a story. I told them that God created and loved human beings, but mankind fell into sin because of disobedience. I described how God later redeemed us through the sacrifice of Christ. They understood this, since in times of tribal distress, their elders offered animal sacrifices at the nearby hill to appease their deities. They also comprehended the Genesis creation story, as it is not too different from their own creation folklore.

Our interaction became a dialogue, as the elderly men asked questions. The concept of a loving God was not foreign to the Rendille, so they could relate to what I was saying. But they were amazed by the love of Jesus that had led him to suffer for our sin at Calvary. They asked, "Why did he do all that?"

I told them: "Because he loved you and me!"

At the end of the story, I asked, "Who among you would like to believe in this God?"

Before they could respond, the village elder stood up and began walking around addressing his people. He said, "Who among you cannot receive a God like this? This God who gave us his Son, who made him a sacrifice? How can you not accept this God, who also has sent these men

to bring us food?" (My friend was busy translating to me what the elder was saying.) My heart was overflowing with joy. "This is just amazing!" I thought to myself.

In response to the elder's appeal, most of those present raised their hands, indicating their desire to follow Christ. I was elated, and continued to tell them Bible stories as the truck arrived and the food was unloaded.

Finally, our team had to leave, as it was getting dark and the road was in very poor condition. We led the villagers in a prayer of commitment, but I was not confident they had really grasped the meaning of salvation. I had no time to tell them more, as the truck driver was getting impatient, trying to be responsible and get us out safely. He kept honking the horn to motivate us, so we said quick goodbyes and headed for the truck.

Suddenly, one of the women stepped into our way. My friend went around her, but I stopped. She said, "You've told us about this God who loves us, who gave us his Son and also sent you to give us food. So that means he knows about and even cares about us?"

"Yes," I confirmed.

Then she looked me in the eye and asked: "Now who among you will remain behind to teach us about this God you've told us about?"

I froze, my heartbeat suddenly moving to my throat and my body beginning to sweat all over. I was shocked. We hadn't anticipated such a profound and soul-searching question. But there she stood, waiting for an answer! I couldn't respond; I had no answer! I knew for sure I couldn't stay behind, and neither could my friend who was already at the truck.

Numb by her question, I needed to get away from her heart-piercing eyes. As I quietly and sadly stepped past her, she turned and kept staring at me. When I got into the truck and looked back, she had not moved an inch. As the truck drove away, her silhouetted form receded into the distance as she continued to stand there looking at me. Her question haunted me, echoing in my heart and mind.

The others in the truck rejoiced in ministry well done and blessed. Men and women had not only been fed, but also had come to the Lord! In

the midst of animated conversation among my colleagues, I was drowning in deep thought, my heart heavy with grief. Etched on my mind was the image of the woman standing, expecting an answer to her question. “Now who among you will remain behind to teach us about this God you’ve told us about?”

That night I wrestled with grief because I had no answer for that woman. Finally, I concluded that from that point on, whenever I proclaimed the gospel, I would stay on to teach the converts about how to follow God’s way. I would move ***from decision-making to disciple-making.***

I asked the Lord in prayer: “How will it be possible to do this every time?”

The insight I received in response was: “Multiply yourself in the lives of others, so they do the same things you do. You cannot be everywhere.” Like cool water to a thirsty soul, this answer refreshed my troubled mind. With a newly-calmed heart, I began to contemplate the implications of this approach.

At the same time, I realized the benefits of indigenous people reaching their own group with the gospel. I saw that this would greatly increase the effectiveness of gospel proclamation and the sustainability of discipleship among a group. The gospel will be perceived as very foreign if it is led by outside leaders, and inside leaders are not developed. If the person who introduces the gospel is an outstanding leader, everything falls apart when they leave, if they have not taken enough time to develop inside leaders. Or sometimes it just looks very foreign, if it’s only being led by somebody from a different context.

***I would move
from decision-
making to
disciple-making.***

A movement or a church or ministry becomes sustainable only when it is being led by indigenous leaders. But it’s also important to understand the role of an outside leader: to coach, mentor, train, and resource the inside leaders. This is not to say that outside leaders are unimportant. They are catalysts and coaches, and can assist in many

ways as movement servants.⁷ But inside leaders are the ones who multiply and sustain what might have been started by outside leaders. So, we limit the role of outside leaders: to start a work, to catalyze it, and then to identify, coach, and train the inside leaders to multiply and sustain it. It's very critical to understand the apostolic⁸ role of outside leaders, and a healthy relationship between the outside leader and the inside leader. Multiplication and sustainability happen best, by far, when the ministry is indigenous.

Many years later, I am happy to report that God *did* answer that woman's request. A network of disciple-making teams now serves in that village and the surrounding area. Three churches already have been planted, with more on the way, as many are becoming true disciples of Christ. Best of all, no one has to "remain behind." Their own people are maturing in Christ and serving among them to teach them the ways of God.

What humans planned as an ordinary food distribution, the Lord turned into a life-changing experience. He orchestrated events that set me on a path toward much more effective and fruitful service for him. He led me from mere decisions of converts into making obedient disciples of Christ—disciples who mature in biblical faith and reproduce more disciples.

REVIVAL IN MARSABIT

Also in 1991, I began an outreach with two other students. In 1992, we started a Bible study meeting not far from my home, which ended up becoming like a revival meeting. We met in the house of an elderly woman who had a traditional Anglican background. We met on Tuesday nights

7 For more on this, see "Movement Servants Needed!" by Dave Coles and Stan Parks. *Mission Frontiers*, May-June 2021, pp. 37-41; "Movement Servants: Helping Movements Multiply" by Dave Coles and Stan Parks. *Mission Frontiers*, Nov-Dec 2022, pp. 20-22; and <https://lifewayglobal.org/get-involved>.

8 We use the term "apostolic disciple-maker" to describe cross-cultural missionaries: those *sent* to other countries or different groups to start new movements in an unengaged area. In using this term, we do *not* mean someone who can add to the canon of Scripture or someone who has an ongoing role of authoritative leadership over the churches they plant.

for prayer, and as we kept on praying and crying out to God, he started working miracles. Even families from another faith invited us to come and pray for them. People saw healings and casting out of demons—a lot of it. That opened the doors, and the fellowship started growing as word spread. People came and were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The fellowship continued to grow, and within a year or two, it had become massive, with roughly 300 people attending. We named it “Emmanuel Christian Fellowship.” The Lord used the prayers of his children to bring a great revival in Marsabit. By 1995, that led to the birth of numerous indigenous churches there, as the local people could identify with the gospel message being proclaimed. God’s people were on fire, and we had reports of people becoming followers of Christ, even in the remotest of areas. Those in distant rural areas began to meet on Thursdays, while the ones in town continued meeting on Tuesdays. This made it possible for those who wanted to, to walk the distance (more than 6 miles) and attend both gatherings. We watched the hand of God moving in power!

In January 1993, I left to go to Bible school, but the revival continued. Amazing things happened between 1991 and 1997. We never intended to start a church, but some people came from the outside and introduced teachings that created divisions among the believers. That resulted in a number of different churches which still exist. Some of the people who came to the fellowship back then are now the pastors of these churches. Two lessons I learned through those problems, which we have since applied, were *the importance of indigenous leaders* in a church and *the importance of real discipleship*—not just great spiritual experiences, which can leave people vulnerable.

Within a few years’ time, the Lord had brought me out of Islam and into his family, given me a vision for reaching many others, and begun fulfilling that vision through various kinds of outreach and the revival. But he had even greater things in mind: making disciples in places and among groups that had never before had disciples or been touched by the good news of salvation in Christ. We now turn to describe the seeds that brought forth that abundant harvest.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- What are some lessons you can learn and apply from Teacher Francis?
- How would you describe a healthy balance between compassion ministry, gospel presentation, and reproducible discipleship?
- What are some ways you can help the gospel not feel foreign to those you are trying to reach?



FROM MINISTRY TO MOVEMENTS





DISCIPLE MAKING SEEDS TAKE ROOT

IN DECEMBER OF 1994, I was invited to minister to a small group of indigenous Christians in Moyale. I went there to help train this group, to disciple them, and help them form a church. This invitation further solidified my decision to become a disciple-maker, and I became the first pastor of this group as they became a church.

My focus at that point was to establish a church consisting of indigenous people. Many times, the presence of believers from other parts of Kenya caused the community to think: “Churches are just for people from the Christian belt of Kenya, not for the indigenous peoples of northern Kenya.” So, any churches in the North had no identity with the local people. Thus, our goal was a truly indigenous church: indigenously led with indigenous worship. That way, when a person from northern Kenya came to faith, they would be able to identify with, and feel at home in, a local church.

When the Ethiopian Communist government fell in 1991, refugees started pouring over the border into northern Kenya. Among them were a great number of Orthodox Christians and some Evangelicals. In many places, they started living in the local communities. That gave the local people a different picture of Christianity. Instead of seeing it as something distant and strange, they started seeing how Christians actually lived. And some of them had a positive testimony. Also, the people in North Kenya are historically people from Ethiopia, so they have a lot of connections, including some linguistic connections. God also used those things to open up the area, especially the urban areas.

The believers needed a way to meet and worship, and I ended up in the middle of that—trying to disciple people. A church emerged, which eventually became a denomination: the Evangelical Christian Church of Africa (ECCA). I served as a leader, a founding pastor in that group, and focused on training leaders. The training I did enabled them to lead new groups and to do the work of the ministry. Ephesians 4:12-13 played a critical role in my thinking: *“to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure*

of the fullness of Christ." I drew from my Bible school notes, and started training—both on the Ethiopian side of the border and on the Kenyan side. During the day, I trained 30 leaders on the Kenyan side, and at night, I trained 38 leaders on the Ethiopian side. That was the first training of its kind for indigenous people in northern Kenya, and it led to the growth of a mission.

One day, I was teaching on "The Mission of God (*Missio Dei*)" and sharing God's heart for missions. Suddenly one of the students, feeling a strong urging from the Holy Spirit, stood up and stopped us in the middle of my teaching. He asked me to stop, and told the rest of the students, "We can't just sit here listening, when God is speaking to us. This is not him [Aila] speaking; this is God. If God is speaking to us, we should *do* something about it, before we need to hear more."

Then they started praying. That prayer became a prayer meeting that continued for a whole week. Right after that, teams started going out for the August Mission. Out of that prayer came a movement. It was amazing—not anything I had planned. God did it, and we kept on following the Lord's leading. Later on, whole groups brought together their resources for reaching out to the communities and witnessing.

This powerful outreach continued for years and years, and still continues, every August. A lot of people raise the needed resources and go from wherever they are. Many of them now don't know when the August outreach started, but I know it started from a class, and has led to planting churches and reaching Unreached People Groups. We learned later on about movements, but even from that time, a passion for reaching the lost impacted a generation. Many of those who came through that outreach joined me in ministry and became part of the network of ministries.

I pursued a new image of what church could be. My passion was mission, and God had already given me the vision of cabbages growing in the desert. So, I pursued a new image of what church could be. I was raising up two different institutions to aim toward that goal: Lifeway Mission and the Evangelical Christian Church of Africa (ECCA). We kept the two entities separate, because we wanted the mission to work with *all* denominations. We didn't want it to be a denominational mission.

Some of the churches planted through the mission became part of this denomination, while others became part of many other groups.

I focused on training and getting people on mission with God. Our slogan was, “You either go or you send. You cannot say, ‘I cannot.’” We started sending people out every August—mostly from Unreached People Groups to Unreached People Groups. We mainly focused on seeing indigenous churches planted among the people groups in northern Kenya.

Even at that point, my main goal was not serving as a pastor of a congregation. I longed to see lost people in northern Kenya become disciples of Jesus. All this was happening in the same town where Teacher Francis had told me that Jesus is the one who forgives sin, and I had received forgiveness of my sin. The focus was not on “becoming a Christian.” The idea of disciple-making, even in the training I did at that time, was to help the people in these tribes to become followers of Jesus—taking inspiration from my experience when I was in the hospital in that same town.

I pursued a new image of what church could be.

The move of God at that time led me and a group of believers to form the northern Kenya Revival Ministries in 1993. Through this ministry, we organized mission trips during school holidays in April, August, and December. Soon, some ministry members enrolled in Bible school, which was a major breakthrough. They were the first indigenous people from our area to study theology. However, their departure left a major gap in the ministry. I started going into the villages alone, traveling on top of livestock-transporting trucks. At a top speed of 25 m.p.h. through the desert, it wasn’t quick transportation, but it gave me time to dream and pray for all the Unreached People Groups there.⁹

⁹ At that time, when there was no road from Nairobi to northern Kenya, this was a common means of transportation. A substantial fee was paid to the driver, for the privilege of riding above the livestock. We used to call it “Borana Airlines” (Borana being one of the major tribes of the region). Now that there is a paved road from Nairobi to northern Kenya, this practice is no longer common.

At the same time, I continued teaching the Moyale small groups. They multiplied and grew in number, and matured into the ECCA Church. I helped them develop leadership structures and a church constitution. In December 1995, the ECCA ordained me as one of their ministers. I served as pastor of the church, but did not forget my calling to evangelism. I continued active evangelism in the community and trained the congregation to focus on missions.

**My passion
was mission,
and God
had already
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the vision of
cabbages
growing in
the desert.**

At that point, most of the fruit—a lot of churches among the nomadic tribes—came from the August mission. We weren't yet developing indigenous leaders, so our greatest challenge at that time was finding leaders for the churches. That meant that although we saw a lot of fruit, the churches were not very sustainable long-term. We focused on proclamation and engagement, but not really on discipling those people.

Our team would go out and minister, and then come back, using the traditional approach of reporting how many people had accepted Christ. That's the best we knew how to do at the time. The big emphasis was on continually reaching out. Now we realize: As important as it is to reach out, we also have to make disciples of those we reach, and we have to see churches planted among those new disciples, and indigenous leaders raised up. Our outreach in those days lacked all those elements.

As the Lord continued to bless his work in northern Kenya, heavy persecution broke out against us. Open Doors International heard about it and came to strengthen us. This developed into a long relationship with ECCA, during which they did much training that further helped the church mature.

I knew, however, that my mission went beyond denominational boundaries. I did not lose the vision of the cabbages in the desert, so I deliberately developed Lifeway Mission as a separate entity from the ECCA Church. Both were officially registered with the Kenyan government in 1997.

With this done, I was free to concentrate on the task of reaching and teaching the Unreached People Groups. Meanwhile, most of the

churches in northern Kenya have been planted by people coming out of this church that I trained—on both the Ethiopian and Kenyan sides. That's how the church in northern Kenya started to make an impact on the Unreached People Groups. So now, in the midst of a majority from a different faith, we have six rapidly growing branches of the fellowship in Moyale, and many more in the outlying areas. The leader of the church there was one of my students. He is now part of Lifeway, and they've sent out many missionaries from there.

On the Ethiopian side, Lifeway also has a training center led by Ethiopians, focusing on reaching unreached groups in Ethiopia. Many business people also have come from the training schools, and the Lord has given them influence in the unreached community through their businesses. Some of them also have become community leaders.

Previously (in the early 1990s), a person would be stoned in Moyale for being a Christian. But the number of disciples has grown, so it's no longer a group that can be ignored or easily done away with.

Before I served as a leader of this group, God already had called me to witness the growing of cabbages in the desert. I knew what that was: reaching the Unreached People Groups in the desert. So, while I was doing pastoral ministry, I was training this group (both those at the training and those in the church) to be missional. The church actually became my training center for sending.

So, I was trainer as a pastor. Our first 18 missionaries came from this church, on the Ethiopian side. My role there was really as a catalyst, to see the indigenous believers understand their role as God's missionaries, wherever they are in the community. We understood very clearly the priesthood of all believers, rather than just my being a pastor. I was also going to other communities at that time; I wasn't just doing a pastoral role among the congregation. I had started developing other leaders to pick up those roles. I specifically focused on giving leadership to the church people rather than just doing a pastoral role myself. In this way, others rose up to do pastoral functions. But I was the leader of both the church and the mission, for many years.

The church and the mission are different, but they work together in partnership. That way, Lifeway can continue to influence the body of

Christ, while the church can create partnerships with other churches. There's no mixture or competition; so they can always complement each other and work together. Both share in the vision of Lifeway for church-planting among Unreached People Groups, and many other churches have joined Lifeway to be part of that initiative. Earlier I had said that I didn't want to start an organization, because I didn't have a background in thinking that way. But we always want to pursue what God is doing.

The way we came up with the name Lifeway was that some people from another faith were asking what we were doing. We didn't want to trigger an "allergy" by using the word "Christian," so I said, "We are the people of the Way," and we cited John 14:6, where Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life," and John 10:10b: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." In the local language, it's kind of reversed, roughly: "Jesus is the way, and we are the people of the way, because Jesus gives life, and we proclaim the truth." So, in the local language, if you put those words together (*Kara*—way, and *Jiren*—life), you have Lifeway—the path of life, the way. So we are "The people of the Way, who proclaim the truth of Jesus." Thus, whenever anyone asks who we are, we say "We are the people of the Way." The Kenyan government said, "That's a description, but we need a word." In the local language, we called it *Kara Jiren*—Way of Life.

The church had its own structure, and Lifeway had its own structure as a network. The church had elders and other leaders we were developing. I was a vision-bearer for both, but the structures were distinct, even while the two worked (and still continue to work) together in close partnership. The Lifeway network also has influenced many other churches to catalyze movements—not only within the church but also outside the church (where churches don't yet exist). Lifeway does a lot of training and coaching for existing churches to be missional.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO FINISH THE TASK?

THAT SAME YEAR (1997), I came across a small book entitled *Called to Share*, published by Daystar University in Nairobi. It contained research results listing 26 communities and tribes categorized as Unreached People Groups in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, including 14 in North Kenya. I saw there, for the first time, statistics about my own people group and many other tribes of northern Kenya—described as UPGs.¹⁰

This information so challenged me that I resolved to travel to each of the Kenyan tribes listed as UPGs. In 1998 and 1999, I went to investigate the location of these tribes and which mission organization, if any, was working among them. I wanted to be physically there and pray. I traveled from Moyale, in the far north, to Pate Island in the Indian Ocean, and on to Kwale, on the southernmost coast of Kenya.¹¹ I visited all but one of the UPGs in Kenya, and that gave me a clearer picture of what to pray for and what to prepare for. We now have teams serving among all these groups.

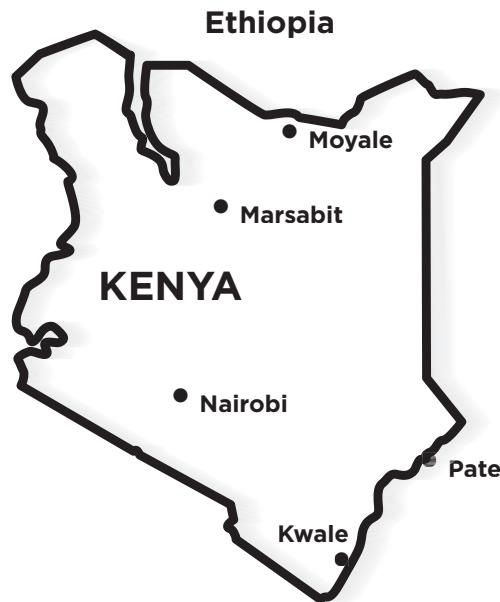
I also learned that globally, 6,900 groups had been categorized as UPGs. They made up well over one-third of the world's population: billions of people! I pondered how they could possibly be engaged before the Lord returns, but I resolved to do my part—whatever that might include. As a next step, I started training and sending believers into the North Kenya and Ethiopian mission fields.¹²

10 We later discovered 321 UPGs in the greater Eastern Africa region, that we are pursuing reaching with the gospel.

11 I was still single at the time, so I was able to travel with very few expenses, and the group in Moyale covered some of my travel expenses. When I arrived in a place, I would see if I could find a church. If I did, I would talk to the leaders and tell them, "I've come here just to pray for two days and learn what I can about this area and the people here." In this way, I was hosted by many churches along the way. On one island, I met a single man who had been sent there to try to reach that people group. Thus, I stayed with him and prayed with him.

12 Because of the work the Lord has done since that time, through our team and other teams, some of these groups are no longer categorized as unreached.

On one occasion, as already mentioned, I was training a group in the border town of Moyale. It was a two-year training, which began in 1995. (The last group I trained finished in 2001. But some of those I had trained continued to lead the training, which is still ongoing up to the present.) Believers had gathered from both Kenya and Ethiopia, on the Ethiopian side of town. After I taught on “The Heart of God for the Lost,” a participant challenged the class: “If God’s heart is for the lost, why are we sitting here? We have already learned enough; shouldn’t we go out now?” The rest of the class accepted the challenge; they started



making plans and praying. Those unable to go gave resources to support those who could. That August, they went on their first mission trip and birthed the annual Moyale August Mission, which still remains active.

Many believers, including business persons and civil servants, mobilized to go out for one month to unengaged areas among Unreached People Groups. They were put in teams and raised their own support. This has continued from 1998 up to the present. They have a special training for a few days. Those who are unable to go would pray and fast

(24 hours), on a daily rotation, lifting up specific requests for the teams and the areas. Everyone plays a part—either going or sending and praying. When the month is over, they would come back and give a report of what the Lord has done, and have a celebration. In April, some people go for one week to survey the areas in advance, do prayer walking, listen to the Lord, and come back with useful information. We call the April trip “sending of spies,” and we call the August trip “Joshua Initiative.”

By 1999, scores of missionaries were being sent out to unreached tribes. In 2000, my wife Tiru and I moved to Nairobi and began to develop a team for reaching out to other parts of Kenya. Teams were developing organically in Ethiopia and northern Kenya. I placed an emphasis on leadership development, and the disciples took this mandate seriously.

During this time, I continued wondering how we could effectively reach these Unreached People Groups. Seeking inspiration, I read missionary biographies, including one of Dr. David Livingstone, which greatly influenced my mission philosophy and theology. I read of his work in northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), and in 2000 I took a “Dr. Livingstone Trail” trip, during which I traveled all the way to his house in Zanzibar and burial place in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. I also went to his birthplace and museum in Blantyre, Scotland. I wanted to see what I could learn from what David Livingstone and other missionaries had done. I observed that he had a very holistic approach to mission, including not only gospel proclamation but also education and medical ministry. I also observed the weakness of the mission-station approach, which limited impact on the community as a whole.

I was also deeply inspired by Hudson Taylor, the father of faith missions. I was amazed by his faith, as he fully depended on God to do his mission work. From his story, I gleaned faith principles that I continue to follow.

Inspired by Hudson Taylor’s story, I founded Lifeway Mission in 1997, based on God’s calling. We are indigenous people who have simply stepped out in obedience and faith. We, too, remain convinced that God has the resources to accomplish his work, and we testify of his continued provision and guidance. As Hudson Taylor said, “God’s work, done in

God's way, will not lack God's resources." This philosophy protects us against overdependence on donors. Though we are not against having financial partners, overreliance on them can curtail the work of the Lord. Some donors prove unreliable, while others donate to push their agenda, then pull out once they achieve their goals or if their agenda is rejected.

**The church and
the mission
are different,
but they work
together in
partnership.**

The Bible warns against putting our trust in other humans: "*Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord*" (Jer. 17:5). Trusting God removes fear, and without fear we can freely pursue God's vision, together with those of like mind.

Another person who influenced my mission thinking was Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With A Mission (YWAM). I read his book, *Is That Really You, God?*, at the end of which he gave tips on how to listen to God.

These three leaders worked based on their deep faith in God. They did not have an easy time but they pushed through setbacks and challenges, pursuing their vision until they overcame.

Christ also modeled this walk of faith for us when he sent his disciples out on their missionary journey (Luke 10:1-8). He instructed them to not carry money bags, knapsacks, or sandals. They were to go out armed only with faith that the Lord would provide for all their needs. He later promised them: "I will be with you to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). The Lord Jesus is the greatest resource we have. More than money, we need his presence.

CHALLENGES REMAINING

I learned much from past men of faith, but also saw great challenges remaining to finish the task. One great ongoing challenge is the inward focus of most of the global Church. Priority often goes to building bigger buildings, rather than sending and supporting missionaries. Much of the Church has little motivation to go to the final frontiers: the Unreached People Groups.

Another challenge is the spread of the prosperity gospel, especially in Africa. This false teaching peddles a message of personal health and wealth, with no focus on seeking the lost. Its focus is personal gain through the church. It's not about the growth of God's kingdom, but use of the church for personal benefit. The net effect is a loss for God's kingdom, in the hope of worldly gain. Everything is built around an individual or a program. People can quote some Scriptures about health and wealth, but that's not the focus of the gospel. And in the end, they're not even mentioning the gospel. They're just giving motivational talks and "prophecies" of how God will bless people, and then taking up offerings. That weakens the church, because it takes the focus off discipleship and helping people understand what it means to follow Jesus. If we don't have a focus on being disciples and making disciples, what can the church stand on? All the empty promises will pass, and then what will sustain people's faith? This is one more reason why we need disciple-making, not decision-making.

A third challenge is that some regions of the world have become inaccessible due to the activity of extreme anti-Christian groups. These groups make every effort to oppose the presence and the spread of the gospel within their sphere of influence.

A fourth challenge is missions being treated as a church program rather than as the normal lifestyle of a believer. Being a disciple is a lifestyle. It's not a project or a program. The Church exists to do mission. We have to share Christ with others as a part of who we are. I see a dichotomy in churches between what happens on a Sunday morning and what happens on a Monday morning. This dichotomy has affected the Church's thinking—viewing missions as an optional program, which you may or may not do, rather than the reason the Church exists. If a church is not missional, why does it exist? I think it's important to redefine church in light of what we see the Early Church doing in the book of Acts. The Church's calling is to go and make disciples. That's not just the Great Commission; we see it as the lifestyle of a believer.

**One great
ongoing
challenge is the
inward focus
of most of the
global Church.**

I struggle with church structures that institutionalize the functions of Christ's body and make it difficult for Jesus's mission to move forward. We end up in a place where the focus is on maintaining the institution and its structures rather than fulfilling the mission of Jesus. How can we change the focus, so the Church will accomplish its mission? Some people think the Church exists for itself, to feel good about ourselves and what we do. But committed mission is what we are becoming; it's what we go out and tell the world to become as well. I believe Matthew 4:19 is critical: "Come, follow me," then go out and reach others. "Teach others to follow me as well." Too many churches are not doing that. They're just inviting people to a church's program rather than inviting people to Jesus and joining in his mission. I see a need for reevaluation or redefining church—its functions and what it represents.

As I read missionary biographies and considered the remaining task, my passion to equip indigenous people increased. I realized that to be sustainable, the churches planted among unreached groups must have an indigenous face. They need local expressions of faith and forms of worship, solidly based on the word of God applied within that context. Only in this way will the gospel attract local people rather than alienating them. In this way, local people who come to faith in Christ will own the vision of reaching their own. I felt that this approach would greatly increase sustainability and growth of the work.

I started holding extended trainings for indigenous disciples in Moyale, taking each group through a course that ran for five days every month for three years. I taught them in the local language that they would be using to reach people (Borana). They became highly effective missionaries since they spoke the language, understood the culture, and were comfortable with the nomadic lifestyle.

In Moyale itself, we clearly saw the effectiveness of equipping indigenous believers, as revival broke out soon after. Local people found it easy to come to faith, as they could identify with other indigenous believers. Now most North Kenya churches are led by local people who have been trained by Lifeway Mission International (Lifeway Global).

INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

ALL THESE EVENTS, INCLUDING my encounter with the Rendille woman (after the food distribution described in Chapter 5), gave root to the idea of church multiplication. In 1998-1999, I began studying previous movements that had taken place in Africa, such as the East African Revival.¹³ This brought to mind the Marsabit prayer meetings, which had become a huge movement with much prayer, reading of God's word, and obedience to the word, resulting in many indigenous people coming to the Lord.

In late 1996, I attended a course at the Kenya YWAM School of Missions. While there, Kevin Sutter told us of church multiplication happening in North India,¹⁴ and the idea of church-planting coaches and what God was doing in Honduras, through George Patterson.¹⁵ His description so captivated me that I caught up with him later, asking to know more. In answer, he handed me the booklet *Church Planting Movements* by David Garrison, which described Church Planting Movements happening in various parts of the world, especially in Asia.

I was already involved in work among UPGs when I attended graduate school (2001-2003) at Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in Seoul, Korea. I entitled my Master's thesis: "A Study of

13 Known locally as the *Tukulendereza* movement. This movement broke out in the mid-1930s through the 1940s and 1950s. It began in Rwanda and spread through Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. See, for example, "1936 East African Revival" (<http://tinyurl.com/2z5bvutb>) and "New Dawn in East Africa: the East African Revival" by Michael Harper (<http://tinyurl.com/22d4byw4>).

14 See "A Movement of God among the Bhojpuri of North India," by David L. Watson and Paul D. Watson, in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Fourth Edition*, pp. 697-700. This was before publication of the book *Bhojpuri Breakthrough: A Movement that Keeps Multiplying* by Victor John with Dave Coles.

15 See, for example, "The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches," by George Patterson, in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Fourth Edition*, pp. 633-642, and *Church Multiplication Guide Revised: The Miracle of Church Reproduction* by George Patterson and Dick Scoggins (<http://tinyurl.com/55knt2rs>).

Cross-Cultural Mission Among the Unreached Borana People Group in Moyale District of Kenya, in Relation to Paul's Model of Mission." It mainly focused on church planting among that people group. Kevin Sutter and his wife graciously agreed to be my dissertation readers. We had many discussions about multiplication and various understandings of church.

At one point during my studies, Dr. Roger Greenway, Professor of World Missiology at Calvin Seminary, made a statement that perplexed me. During a graduate mission class, he said, "We are living in the most exciting time!" That was definitely not true for me. That year was not exciting. It was a difficult time. I found mission work among UPGs very challenging. It seemed like nothing much was happening. I sought him out after that class. I asked him, "What is so exciting about these times in the context of missions?" My mission work had suffered setbacks due to the global economic depression of 1997-1999. Many regions also experienced negative political developments. Everyone I knew complained of the same problems. Nothing exciting at all!

He replied that this is an exciting time because God is working in his harvest field and is calling many workers into his harvest. This did not give me much encouragement until I read the article, "The Glory of the Impossible"¹⁶ by Samuel Zwemer, the famous missionary to the Islamic world. At one point, back in his home context, he described his work among UPGs in the Middle East, and preached on the text: "Lord, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless, at your command, we let down the nets" (Luke 5:5). But full of hope, he quoted from the rest of Luke 5:1-11, saying: "The time is coming when we will fish the lost people for Jesus until the net breaks."

His faith filled me with hope. I felt that that time had come. When I thought of the work that remains in bringing in the Lord's harvest of souls, I had a sense of urgency. Our present strategy was not yielding the required results. If we continued doing evangelism the same way, we

16 (<https://tinyurl.com/4vxper4r>)

could not expect different results. I thought to myself: “There must be something different we can do.”

At first, I had envisioned a people movement, as Donald McGavran had described.¹⁷ But Garrison’s booklet opened my eyes to realize he was describing something different. The concept seemed simple: plant a church that plants another church, which plants another church, etc. As this process gathers momentum, it becomes a Church Planting Movement.

Among other things, Garrison described 10 Universal Elements found in every Church Planting Movement:

1. Extraordinary Prayer
2. Abundant Evangelism
3. Intentional Planting of Reproducing Churches
4. The Authority of God’s Word
5. Local Leadership
6. Lay Leadership
7. House Churches
8. Churches Planting Churches
9. Rapid Reproduction
10. Healthy Churches¹⁸

He emphasized the importance of prayer, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the centrality of Scripture in the group meetings. All this was happening among Unreached People Groups! It spoke powerfully into my context, and helped me think beyond conventional ways of evangelism, such as open-air meetings, altar calls during church services, and establishing

17 In his article, “A Church In Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Fourth Edition, 2009. Pasadena: William Carey Publishing, 627-632. [[Also remove the semicolon, which I couldn’t manage to select]].

18 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004).

mission stations. None of these approaches was practical or useful among the nomadic tribes of northern Kenya.

If a village or family could be won to the Lord, they would very quickly share the word through their network of relationships. I knew

that in northern Kenya, if an individual came to Christ, they easily abandoned their faith due to cultural pressure, or fled the area due to persecution. But if a village or family could be won to the Lord, they would very quickly share the word through their network of relationships. The gospel would spread to relatives, clan and village. And a group or family would withstand persecution better than an isolated individual. It became clear to me that to reach the UPGs of our region, we would need to empower indigenous persons from their midst.

By the time I completed my Master's degree in 2003, I was mulling over how to inspire congregants to actively spread the gospel, since the Bible says all believers are priests, thus all can do God's work. The pastor's main work is to equip, train, and facilitate them, as we see in the New Testament.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9).

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Eph. 4:11-12).

I saw that if we shifted the focus of evangelistic missions from the ordained leaders to all believers, we would more effectively fulfill the Great Commission. To accomplish this, I pulled away from the traditional church model. Following the concepts outlined in David Garrison's book, I sought creative ways to evangelize the UPGs of North Kenya and beyond.

Because of their nomadic lifestyle, planting churches in buildings would not work. The people move (as a whole village or clan together) with every change of season. You can't expect them to always meet for church in one specific location. Their evangelists would have to come from among them, and their churches would have to be as mobile as they are. So our team started describing the model as the "Church on the Back of a Camel"¹⁹—a phrase that others also have picked up and used.



Family travelling by camel in the Chalbi Desert of northern Kenya

They move their homes on the back of a camel, so the church needs to move when the people move.

Using local languages, we started equipping ordinary people with manual (hand-crank) tape players, provided by Gospel Recordings (now

¹⁹ See "Church on the Back of a Camel?" (<http://tinyurl.com/49thdm95>) and *Peoples on the Move: Introducing the Nomads of the World* by David J. Phillips (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing, 2001).

called “Global Recordings”). Each tape recorder came with about six pre-recorded cassette tapes and an illustrated flip chart that could be hung on the branch of a tree.²⁰ The messengers traveled with these wrapped in a plastic bag for protection from the elements.

As people listened to the recorded gospel message, they turned the pages of the flip chart. In this way, we started spreading the gospel among the unreached. But because of their mobility, we had no way to assess the impact of that model. Only eternity will reveal the results.

An emphasis on planting churches doesn’t necessarily focus on whether the people in the churches are really disciples. It doesn’t always give clarity about what people are doing when the church meets. It’s not a question of whether one strategy is better than another. Our intent is to focus on the central command of Matthew 28: “make disciples.” The disciples come together to constitute a church. And those churches multiply to become movements of churches.

It’s not a matter of just moving people around to make churches, without caring what they do when they meet. We want to be clear that we’re talking about disciples who obey Jesus and come together to do the functions of the church. And through faithful obedience, they multiply. They make other disciples who multiply to become churches. So we decided to focus on the key entry point: make disciples, and those disciples together become a church. It’s a church plant that focuses on making disciples, and that process can be easily replicated. A church is an *outcome* of disciples. It’s not an end in itself. We want to see multiplication of churches, beginning with multiplication of disciples. This was clarified in a discussion with City Team in 2009 and 2010.

But as early as 2005, I was thinking about these issues: the importance of making disciples, and concerns about potential problems if we just focus on the number of churches planted. Some people talk about

²⁰ These cassette players are no longer in use. We now equip people to tell Bible stories (such as Creation to Christ stories) orally, as part of Discovery Bible Studies. Most group leaders also have audio Bibles, and we are translating portions of the Scriptures for oral use in various tribal languages. These can be shared and played via microchip (SD card) in a cell phone.

church-planting, but it is really just church transplanting: moving people from here to there. That's very common in urban areas: people moving around or splitting a church and calling it a new church plant. The question for me is: "How do I engage a lost person and disciple them, so that out of discipling people, a new church emerges?" That's what I wanted to see as a description of my ministry.

It's important to clarify what a person means by "church," because it varies in different contexts. For me, a church is a local, independent, functioning body that relates to other bodies, and functions in a network that provides mutual support. But it's autonomous and it can grow and influence the kingdom of God. Not standing by itself, but as a part of the larger body of Christ. I have a very simple definition of church. I just say, "A church is a group of baptized believers (though some might still be in the process toward baptism) with recognized leaders, who regularly meet for worship, the ordinances, fellowship, discovering God's will from his written word, prayer, supporting each other, and sharing their faith in the community." That's a very simple definition: not qualifying it by the number of people, but by the functions—what they do when they come together. It has to be more than just "two or three gathered in Jesus's name," because a gathering of just two or three can't support itself to fulfill all the functions of a New Testament church. The average size church we've seen among those from a different faith background is 12-15 believers; among those from a tribal religious background, 23-25 believers, and some are much larger. It varies from one tribe to another.²¹ They need to appoint elders (leaders), as we see in the book of Acts, and as Paul instructed Timothy and Titus.

10,000 CHURCHES BY 2010 . . . IS IT POSSIBLE?

In April 2003, I was invited to speak at a weeklong conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on church-planting among the unreached. The organizers shared a passion for missions to Unreached People Groups, and

²¹ Also, the prior context of that phrase in Matthew 18:20 makes it clear that the church Jesus envisioned (verse 17) was significantly larger than the three or four believers described in verse 16.

had formed the “Horn of Africa Mission” in 2002. That April 2003 conference was to be its official launch. At the end of the conference, five of us held a meeting to discuss the way forward.

Out of the blue, one of them said, “Aila has a calling to the unreached. He also has experience with them; we want to see if he can lead us to plant 10,000 churches among them by 2010.” He was talking about the whole Horn of Africa,²² and 2010 was just seven years away. I thought that was a crazy idea! We had no resources at hand, no networks on the ground, and no strategy. I had no idea how to plant 10,000 churches. But the brothers had faith that God would lead us to achieve this goal. I went back home that night and prayed. As I prayed, I came up with a document, and a few weeks after that, a roadmap. I realized, “This is not something I have to run around trying to make happen. I need to train others to do it.”

So, we started training, and I put things together focused on church-planting, and we began recruiting and sending out church planters. I took a lot of ideas from what I was already doing in northern Kenya among the UPGs. If you train indigenous people to continue planting churches, the churches can multiply. I didn’t focus on training pastors. I’m not saying pastors can’t do it, but their focus and calling is to shepherd the sheep. I wanted to train those with a passion for those still outside the sheepfold.

I accepted this massive responsibility because of my firm belief in what God can do if we trust him. As J. Hudson Taylor said, “God’s work, done in God’s way, will never lack God’s supply.” I also reasoned that even if we did not meet the target, it would not be a loss, since we would have successfully planted *some* churches! So I had nothing to fear.

We prayed and parted ways. When I got home, I took time to pray and fast for God’s wisdom, then wrote a concept paper in which I outlined proposed activities toward this mission. These included training, recruiting, catalyzing and building networks.

22 At that time, the countries considered by the group as part of the Horn of Africa included all of Sudan (before its division), Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti.

After that conference, I stayed in Ethiopia for the next five years. The years 2003-2005 were very special for me. I was serving full time with Open Doors, studying for my doctorate²³ and working passionately on the 10,000 churches mission. Many nights I went to bed at 3:00 am. The 10,000 churches mission challenged my faith. My continuous prayer was, “Lord, help us plant 10,000 churches by 2010.” God started orchestrating events to bring this to pass.

In 2004, Dave Hunt, who I had met at the conference in Ethiopia, attended a Church Planting Movement (CPM) conference in the United States. After that, he traveled to see firsthand the CPM led by Victor John among the Bhojpuri people in North India.

On his return, he asked if I had heard about the concept of CPM, and he gave me another copy of the book I had been given at YWAM, many years previously. He shared with me lots of stories and said, “You know what? These principles work! These people are doing it. I met thousands of people . . .”

I, in turn, shared with him my concept paper. He reviewed our training elements, the plan to recruit existing churches, build church and tribal networks. After this, I started implementing it on a trial basis with teams in North Kenya, and with key leaders in Tanzania and Sudan.

LET IT GO!

In March 2005, Younoussa Djao from Ivory Coast organized a CPM training by David Watson for Francophone Africa in Guinea. Then in December 2005, Dave Hunt invited me to Ivory Coast, where Younoussa was hosting the first Church Planting Movement Consultation for Africa. At that Consultation, Shodankeh Johnson, a movement leader in Sierra Leone, came to testify of what God had done in his country since David

23 In 2005 I began a doctoral program in Transformational Leadership through Bakke Graduate University in Seattle, Washington, USA. In 2009, I completed my dissertation, entitled: “Incarnational-Holistic Approach for Socio-Economic and Spiritual Development among the Borana in Moyale District of Kenya.” It contained many of the principles we have implemented since, which have borne great fruit, by God’s grace.

Watson had led a CPM training there a few years earlier. David Watson was coming to the Ivory Coast CPM Consultation, which would give me an opportunity to meet him.

At that time, I was highly skeptical about the stories I had heard. David Watson described what God was doing through movements among the Bhojpuri people of North India. He shared how thousands were coming to the Lord through a simple disciple-making process that used people's relational networks. I was skeptical and pushed back at him that whole day. I thought the massive numbers he was reporting from India could not be true. Whole villages coming to the Lord? Impossible!

I was convinced that the model he was talking about could not work in predominantly Islamic North Kenya, where normally individuals rather than tribes came to faith in Christ. I thought: "Mass conversions may be possible among Hindus in India, but certainly not in my context!"

I confess that I was also proud because of my own success in evangelism among people of North Kenya. I had even written my thesis on that subject for graduate school. I felt sure my way was best for my region. Because of my negative attitude, I struggled through the Ivory Coast training. I was not really learning; I just presented arguments throughout the training. David Watson eventually lost patience with me. He told me: "If you think your process can work well enough for you, don't come to this training again. You just continue with your own thing."

Dave Hunt and others tried to talk to me. They appealed: "Relook at it . . .," but I was immersed in my way of doing things, and very skeptical of all I had heard.

On my return flight to Kenya, I sat at the back of the plane by myself. I was not at peace. I reflected on the whole experience and sensed the Holy Spirit telling me, "Let it go."

"What should I let go?" I wondered.

"Let go of your past experience. Let go of your success. Let go of your prejudice. All that you're hanging on to: let it go and get out of the way."

As I heard him speak in my heart, I saw clearly that pride had kept me from learning. I also saw that I was prejudiced against learning from Americans or any white person. I had dismissed his ideas, thinking: "How

can he tell me this will work in my context? He doesn't even speak the languages or know the culture here!"

But as I tried to rationalize my attitude on this flight home, the Lord kept saying: "Let it go! Get out of the way."

I came under strong conviction, and before we landed back in Nairobi I yielded. "Okay! I let it go. I don't understand everything, but I will not stand in your way, Lord. If you can use ordinary people, use me. Before I went to Bible school, I was just an ordinary Muslim-background believer." I confessed to the Lord my pride, and accepted his invitation to depend fully on him from that point on. I now commonly use the slogan: "Simple faith and obedience." It's not a matter of what I'm going to do. It's what I can trust God to do by using me, as I obey the principles I'm learning from the Scriptures. Getting out of the way means not grasping on to my experience, letting go of my pride. I'll be obedient in what I receive from him. And God started moving, and things started happening immediately. I realized the best thing I could do was to get myself out of the way.

Yielding to the conviction and urging of the Holy Spirit, I embraced the idea of movements. I accepted that through kingdom movements, we might succeed in finishing the task of the Great Commission. As my perspective changed, I saw that the harvest is indeed plentiful and the workers few. I concluded that since the harvest and the harvesters both belong to the Lord, all I have to do is to embrace what God has already shown us in the Scriptures and pray, asking the Lord of the harvest to raise up more workers. I have described in some detail the process the Lord led me to use for implementing this in Lifeway mission, in my chapter "An Agency Transition: From Church Planting to Disciple Making Movements"²⁴

However, this meant going back to the starting point: the New Testament. It has been about 2,000 years since Jesus's disciples received his command to go and make disciples of all nations. Yet over half the

²⁴ In *24:14—A Testimony to All Peoples*, Edited by Dave Coles and Stan Parks. (Spring, TX: 24:14, 2019), 278-286.

world's people have not yet clearly heard the true message of salvation through Jesus Christ! There must be a better way of making disciples.

Modern evangelism efforts often have focused more on conversion than on discipleship. In theory, a saved individual or a few converts will lead to reaching many, but this rarely happens. I had personally experienced the same disappointing results. I had done many things to evangelize the lost. I had even planted churches, but I had not seen multiplication.

In 2005-2006, I realized I had to change my evangelistic approach in order to see the desired result: multiplication of obedient disciples. I

felt like a light turned on as this inspiration came. I would begin to focus on disciple-making that leads to reaching the many. These disciples would also be equipped with the DNA²⁵ of reproduction.

**Modern
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While the principles of Scripture remain the same, cultural contexts differ. So some ministry practices need to be different in different places. For example, movements tend to be much smaller in places like the Western world, partly because of different kinds of relationships. People in the West tend to be individualistic and live as individuals or small nuclear families, not as extended families and vil-

lages, like in Africa or India. But the big issue is: communities are available. To catalyze a movement, we have to either find a community or make a community. In the West, it won't be exactly like in Africa or Asia, where people tend to be more relational. In American churches, people are not as relational.

So, the big question is, "Where do you plant the gospel message and Christ within the existing group?" It's not that it doesn't work in some contexts. The question is, "What are the *ways* to make it work in any

²⁵ DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) carries genetic instructions for the development, functioning, growth, and reproduction of all known organisms. Many disciple-makers use this term metaphorically to describe the factors that enable generational reproduction of disciples and churches.

specific context?” You can find a person of peace²⁶ in your neighborhood, but that person’s access to other people will be different. People’s interests in the Global North are generally different from people’s interests in the Global South. The approach will differ in different contexts.

THE SPROUTING

Before I attended the training in Ivory Coast, I was already doing training that I called “Timothy Training.” It included much of what I was learning at Bible school. I presented it in small modules I had developed, on topics like Church, Church Leadership, Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, Hermeneutics, Homiletics, and Spiritual Maturity—normal Bible school courses. But one of the key courses I presented was entitled Mission Outreach: going to the lost, especially those of another religious faith, and how to engage a community.²⁷

Soon after the Ivory Coast training, Dave Hunt and I held our first recruitment and training in Debre Zeyit (now known as Bishoftu), south of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We started seeing amazing results from around Ziway Lake, where we used an Open Doors²⁸ project to access the community. A huge movement broke out there. At one point we were baptizing about 300 people from another religion roughly every three months!

The movement spread rapidly, suggesting to us that 10,000 churches by 2010 was indeed possible. But so far, the success was concentrated in North Kenya and Ethiopia, and we were eager to see the rest of the Horn

26 As described in Luke 10, a person of peace is one who: a) is welcoming (open) to the gospel messenger, b) is open to have spiritual conversations and listen to the gospel message, and c) has influence and opens the way for their household (or network) to hear the gospel message. A person of peace does not always come to saving faith, but they always open the way for others to hear the gospel and come to faith.

27 The training we now do for leaders is somewhat similar, but much more organized. We’re much more intentional about equipping the saints for the work of ministry, as described in Ephesians 4:11-12. Our goal now is very much to *empower* the leaders, so they have the information they need to know: both the skills and the tools—for knowing and doing.

28 www.opendoors.org/en-US, especially www.opendoors.org/en-US/how-we-help (<http://tinyurl.com/5n8fsvvm>).

of Africa also included. In order for this to happen, we held trainings in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya.

We tracked the results, deliberately posting conservative figures. And by 2009, God had done the seemingly impossible: 9,000 churches had been planted in East Africa, most of them at the fourth or fifth generation of reproduction! None of us could take the credit for these amazing results.

The Lord inspired us to understand that if we multiplied disciples it would lead to multiplication of cell groups, leaders, and ultimately churches. Many church mission programs make reference to finishing the task of the Great Commission. But too often the goal, especially of local outreach efforts, is essentially to grow the congregation in size. We invite people to *come to us* (which makes us look important). I don't aim for people to come to me. The gospel needs to move *away* from me. Jesus's idea is sending out and giving it away. From my perspective, to actually finish the task of the Great Commission, we have to move beyond mere addition and into multiplication. We want to see local churches multiply themselves and influence their societies by following Jesus and living as his active disciples. Only multiplication—of disciples, leaders, churches, and networks—offers real hope of God's kingdom growing everywhere on earth. The reality of multiplication through movements gives me hope for potentially reaching all people groups in this generation.

Some people might wonder: "What do you mean by 'church' in this context?" For most Christians, the word "church" immediately conjures up a vision of a nice building with stained-glass windows, comfortable seats, and instruments, with an ordained pastor presiding over ministry. Those who know the Horn of Africa would have a hard time picturing the region dotted with such wonderful church buildings and large congregations. Such a model would neither fit nor survive in our context.

However, that image of "church" is merely its form, not its function. That form requires massive financial input. It requires constructing or renting suitable premises. It requires large ongoing investment of human and material resources for maintenance. All of which make it hard to multiply.

According to the Bible, the church's essential feature is its function, not its form. The Bible describes a local church as any group of baptized believers in Christ who meet regularly for worship, prayer, breaking bread, fellowship, discovering and obeying the Scriptures. They also spread the gospel. Such a church may meet in homes or even under trees. They may or may not also have dedicated physical structures.

The Bible describes the Church as a living organism: a body that lives, grows, and multiplies (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-15, 27). In our 10,000 Church Plant Mission, we defined the church by its function, not its form.

We have our own story in East Africa, which is part of a global story. From 2007 to 2016, I was part of the church-planting network that formed “New Generations Initiatives.” Members included some of the brothers I have already mentioned: David Watson, Shodankeh Johnson, Younoussa Djao, and a few others. Each of us in Africa has an indigenous agency on the ground, and we function as part of the umbrella network of New Generations. We all believe in disciple-making, and we describe our relationship using the analogy of an airline alliance—like SkyTeam or Oneworld or Star Alliance. Each airline functions independently, but benefits by being in the alliance and doing code sharing with the others.

UNLEARNING TO RELEARN

As the Church Planting Movement grew, questions and opposition arose. Those with strong denominational patterns of ministry had difficulty with our definition of church. They strongly considered some specific forms to be essential qualifications of a church. For example, most churches have a constitution describing and defining what they consider a church. They might say a church must have a certain number of elders, must be able to pay a trained minister, must own some property and put up a church building, and so on. Then their denomination will consider a group qualified to be called a church. If you don't have those things, you can't be called a church. That makes it difficult for many of the people we work with, who want to minister based just on what the Bible says. Some leaders of existing churches have told them, “Yes, what the Bible says is true, but our constitution also has these additional criteria.”

Some church leaders also questioned some of our methods. For example, in the Great Commission (Matthew 28), we see that Jesus said, “Go and make disciples, baptizing them . . .” The issue of baptism often becomes a problem. Many existing churches hold that baptism should only be done by an ordained minister. But we ask: “If you believe that Jesus intended *all* of us to make disciples, why should baptism be singled out and left behind for an ordained minister? Where does the Scripture say that it should be that way?” In that verse, Jesus didn’t focus on *who should do* the baptizing; he focused on who *should be* baptized. He said: “baptize *them*.” It seems clear that those who do the baptizing are those who make the disciples. But many churches have added an extra idea not found in that text: specifying who the new disciples should be baptized *by*. When we challenged that traditional idea, we started having problems with some people’s complaints. Some churches add a lot of extra rules that make it very difficult for new believers—even to become a church.

Another example would be forms of worship, or liturgies. When churches introduce those things to new believers, they understandably ask “Why? Why do we have to do it this way?” They see forms of worship that are not relevant to the community. Or they use songs that are hard to sing because of the foreign style. Some even use hymn books with foreign songs translated into the local trade language, and people sitting in rows just as worshipers would in the foreign missionary’s country. Sometimes imported foreign cultural elements are presented as part of the gospel. Not many people are interested in that. So, we help people develop their own indigenous style of singing praise to God.

When we started mentioning some of these things, like culturally relevant worship, some of the churches couldn’t accept it. Consequently, we met a lot of resistance. When we gave a simple, biblical description of a local church, they’d say, “No. In our church’s history we’ve done this and that,” and everything they referred to was a tradition from denominational history, not a biblical command or model. For us, the final authority is the Bible—the word of God—not human traditions. We don’t have to keep doing all the same things that people did in previous generations or

in other cultures. We avoid imposing extra-biblical elements on people and making it hard for them to obey Christ.

We don't try to tell their local groups how to function or how to worship. The question we always ask is, "How do they function in their context? As they study the relevant Scriptures, what feels biblically appropriate to them?" Some groups develop tonal music, which sounds like the way Muslims chant. Most Muslims are not used to singing; they just recite texts. But it's not a problem for Christians to recite Scriptures. If they use biblical content in a style that feels normal to them, it's a better way for them to worship. This also tends to diminish unnecessary persecution arising from the sounds of a "foreign religion" or a "colonial religion."

To give another example, when many Christians pray, they bow their heads and close their eyes. Muslims don't do that. Jesus also didn't feel a need to do that, as we see in John 17:1. But in some contexts, that's treated as a requirement during an altar call (which also is not found in Scripture). We just ask people, "How would you apply this Scripture, here in your context?" We ask disciples from a different religious background, "Now that you *know* God, how do you want to worship him?" We let them choose biblical and culturally relevant ways to do that. And that will vary among different unreached groups. So it wouldn't help if I were to describe the details too specifically. We teach the principle, and out of the principle, various groups develop the practices that are relevant in their context.

Sometimes our denominational backgrounds put pressure on us to ask the new believers to do something a specific way. That comes out of our personal experience from some church tradition. Christians too often view these issues through the lens of their own background. Even many scholars often seem to be starting from the vantage point of their church tradition, and their effort goes into defending that tradition. But a disciple from a different religious background isn't interested in arguments for various church customs. They want to glorify Jesus as they find him in Scripture, not be boxed into someone else's foreign-based interpretation. The guiding principle is the Scripture, not someone's tradition. We need to be clear about the criteria we use to judge things.

I used every available avenue to plant churches, including food distribution. Some food recipients formed groups that met regularly and performed the church functions described above.

In some communities (i.e. Folk Religionist and traditionalist communities) it was relatively easy to plant churches, but I was not satisfied. I wondered: “What has really changed in these people?” I also noticed that in many cases, the fruit seemed to be church *transplanting*, rather than church-planting. A number of “new” church congregants had simply moved from other churches and denominations.

I wondered: “What difference is this making? These are just Christians being drawn to a new experience. That’s not going to finish the Great Commission!”

I wanted to see the gospel introduced to non-believers who would become disciples and grow into a church. I decided to focus on the Church Planting Movement principle that called for us to be multipliers.

How could we get believers to multiply? The Lifeway team discussed this challenge and moved our focus to ordinary people rather than clergy. We also noted that existing churches had a problem with the term “Church Planting Movement” because they already had a method of church planting and didn’t want to hear about a different approach to doing it. They didn’t see how their concept of church planting could ever become a movement—and they were right about that. Also, none of the existing denominations agreed on a definition of church, while at the same time, our definition of church differed from all of them. We didn’t change our terminology because we had any problem with the idea of CPM, but we wanted to address resistance from existing churches, based on their pre-existing definitions.

Our main concern was “What kind of people are in the churches being planted? Are they really following Jesus?” We wanted to avoid ending up with churches but without disciples. So we began to focus more clearly on making disciples. A movement that makes disciples results in a movement of churches being planted. This led to officially changing our mission description in 2007: from Church Planting Movement (focusing on number of churches planted) to Disciple Making Movement (focusing on the DNA of making disciples, as Jesus commanded in Matthew

28:19).²⁹ After this change in description, the movement was better accepted by churches. The existing churches didn't have a problem with talking about making disciples. Also, the clear biblical foundation made it easier to explain and defend. We look at the Scriptures to define things rather than starting from what people are practicing. So, for example, what does a church look like in the book of Acts? What do I see them doing? And what are Paul's instructions in the Epistles about the church? I don't try to attack what others are doing, but I need a biblical defense for what I'm doing. When people ask me why I do what I'm doing, I tell them, "Jesus said, 'Go, make disciples.' It's in the Scriptures." Jesus didn't say, "Plant churches." He said, "Make disciples," and disciples will become churches. We see that happening in the book of Acts, and I can point to that. Our main concern was "What kind of people are in the churches being planted? Are they really following Jesus?" Some other key texts that have shaped our approach include Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Timothy and Titus, and various instructions for the life of a believer and the life of a church—as we find in both the Gospels and the Epistles.

My own calling was also clarified to multiplying disciples. I shifted my personal focus from pulpit ministry (preaching in the church) to investing in young men and women through Discovery Bible Studies. I realized that my most fruitful ministry is not to preach; my most fruitful ministry is to develop leaders for the work of the ministry. I still preach occasionally, of course. But my main ministry is developing leaders, so that those who have a pastoral calling (or any other of the gifts listed in the Scriptures) can serve God with that gifting.

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29 For more detail, see, for example, "Using the DMM strategy for multiplication" at <https://newgenerations.org/approach/#about-DMM> (<http://tinyurl.com/vyn65v3m>).

I hold trainings, usually with 15-20 participants, meeting for about two hours at a time. I create Bible discovery questions, and have participants discuss those. Then I have them give feedback on the questions, and I take a principle and talk about the principle. After that, we discuss practical applications, and I have them share what they've learned that will be useful in their ministry. I see a leader as a whole person, so the trainings focus on three areas of a leader's life: head, hands, and heart. These stand for the knowledge they need to have, the skills they need to develop, and the spiritual formation which is the heart of a leader.

The training consists of a number of courses, and I also have one-on-one mentoring and coaching sessions with them. It's a very relational process, and I ask a lot of questions. "How are you doing with this? What do you think about this? What are you observing?" I listen carefully to their responses, which informs me of their perspective on things. Sometimes I point out an issue, other times I just appreciate what I'm hearing; sometimes I give instructions related to what I'm hearing. I often try to help them think through some things." So, it's all-encompassing. I constantly ask myself, "How can this person go and *apply* what they are learning?" After I do a training, I offer to help people find a mentor. My wife does mentoring with a lot of the women.

During this season, I discovered that one of the most difficult parts of learning is *unlearning*! Yet we cannot learn new things if we refuse to unlearn the old. I had to unlearn my traditional view of church. I found this extremely difficult, as I had studied ecclesiology, during which time I had formulated church models and read many books. I also had planted numerous churches using the traditional model. Some of those have ended up adopting the DMM model, and some have not. They don't resist DMM, but they also don't do it. It's very difficult for them to unlearn what they've been doing for many years. So I don't put much pressure on them. I just work patiently with those leaders who have potential apostolic gifting. If they have passion and interest to learn, they can begin a new work, rather than trying to pull along those who are not interested in unlearning old patterns. But we're still on friendly terms with all of the churches; we don't disconnect ourselves from the traditional churches. We are all part of the body of Christ.

When we first began applying the DMM approach, some people thought we were getting rid of the church. The language being used by some of the trainers was not helpful; it was unfriendly to the existing churches. Some people initially rejected the DMM approach because of that. But now we've changed the way we describe our approach, and we invite church people to our meetings. They see what God is doing, and then they come back and ask more questions about the DMM approach. We give them exposure to the movement, so they begin to have questions in their minds about the difference between the traditional vs. DMM approach.

I had to deconstruct my thinking that church requires buildings, structures, and policies. These are not inherently bad things. Indeed, they can be very useful, particularly in urban areas. But my unlearning involved observing that many church buildings in the West were being sold and used for other activities. Some were turned into cinemas, bars, clubs, and even mosques.

Another deconstruction involved allowing others to lead me in Discovery Bible Studies. A founder and leader always naturally tends to take the driver's seat. I had to lay this aside. Now some Discovery Bible Studies I attend are facilitated by people who I previously led to the Lord.

CHANGE REQUIRES HUMILITY

Change can be difficult for religious leaders. We see the example of Nicodemus, who was interested and curious about Jesus's teaching. But he came at night, which might indicate he didn't want people to know he was meeting with Jesus. And he was a smart man, but he had trouble grasping the idea of a person being born again.

If you've been respected as a pastor, the people you've brought to the Lord ask you questions, and you're used to giving them good answers based on Scripture. It's a whole different thing to just point people to the Scriptures and let them discover God's answers for themselves. And instead of being the honored answer man, your new role is to ask people, "How will you obey what you've discovered from God's word?" and then to hold them accountable, even as they also hold *you* accountable to obey what God is telling you through the Scripture.

In the normal church pattern, leaders tell members what to do; the members never tell the leaders what to do. It's one-way guidance. But DBS (Discovery Bible Study) involves a group dynamic. We all discover together, we all go out to obey what God has told us, and we all come back to share the fruit. First and foremost, I'm a disciple of Jesus. I might have other roles as well, but my most essential identity is the one I share with every other follower of Jesus: I'm a disciple. It takes humility—for a pastor or teacher or other church leader—to not only accept but also consistently apply this biblical truth. Our primary identity is as God's child and Jesus's disciple—the same as everyone else in the kingdom family.

Humility, as modeled for us by Christ, is crucial in this unlearning process.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:5-8).

Humbling ourselves requires crucifying the flesh, dealing with emotions, perceptions, and attitudes. For some, it may mean giving up social status, position, and even friends. This can be challenging, but when we do so for God, we do not lose.

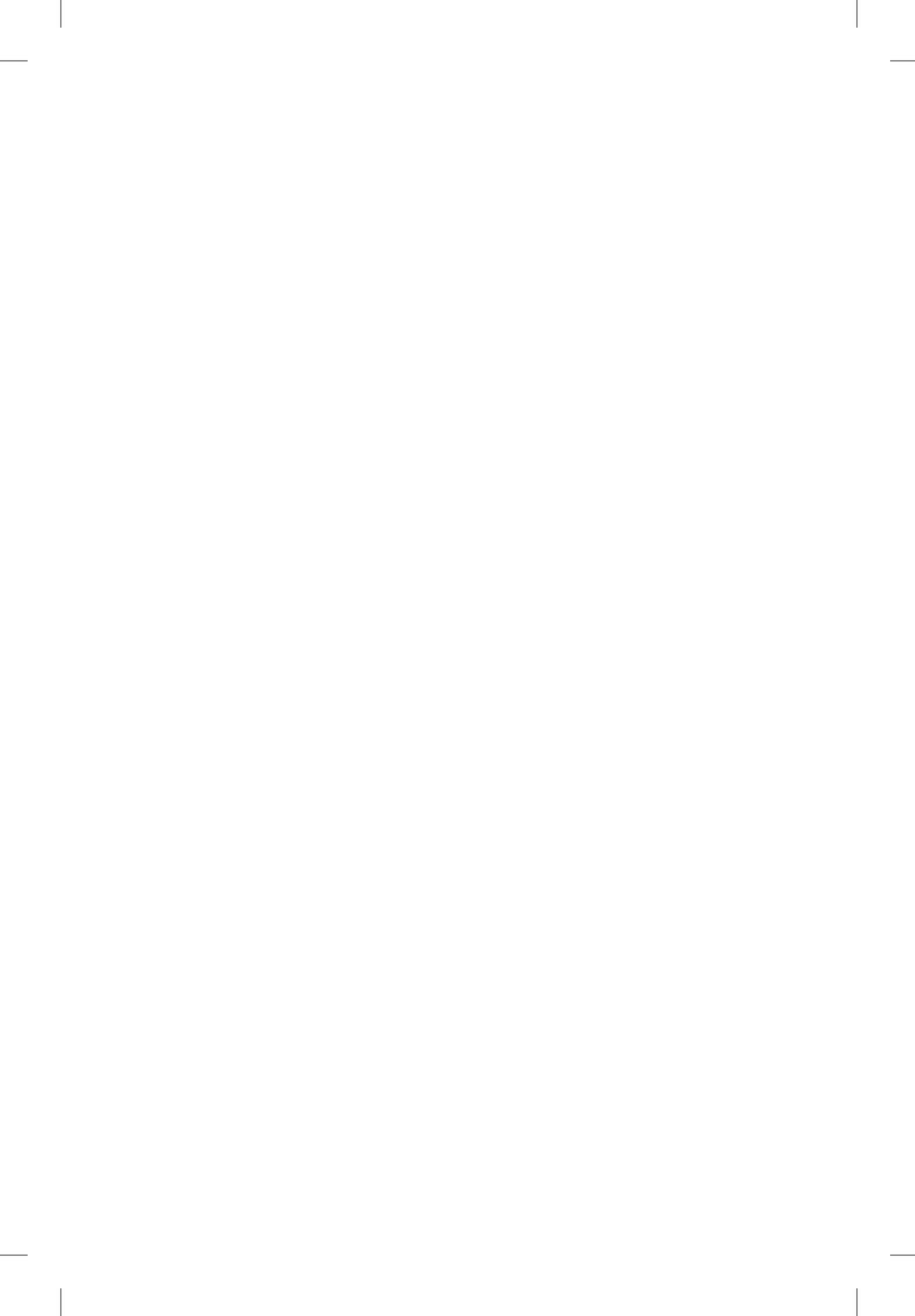
Christ gained his Bride and was given the Name above every other name.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

As Jesus did in the incarnation, we need to allow God to give us grace to release whatever would hinder us from effectively identifying with those he has called us to reach. Many believers struggle with this. I had to go back to the foundation and take my perspective from Jesus. How do you allow God to work through your life to cause that change?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Is the Lord prompting you to reconsider any of your ideas about missions and evangelism strategies?
- Is anything holding you back from accepting any needed changes?
- How would you define a local church?
- What Scriptures support each element you would include as essential for a local church?
- Do you have hidden assumptions about church that might be hindering your outreach to unreached people?
- Are there any things God might want you to let go of, for the sake of expanding his kingdom?
- Are there any ways in which the Lord is calling you to humble yourself?
- What titles, roles, positions, education, or ministries do you have that could tempt you to consider yourself at a higher level than other followers of Jesus?



REACHING ANOTHER FAITH

AS ALREADY DESCRIBED, I don't control the various movements that have sprung from our training. Neither do I control the organizations or leaders within Lifeway network. While our DNA of DMM has been reproduced, different contexts and leaders have, by God's grace, brought forth significant diversity in the working out of DMM principles. We don't have a one-size-fits-all model of church-planting; rather, we encourage each leader to follow the voice of God's Spirit in applying the biblical DMM principles in their context(s). To flesh out this picture of diversity within our East African context, we want to share testimonies from 14 leaders within the Lifeway network.

TESTIMONY FROM NORTHERN KENYA AND ETHIOPIA

My name is Ado, and I work in northern Kenya and part of Ethiopia as a Lifeway regional coordinator. I have been involved with DMM since the concept started being applied here. In more than a decade since then, I have grown in the process of DMM and in leadership.

I first heard about DMM from Dr. Aila. Before we heard about DMM, we had our own way to make disciples, but it was not effective. Then my team and I learned from Dr. Aila how to start, multiply, and sustain a movement. After we got DMM training from Lifeway Mission, our way of doing church changed. We previously thought "if there's no building, there's no church." Then we learned that the church is not a building; the church is people.

THE DMM PROCESS: FROM STARTING TO MOVEMENT

We learned that we first needed to start with prayer, which can open things that wouldn't open any other way. Second comes access ministry,³⁰ to engage the community. In the past, we didn't know how to do access

³⁰ An access ministry (which we often prefer to call "compassion ministry") begins with assessing the felt needs of a community, then working with them to meet that need. This lets them see the love of Christ concretely and becomes a doorway to enter the community and convey a holistic gospel message.

ministry. We had passion to reach out but no experience. Through DMM, I learned about access ministry and how to engage a community.

After we engage a community, we look for the person of peace. As we read in Luke 10:7, when we find a person of peace, we don't just leave them. Through the person of peace, we get connected with their family, their household, or others from their village. We stay with the person of peace and start a Discovery Bible Study to help them discover more about God. Those we are reaching with the gospel are mostly oral learners, so we mainly use storytelling to convey Scripture. And we've started recording the Bible in one of the local languages.

After we start a DBS group, we equip them to do their own DBS. After we start one DBS, it doesn't remain as just one group. The group multiplies by starting another DBS. After those in the DBS group come to faith, they need to be formed into a church, which we often call a "gathering." We teach, train, and appoint a DBS leader, a local person, who will also go with his team to start another DBS. I give them responsibility and tell them: "Continue this way." That's how multiplication happens, because they own the process.

The people we're reaching come mostly from a different faith background. Some come from a traditional religious background, but most come from another faith. The set of Scriptures we most often use for DBS with non-believers, starts with Genesis and moves gradually toward bringing them to Jesus. (See Appendix C.) If someone tries to start a DBS with Scriptures about Jesus, people from a different faith will not want any part of it. So we start with the Old Testament, to help them understand who God is, what sin is, and why blood sacrifice is needed to take away sin. Then after many studies, we come to the gospel and say, "You've heard about Isa, and you believe in him. Let me tell you more about him." At that point, when they hear about Isa, they are ready to pay attention. We guide them to study what the Bible says about him.

Through that process, they learn some interesting and important things about Isa—things their previous book didn't tell them. We use, for example John 3:16, which tells them about God's love, which he has shown through Jesus: love great enough to save! At that point, they discover that

salvation does not come because of their works, as they had previously thought, but by God's grace through faith in Jesus. When people hear that good news, they give their life to Jesus. It doesn't happen instantaneously; the process unfolds through substantial relationship with them, sharing about the love of God. Then when they pray to receive Christ, the Holy Spirit comes in and begins to lead and transform them. Disciples from a different faith background usually call themselves "followers of Christ." I myself use that term, since the name Christian is a stumbling block to many in our area.

When many people in the DBS come to faith, we bring them together, maybe with four or five other groups, and they become a church. The church has certain elements: worship, the word of God, offering, baptism, communion, and all the other practices that characterize a church. After the church is formed, the believers don't remain stagnant. They start a new DBS and plant more churches. They don't think: "Now we've become a church, we don't need to go anywhere; we'll just build ourselves up."

The churches often gather on Sunday, often under a tree. Elements of the gathering include praise (singing), prayer (worship), offering, DBS (*must* include DBS), everyone sharing what they have learned, and accountability: how they will obey, and with whom they'll share what they have learned.

CHALLENGES AND PATTERNS FOR THOSE FROM ANOTHER FAITH

Doing DBS with people from another faith is much easier in some areas than in others. In some cases, women are secret believers, because of fear of their husband. Although they already believe in Jesus, the secrecy makes it very difficult to train them.

Some of my neighbors come from a people group known for being quite fanatical. But after developing a relationship with them, I can share with them. Reaching people like that requires relationship. We can't do gospel sharing in public; it needs to be done privately. Lifeway Global gives training in how to reach people from another faith, and do DBS with them. It's very different from doing a DBS with Christian-background people. We need to do it much more carefully.

We have planted some churches among other people groups from that faith. It takes time, but we have seen churches among those groups planting other churches. Among two of the people groups, we have seven

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or eight generations of churches that have planted other churches, and the number is growing. It's not easy to reach eight generations of people from that background, but God is moving. We start with the Old Testament, to help them understand who God is, what sin is, and why blood sacrifice is needed to take away sin. Sometimes he works in such amazing ways, we can't even explain it. We've found that those who come to faith from that background can better reach others from that background, and start a DBS with them—especially when top leaders come to believe in Christ as the way.

In each generation, the disciples form teams and plan how to reach people and multiply more DBS groups. Each generation of the movement trains the next generation: the second trains the third, the fourth trains the fifth, etc. That's the DNA that makes the movement not only keep growing but multiplying. The fourth or fifth generation doesn't depend on me to come teach or train them.

AWARENESS TRAINING WITH BELIEVERS

Not many established churches accept this way of doing ministry. Many of them don't want to go outside their church, because they want to build internally. But for believers outside the movement who want to get involved, we have different levels of DMM training. The first level is awareness training. The first thing we do to prepare for an awareness training is to call pastors and invite them. We give two or three days of training to those who attend, then get feedback from them. "Can you see this being useful for you? How could this work for you? Do you agree with this? Is this something you'd like to continue?"

Some say “Yes,” and others say, “Let me think about it.” We move ahead with those who are ready and invite them to a next-level training that we call “Basic Training, Level 1.” We’re happy to include anyone interested in being equipped with this approach to making disciples.



RUTH PROCLAIMS THE REDEEMER

RUTH IS A BUSINESSWOMAN whom God has used to catalyze generations of new disciples and churches among non-Christian people groups. This is her story.

I used to do ministry without knowing clearly what to do. After learning about DMM, 14 years ago, I started making disciples and forming teams. I raised up leaders, and sent others out to make disciples. I have continued doing those things right up to the present time.

The people I'm reaching are mainly followers of another faith and followers of traditional religion. Since I am a businesswoman, I look for a person of peace by connecting with people over business and making friends with them that way. I also gain access to people through miracles, lending money to groups, and helping people with their farms—doing agriculture.

When my teammates find someone has planted maize or sorghum, they go help him or her weed the crop, as an access ministry. Through that, a conversation starts, and they begin to develop a relationship. Then, the person gets excited and starts asking questions: "What are you doing?" "Who are you?" and so on. In that way, we begin to discern who is a person of peace (PoP). When we find a PoP, we start a Discovery Bible Study. We have started many Discovery groups, which usually have about 15 people. Sometimes only about 10, but on average, about 15.

Groups usually meet to do DBS twice a week. Some of the people we're reaching are oral learners; some are literate. With oral learners, we share Bible stories and use drama to tell the stories. The Bible is available in the local language of the group we're reaching; both written and audio, but the people have only a few recorders that can play the audio.

For a DBS with people of another faith, we have found that they like starting with the story of creation (Genesis 1), then the Fall of Man (Genesis 3), and so on through key texts in the Old Testament. Also, in John 1, that Jesus was involved in creation—he's the same as God. When people discover that Jesus was involved in creation, they *love* that. And in

John 14:6, they learn that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. They memorize verses like that.

If we start by talking about Jesus Christ as Savior, they're not ready to immediately receive that truth. But when we start all the way back in Genesis, they accept it. We give them a logical progression, as one story follows another. Some of them ask us to go through the stories several times, because at first they don't really understand what it is talking about. We happily go back over the stories until they catch on. Some quickly come to understand the gospel, but for most of those we minister to from another faith, we need to do about 50 Discovery Bible Studies with them before they understand. They need to study a lot of Scriptures because they start out believing that Jesus was just a prophet. It takes a lot of Scripture studies for them to discover that Jesus was much more than a mere prophet. We help them learn about many prophets in the Bible—like Isaiah and Jeremiah. And we help them come to understand that Jesus is different from all other prophets.

People of another faith believe that salvation comes through a person's good works. We teach them that salvation is by grace. It's through faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved, not by our own works. We have them study the Scriptures that talk about this, like Romans 3, that says, "Everybody's a sinner, and it's not by works that we can get to heaven." We keep teaching these things until they change their minds, get a new understanding, and receive salvation and become disciples of Jesus. We train them and baptize them, and they become part of the team. They learn how we operate as a team, and they start making other disciples.

In the DBS, we ask: "What do we learn in this text about God? What do we learn about people? What will you do to obey this Scripture? With whom are you going to share this Scripture?" We also ask: "What are you thankful for? What are your challenges? What can any of us do to help meet the challenges?"

After a group has been doing Discovery studies for three or four months, and some have started following Christ, we look to see who in the group has potential as leaders. We choose leaders from among them and raise them up as leaders. When a group grows, starts making

disciples on their own, and starts doing the other functions of a church, we see that this group can become a church. We teach them well, then help them discover in Scripture what it means to be a church. Then we stop meeting regularly with that group and go to another place.

After the group becomes a church, they still sit and discover together from the Scriptures. If someone puts a preacher up front, the fruit is zero! That church will not grow as a discipling church. We find that everybody grows when they discover together. Nobody in the group acts like they know a lot; nobody is a teacher. We allow everybody to discover the truth in the word of God. When people from another faith come to Christ, their identity is as a “disciple”; not a “Christian” or a “religious person.”

Through singing, we exalt our God. But we don’t sing a lot. We sing a little bit, but mainly focus on studying God’s word. We teach each other how to go and find a person of peace, and we discuss which places we could go to, that are not yet reached.

The believers do experience some persecution from the majority community. For example, one new believer from a nearby community is experiencing rejection because of his faith. The team is staying close to him and working with him every day, so he can remain in his community.

At this point, we have planted 18 generations of churches using this approach. To ensure that the DNA is properly reproduced through all the generations, we do follow-up with the groups. Our team divides up the groups, and we make visits to check on how they are doing and make sure they are maintaining the correct DNA for making disciples. Our team has a few people whose ministry just focuses on doing follow-up. Every gathering, down through the generations, has a person who does follow-up, and they report to our core team. If someone stops attending a DBS meeting, we find out: Are they sick? Or what’s really going on?

After the group becomes a church, they still sit and discover together from the Scriptures.

We also have training for leaders, down through the generations, once every month. We call together all the leaders from every region—80 of them. The training doesn't use discovery format; it's more in a lecture format, but with a *lot* of discussion. We also share successes and challenges, and consider what steps we should take next. We continually mentor and coach the leaders, and we multiply coaches. We do what we can to grow healthy disciples and maintain reproductive DNA, so the greatest possible number of people can come to faith.

CATALYZING DISCIPLE-MAKING IN EAST AFRICA AND BEYOND



“A catalyst is a substance
that increases the rate of a
chemical reaction without
being consumed in the
reaction.”

—Khan Academy





KENYA AND BEYOND

AS THE 10,000 CHURCH-PLANTING mission continued in 2008, I often prayed, “How can we ignite a reaction that will continue after we leave?”

At that time, my family and I returned to Kenya, as we were keen to see the Ethiopian results replicated in Kenya. When I completed my doctorate studies in 2009, I resigned from Open Doors because I knew my calling was to work full-time as a disciple-making catalyst.

Before going out to start the work, I felt it important to personally apply what I had been teaching. So I followed the principles of Church Planting Movements, step by step. I began with prayer, wanting God to show me the way. I wanted to avoid following my human understanding. I sought the Lord concerning this for about four months. After that, I traveled to the United States for an organizational meeting. While I was there, I received an email from an American brother interested in meeting me to get advice on disciple-making and training some people he had connections with in Kenya.

We met and talked late into the night. Before he left, he asked if I could help with a training in Kitale, in western Kenya, a few months later. I accepted, and when I returned to Kenya, I went to Kitale. There I met Christian leaders from Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and different parts of Kenya.

During the first session, I felt the Holy Spirit speak to me about specific people in the meeting. At break time, I approached brothers from Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo, and got to know them a bit. I told them I would like to train and launch efforts toward a Disciple Making Movement in their countries.

We kept in touch after this meeting. They practiced what they had learned, and a few months later, I asked how it was going. They told me they already had 40 DBS groups! So I went to train the group in Rwanda—these brothers and their teams—about 35 leaders, mostly church leaders. Another group from Burundi and some women from Congo also attended that training. After that, I went to Congo and Burundi to do additional trainings, as part of Lifeway’s catalyzing of new

movements. After the training, the team put the training into practice, but most of the church leaders did not; they continued their previous patterns of ministry. If one-third of the people we trained actually implemented the training, we considered that a great success. We continued to keep our eyes open for people who had a passion to see God's kingdom grow, and just needed training.

During 2010-2012, we focused on finding key people. This is what the Lord had spoken to me, about duplicating myself in others who would do the work. I prayed for God to reveal to us his chosen people in various communities. We sought men and women of peace, spiritually sensitive people who were willing to bring others along in their journey toward knowing God. I also prayed they would be willing to learn. I remembered how God had convicted me to become teachable on the way from Addis Ababa. I knew some others would have the same challenge. I brought along those I was training, to find and equip others. We started the Disciple Making Movement (DMM) journey with those he gave us: some were believers already involved in a church; others were new believers.

Some of the church people were already desperate for something more: dissatisfied with the passive life at church and looking for more meaningful and substantial spiritual life. One pastor in Rwanda jumped into DMM with both feet. He said, "I'm tired of what I've been doing. I need something that's worth investing my energy in—something to revive my passion for God and his work." I never encouraged church members to leave their church. I encouraged them to be a blessing in their context and maintain trust there while making disciples. But some of the churches were not wired for making disciples. I'd tell people: "Try your best; don't quickly give up on your church. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work." Some of the pastors told their people: "It's biblical, we're open to it, but it may not happen like you expect here." So they give their permission and blessing for the members to step out and focus on disciple-making.

I gave basic DMM training in Burundi, Congo, and Tanzania. The trainings each lasted for four or five days. For the first couple of years after this, I gave the training, and then I sent my team from Kenya to follow up. I had a training team devoted to follow-up. Then we had those who caught the vision, who shared a passion to see God's kingdom grow in

their communities and nations, suggest others who might be interested in DMM training. We have a two-day awareness training, which is open to everyone. Then we wait for two or three months and send someone to see who has implemented the material in the training. When we do the next training (the four- or five-day basic DMM training), we invite only those who already have started to implement what they learned in the previous training.

Because a catalyst creates a mentoring and coaching relationship, I would train, coach, resource, and then step back. I directly mentored about six men at that time, and they were mentoring others. Those six are now at the level of movement leaders. When I went to their area to do a few days' training, I would spend one day with them, to focus on mentoring. We spent time together, I'd visit with their families, and ask a lot of questions: "How are you doing? What are your challenges? What are you learning?" And they often told me one story after another, giving me insight into their lives and ministries. It's important to allow them to share all their stories and just talk things out, so you get a feel for what's really happening with them. Then I would pick up on a few of the topics they mentioned, ask more specific questions, and maybe offer some suggestions. Besides our face-to-face meetings, I also talked with them by phone at least once a month, because of the distance. That was before Zoom, so sometimes we used Skype, which was very common in those days—especially just voice Skype. I knew that regular communication is important to maintain a relationship.

Among the resources we provided were Bibles, various trainings, and sometimes assistance with means of access—something to help meet a felt need and open doors into a community. I didn't want to just give them stuff, I also wanted to show them that we can share, as God provides. That also encouraged them to do the same with each other. Swahili Bibles could be used in Kenya and Tanzania, while in Rwanda they used Rwandese or French. In Burundi, they have Burundian or French. In those days, the

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Bibles were print Bibles, which we stopped distributing not very long ago, replacing them with audio Bibles. Those are a bit expensive, but they're much more portable, and useful for many more people, especially oral learners. Even for literate people, listening requires less effort, so people will listen to an audio Bible for a very long time.

At the beginning, many who joined the movement assumed I was starting my own ministry. They soon understood that I did not intend to multiply my own brand. My goal was purely to see God's kingdom expand through Disciple Making Movements that would flow through *them*.

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I was eager to hand over ministry ownership to indigenous people in various countries, so we created networks for collaboration instead of ministry branches. Some of the ministries had grown enough that they wanted to start their own ministries. And some of the national governments had restrictions:

If you have a certain number of people gathering, you must register with the government as an official entity. That way, when you have a group meeting in someone's house, there's no danger of accusation that the group has some political agenda.

When the groups prepared to register, they asked me if they needed to register as "Lifeway." I said, "No. What would you like to have as your entity when you register?" I worked alongside them to shape their sense of identity as a ministry that they really own. At the end of the day, it's *their* ministry as they serve the Lord. I told them, "I'm with you, and I'll come alongside you and do what I can to help you, but you need to know that this is *your* ministry, not mine. So in each country, they registered as distinct organizations or missions (not as churches), and none of them is named Lifeway. Although their names are not Lifeway, their practices and DNA are the same as Lifeway's.

In 2010 we created a network called "LifeNet," that the national ministries have all committed to, and each of the national leaders is a leader in that network. Lifeway has a role in bringing them together, training

and coaching them, and sharing successes when we can. At the same time, we let them continue to build their agencies in their own countries and implement the things they learned from Lifeway. They've not become institutionalized, because they don't function as a church; they function as a ministry that advances God's kingdom among the unreached. They function within the Lifeway network, but they own the ministry locally.

In 2010-2011, LifeNet added national ministries in Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2012, Uganda joined. From 2014-2017 was a time of expansion in East Africa, where LifeNet added ministries in South Sudan, the Nuba mountains, and part of North Sudan. In 2017, we started expanding to other places around the world. We also celebrated our 20-year anniversary, and as part of that, we launched a number of initiatives: the GoNorth Initiative, the Swahili Coast Initiative, and Mediterranean Bridge Building—engaging with brothers and sisters in Europe to reach those traveling to Europe from across the Mediterranean Sea.

In Level 2 DMM training, I talk about building networks and collaboration for movement. We present a model like the one New Generations uses: a network partnering with indigenous agencies. So each country has indigenous leaders. They started it, I coached the process, and they own it. Because when people don't own something, they don't care for it. So I made sure they understood: "This is yours. You do with it whatever you think the Lord wants you to do with it. If I can come and help in some way, I will; if I'm not able to come, I won't." We began doing that training in 2010 around the same time as the launching of LifeNet.

In 2017, we developed a five-year strategic plan. From the launching of LifeNet up to the present, our pattern has been that the network leaders meet face-to-face three times a year and once a month online. They share about their ministries and pray for one another. Every quarter, we have teams come from Lifeway to do training with them. We also nurture cross-pollination for each of the country leaders, so they can learn from each other and train together. That's one of the commitments within the network. We also have a WhatsApp group in which they post, if a training or some other significant event is happening. They keep each other informed of events and prayer requests.

We started the WhatsApp group in 2017. The online meeting began in 2020, since COVID-19 prevented travel for in-person meetings. We also started online coaching during COVID. As I have previously described, “Before COVID-19, many of us in our context (myself included) were IT illiterate. Any mention of using Zoom for a meeting met a lot of resistance about bandwidth. . . . Because of COVID, we overcame that resistance, despite the challenges.³¹

We have many catalysts involved in online catalyst coaching. That also started during COVID. We started with prayer and basic DMM training, and those who put the training into practice went to the second-level DMM training. Each week, the catalysts meet for one hour. One of them shares a Scripture discovery—what they have been learning. Another will share a presentation with a principle they have been learning. So they discuss the Scriptures, but mainly they learn from each other. We consistently encourage group learning.

When the network gathers, our quarterly meeting lasts about five days, including accountability and problem-solving together. We dedicate the first day to prayer—praying for each other and our ministries. On the second and third days, we hear presentations from all the countries—what has been happening during the past three or four months. After each presentation, we pray over them. On the last day and a half, we have training on a specific subject designed for them and some strategic planning. Then we have half a day to go out somewhere and do something together for relational bonding. If a leader is facing confidential pastoral issues or relational challenges, I often discuss those with them in one-on-one time. We might find a time to meet one-on-one during a break or meal or in the evening. But if an issue seems appropriate to share in the group, I encourage them to share it with the group as part of sharing about their ministry, and have the whole group interact with the issue.

Thus in Rwanda, the movement is fully owned by the Rwandese. The same for Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and each of the

³¹ “Gaining Church-Planting Momentum During COVID-19,” in *Mission Frontiers*. May/June 2022, 42 (<http://tinyurl.com/5n7s6k56>). See the full article for further description of the Lord’s amazing work during that challenging season.

other nations. The leaders in every country have learned to trust God to provide for his work. In this way, all the glory goes to God, not humans. For example, when one key leader felt the call to fully focus on DMM, he asked for financial support. Instead of directly giving that, we coached him to seek the Lord to provide. Just a short while later, he was excited to share how God had answered, and they were able to run their ministry and see it expand. This coaching to rely on Christ also purifies the motives of potential workers. Is the person truly called and motivated to work for God or do they see ministry as a potential source of income?

One problem the groups face, though, is when someone poaches our leaders—coming from the outside with money and wanting to buy workers or buy a ministry. The issue is almost never false teaching. It's money being used to divide the leaders and steal workers. Some other organizations see a leader who is well-trained and very effective, so they hire that person to become their own worker. That has happened to us in a significant way on three different occasions. Not giving workers a salary leaves the door open to that temptation, but it also allows the work to multiply rapidly rather than depending on lots of funding to keep the ministry going.

Rwanda now has one of the strongest Disciple Making Movements in the region, with up to 18 generations of DMM groups (DBS groups and simple churches)³² in some areas! See Chapter 24: Catalyzing Movements in Rwanda.

EXPANSION OF LIFEWAY MISSION AND DMM IN EASTERN AFRICA

Unreached People Groups remain Lifeway Global's vision and primary goal. We have found Disciple Making Movements to be an effective strategy toward achieving this. To more effectively reach this goal, we changed the geographical description of UPGs to include urban areas.

³² Many use the term “house church,” but in our context the churches more often meet under a tree, or anywhere sufficient to regularly gather a group of believers (some baptized) for fellowship, worship, learning and discovering from the Scriptures, and doing sacraments together to obey Jesus, then going out and sharing their faith with others.

For example, sizeable numbers of Somalis and other North Kenya tribes currently live in Nairobi. In the past, most people thought they would find UPGs only in remote areas.

We also expanded our description of the unreached to include special groups like the hearing impaired and youth. Indeed, lost people are found in all places, languages and tribes. Sometimes when people hear the word “unreached,” they think of groups in the jungle or the desert, or very rural areas. That’s only part of it. We’ve started seeing groups in the cities, whom no one is reaching. We’re less concerned about precise categories than we are about reaching all kinds of lost people with the gospel. We appreciate the missiologists who have created words and categories to try to help us reach those being overlooked. So in each context, we try to be sensitive to those groups who haven’t yet had access to the gospel—whatever they might be.

Back in 2005, Lifeway Mission widened its vision to the broader vision statement we now have.³³ Among many Africans, the understanding of missions is still white people traveling very far to reach non-white people. They think that if someone is not white, they can’t be a missionary. But when we look at Jesus’s command to “Go,” it’s to all his followers. And actually it could be translated, “As you go, wherever you go, make disciples.” The idea is that wherever you go, whatever context you’re in, you make disciples.

Missions no longer means just sending from the Global North to the Global South. It is also from Global South to Global North, from rural areas to cities, and from cities to rural areas. A missionary is not a

33 “**OUR VISION:** We believe that it is God’s desire for all to be reached with the gospel and come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and that God enables his Body, **to go into all the world and preach the gospel**”. Therefore, our ministry includes:

1. Reach the Unreached People Groups and do church planting and discipleship training among ALL Unreached People Groups.
2. Train a maximum number of people in transferable methods of communicating the gospel and sending them as missionaries and church planters.
3. Promote and enhance a biblical perspective on missionary support and provide trainings to churches on missions and Christian leadership.”

professional person; it's someone who has responded to the call of God to go and reach out to the lost. Now we say, "from everywhere to everywhere." Our primary focus is East Africa, but we look beyond that in God's timing and as he leads and opens doors with other networks. I may go somewhere and catalyze something in partnership with others. I don't have to stay long. God places his servants where he wills; we don't have to be limited by geographical or political boundaries. His kingdom is way beyond that. The cabbages in the desert continue growing and multiplying to the glory of God.

God places his servants where he wills; we don't have to be limited by geographical or political boundaries.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- What fields of evangelism in your current awareness are least reached with the gospel?
- How can you empower and strengthen others in ministry, and diminish any dependence on yourself?
- Do you feel confident you are currently on track in fulfilling the biblical call God has put on your life?



MULTIPLICATION IN A VERY RESISTANT GROUP

Timothy is one of our LifeNet partners who lives and works with a very resistant non-Christian people group. Nonetheless, God is using him to multiply disciples and new churches in this field of hard soil. This is Timothy's testimony.

Before I heard about DMM, in 2015, I had started a formal church and served as a pastor. I very rarely saw any new believers coming to Christ; we had the same number of people year after year. Then Lifeway came and did an awareness meeting for church leaders and pastors. I realized, "This is what God is calling me to do." I already had a burden for reaching others, because most of the people in the church I led had come from another faith background. They had not yet become deeply entrenched in Christian traditions.

Many of them were willing to change the DNA of the church. So I started training those interested, and it changed everything. We did Discovery Bible Study every time we met, casting vision, and praying. We started reading the Bible differently and asking ourselves: "Why are we here?" Our courage began rising to accept the challenge God laid before us. We began to focus everything on outreach in the DMM way. After praying, we went out to look for persons of peace, and we easily found some. All we did was realign our relationships with people we already knew, as we changed our mindset and assumptions about people of another faith. After working on our own hearts, we started engaging them and having DBS in our area.

I live and serve among the Digo people—a very resistant people group. They hold more firmly to their religion than many other tribes. Extremist groups come all the way from other countries to recruit people from among them and take them back to their country. But the problem of extremist recruiting opened an opportunity for me to share, because it made the leaders of that faith and Christian leaders come together, to see what could be done. We had a lot of killings happening around us; the terror and extremism affected people of every religion, so we had to come

together. I met with leaders of another faith and some other Christian leaders, and that opened a platform to share the gospel.

MINISTRY THROUGH DIALOGUE

Our first step was to say, “Before we deal with the problem as leaders, we have to address our own issues. Otherwise, a leader from another faith and I can’t sit at the same table.” So I had to address for myself as a Christian: “What is my attitude toward people of other faiths? Are there things I hold against them?” We asked leaders of the other faith: “Please write down honestly things you have heard about Christians.” And we asked Christian leaders, “Please write down all the things you have seen and heard against those of another faith.”

Then we came back and exchanged our lists. They started responding to our list and we started responding to theirs. We had very frank and well-facilitated discussions. Many of us often said, “That is just a perception; we don’t do that.” After that discussion, we said, “We want to go see your place of worship and have you tell us how you do your worship.” So we set a date and did that. Then we welcomed them at a church building and taught them about Christian worship and answered their questions.

From that interaction, we started getting closer to one another. When we each shared about our practices, we would accompany it with a verse from our respective holy books. After that, some religious leaders began coming to meet with me, because they wanted to know more of what I was talking about from the Scriptures. They became my friends, so I started visiting them at their homes to sit and discuss these things.

Through that, at least one leader came to faith. While he was still in the process of coming to faith, he had some things he needed to renounce. Sometimes he would explain things and I could see it was demonic, not a normal thing. So we had some discussion and prayed through those things. I asked: “What do you do when you’re feeling like this?” And he shared about a time when he had visited a witch doctor. People from that background often have things like that. Sometimes it’s something from a witch doctor, sometimes something else. In some cases, much prayer is needed, because they have habitually done those kinds of things. When

they face a big challenge, they sometimes feel the easiest solution is to go to a witch doctor. But we worked through those issues in his life, he came to faith, and I baptized him myself.

After that, he started experiencing some persecution. At first, he told only his wife about his faith. She said, “I love you; I will stay with you.” But due to pressure from her family, she left. The villagers also rejected him; the shops wouldn’t sell him anything. Sometimes neighbors vandalized his house and threw out all his possessions. He experienced a lot of persecution, which still continues.

He’s a learned man, with a degree from a well-known university in another country. Those who know his tribe know it has a reputation for fierceness and hostility. But the Lord has transformed him. He says, “I am saved and I know the truth. I have to stick with it.” He’s still young, about 34 years old. He has a sports team of youth (teenagers), and he shares with them about the Lord. I also have a team of youth. Sometimes we organize a match between his team and mine. While the teams play, I coach him (in spiritual life) on the side of the field. If he wants to discuss an issue, we organize a match and we discuss the issue while the teams play.

EQUIPPING BELIEVERS FOR DMM AMONG THE MAJORITY

As our church started engaging with people of another faith, not everyone in the church accepted that concept, but I worked with the leaders who were open. We did trainings midweek, sharing, and praying. That’s how we began. We continued the trainings from 2015 up through 2020, when COVID-19 struck, and the church buildings had to close. Then, leaders I had trained started getting persons of peace and doing DBS. Nowadays, if you came to my church on a Sunday, you’d find that some of those people don’t attend the Sunday service. They go to their DBS, then we meet midweek to discuss how it went: how things are working, successes and challenges. We pray and learn together, and plan to continue this pattern.

At present, we have churches planted up to the fourth generation. I count myself as the first-generation leader, then I began training other

leaders, and they started groups that started groups. Now, we have leaders emerging in the churches which have been planted using DMM.

In our sharing with people of another faith, we don't begin with the story of Jesus. They have been trained in lots of arguments about Christ, so we don't start there. We begin building a foundation from creation. As we build that foundation, they start glimpsing a personal relationship with God. They have been taught that God is very distant; he created and then left. But in Genesis, they learn that God was in Eden, having fellowship with Adam and Eve. They ask: "Do you mean I can have that kind of personal relationship with God?" They start learning that God cares about everything in their lives.

We start from creation and work our way slowly toward Christ. They don't find it easy to understand salvation. We have learned that even some Christians are not deeply rooted in salvation, because they don't understand creation. We see discovery of creation truth as the foundation for healthy spiritual life. When a person knows how God created, how he made creation good, they start feeling God's love from the beginning. They begin to see the mistake of mankind—that humanity messed up everything. Adam messed things up, but God calls us back to fellowship with him.

We find that people of another faith don't value women much. But when they read in creation that God created man *and woman* in his own image, that gives a whole different perspective. Where did things go wrong? With sin. After that, God told the woman: "Now your man will have authority over you." Creation didn't originally include that. So they begin to see something different about God's way.

We have divided our Discovery studies into three parts. We have the part with creation—about 10 studies. Then the part with the Prophets—11 studies. Then we come to the New Testament—around 11 or 12 studies. It takes about six months for a group to go through all those.

Some people think salvation depends on their works. But when they start discovering from the Bible, they come to understand that God has come to humanity to reveal himself. When things went wrong in Eden,

**We start from
creation and
work our way
slowly toward
Christ.**

God came. When things went wrong at the Tower of Babel, God came. So they see God coming, over and over again. They see that it is not we who have to go; it is God who always comes for us, over and over. In that way, they see grace: God keeps on coming. They see it all the way through the Discovery Bible Studies. God's action doesn't depend on human action. God says, "I will do it."

As we go through the DBS process, sometimes people ask, "What shall I do to become a Christ follower?" We just open the Scriptures and they discover: "Repent and be baptized." This is their answer. We teach them that baptism in water gives access to join God's family. It's not a ritual which, if not done, would prevent a person from inheriting the kingdom of God. But Scripture presents it as the appropriate first response to saving faith. When they understand this, they say, "Okay, I'm ready to be baptized."

We have found it challenging to see the DBS groups transition to become churches. Sometimes in a DBS of seven people, not all of them come to Christ at once. Out of seven, maybe four initially come to faith. Recently, I discussed with other leaders: "Can this become a church? Or should it continue as a DBS?"

Our conversation yielded an idea for our context. Whenever we have some people in a DBS who believe and get baptized, we start doing some church practices, and we move *toward* having it become a church. We've seen in some cases, a DBS goes on and on as a DBS, because some people want to wait for *everybody* in the DBS to believe before they make it a church. But we observed that quite often, not everyone comes to Christ at the same time. So whenever a certain percentage of the DBS follows Christ, we transition it to become a church, and start doing church elements.

HANDLING PERSECUTION

When people from another faith come to Christ, many of them face persecution. We had an elderly woman come to Christ from another faith background about three years ago. When she came to faith, her whole family rejected her: not only her brothers but even her own children. We helped her complete a small muddy house on some land she had. We carried this burden, because she's part of us—our sister. We shared her

story with Lifeway, and they assisted us to help her start a small business. She was a good cook and knew how to make snacks, so we helped her boost her business. But besides being up in years, she was diabetic and had high blood pressure. She passed away a few months ago. We contacted her family, to include them in the arrangements, but they said, “No, you take care of everything. She came to Christ and changed her faith. We are not appreciated; you arrange for everything. But please let us know the day of her burial; we will come.”

So we took care of everything, including buying a place to bury her. We informed her family of the day of burial and they came—almost the whole clan! We conducted the burial service and gave them an opportunity to speak. We told them, “We can’t do this properly without you. We welcome you here, because this is your mother, your sister.” We showed them respect and gave them a part to play. After the burial, we ate together. Before they left, they said, “You have really shown us the love you had for our mother. So we accept contact with you. We need your advice, the way you used to advise our mother. So please feel welcome to walk with us.”

We now have plans to start building those relationships and engaging them. Even through the death of this woman, we are seeing fruit. God works out everything to accomplish his will.

CHURCH IN A SENSITIVE CONTEXT

In some sensitive environments, we can’t easily do the things normally done in a traditional church. For example, we don’t sing, the way we would in a more open context. To lead people to praise God, we ask: “What are you thanking God for?” In answering that question, they praise God. In a new DBS, among those who have not yet believed, we would ask, “What are you thankful for?” The process lays a foundation for leading people toward praising and worshiping God.

We also ask, “What challenges are you going through?” When we as a group can meet a need someone mentions, we do that. The needs we can’t meet we commit to God in prayer—to see what God will do for us. After that, we have a time for sharing. We ask, “What did you share with people from the last study we did?” Then we discover God’s message

through the Scripture, and discuss how we will apply the Scripture in our lives. The disciples come away strengthened, encouraged, connected with God and with each other, and ready to apply his truth in fresh ways.

GREATEST JOY IN DMM

My greatest joy in DMM is that ordinary people can do it. They don't have to go to school or seminary to be qualified for ministry. Anyone can do it. Anyone can learn to cast the vision and share the DNA with others. All believers can listen to God through the Holy Spirit. I love that DMM equalizes every believer. God can use any one of us, so we can learn from one another. We don't meet to have someone tell us what to do. We meet to share what God is doing in our lives. It's a joy to see a brother or sister being used by God to equip the body of Christ for the work of the ministry. When I was a pastor, the ministry all depended on me. It felt burdensome and stressful. But now, every leader owns it. We live as brothers and sisters in Christ, so no one is above anyone else—only Christ.

GREATEST CHALLENGE

My greatest challenge is in developing leaders. It's not easy to identify people who are faithful. I might look at a person and think, "This one will make a leader," but then somewhere along the way, I see elements that discourage me. So everything needs patience. Sometimes when I want to make people be the way *I* want them to be, I fail. But I realize God calls me to lead people in such a way that they can be what *he* wants them to be. When I feel discouraged with their process, I still believe God has his own way of shaping them. He calls me just to facilitate and see the outcome he will bring.



HOLISTIC MISSION AND WITCH DOCTORS

Andrew³⁴ is one of our LifeNet partners working among a people steeped in another faith. Here is his story of how God opened the community to Jesus and multiplying disciples.

I've been involved in DMM since 2010, when we met with Aila. Before that, I was a believer but I mainly did children's ministry. After I learned about DMM, I understood that I have a greater purpose in God's kingdom. I realized that Jesus came to seek and save the lost, so we started going out and reaching out to people in this area. After we learned about Unreached People Groups, Lifeway Mission helped us start going to some other areas within our country. Then I got more training and became equipped to reach out to the people in an especially challenging area.

We have been focusing on that group since 2016. The majority follow another faith, though some are Folk Religionists who worship mountains, rivers, and so on. The Lord has allowed us to make disciples among people from both those backgrounds.

The people we train mostly engage those from another faith. We tell them: "Jesus died for *all* people, including those from any faith background." In the past, sharing with those people was viewed as an offense that the regional government would punish (though it didn't violate the national law). But when some of them ended up in refugee camps, the government didn't have much control over them. Also, a friend of mine told me that one of the rebel leaders realized Christianity brings peace. He wanted the people in the camp to be reached by the gospel, so after they became Christians, they would be peaceful in their country.

ENTERING AN UNCHURCHED AREA

Some areas we visited had no churches at all. I asked other Christians, "Why is there no church in that area?"

They said, "The people there follow a different faith."

³⁴ For security reasons, names marked with an asterisk are pseudonyms.

I asked them, “Did Jesus die also for those people?”

“Yes.”

“That means we are supposed to go to them, but we don’t, because of fear. Can we go and see, maybe one of your friends there?”

“We don’t have any friends there.”

“Okay, let’s go and see the chief.”

When we visited the chief, God gave us wisdom. We asked him questions, kind of like we normally do in our Discovery groups. We asked him, “Where is your school?”

“We don’t have one. Our children don’t go to school.”

“Where is the meeting place for people of your faith? As I walked here, I didn’t see any.”

“Our people are so weak they can’t go to the bush to cut logs and build a structure.”

“Are there any Christians in this area?”

“We have them, but they don’t have a leader.”

When I found out they needed a school, and some Christians lived there, I asked the chief: “Would you allow us to start a school under that tree?”

He said, “Yes! No problem.”

Then I asked: “If we start a school and the Christians come there to worship, would that be a problem?”

“No problem.”

So I went to look for a blackboard, chalk, and registry book. After I got those, we came back. I saw some young people hanging around, and I asked them, “Who among you has attended school, and could teach these young kids?”

One of them (a believer) said, “I can teach them.” So I gave him the teacher’s textbook, the chalk, and the registry book.

The school started the next day, and they registered 50 children. As time went on, the number increased rapidly. Before long, they had 250 children attending the school.

From the beginning, as we taught them, we shared with them the love of Jesus. After about two months, roughly 50 children accepted Christ, and five families had come to the Lord through the

ministry of the school—in a community whose vast majority followed another faith.

I stayed there for about three months, then I left for a while to start another ministry, and then I came back. When I returned and the chief heard I was around, he sent for me to come talk with him. When I got there, I saw he was very happy because his children were speaking English. The English they were speaking was the word “water.” (That’s a subject of a lot of discussion in that place.) The chief said, “This school is okay. My children are now speaking English.”

I visited there again three weeks ago, and I saw that a number of youth have come to faith and are being actively discipled. (Every new disciple has an assigned coach.) We have the Jesus Film, and I was amazed that the young men can take the Jesus video, share it in the community, and pray for those who want to accept Christ. Then they form a Discovery Bible group with those who accept Christ, and assign someone to lead the group. They continue going around with the film and forming groups with it. God is doing amazing work through these young men. They have not been believers for a long time, but they are being well coached and trained, and they’re very effective.

HOLISTIC EMPOWERMENT

I also have introduced some of the people to farming, because I love farming. When we first went to one area, the land was all bush. Although the people there don’t love to work, the land is very fertile. I had contact with a man working in the UNHCR,³⁵ and I asked him to get them mango, guava, and lemon seedlings to plant. Those were planted in 2016, and I’m now seeing some of those who planted and cared for the seedlings starting to eat the fruit. So when I speak to them about things, they consider it worth listening to what I say.

35 “United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees” – the UN refugee agency.
www.unhcr.org.

MINISTRY BY FOUR YOUNG MEN

In another place, our youth (boys ranging from ages 15 to 25) went around asking people “Can we pray with you?”

People would always say, “Yes, you can pray.” (People of another faith love being prayed for.) God has done amazing things in answer to those prayers.

With one family from another faith, they shared about the love of Christ and then prayed. As they were leaving, they asked, “Would you like to give your life to Jesus Christ?”

This family accepted Christ right then! In a case like that, the boys start a Discovery group. They get people into the word of God to help them understand God’s truth and all it means to live as Jesus’s disciple. After the questions focusing on a specific text and its application, they ask one final question: “With whom are you going to share this?”

In the neighborhood of these four boys, people used to go visit a witch doctor who professed another faith. As the boys’ application of the last DBS question, they said, “We are going to share this with the witch doctor.” When they went to share with him, he wanted to accept Christ! They were thrilled, but they faced a challenge. When he brought them his paraphernalia to get rid of it, they didn’t know how to dispose of it safely. But the Holy Spirit quickened their mind, and one of them said, “Pastor R. lives not far from here. Let’s go ask him to help us with this.” They went to the pastor’s home, and he came with them and disposed of the paraphernalia in an appropriate way.

After the witch doctor gave his life to Christ, he started a Discovery group, and all his former customers came to study the word of God together with him. After about two months, the group had become quite large, many more had come to faith, and the group became a church.

In another place, the four boys met a man who followed another faith and said, “We’re just walking around to say hi to our neighbors, to get to know how they are doing, and offer to pray with them. Would you like us to pray with you?”

He said, “Yes. Actually, my son here has been sick for a very long time. We have gone to many, many witch doctors but there’s been no change.” The boys shared God’s love with him and then prayed for the

young boy. He was instantly healed! When the man saw his son really healed, he said, “Starting today, I’m letting go of my old faith. I want to be a Christian.”³⁶

The boys said, “Wonderful! We’ll read the word of God with you, so you can understand what that means.” They began going regularly to do Discovery studies in God’s word with him. As usual, the last question in the study was, “With whom are you going to share this?”

This man amazed me. Within about two months, he had brought 15 families to Christ—all people in his community who knew him and spoke the same language—all from another faith. They knew how he had struggled with his son’s illness. So they understood the significance when he told them, “The Christians came and prayed for my son and he got healed. So I became a Christian.” Besides those 15 families, he also reached one other family from another tribe.

When I heard about this, I said, “I’d like to go visit this man.” I gave him an MP3 player and told him: “This is to help you continue doing the Discovery Bible Studies with these families you’ve reached.”

He told me, “In this area, I believe there will be a big church. It won’t start as a big church. We will start under a tree, and as we reach out to our people and the number grows, it will become a very big church.”

I continued working with him and discipling him. After a while, the time came for him to return to his home area. When he got there, he told people, “I’m now a believer in Christ,” and for two weeks, nobody spoke to him. But he didn’t get discouraged; he continued following the Lord. After two weeks, people began speaking to him again. Within one month, 25 families had come to the Lord. Whenever I go there, I visit him and encourage him. We have quite a few people coming to the Lord and becoming disciples in that area—both from another faith and from African religions.

³⁶ In our area, people of another faith often use the name “Christian” as a pejorative term: “that *other* group.” But when a person learns what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and chooses that new path, they normally call themselves a “disciple,” or a “follower of Jesus.”

One of the four young men went for more education at a college outside the capital city. He has already started a Discovery group there, and some of the tutors at the college attend the group. That wasn't enough for him. He next went to the local community and talked to the chief—an essential first step in this area.

The chief said, "Yes, it's no problem. Come."

So in that community, where the majority come from another faith and from Catholicism, he has already started groups that are doing very well. He now has streams of ministry in two different places.

ANOTHER WITCH DOCTOR BECOMES A PERSON OF PEACE

One woman attended a training I did, and after I talked about the character of a person of peace, she said, "I have a neighbor who is a witch doctor. This lady has kept asking me to share the word of God with her, but I was afraid. Now I realize she may be a person of peace. I will go and start sharing with her."

I came back to that area about a month later, and as I walked through the town, this woman saw me and hurried over to tell me, "That witch doctor has really received Christ! And she had about 37 customers who used to come for her services. Now those people have been meeting as a Discovery Bible group and learning about salvation in Christ."

When she told me the group meeting had 38 people (including herself), I said, "This group should become a church." So I went and spoke with her pastor, and a church started there. They are being discipled and learning more about what it means to live as God's people and God's family.

CHALLENGES FROM OUTSIDE AND FROM WITHIN

Our disciples do experience persecution in some areas. One of the young men went and started a church in an area dominated by people of another faith. The person of peace he found there was a chief, a woman. After she came to faith, they had a group praying at her house once a week. For three weeks, whenever they met, a group with clubs surrounded the house while they met. But none of the group got hurt, and after the third week, the people gave up their threats and a church has been

established there. It's doing very well and now has a church service on Sundays.

We already have started doing ministry in a capital city where the denominational church people are very strong. That presents a different kind of challenge, but we are working slowly with them. Last time I visited there, one of the denominations asked me to speak to their leaders about DMM. When I go there again, I plan to share with those leaders—at least introduce them to DMM. We have already done the introduction in quite a few areas, and we're now beginning to follow up and develop leaders in partnership with the churches.

TRAINING WITH CHURCHES

I mentioned earlier the boys going to the pastor for help with disposing of the witch doctor's paraphernalia. In the past, some pastors had a negative attitude toward DMM. They feared we would upset their system and steal their people. But three years ago, we started a class in which we taught basic understanding of the Bible and leadership development. About 60 people attended the class, and they graduated last year. This has helped strengthen the ministry. In the past, when our disciples went somewhere to reach out, the pastors might ask them, "Where is your certificate? Where were you trained?" Now, they have a certificate they can show, if needed.

Some pastors attended the graduation. When they saw the scope of the program, some of them approached me and said, "This is good. We also want to learn this material."

When I went to that area again this year, we started another class. This time I said, "We *need* the existing church, and we need to focus on the youth." So now we have a 50-50 balance of people from the existing church and youth.

When I did that most recent training, one man had already started a Discovery group by the time we finished the training. He invited me to go and see the group. When I go back, I'll also visit them, encourage them, and see how they are doing. People are grasping the concept. The youth especially have gotten it and are doing it very well. We also focus on existing churches, because they have significant influence among

many believers. If they grasp the idea of making disciples, I think that will have a great impact.

MINISTRY IN A REFUGEE CAMP

The people we have trained in the refugee camp have really grasped the concept of DMM. I told them “We are workers in the kingdom of God, so wherever we go, we must do something.” As a result, they make disciples wherever they go. When they return to their homelands, they begin doing DMM there.

I don’t talk about the number of disciples in this movement. I simply talk about the streams. We have streams in [nine locations; names removed for security reasons]. Whenever I have funds, I go to all those places to see how they’re doing and encourage them, especially those who have recently entered the kingdom of God.

Sometimes, because I’m short of funds, I just walk around within the camps and encourage the disciples. And I tell those who are preparing to return, to walk around and also encourage their brothers. Some people are always on the move between their home area and the camp. You can see on the roadway: people coming and people going back; people coming and going back.

DBS WITH THOSE OF ANOTHER FAITH

People from another faith always oppose the idea of Jesus as (divine) Christ. With them, we normally begin DBS from creation. We want them to see God first, as described in the creation story. When they get to know who God is, as we progress through Old Testament stories and they reach the stories of Jesus, they don’t have a problem. But if we begin with Jesus, we don’t get very far. So we always begin with creation.

I have spoken on a number of occasions with chiefs; some have called me to go and speak with them. They relate very well with the Pentateuch. I begin by telling them, “We all know the books of the law from Moses.” Their holy book mentions them and the Bible includes them. So the chiefs have no problem if I share stories from the Bible. They have a problem only when someone begins to challenge their beliefs. If I speak on something like Exodus 3, where God calls Moses, they relate very well.

I normally just tell the stories rather than reading from a physical Bible. When they grasp the story and understand it, they know that I am a chief; I was elected to this position to do something. I tell them: “Time will judge us. I am a chief today. If I don’t do anything for my people, somebody will come and ask, ‘What did he accomplish when he was chief?’ But if you do something useful, even after you die, people will remember: ‘So-and-so was here, and this is what he did for our people.’ People remember Moses, because he went and delivered the children of Israel. That is why God called him. Nobody is given a responsibility without a purpose they are supposed to accomplish. You are a chief; you have been given that responsibility for a purpose.” They relate very well to that concept, and it opens the door for more stories from the Bible.

FROM A DBS TO A PROFESSION OF FAITH TO A CHURCH

When a Discovery group still consists of just unbelievers, the facilitator (who’s a believer) stays with the group until some in the group come to faith, to give them guidance. Sometimes one of the group members might have a question. If the group has been left all by themselves, they might not get direction on what Scriptures to look at to find an answer.

To help people from a different faith background understand salvation by grace through faith, we help them discover God’s forgiveness. After laying a foundation in the Old Testament texts, we bring them to discover gospel teaching, like (for example) where Jesus said, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:29). So the “work” in the kingdom of God is just by faith, not doing something. We cannot do good things in order for God to forgive us or accept us. We also have them study other New Testament texts, like Ephesians 2:8-9 about grace and faith, and Luke 15 about forgiveness. They see in Ephesians 2:10 that the good works God intends are a *result* of our saving faith, not a means to salvation. That includes obedience to God’s word and reaching out to those who have not yet received God’s love. As they discuss the Scriptures in depth, they gain a good understanding about these things.

The number of Discovery Bible Studies a group does before coming to salvation depends on the area and their previous level of understanding.

Sometimes, we have seen it take two or three months of weekly meetings; in other places, it might be just a month. In some cases, it happens immediately—like with the man whose child got miraculously healed. The challenge in cases like that is, when a person quickly gives his or her life to become a Christian, that is where our work actually begins. We cover that issue in our trainings, so disciples don't assume the job is done when someone makes a profession of faith. We need to walk with new believers in learning biblical truth and help them build a good and solid relationship with Christ. They need to understand his commands

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very well, so they can begin to help other people come to know him. To help people from a different faith background understand salvation by grace through faith, we help them discover God's forgiveness. When a person quickly says, "I'm a believer," our disciples say, "Let's begin reading the word of God together." As they read, they ask the DBS questions, which cause people to change and grow and be transformed. After a group becomes believers, I guide them to the Gospel of John. As they do lots of discovery through the Book of John, they gain a good foundation in the word.

When we train people to facilitate a Discovery group, we tell them, "As the facilitator, you don't need to propose the idea of a church. Read the relevant Scriptures with them and let them discover about the church. When they conclude that now they want to begin meeting regularly on Sunday for worship and performing the other functions of a church, you'll know they are ready. You can help them gain clarity on that.

The gathering as a church normally includes singing, preaching, and all those things. When they come to the point where they consider themselves a church, they do all the functions of a church, including Discovery Bible Study. We encourage them to continue doing Discovery studies as a church, because DBS is the process God uses to make the

church grow. It equips them to learn, to share with other people, and continue the process.

If the facilitator attends the church service, they might do some preaching and teach others how to do it. But we teach our leaders not to pick somebody and say, "You are now the pastor." If you do that, it messes up the biblical relational dynamics in the group, because they have often seen how traditional pastors handle things. In the Discovery group, we form a team and work as a team. As we train them, this team works together. Even if they reach a point of including preaching in their service, they still do it together. One person does it this week, and another person does it the next week. As they do that, the Holy Spirit will help them identify who has the most pastoral gifting.

LANGUAGE ISSUES

Most of the people I'm reaching are illiterate. If any of them went to school, they know only how to read the national language. But when they came into the camps, God gave them the opportunity to learn English. They know that the national language was introduced to them to control them, and in many situations it's not useful. But they have seen the importance of English, because with English a person can communicate with almost the entire world. So now, many of them want to learn English.

One area we serve has speakers of about 99 languages. In the past two years, another seven languages were discovered, so now it's about 106 languages. Even though some of the languages have similarities to others, they still have significant differences. We have the Bible in a few of those languages but not in most of them, so we have a team working on translating the Bible.

When these various groups do a DBS, they usually use a Bible in the national language. But in some areas, some people don't understand the national language. When we go to places like that, we have to make sure we have a person from that locale, who can speak to them in their own language. We have seen the great importance of the indigenous person. An indigenous leader can speak their language and relate very well with them. As we teach people, we want to identify those coming from the various language groups. Then, we work to develop them as we disciple

them, so that when we go to those particular areas, they can lead us and translate into their own languages.

We generally don't have audio Bibles available. So I have trained the leaders how to share the Scripture orally and present it as a story. Our pattern is to read a story many times ourselves and understand it very well, so we can recite it accurately. Because the people are not educated, we have to recite the story three or four times. When they have grasped it, we begin to ask questions. I went to a new church plant where they were using this approach, and just sat and listened to see how they did it. The leader narrated the story very well. When he began asking questions, I was amazed at how well those people, from a background of a different faith, could understand and apply the Scriptures. It seemed to me like a miracle.

If the whole group is conversant in the national language, they have their discussion in that language. If they're all more familiar with one particular tribal language, they have the discussion in that language. They first recite the biblical story in the national language, then translate it and discuss it in their local language. We use both approaches, depending on what best fits the situation of those gathered in the group.

MINISTRY THROUGH THE GENERATIONS OF CHURCHES

Some places have seen eight generations of churches started among those of another faith, some seven, some five, and some four generations. To ensure that the DNA continues, I regularly bring together all the leaders of the various generations in a particular area, to see how they are doing. Where things are not going quite right, we discuss those issues as leaders and work toward solutions.

I also call them sometimes, to discuss how things are going. And they can call me, if they're facing anything especially challenging. I don't wait until I go to their area to talk with them. We stay in touch so I know what's happening in their lives and ministries.

I do the leaders' gatherings at different levels. If leaders in the fourth generation have a problem, it could be a common problem in that generation. The same for the seventh or eighth generation. At the gatherings, we also challenge them to go to the next level, and not get easily contented with the status quo.

I don't want to have a big number of leaders at these gatherings: maybe 25 or 30. After I meet with the leaders in their respective areas, they go and meet with their teams and other leaders down their stream of the movement. Some of those meetings happen according to the generations and some according to the location of the churches. Everybody has somebody they talk with and share with on a regular basis.

Most of them have chosen to meet with their group of leaders once a month. But some of them meet on a weekly basis to share their testimonies and challenges, and pray together. The testimonies help a lot. They encourage others who may be struggling or not doing much. And where we have challenges, we share and encourage one another. As a group, we come up with a solution or a strategy on how to address the challenge. That helps everyone in the group to grow as a leader and become more effective.

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BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DISCIPLE MAKING MOVEMENTS





A FIRM FOUNDATION

IN TRANSITIONING TO A FOCUS on Disciple Making Movements, I needed confidence about the biblical basis for multiplication through disciple-making. I wanted even to review what Scripture says about *why* we make disciples and what *is* the church. Here are a few key texts through which the Lord has spoken to us.

ADAM, EVE AND BABEL

The thread of heaven's multiplication strategy runs throughout Bible history. At creation, God gave humanity the command to multiply:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground”
(Gen. 1:28).

God intended mankind not just to multiply numerically but also to spread the knowledge of the Lord as they increased on earth. Sadly, Adam and Eve fell into sin before any other humans existed to whom they could spread that knowledge. Sin's entrance hindered multiplication of the knowledge of the Lord. The Lord initiated a restoration process by promising that the Seed of the woman would come and crush the head of the serpent, making a way back to intimacy with himself. Mankind was to trust God to create a way back into his presence. But they sought to reach him by their own devices.

Outside of Eden, mankind increased in number but disobeyed God's command to fill the earth. They decided instead to remain together in one place and build a name for themselves. They decided to build the tower of Babel (Genesis 10), attempting to remain together and reach heaven by their own strength. To build their own kingdom rather than the kingdom of God.

The Lord responded to this rebellion by confusing their language, causing them to scatter over the earth, as he had previously commanded. However, multiplication of the knowledge of God did not happen, even as mankind spread over the earth and grew into various nations.

We can see an application of this for the modern Church. Many churches and denominations nowadays invest their resources in ways they hope will draw people to *come to them*. But consistent with his command at creation, God calls the Church today to *multiply* and fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory!

ABRAHAM AND ISRAEL

God called Abram and promised to bless him and his descendants, so that through him all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). Because of the Lord's faithfulness, Abraham's lineage grew into the nation of Israel. From its inception, God intended Israel to be set apart as his witnesses, to spread the knowledge of God by shining his light among the nations (Is. 42:6).

Israel was called to carry his blessing into the world. Instead, they became inward looking, not comprehending that God loves all nations. Not only did they not teach the nations to obey God, they fell into rebellion over and over. They learned and adopted the evil ways and religious practices of the pagan nations.

The Lord responded by allowing their enemies to take them into exile. During their captivity in Babylon, Israel bore witness of the Lord to the nations, with men of faith like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

GOD'S PROMISE THROUGH HABAKKUK

Habakkuk proclaimed God's promise to cover the earth with his glory.

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

This portrays our *inspiring motivation* for making disciples: to see God's glory cover the whole world, as the waters cover the sea. In our day, we can see this beginning to happen in fresh ways through what God is doing in Disciple Making Movements. As obedient disciples live out their faith and take the gospel to yet-unreached groups, they carry Christ's glory across the earth. We look forward to the final day when his glory blankets the whole earth.

JESUS'S MINISTRY AND TEACHING

Early in his ministry, Jesus went to the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth. From the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, he read the text which publicly announced his ministry's mission statement.

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19).*

He then declared: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Not long after that, he went to the Sea of Galilee, where he called his first disciples to follow him, and promised he would send them to fish for people (Luke 5:10).

During the three years Jesus mentored them, the disciples learned from him as they watched how he did ministry. He taught them to pray by his example and to understand the heart of God the Father. They witnessed miracles and heard his message of the kingdom of God. He also spoke many parables to illustrate the multiplication DNA of God's kingdom.

The tiny seed of the Middle Eastern mustard plant can grow into a tree six feet high or sometimes twice that (Matt. 13:31-32). It grows best near water sources but can also survive with very little rainfall. And like yeast spreading through dough, the kingdom of God works steadily to bring incredible expansion (Matt. 13:33). As Jesus prophesied, kingdom growth is truly becoming a worldwide movement. In the parable of the sower, Jesus described differing results, depending on the type of soil where the seeds fell. The seed that fell on good soil multiplied greatly: some one-hundredfold, some sixtyfold and some thirtyfold.

Jesus also trained his disciples by sending them on short mission trips to do what they had seen him do, as described in Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-20. At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus gave this Commission to go and make disciples of all nations:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20).

Those who truly love Jesus obey his commands (John 14:21). Those commands include the making of disciples. Our love for Jesus compels us to do our utmost to make disciples among all people groups (*ethnē*). He did not send his messengers without help, but promised the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who would empower them, and now empowers us, for spreading the gospel to the world (Acts 1:8). Jerusalem, Judea, cross-cultural witnessing in Samaria, and on to proclamation to the ends of the earth—this is the road map for making disciples among all peoples of the world. Jesus said, “Go,” and did not say to come back. He will come back at the end of the age, so we as the Church are to stay in “going” mode until his return.

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GOSPEL EXPANSION

The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost. About 3,000 people were added to this Church on the same day, after hearing the gospel from the Apostle Peter. This Church grew as the disciples established a sustainable movement. The believers continued in the apostles’ teaching, in fellowship, in breaking bread, and in prayers. They went from house to house rejoicing. They had favor with the community, and miracles took place as they ministered. *“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b).*

This growth was initially localized in Jerusalem and limited to Jews. At that time, the Romans ruled over, and were considered enemies of, the Jewish people. The Roman religion involved worshipping a variety of gods and goddesses, as well as some emperors after their deaths. This conflicted sharply with Jewish and Christian beliefs. However, the Lord had clearly instructed his followers to make disciples of *all* nations. This meant leaving the Jewish context of Jerusalem to spread the gospel among pagans having no prior special revelation from the True God.

When persecution broke out (Acts 8:1-4), they dispersed, spreading the gospel as they went. The Apostle Philip went to Samaria, where he preached the gospel and multitudes became followers of Christ. He was then instructed to go to the road where he met the Ethiopian eunuch, whom he taught and baptized. The eunuch in turn took the gospel back to Africa. Persecution also led to the birth of the Gentile church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-21). This church, in turn, obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit, setting apart Paul and Barnabas for the work he had set out for them (Acts 13:2-3). This included Paul's lifelong commitment to proclaiming the gospel to Gentiles; to those who had never before heard of Christ (Romans 15:15-20). It also included multi-generational multiplication of his ministry to many others. As he instructed his protégé Timothy, "*And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others*" (2 Tim. 2:2).

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APOSTOLIC CLARIFICATION OF THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

In expounding the foundation and application of the gospel for the church in Rome, the Apostle Paul left no doubt that all humanity is lost apart from the saving message of the gospel. In Romans 1, he shows that all people are "without excuse" (v. 20) and deserve God's wrath. In Romans 2, he describes the justice of God's judgment against all people: Jews and Gentiles alike, including those who have never heard of Jesus or God's law. In Romans 3, he drives home the point that "all have sinned and fall

short of the glory of God" (v. 23), yet God has made a way to be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (v. 24). He reiterates a similar point in this summary sentence: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). If we truly believe that people outside of Christ are lost and justly destined for God's wrath, these realities impassion us for making disciples. We long for those who are dead in sin to become dead *to* sin and alive in Christ, with a life that is abundant and eternal.

WE, TOO, ARE SENT

Christ instructed believers to go because he knows that lost mankind, not being aware of their lost state, cannot of their own volition come to him. They must first be brought to see their spiritual condition so they can understand their need for redemption and call on Jesus's name for salvation.

For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom. 10:13-15).

Today, much of the world still remains lost. Jesus still tells his disciples to, "Go," even to those who consider us their enemies. As the Father sent Jesus, so he is sending us (John 20:21).

A GLORIOUS FUTURE

We don't have to wonder what will become of this world, or how history will end. Jesus has revealed to us—in his own prophetic promise, and then through the Apostle John—what will happen at the end of this age. After the gospel has been proclaimed in the whole world, as a testimony to all peoples (*ethnē*), Jesus promised that at that time "the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). He who called his Church to proclaim the gospel has promised that our proclamation will bear fruit. We see in Revelation the promise of a glorious outcome from our spreading of the gospel: disciples of Jesus

“from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9; cf. 7:9). We eagerly look forward to that great day, and such fervent expectation brings eagerness to make disciples today!

THE CHURCH IN DISCIPLE MAKING MOVEMENTS

One of Christianity’s challenges is misunderstanding the meaning and functions of a biblical church. The New Testament gives this description:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Rom. 12:4-13).

From this text, as well as 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 3, we see church defined by the function of the group, not the presence or absence of a building. A church consists of any group of believers who regularly gather to worship, fellowship, read and discover God’s truth in Scripture, serve each other, and evangelize the lost.

The Bible also contains numerous metaphors to better help us understand God’s view of Church:

- **The Body of Christ.** All believers are part of the body of Christ, with many diverse functions (Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 1:24). We are baptized into this body of Christ. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ, not the pastor. Thus, authority in the Church lies with Christ; all other functions have equal importance in the body.
- **The Bride of Christ.** Christ gave himself up for the Church to make her holy, cleansing her through the word, and to present her to

himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. The Church, in response, is called to submit to Christ in everything. Jesus will return to the earth for a bride who has made herself ready (Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 19:7). Jesus calls us, as disciple-makers, to play a role in preparing this beautiful bride of Christ for his coming.

- **God's Household.** In God's household, God is the Father and we are his children, his heirs. Thus, we relate to one another as members of a loving family (1 Tim. 3:15; 5:1-2; Rom. 8:17; Matt. 23:8-9).
- **The Pillar and Foundation of Truth.** Jesus Christ is the master builder of the Church. The Church represents God's truth throughout this age (1 Tim. 3:15). Thus the new churches arising through Disciple Making Movements value their connection with the historical and global Church of Christ.
- **The Temple of the Holy Spirit.** While the Holy Spirit dwells within each individual disciple, that Spirit dwells uniquely as an abiding presence within the Church collectively (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).
- **Living Stones.** *“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet. 2:5). The Bible states plainly that the church is not a physical building (built with physical stones). The church is *God's people*—living stones—being built up together for his glory. The unbiblical habit of considering a building to be “the church” has an unhealthy effect on God's people, by denying a part of our true identity in Christ.
- **God's Fellow Workers, His Field, and Building.** We are to be careful how we build upon the foundation, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:9-13). He has chosen the Church to accomplish his purpose on earth, and we each have a part to play.
- **A Royal Priesthood.** *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”* (1 Pet. 2:9). As with the

living stones, too many of God's people have been robbed of their full rights and rightful functions as New Testament priests. A very long time ago, the Church fell into the error of imitating the Old Testament pattern. At that time, only a few of God's people were designated as priests and set apart to do the work of ministry. Even now that mindset persists in many churches, even if instead of "priest" they call that special person "the pastor" or "the minister" or "Reverend." But there's no special calling for some of us to be higher than others. God has poured out his Spirit on *all* believers, intending *all* of us to live close to him, to proclaim his excellency, and to make disciples—with everything that entails. We are his royal priesthood, so we encourage disciples to live that way, and fulfill his purpose for us as priests. We are *all* called to represent Christ and serve him.

Thus, a biblical church can exist in many forms, such as in a building, under a tree, in the market place, or in believers' homes. Her function establishes her identity.

The Church is built on the foundations of the prophets, apostles, and Jesus. The Church is Christ's holy bride, and church discipline is necessary to maintain its purity (1 Pet. 1:16; Tit. 3:10; Matt. 18:15-17).

The Church is universal. All those who believe, confess their faith, and follow Christ become members of his global Church, regardless of nationality, race, education level, or culture (Rev. 7:9). Jesus calls his church to unity in a common purpose (John 17:20-21; Phil. 2:2). This does not mean uniformity requiring agreement on everything; it means unity in Christ, with shared belief in his death and resurrection, and obedience to his commands.

In Acts 6, we see that the apostles chose to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. So, they instructed the believers to choose from among them seven people to wait on tables. This was the beginning of a diaconate-type ministry. A group needs apostolic leaders and also those who serve within the body. It's not a top-down structure, but rather functional responsibility within the group. The point is not governance as much as service. A church needs leadership and discipline, but serving is part of that.

If a believer goes off the path of the Lord (for example, in sexual immorality), the purity of the church needs to be maintained. The New Testament makes clear how to handle these kinds of issues: those who fall into sin (Matt. 18:15-18; Gal. 6:1), weaker brothers or sisters (Rom. 14:1-15:7; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 1 Thess. 5:14), issues of conflict (Matt. 5:23-24; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:2-3, 32; Phil. 2:1-15), and other such challenges.

Within the movement today, churches relate to other churches through numerous means of cross-pollination. Leaders within the same area, and occasionally the same region, meet together. Some events bring people together from various churches, because they are part of the same network. At the same time, the disciples know they are part of the global Church of Christ. They understand that the Church is universal, including all who follow Christ.

A church consists of any group of believers who regularly gather to worship, fellowship, read and discover God's truth in Scripture, serve each other, and evangelize the lost.

In some places, where folk religion dominates, disciples can worship freely; they don't experience much pressure. In areas where another faith is more strict, and where extremists are active, the church is much less visible and experiences much more persecution. In those contexts, we find it much more challenging to see the church grow. But in Matthew 16, Jesus said, "I will build my church." *I* don't build his church; *he* builds his church. He has preserved his Church, even in the midst of all kinds of challenging situations. Even in places like Iran, we see the Church growing, despite immense pressure. Church history teaches us that the Church can go through very painful times and still come out the other side. Of course, the Lord uses us in the process, but the bottom line is that *he* is the one building his Church. We stand amazed at how bold God's people sometimes become by his Spirit. We've seen disciples under pressure become very courageous and united.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- What Scriptures do you find most encouraging as you consider God's plan to multiply knowledge of himself throughout the whole earth?
- What aspects of the Lord's calling and plan do you find most challenging?
- How is your level of passion for going into the world to spread the gospel?



IN THE MIDST OF WARS

Thomas is a Lifenet movement catalyst whose ministry has unfolded in a turbulent context. Here is his story.

I have a calling to reach people of another faith, and some of my colleagues have the same burden. I've been involved in CPMs since 2005, when David Watson came with Aila to do a training. I had graduated from seminary and was doing church-planting at that time. The first time I interacted with Watson, it was hard for me as a pastor to accept what he said. But after a while, the concepts became normal for me.

When I train pastors in DMM, they often experience an initial challenge in understanding the DMM concept. Ironically, people from another faith background find it easier to grasp DMM. They don't have Christian traditions embedded in their thinking and experience. But pastors and Christians with ingrained traditional church patterns find it harder to grasp DMM.

In 2006, I started working with Lifeway Mission. In 2009, I went back to my focus country, which was undergoing great turmoil at that time. We moved to a relatively safe location, and continued making visits to the more antagonistic region. When war began in 2013, we left. In 2014, we went back. In 2015, some of our colleagues were arrested in the capital city. Then in 2015-2016, war broke out again, so we moved our office to Uganda, started an equipping center, and did training there. We recently moved our office and training center back to a part of our focus nation.

In 2017, the government banned us from going into the capital, and started hunting for us. But we had some good times, going into a neighboring country, winning some people, going to churches, bringing some people out for training and sending them back. We call our mission Greater Reach Alliance, which partners with Lifeway. We focus on reaching unreached groups and mobilizing churches.

We are reaching people from backgrounds of another faith and African tribal religions. We know their languages and we translate some Bible stories to make it easy for them to share God's word with their own people. We also use material called "The Journey" for discipleship—working

together with DMM. We start with the national language as a gateway, and people work from that language to their tribal languages.

When people come to Christ from the background of a different faith, they don't know anything about Christianity. They've just fallen in love with Christ, but they don't know anything else. So we see the importance of discipling them well. As we share with them and do DBS, they feel the love of Christ. We deal with their character—a very important issue for people from that background. We equip them with skills to study the Bible, and help them learn how to live for Christ, then give them the tools for DMM. We've translated the DMM basic-level training material from the national language, for equipping them to catalyze DMM. We help them know how to share their faith, how to impact their families, and how to deal with persecution.

We train indigenous people because we feel convinced of the importance of that approach. Those we've trained have played a part in multiplying churches to many generations. Some have reached 10 generations, others seven generations, and some three generations. We currently focus on tribes in three different areas. We also work in one refugee camp and we're building an equipping center in that area.

Most of those we're reaching have been traumatized by war. So our training includes trauma healing and deliverance. It also includes Systematic Theology, so they understand Christian teaching, and what the Bible says about salvation by grace through faith. We also teach Systematic Theology 2, including many other topics. They receive it not just as teaching of a tradition, but rather as a way of life. And every Wednesday morning, we have prayer together: praying for the nation and for the church. We also allow them to baptize. In my background as a pastor, we didn't allow an unordained person to baptize people. But now we understand baptizing as part of the process of making disciples.

We bring believers from three different unreached areas to a secure location, where they stay for six months. We train and disciple them intensively for those six months, then send them back to share their faith with those in their home area. They go back as leaders, able to lead groups and equip others, and God does miracles. As they win new believers, we

bring those new believers for training and disciple them for six months, then send them back.

Most people, when they come for the training, don't say they're coming to become a Christian. They usually say they're coming for English language or for school. But after they have been with us for a while, we encourage them to share their faith with their family and friends. So they start sending messages, sharing their faith. Some of their families don't accept that news well. One young man, when he came to do Bible translation, wasn't sure whether he wanted to become a Christian. He came, joined the training, became a Christian, then called his mother and said, "I've become a Christian."

His mother said, "Okay, but don't tell your father." He went back, did DBS with his mother and one of his brothers, and led them to Christ. Now his father has also become a Christian. We see that as God's grace. But some of the returnees have been persecuted.

When doing a DBS with people of another faith, we don't come with a Bible. We share Bible stories with them. We have many stories in common with them: creation, Abraham, and other prophets. We take them slowly through the Creation to Christ stories, until they come to faith. It depends on the situation how many stories they study before they begin to follow Jesus. Some of them take quite a while, but others realize the differences immediately.

CHALLENGES IN A CONTEXT CONTROLLED BY ANOTHER RELIGION

In a typical worship gathering in a context controlled by another faith, we encourage the disciples to have DBS—whether in houses, schools, universities, or any convenient place. We tell them Friday is the best day to gather for worship; it's the holy day in that context. Typically, only about five people gather, depending on the area. Some areas are new, and just three or four gather. Other areas have 12 or 15. But we encourage them not to have a group of more than five, lest they invite a problem. They have prayers, do DBS, give an offering, and share. They also sing if they're in a location where it's appropriate.

Our people have been arrested many times. In December 2018, in city N., a neighbor heard about a dozen people worshiping and reported

them to the authorities. The police arrested them and they spent three months in jail.

But the war opened doors for the church. Many people changed their mind about Christianity, because of food distribution in the IDP (internally displaced person) camps. We didn't preach to them. We just gave them food and told them, "This food is from Christians; we'd just like to pray with you. We don't want to push you to be Christians. We're just giving you food that has come from the churches." At first, they were hesitant to receive food from us. They went to their spiritual leaders and asked them: "Can we receive food from Christians?"

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The leader asked them, "Who is an unbeliever: the ones killing you, taking your wives, and burning your houses? Or the ones giving you food and helping you?" So they welcomed us, and we simply gave them food. At that time, the lady cooking the food for us was the only one who became a believer. After a while, one by one, then a few at a time, people started coming to Christ. Then we trained five local believers and sent them back, and things changed. At this point, many religious leaders also have become believers.

We are currently training 43 people to do Bible translations, and we have 20 residential students involved in discipleship. Accommodating them is not easy, with renting a place to stay and all. We also have a special challenge with those from other faith backgrounds. When they return to their home area, some of them have been disowned by their families. We stay in touch with them and encourage them to stay where they are. Sometimes, they just want to get away, but our DMM policy is to find ways to keep them there in their community, and to help them have a way to support themselves. That is a challenge. One other challenge is that we don't have a lot of time with our families, because we travel a lot.

But in the midst of the challenges, I praise God for his marvelous work in bringing generations of people from other backgrounds into his family, to live as disciples of the Lord Jesus.



REACHING A SANDWICH OF FAITHS

ALBERT HAS SEEN HIS ministry transformed as he shifted his focus from pastoring to disciple making and disciple multiplication. Here is Albert's story in his own words.

I am a pastor, but I don't use that title much. I call myself a disciple-maker. I still plant churches and lead some churches, even while I focus on multiplying generations of disciples. I began ministry as a pastor, so when I came in contact with Lifeway and learned about DMM eight years ago, I had a major paradigm shift. That took a while. The churches I had started before that have ended up being a mixture of traditional and DMM churches. The traditional mindset and DMM are two different things. The churches that I start now are disciple-making churches. I started them with that DNA, so I don't have the challenge there of wrestling with the traditional mindset: people just attending church. The disciples in the new churches don't depend on me. They keep busy winning souls and making disciples. They have other leaders leading them, so I sometimes don't visit there for a month. But they keep moving ahead, because that's in their DNA.

I minister in my home area in Kenya, among a group comprised of nine tribes. Their religion is a "sandwich" of traditionalists and another religion. Of the nine tribes, two mainly follow another religion. But most of those we're reaching are traditionalists. We do disciple-making among both groups, using different approaches.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TELLING STORIES

Those who follow another faith don't usually want to talk directly about Jesus or the Bible at first, so we talk about common interests, then move to sharing Bible stories. We build relationships through normal community activities, and start on the common ground or platform of whatever special issues we all experience in that region or community—such as water, education, raising children, or marriage. After we build relationships and bond with people, we introduce them to God's word in an indirect way. We do this process very intentionally, because we aim to make disciples. So we look for a good starting place, then move toward

discussing who God is: that he is loving and forgiving, and he is greater than the problems we are experiencing.

Recently, our area has seen a trend of old people being killed because of accusations of witchcraft. Often, the real issue is not witchcraft. It might be that someone hates the person, so they look for an excuse to accuse them of witchcraft. This happens among both the traditionalists and those of another religion. A problem like that also can serve as a starting place for discussion.

We start at people's level and situation, and go from there, like Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch. When we begin sharing God's word with people, we don't take along a Bible and open it. We have memorized Bible stories, and we use storytelling. We share stories that show God's greatness, God's love, or God's power. We might share more information or less, depending on how people respond to the stories. With those who seem open and interested, we share more, but we don't push ourselves on the uninterested.

With those who want to hear more Bible stories, we keep sharing and helping them discover God's truth through Discovery Bible Studies. Those who continue eventually understand the gospel and give their lives to Christ. Then we baptize them and they become disciples. We generally use stories of Creation to Christ, but we focus especially on Bible stories that show God's greatness and love. A lot depends on the kind of people we're talking to.

People might have a special need, for example an illness. In a case like that, we'd start with a story that illustrates God's power. We deal with each person as an individual, showing concern for their life situation and challenges. We want a personal relationship, not a mechanical process. Starting from whatever common ground we find, we move toward the word of God—either directly or indirectly. Because it's God's word of truth that can transform people's lives.

DBS WITH FAMILY VERSUS INDIVIDUALS

We like to do DBS with families, but because the local society prioritizes the authority of men, we often make our initial approach to the father—the head of a household. If he is open, he will introduce us to others in his

household. So the DBS sometimes happens with a family and sometimes with an individual, depending on the kind of response we receive. Among those of another religion, some people want to be very secretive at first, because they fear persecution. We don't want to expose them before they feel ready to share openly about their faith.

For example, with one man from another faith, I first did one-on-one DBS in secret, and the Lord used it. Another brother and I had been praying, and the Lord led us to visit this man, who was a witch doctor. So we went to his place, as if we were going to request his services as a witch doctor. He invited us in, and when he began praying for us, we also prayed in our hearts. When he began speaking in tongues, we also prayed in tongues inwardly. After a while, he stopped praying, because he realized we had not come there to seek his help. He said his powers were paralyzed, and he asked what kind of power we had, that could paralyze his powers. So we shared with him the truth of the power of Jesus.

He did not accept Christ at that point. However, the next day, he had an accident on the road and broke both his legs. He called me and asked me to come and pray for him. I went and prayed for him and shared the gospel with him. He didn't get healed or saved at that point, but he welcomed me to begin doing a DBS with him. After two weeks, he surrendered his life to Christ and I baptized him, but he had not yet told others what God was doing in his life. And his legs remained paralyzed for the next year. Though I live at some distance from him, I continued occasionally meeting with him in secret to do DBS.

An interesting circumstance eventually led him to share with others. After our Discovery Bible Study reached the story in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus healed a paralytic, he called me one day and said, "We've been studying the story of how Jesus healed someone. Was that a special case? Or could Jesus do that in my life?"

I said, "No, it wasn't a one-time case. If you believe in Jesus, his same healing power is available now as it was then. If you believe in him, you can be healed and you can walk."

He said, "I believe it, that it's true," and he began to get healed. His legs became strengthened, and two weeks later he called me and said,

“I can walk on my own!” This was big news, and his extended family wanted to know what had happened. The miracle demonstrated the power of God to this family of 25, and a DBS group started in that place. He and his wife invited their brothers and sisters and their neighbors to the DBS. They did a DBS once a week, inviting neighbors and people around the area. I lived far away from him, so I called him once a week and coached him in the process. He had a lot of questions, because he had previously followed a different faith.

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After many of those in the DBS group came to faith, they became a church. Now, a whole village has come to Christ through this one man with whom I first did an individual DBS. It's no longer a secret; everyone knows they love the Lord, and they have permission to meet as a church. He and his wife now lead the church in that place. He was a person of influence, even in the political arena, because of the services he offered. Through his relationships, he also opened access to some political leaders.

I haven't visited there in over a month, but they're still moving ahead and growing in the faith. When they get together, they study Scripture, pray and sing together, and share their experiences and whatever challenges they are facing. We are developing leaders among them, so the church is relevant for that context, and they understand how to apply the Scripture in the context of their local culture.

I'm an outside leader, so when I go there, I aim to instill in them the right DNA, so the gospel not only can take root but also multiply effectively. They still have challenges and questions, so I still coach them and help them to grow. Whenever he has a question, he calls and asks me. And whenever we meet, he pulls out a book where he has written all the questions he wants to ask.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL

When people begin to understand the word of God, God opens their understanding to realize that salvation comes by grace through faith. We don't have to try to force them to understand the gospel. We just go step by step, helping them study how God created people and all things, how God loves people and sent Jesus to bring salvation. The Scriptures have a way of opening people's understanding—to grasp that some of their previous beliefs were untrue. What they are now learning in the Scripture is God's truth. They often had questions about their own (previous) religion, but because no one gave them clear answers, they had followed blindly. Then they gradually discover in the Scripture that Jesus, whom they had previously heard about only as a prophet, is actually God! And they accept him as Savior.

ORAL LEARNERS

We are reaching both oral learners and literate people. If leaders can read and write, we try to get them a Bible, so they can read it for themselves in their own language. Often, because of their backgrounds, they've never seen a Bible before.

For the majority, the oral learners, we use storytelling and recordings (using an audio player), so they can listen to the Bible. Whenever possible, groups do DBS in the local language. Of course, only a few tribes have Scripture in their local languages. So they hear Scripture in Swahili and then discuss it in their local languages. But not all of them know Swahili. Another challenge is that we don't have enough audio players for all the DBS groups among oral learners. To fill the gaps, we use storytelling. We train leaders in biblical storytelling, so they know how to tell the stories accurately and help those who otherwise would have no access to God's word.

GENERATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Among those of another faith, we now have some groups in the third and fourth generation. In some other places, the groups are just in the first generation. Where we have groups in the fourth generation, we have teams who act as "bishops" in the area. They visit the groups from time to time, and check the DNA of the groups: whether they are staying

on track biblically and multiplying. They also help them work through whatever challenges they face—whether persecution or something else.

As groups grow, we watch for potential leaders and work to develop them. Every now and then, we call together the leaders from various areas for training. We do some of the training as a one-time event and some on an ongoing basis. We see this as vital because when we grow indigenous leaders, rather than depending on outsiders, we see the multiplication becoming a movement.

Each church—among groups from all the different kinds of backgrounds—normally has a plurality of leaders, depending on the functions and growth within the gathering. A group may have two, three, or four leaders, depending on the situation.

Among the tribal groups, we have six and seven generations of churches. Of course, among those from another faith background, growth tends to be slower (currently only up to fourth generation). Where the leaders have been disciples for quite a while, we can do leadership training with leaders from various backgrounds all together. But in the very strict areas, our leaders don't want to be seen associating with “Christians,” so we train those leaders in a very private way, sometimes one-on-one. We need to train them well, because we as outsiders don't hang around in those places. We equip and empower them, then disappear so we don't expose them to undue suspicion within their community. In some of the very sensitive areas, we sometimes help the leaders go to another location for one or two days of training.

In other areas, where the believers are known and accepted as followers of Jesus, church gatherings look quite Christian, with songs in the local language and all. In some of the more sensitive areas, though, the believers meet just to study God's word, pray, and then leave. Some (especially those still living under their parents' authority) still go to their family's place of worship and pray in the name of Jesus, while also making disciples of those open to God's truth. But as the opportunity arises for more freedom, they become more openly known as followers of the Lord.

In different contexts, the disciples use different approaches, as the Spirit leads them. We don't try to push or enforce any one particular approach for all believers or all groups. The Lord gives specific wisdom

for specific situations. We trust him as the Shepherd of all his sheep and the one who best knows every local context.

I've not personally experienced much persecution, just some people hating me and some verbal attacks. But some of the disciples in the movement have undergone severe persecution. Some have been ostracized from their families and some have had to go into hiding for their lives. But we don't treat hiding as a long-term solution. We do what we can to help them not become dependent—sometimes starting a small business in a new area. We aim to use DBS discreetly, to reach those who are open.

GREATEST JOY

My greatest joy in ministry is to see people taking what they know and replicating it with other people. They learn obedience to the Lord and they replicate it to others, who pass it on to others. I count it a privilege to have met a disciple in the seventh generation of reproduction, someone I've never met before. I just heard that they received the gospel from someone who got it from someone, who (way back somewhere) got it from me. That's very fulfilling: seeing the multiplication of the gospel message, with people discovering God's truth in the Scriptures when I'm not even there. The growth doesn't depend on me; it depends on God. The truth of God's word is transforming people, which leads to even more people becoming followers of Christ.

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DISCIPLE- MAKING IN PRACTICE





PUTTING THE GREAT COMMISSION INTO PRACTICE

AS DESCRIBED IN CHAPTER 4, Jesus has commanded his followers to “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*” (Matt. 28:19, 20a). What does that look like in practice? Let’s briefly take a closer look at three key phrases in that command.

MAKE DISCIPLES

Our Lord did not instruct us to make converts,³⁷ build church buildings, or create denominations. He said, “Make disciples.” Christ calls every follower of his to a role in the vital ministry of making disciples.

Disciple-making is a process. I commonly quote what Jesus said in Matthew 4:19, “Come and follow me.” Jesus *invites* people to be his disciples. When Jesus walked along the seashore and called Peter and Andrew to follow him, they didn’t know a lot about who he was. Yet when Jesus called them to follow him, they *immediately* left their nets and followed him. When Jesus called the two sons of Zebedee, James and John also left their boats and *followed* him.

So, when I say disciple-making is a process, I mean that it’s introducing a person to a relationship, to follow Jesus—to walk with him and learn from him. His first disciples watched him do things. They heard his teaching. It was a life-on-life experience—sharing life and sharing everything. It was not just an event, though it involved many events. They heard him tell stories, saw how he interacted with people, and asked him questions. Everyday life became the consistent trigger for their learning.

³⁷ A “convert” has changed their external (visible) identity from one religious group or party to a different one. This public change may *or may not* involve an inward (heart) transformation. Jesus (consistent with God’s promises in Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26) focused on transformation of hearts, and indispensable love for God and others (Matt. 22:37, 39). His only recorded use of a word that could be translated as “convert” (in Matthew 23:15) was strongly negative. He placed little value on religious externals (Matt. 23:5-7, 25-28) and called people rather to heartfelt discipleship in following him and the ways of his kingdom.

It wasn't a program with Lesson 1, Lesson 2, and so on, until the student finishes the last lesson, "And now you're a disciple!" Discipleship is a lifelong commitment—learning to follow Jesus every day. That's the process: learning from the Scripture and obeying his will in everyday life, by the power of his Spirit.

When we introduce people to Jesus, they begin a journey of discipleship which involves making *more* disciples. It includes prayer, caring for others' needs, finding those who are open (persons of peace), starting Discovery Bible Studies, gathering believers into groups, developing leaders, and catalyzing continuation of the process. We keep on encouraging that kind of multiplication. When successful, this process yields disciples who repeat the same process with others. Sadly, many churches have missed this vital element and focus instead on increasing church membership. In place of making disciples, they merely teach new believers their church history, their position on tithes and offerings, the church constitution, and benefits of being an official church member. Many today are more afraid of breaking man-made traditions than they are of sin. Yet God's word will stand as his pattern throughout this age until the last day.

BAPTIZE THEM

Baptism is an outward sign of inner regeneration. The Early Church considered it a crucial first step of obedience, evidencing saving faith. Today, many argue about the mode of baptism or the minimum age for baptism. What should matter is the meaning the baptized individual attributes to the rite, as described in Romans 6:3-13. Some also dispute who has the mandate to baptize. Yet we don't see this showing up as a problem in Scripture. Jesus did not specify that only church leaders should have the authority to baptize. He instructed all who obey his command of disciple-making, to go and to baptize disciples in his name. Therefore, it seems clear to me that the right and responsibility to baptize was given to all disciples. The Early Church did not have ordained ministers or church structures as we have today. They baptized those who came to faith in Christ, as they went about spreading the gospel and making disciples. Therefore, in a Disciple Making Movement, any disciple of Christ can baptize a new believer.

TEACH THEM TO OBEY

We are to teach new disciples to obey the Lord. Having head knowledge and information about Christ does not guarantee transformation. Even memorizing Scripture may not transform a person. Transformation comes through obedience to God's word. As we obey all Christ has commanded in the Scriptures, we become progressively transformed into his likeness and mature—as disciples who make and multiply disciples.

BEING A DISCIPLE AND MAKING DISCIPLES

When Jesus called his first two disciples, Simon Peter and Andrew, his invitation simultaneously summed up the essence of both being a disciple and making disciples. He said, "*Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people*" (Matt. 4:19). Near the end of his earthly ministry (John 15:1-16), he gave his 12 closest disciples a brief summary of the heart of a disciple's lifestyle:

- “*remain in me*”—intimacy
- “*bear fruit*”—stewardship
- “*much fruit*”—multiplication
- “*fruit that remains*”—sustainability

The lifestyle of an obedient disciple includes:

- Prayer
- Personal discovery of God's will in Scripture
- Fellowship with other believers
- Serving one's community
- Sharing one's faith with others

The lifestyle of *making* disciples includes:

- Intentionally engaging with lost people
- Finding and identifying persons of peace
- Discipling through discovery in Scripture

- Gathering disciples
- Multiplying disciples and groups

Jesus spent most of his ministry years doing life and ministry with 12 close disciples. He used a life-on-life discipleship process: They learned by watching what Jesus did and then going and doing the same things. They asked him questions, and he gave them personal correction as needed. They followed him everywhere and learned by experience to do what he did. He was so confident in this process that shortly before his departure from earthly life he declared: *“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father”* (John 14:12). Discipleship involves personal experience: being with Jesus, and lovingly following and obeying him as a lifestyle. *Making* disciples involves helping others to do that same thing. We want to see this happen, not just with individuals or with one generation of people, but in a Disciple Making *Movement*.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE MAKING MOVEMENT?

Disciple-making happens most effectively and widely when it takes place in the context of a Disciple Making Movement. We don’t aim for making a bunch of individual disciples here and there, striving alone to follow Jesus against the powerful tide of their family, friends, community, and tribe. Such discipleship is noble and sometimes required, but sometimes mistakenly chosen when a more effective and fruitful discipleship path is available. That path is a Disciple Making Movement, in which the gospel spreads through families and relational groups, with rapid multiplication of disciples bringing transformation not just to individual lives but also to groups and communities.

To be clear, I define a Disciple Making Movement as the rapid, multi-generational, self-replication of disciples, leaders, churches, and networks in a region or population segment that continues to multiply itself into a movement, until the whole world is reached and discipled for Jesus. A DMM occurs when the Spirit of God empowers teams of ordinary people to lovingly obey Jesus and rapidly multiply disciples who make disciples to at least the fourth generation, resulting in more than 100 simple churches.

I define a Disciple Making Movement as the rapid, multi-generational, self-replication of disciples, leaders, churches, and networks in a region or population segment that continues to multiply itself into a movement. A movement of multiplying disciples is a supernatural act of God. Only he can bring individuals and groups to saving faith in Christ, and only he can bring disciples to maturity and fruitful reproduction through his Spirit. Obedient disciples play an active role in the advance of a movement, but no human can control a movement or make it happen. Only God can supply the essential ingredients to make the harvest grow and multiply (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

CHARACTERISTICS OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

What does it look like to make disciples in the context of a Disciple Making Movement?

- not a method but a process
- fits with what we see Jesus doing in the Gospels, and what we see Paul and the Early Church practicing, in Acts and the Epistles
- focuses on making disciples, not converts
- focuses on a discovery process in Scripture to learn, obey, and share; not just teaching information and church doctrines
- key element is *obedience* to what God is saying through the Scriptures
- works through networks of relationships and families (*oikos*) as we see in the Book of Acts
- produces a Disciple Making *Movement* that continues making disciples until the whole world is reached
- is led by God, powered by the Holy Spirit through the obedience of his disciples
- is catalyzed (initiated) by outside leaders, who develop inside leaders to multiply and sustain the movement.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Are you willing and ready to make disciples, teaching them to obey and baptizing those who come to faith in Christ?
- What area(s) might the Lord want you to strengthen in your lifestyle as an obedient disciple?
- What area(s) might the Lord want you to strengthen in your lifestyle of *making* disciples?

THE DNA OF DMM

We always keep in mind: “What makes a movement a movement? What makes it multiply and become sustainable?” We categorize a movement into three phases: starting, multiplying, and sustaining. When we start something, we have to start it well. If it doesn’t have the right DNA at the beginning, it’s very difficult to infuse it later when we want it to multiply. If it has the right DNA at the beginning, it will multiply naturally. And if it has the right DNA, once it multiplies, it will become self-sustaining.

For example, by starting a movement with focusing on the person of peace (or a person introduced to us by the person of peace) as the first level of leadership, we’re already starting with the DNA of developing an inside leader. By the time we want to transition a group to become a church, we already have inside leaders we are developing. We don’t have to bring in an outside leader who has no prior relationship with the group. And as the group grows and matures, we continue identifying leaders, so the multiplication becomes sustainable. We discuss these elements of DNA as part of our training. Any movement we want to start, multiply, and sustain needs to have this DNA from the beginning. If anyone doesn’t start with movement DNA at the beginning, they won’t likely end up with a movement in the end.

Our core DNA elements for launching a movement are these:

- Prayer
- Dependency on the Holy Spirit
- Discovery of the Scriptures

- Ordinary people
- Obedience
- Replication
- Coaching the process
- Leadership development
- Constantly engaging with the lost

We incorporate these core DNA elements into the disciple-making journey, as foundations for multiplication and maturing of disciples, churches, and leaders. We will describe the disciple-making journey more fully in Chapter 20. But first, we want to comment on some common obstacles to disciple-making.

COMMON OBSTACLES TO DISCIPLE-MAKING

Many who could obey the disciple-making command are hindered by misconceptions such as these.

It's not my job

When the church presents disciple-making as a professional job, members feel that they personally don't have the skills needed to do it. They assume that only pastors, evangelists, or a select few have that mandate and responsibility. However, Jesus didn't specify any limitations when he told his followers: "Go . . . make disciples." Ever since Pentecost, he has freely poured out his Spirit on *all* believers. All who have been justified by faith and have submitted to his lordship are included in that command.

I'm not gifted at this

On the other hand, some feel inadequate and overwhelmed, wrongly thinking that evangelism and disciple-making depends on their human efforts and outreach strategies. They don't understand that it all depends on God's Spirit. He is the one who draws people to Christ. Our job is to present the gospel, share what we've learned from the Scriptures, and let him do the rest. Jesus said, "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day*" (John 6:44).

We have no church

Another obstacle is misunderstanding the biblical meaning of church. Many think of church as a building with systems and programs rather than as an assembly of believers. Where this does not exist nearby (as in the case among many unreached groups), some people think they don't have a church, and have no way to establish one.

Our church already has a discipleship class

Strange as it sounds, a "discipleship class" may hinder the actual development of disciples. A discipleship class usually aims, in a few weeks' time, to teach new believers basic Christian doctrines, and maybe some history of their church or denomination. When the class ends, "discipleship" is finished, with an expectation the believers will continue to attend worship services and perhaps some other church activities. An intimate, daily walk with Christ is considered optional. Transformational daily-life patterns, based on ongoing study of and obedience to Scripture, are also viewed as optional rather than as the essence of following Jesus. The idea of active, whole-life, ongoing discipleship can sound threatening to those who have already completed a discipleship class and now feel content to just enjoy the services offered by their church.

I am not qualified

Many Christians think they need a special class or Bible school education, or a certification letter from their church leadership to prove that they can make disciples. Or they think it's a pastor's job. We were certified by Christ when he said, "Go!" Awaiting further qualifications creates a major obstacle to sharing the gospel.

Imported Christian culture

Some common practices in Christian culture also create a barrier to disciple-making. These are not bad practices, but patterns that do not apply well to everyone. For example, certain styles of music will fit well for one group, but feel strange or distracting or foreign for others. Various kinds of clothes will feel appropriate for one group, but inappropriate, strange, or even offensive to others. Even things like seating patterns in worship can become a major obstacle to those from other

religious backgrounds. As a result, many Unreached People Groups view Christianity as a cultural threat.

Nowhere in Scripture did Jesus command people to change to a different culture in order to follow him. The gospel has power to impact and transform every culture. As disciples learn and obey the Scriptures, they progressively recognize evil elements of their culture that must be rejected, and other elements that can be redeemed.

In a Disciple Making Movement, people have freedom to discover how to express their obedience, as best they understand it from Scripture. Rather than prescribing applications for them, we indigenize the gospel, as groups of believers contextualize for themselves. Disciples are presented with the gospel, allowed to discover its truth, and asked, “How will you obey? How will you apply this in your cultural context?” When anyone looks at the Scriptures, understanding the *meaning* of the text is just a beginning. The most essential question is: “How will I obey what God is saying here?” The discovery approach encourages people to ask application questions and accountability questions: “What are you learning? How will you obey? How will you share what you’re learning?” This develops healthy habits of discovery, learning, obedience, and sharing. These are very important. Each person allows God to speak directly to them through engaging with the Scripture.

We have to reproduce our church model

Another obstacle is attempting to apply minimally reproductive church models such as the megachurch, which cannot be reproduced outside urban areas. Also, the patterns of church used in a predominantly Christian community will not likely work well to reach those in a community following a different faith. Thus, we need flexibility in our styles of worship, within the parameters found in the Bible. If Scripture sets the standard of worship, syncretism will not creep in.

Many people argue: “Some of these leaders don’t have enough training, so people will have syncretistic beliefs or mix together Scripture and their traditional religions or traditional beliefs.” But in the discovery approach, most of what people learn comes straight from the Bible; Scripture is at the center. We allow God to speak through his word,

rather than bringing an expert to give a teaching. (And sometimes those “experts” bring a teaching that doesn’t even relate to the Scriptures.) Discovery is not teaching, in the sense of passing on information or knowledge or ideas from one person to another. People listen to the Bible and interact with it, and the Holy Spirit opens people’s eyes to understand and apply God’s word. Wrong teaching is more likely to happen when you bring in an expert to start telling people his or her interpretations,

Jesus didn’t specify any limitations when he told his followers: “Go . . . make disciples.” Ever since Pentecost, he has freely poured out his Spirit on all believers. All who have been justified by faith and have submitted to his lordship are included in that command.

but people aren’t allowed to ask questions or grapple with Scripture for themselves. In the discovery approach, if people want to know more about a subject, we can give them more Bible verses to study. Syncretism comes in when people mix in the Bible *plus* something else. To avoid that, we stick close to the Scripture and keep people in the word.

In the discovery process, we start from what people know and move to what they don’t know. For those whose religious background (any theistic religion) includes the concept of creation by God, we start with that, and move toward Christ. Because if we start with Christ, they may struggle with all kinds of questions about the person of Christ (based on teaching they’ve heard in another faith). Why start with something they struggle with? We start

with something that’s already somewhat familiar to them, and lead them, step by step, to a more biblical understanding of God, sin, salvation, and so on. Then, by the time we get to the New Testament and the life of Christ, they’ve already learned a lot. And in the process, we have prayed with them and talked with them. If there are some areas they struggle with, we look for specific Scriptures that can address those issues.

I'm not a big fan of using arguments from someone else's holy book. If you start with that, you're already acting as if that book has some authority. If someone is not ready to do Discovery study in the Bible, I recommend waiting. The goal is not to convert someone. If the goal were conversion, we would do things differently than if the goal is to make disciples. That's why in DMM, we disciple people toward commitment. We don't try to convert people and then try to disciple them. If people keep studying the Scripture and we let them discover God's truth, they will come to a point where they make the decision to give their full allegiance to Jesus. And by the time they make that decision, they already have been discipled for a long time. That's why I say that disciple-making is a process, whereas conversion is an event. Sometimes people don't even know when they were converted, because conversion is the language of religion (changing from one religion to a different religion), while they were focused on a growing *relationship* with God, through his word. I don't want to convert people. I want to introduce them to Jesus, so they learn to be his followers.

As I've already mentioned, for people like myself from a Muslim background, the idea of becoming a Christian can be a stumbling block if they've seen people who call themselves Christians doing all kinds of immoral and evil things. They say, "I don't want to become Christian. I don't want to become that kind of person." Sticking closer to biblical language makes it easier for those from another religious background to consider the way of Jesus. For example, we can say, "We are followers of Isa al-Masih (Jesus the Messiah)," and describe what it means to follow Jesus.

In the book of Acts, we see just two verses describing the disciples as "Christians," and in both cases, it was someone else's choice of words.³⁸ But we see hundreds of times where they were called *disciples*, including occasions when they were describing themselves. And many times in Acts they were called "followers of the Way." So, if our lives look like Christ, I don't have a problem with us being called Christians. But I challenge

³⁸ In 1 Peter 4:16, Peter himself chooses to use the word.

people if it sounds like they're thinking or trying to minister according to the categories of just conversion from one religion to another. Jesus never said, "Come and become a Christian." He said, "Come and follow me."

Some view the world as the arena for a contest between religions—to see who can get the most people to join their side. They think in terms of converts and numbers and trophies. But Jesus is looking for *transformed lives*—people who follow him and his ways, day by day.

As people focused on religious works come to discover God, starting with key stories in the Old Testament, they are often struck by the grace and graciousness of God—his amazing love. They've not learned or heard about or experienced that kind of concrete and specific divine love in everyday life. When they realize that he's a God of grace, and discover his love, what opens their mind is, "The God of the Bible is so loving and so gracious, so forgiving!" They've heard the *words* before—that God is gracious and forgiving. But they've never seen or experienced it. They believe their sins are recorded and weighed on a scale. So this discovery brings a radical change in their eschatology—their understanding of what will happen after they die.

Some of the Scriptures I share most often with people from that background are passages about God's love. That often makes a huge impact, because they've never heard that before. It's all there, in God's creation of a good world and his making a way out for Adam and Eve after their sin. Then so many stories in the Old Testament show that line of redemption by God's grace—from Creation to Christ.

Complicated strategy

Disciple-making can be as easy as the Samaritan woman running back to her village to share about meeting Jesus, the man who told her all she had ever done. However, some churches have such highly structured and

detailed methodologies that ordinary church members find it too hard to make disciples.

A Disciple Making Movement keeps the process as simple as possible. We want it to be something that can be done by everyone, at every level. If it's not simple, it's not transferrable. And if something can't be easily transferred, it can't create generations; it can't result in a movement. The goal is not simplicity just for its own sake. The goal is for discipleship to be simple enough to be *understandable, do-able, and transferrable* for a village woman to replicate among an Unreached People Group. We don't want her to be dependent on me, or dependent on learning to read and write. The process needs to happen without my direct involvement, and it's always best when it happens that way. That's how it multiplies to many generations and becomes sustainable.

Some people look down their noses at simplicity. They think complicated is much better because only a few special people will understand the depth of it. That's not our goal. We want something that will bring as many people as possible into discipleship and a saving relationship with the living God. We believe the process is powered by the Holy Spirit. In obedience, we willingly go out to the unreached, trusting the Holy Spirit to guide, lead, and work through our process. Those who become disciples of Christ then discern how to express their faith in their own language and their own cultural context.

Insufficient prayer

Our drive to make disciples should come out of our engagement with God. The man Jesus Christ, our disciple-making model, prayed all the time. He prayed before he began his ministry, he prayed throughout his ministry, he prayed before he went to the cross, and while dying on the cross. He prayed after rising from the dead and continues praying for us in the presence of our Father in heaven. His life was and is a life of prayer and service in obedience to the Father. We, too, need this kind of prayerful intimacy with and dependence on God the Father, as we set out to make disciples for him.

Resistance to change

One huge obstacle is resistance to change. The prevailing paradigm common in many churches makes church leaders and members see life and ministry through the lens of an organization. Anything that does not fit the organizational paradigm feels like a threat to the church system. Making reproducing disciples requires a paradigm shift. That can take some time and entails openness to embrace a different concept and strategy.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- What obstacles to evangelism and disciple-making stand in your way?
- Will you ask the Lord what he wants you to do about those obstacles?

REACHING TWO FAITHS AND TWO CONTINENTS

JAMES* first got involved with Disciple Making Movements after attending a Lifeway Catalyst Camp in 2018. This is his story.

For a year before the Catalyst Camp, I had been trying to find a better way of doing church. I was fed up with the traditional way. I wanted to reach out without getting stuck in traditional religious activities. Then I heard of DMM, as an approach bearing fruit in various parts of East Africa. I shared my desires with an American friend who had been helping us with a project, and he got some books and sent me a link to a video series entitled “Engage Africa.” I watched those videos and felt: “This is what I’m looking for!”

With his help, I managed to come to a DMM Catalyst Camp for the first time. We heard stories of God doing amazing things, and I wondered, “Are these stories really true?” That began a change in my perspective. I knew I wanted something different. At the end of that Catalyst Camp, the Lord opened opportunities for me to see how I could use this approach to make disciples.

BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT

When I got back home, I had a lot of ideas, but I didn’t know where to start. So, the Lord showed me. Out of the blue, I got a call from the chief of the community where I live. He said, “I’d like to talk to you, because I consider you one of the wise men in this community. I want you to help me with a number of things.” I visited him and we talked about his leadership and various issues. Then toward the end of the time he asked, “How can I live as a godly person, like you do at your school?”

That brought a sudden shift in my mind. I thought, “Oh, maybe this is my person of peace!” He gave me an opportunity to share with him what I believe, and that opened access to all the chiefs under him. We started having a Discovery Bible Study (DBS) for them, which was great, because people here respect the chiefs; they listen to whatever they say.

One day, when we had just finished the DBS with the chiefs, one arrived late, after everyone had shared what they planned to do in

response to the DBS. The man who had come late asked, “What have you guys done today?”

One of the chiefs told him, “We’re going to do some things together,” but didn’t tell him what they were going to do.

So he kept asking other chiefs, one after another. But they wouldn’t tell him what we had discussed. Finally, the last chief told him, “Just buy yourself a Bible and read the Gospel of John to see what Jesus said.” The latecomer held to a different faith, had never been to a church, and had never read the Bible. Now, this other chief told him to buy himself a Bible and read it.

So he bought a small New Testament and began reading the Gospel of John. He found it very interesting, as he had never read those stories before. At that time, he worked as a guard at some expatriates’ business. They didn’t allow him to go into the house or eat inside the gate; he just guarded the gate. While doing that, he read from the New Testament every day. His employers (who were Hindus) went in and out of the gate every day, and began to notice that he seemed like a different person. He was happy and more faithful in his work, and he was reading this small book.

After a while, they asked, “Why are you so happy and so faithful?” He started sharing with them the stories he was reading (though he was still not a Christian). After that, whenever they went out, they would ask, “Are you still reading your book? Where are you in it now?” These Hindus inspired him to keep reading, so he could tell them more stories. That became some of the fruit of my first encounter with DMM.

After three months, a group of the Hindus got baptized, and after a while, some of them felt the Lord calling them to go back to their home country, because they wanted to live their life for Christ and share with their own people. More of that story can be found in the article “Disciple Making Movement Jumps to Another Continent,” by Ken Morris.³⁹

39 *Mission Frontiers*, Jan/Feb 2023, 20-22 (<http://tinyurl.com/44kw3de5>).

MULTIPLICATION IN CONTEXT

The chief introduced me to the other men in his DBS, and we started another DBS in their place of worship, focusing on the goodness of God. That group started another which led to my meeting one of the religious leaders in our country.

We had a long talk, and he said, “I want to hear more from you.” He made himself available to meet, and after three or four months, he revealed that he had cancer. He knew he was going to die, and he didn’t feel sure he was on the right spiritual path. So I did Bible studies with him at his house (just the two of us), and he gave his life to Christ. Then he introduced me to his brothers, his wife, and his children—a whole family network.

The following year, the chief passed away, but that led to significant encounters with people of that faith. At this point, we have about 14 churches in six generations (that I’m aware of) among them. I know more groups are forming, and by the end of this year, we might be up to 40 or 50, as the existing groups multiply. The multiplication slowed down during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we had many Discovery Bible Studies begin, because churches and other places of worship closed up, and the only groups still meeting were DBS groups.

We usually start a DBS with stories from creation and gradually move toward revelation of Christ. But we don’t always follow all the texts in the order we prefer to do it. People have many questions, so we’ll often branch off to address issues they are wrestling with, to meet their needs. We consider it more important to meet their needs than to stick with our pattern and satisfy our program.

Some groups take just a short time to come to the point where they understand salvation by grace through faith. Other groups take a long time. It depends on the people involved and their motives. Most people from another faith, who come to an understanding of salvation by grace, start to understand it when they do a DBS about Abraham. They know some of his story. They have memorized the parts of their book that tell about him, and can recite it as written in their book. But when they read for themselves the story as it is written in Genesis, it has an impact. It makes them ask questions that their background can’t answer. They

realize that the Bible's story of Isaac and Ishmael differs from the way they have heard it. And what the Bible says makes more sense to them.

That starts to ignite a feeling of "Who are we? What are we following?" I also discovered that when leaders of that faith talk to a group, they don't just quote their holy book and official teachings. They mix in traditions and elements of the culture. So people think: "This religion is essential to my tribe." When they realize that membership in their tribe doesn't mean they have to follow the religion into which they were born, they start understanding things in a new light. They see possibilities they have never seen before.

Different people come to this realization at different levels. DBS plays an integral role in bringing this realization. If biblical teaching happens in a way that people don't *discover* God's truth, it creates just another religion. But when they discover for themselves, they are transformed. When they ask questions, we don't only give them answers. We help them discover God's truth for themselves, and it changes their lives.

Some of the non-Christians in our country have some idea of Jesus, because they have seen the Jesus Film. The film shows grace, but they hate it because it portrays something contrary to their beliefs. When we start from creation and move toward Christ, they begin learning who Jesus is in that context, more than they had previously understood. When we invite them to, "See for yourselves," they begin to discover God's grace, even before they come to Christ. The Bible shows the connection between Jesus and grace, which makes the Bible more alive than their book. The Old Testament portrays God's grace, so they start to learn about grace little by little, and they come to desire it. Then, when they discover it in Jesus, it all makes sense.

The questions we ask in DBS include: "What have you learned? What are you going to do with what you have learned? Who are you going to share this with?" We also include accountability, asking: "Who did you share with? And what was their response?" That active personal involvement sets a different tone from what they used to do. In this way, they start seeing the Bible as a living book, not a set of laws or do's and don'ts. They realize that salvation comes through their faith response to God's grace in Christ. They start to think differently, which makes it

simple for them to become evangelists without realizing it, and become disciple-makers without great effort.

When they come to a DBS studying the text where Jesus says, “Go and make disciples,” it’s like they see a summary of their previous discoveries. They just didn’t know where the story was headed. They realize: “Making disciples is the gospel moving through me. Why don’t other religious leaders discover that for themselves? If preaching the gospel is what we’re doing now, why don’t traditional church pastors do this?”

I’ve concluded that a lot depends on how we approach people. We need to respect their beliefs and allow them to let go of old things as they discover the new way in God’s word. We don’t want people just switching from one religion to another. I’ve made those mistakes in the past, and now we do something different. The DNA of DMM goes beyond that approach to bring real change in people’s hearts and lives.

FACING CHALLENGES

At one time in the past, I wanted to have a lot of groups, so I made the mistake of creating wrong expectations. I became a kind of Bible encyclopedia for the believers. If they had questions, I made the mistake of answering them. When we answer all their questions, they go back to their previous religious leaders, who may argue against everything we said. But when they discover God’s truth for themselves, it’s harder for someone to talk them out of it. We can best correct previous error by helping them discover the basics from the Bible. We look at God’s word with them and ask, “What do you learn from this? What does this say to you?” That approach is very simple and doesn’t require a lot of education to apply and become strong in the Lord. I call DBS the “engine” of DMM.

We work mainly among three religious groups: 1) the majority faith in our country, to whom God has graciously given us very good access, 2) some Hindus, and 3) some from African Traditional Religion. Our country also has many nominal Christians. They go to church and believe in the Bible, but they also believe in witchcraft. We’ve tried to focus mainly on the unreached, but recently discovered that we can’t leave the denominational churches behind. So we also reach out to church leaders,

which is not always easy. They have a lot of traditions and patterns, and often judge things according to those traditions.

Syncretism (such as mixing witchcraft with other religious practices and beliefs) happens subtly, but the gospel breaks through it. The majority faith has patterns that affect every part of life: how you eat, dress, wash, and go to the toilet. Some people of that faith will say “Jesus is Lord,” but still live their lives according to their old patterns. That’s a big problem. To break that, we have discussions in which they can express their ideas and their worries in interaction with God’s word.

HOW THE GOSPEL IS SPREADING AMONG THE MAJORITY

The main group we’re reaching has a great gift for sharing stories, so we make use of that talent. They tell people part of a story, then leave them hanging so they become very curious to find out how the story ends. Then they bring them to a DBS to hear the whole story, and more stories like it. I make it clear that the stories we share are not just made-up stories, they are part of God’s story from the Bible. For those who can read, the stories are written there. For those who can’t read, we provide audio Bibles.

Most people involved in a DBS initially continue their previous religious practices, and gradually drop some of those as they learn more. If they start slowly and make an informed decision at every step, they tend to grow very well toward mature faith. Some reach the point of understanding the truth, then suddenly stop all their previous religious practices all at once. Most of those who make that immediate break don’t grow very far; they tend to backslide. They end up cutting themselves off from the community—from all social activities and friends. They become a lonely island relationally and experience serious persecution—being beaten or even killed—because they took a large and sudden step. Even though we have lost some believers that way, we have reached thousands from that community. And sometimes what looks like someone made a mistake ends up working to the advantage of reaching more people.

For example, the first person I met in one area gave his life to Christ. He died as a believer in Christ but was buried according to the pattern of his previous faith, even though his family knew he had changed. His brother, who was a well-known religious leader in that region, came to

saving faith, then went back home and told his friends, “I have changed; I’m a believer in Christ now.” He gathered his former disciples, went to a village, and baptized them. That brought a lot of attention, and they got ambushed. Some of them were killed on the spot, some died in the hospital, and one died later from his beating. That was one of my saddest experiences. But those who survived the attack now have become the leaders of that movement. And the men who ambushed them have come to faith in Christ and become part of the movement.

The ambush and killings created fear, which seemed it would stop the advance of the gospel. But that fear gave a boost to what has now become a DMM, because people wanted to know: “Why did those people accept a faith they were willing to die for? How did they come to follow that faith?” In this way, God started to touch more people and bring them to faith.

A while back, I was traveling by car in that area, and some radicals had put a device in the engine of the car, set to explode when the car had driven no more than 10 kilometers (six miles). They followed us at a distance, waiting for the car to explode. We drove six miles, then 12 miles, then 60 miles, and they kept following us, but nothing happened. Then suddenly, the engine seized up and the car just stopped. When we opened the hood, we saw that the pistons had melted! I’m not a mechanic, and we had no idea what to do next. The men in the car that had been following us came up to see what had happened, and they offered to help. As they were helping, one of them told me, “We have done this to people before, the car always explodes, and nobody knows what happened; they just think it must have been some kind of malfunction. You are the first people to survive this. God has saved you.”

We started talking further, and I found one of them open to the gospel. After a time, he accepted Christ, and he’s now one of the leaders in the movement, which has reached a lot of leaders from that faith background. I haven’t met many of those leaders, but he gives me updates on people

Most people involved in a DBS initially continue their previous religious practices, and gradually drop some of those as they learn more.

coming to faith. On one occasion, he arranged for me to meet some of them, and I had the privilege of hearing their testimonies first-hand. They told me about all they had previously done to attack believers and how God had touched their souls. Today, God is doing amazing work among that people group.

As leaders from that background come to faith, they usually do some DBS to understand the gospel and the meaning of faith before they get baptized. We try to make sure they have adequate teaching first, so they understand what it means. We believe they should be baptized when *they* decide they are ready to be baptized. They don't need a lot of prior lessons, but they need to understand the impact of it. Most of the people I personally have baptized have done three or four DBS's then started asking: "How can I show that I'm committed to what you've been teaching me?"

I tell them, "Jesus told us the way to show what he has done in your life: for you to symbolically get buried with him and resurrected with him. That's the meaning of baptism: to be buried with Christ and be resurrected as a new person. That speaks powerfully—both to you and to other people." I point them to the relevant Scriptures and encourage them to study those Scriptures for themselves. In this way, we help them understand, and they weigh the meaning and the implications.

After they discover what the New Testament says about baptism, most people say "I'm ready." In some cases, I've had people confess to me all kinds of bad things they've done, and say, "When I come up out of the water, I want to be rid of all those forever." Of course, some people from other faith backgrounds struggle with the idea of baptism, or refuse to get baptized. We don't baptize anyone who's not really ready.

In DMM, sometimes the hard part is not learning new things; it's unlearning old things. When people begin following Christ, that doesn't mean they leave all their social circles. We encourage them to act very wisely in the way they transition from their former practices. People will not attack a person because they believe in Christ. But some people get attacked because they stopped doing the religious practices they used to do. So I encourage people to transition their outward practices gradually.

I have two religious leaders who still teach in their previous settings, even while I'm doing Bible studies with them. Their faith in Christ shapes

what they teach, but they've not yet had a negative reaction from their community. One religious leader came to faith and began including biblical truth in his teaching. People found it so interesting that attendance at his place of worship started to increase. He taught biblical principles to the people, without mentioning the Bible.

Another leader in a similar situation mistakenly said during his sermon, "I have been reading the Bible. This book is more than what you think it is. Read it with understanding and you will find life in it." He was quickly taken before a religious council and fired from his role, because he had made a very powerful statement that made a lot of people wonder what was written in the Bible. Some of them then started reading the Bible, so it wasn't a total loss. But he lost the potential to continue guiding them toward a clear understanding of the gospel and discipleship.

We tell people: "Be who you are in Christ. Let your light shine through transformed character, but don't rush to make obvious changes in your outward practices. In all things, keep your focus on Jesus." Some who have come to saving faith are viewed as still being part of their previous faith. But it doesn't take long for people to catch on, because the joy the disciples have in Christ cannot be hidden. We don't force new believers to all do things one certain way. Each person needs to follow Jesus and listen to God's Spirit to sort out the details of discipleship in their own context.

By God's grace, we have encouraged people from the majority faith that when they come to a DBS, they should not cut off their social networks. We encourage them to maintain their social connections, because it's *they* who have changed, not their friends. Just because they have met someone new through the DBS, we don't want them to substitute that relationship for their social networks. We want to empower them in the context of their relationships. We want to show them that their existing social networks are not just a field for multiplying disciples. They also are vehicles through which they can create around themselves a hedge of protection. When people understand that and begin to form a hedge of protection, they inform their contacts: "This is what I'm doing; I just want you to know. What do you think about it?"

Their contacts may not all want to know more, which is fine. But when they tell their close friends, those friends often become their guardians.

If someone begins planning something against them, their friends will come and tell them: “Be careful; something is stirring.” The hedge of protection doesn’t come from someone or somewhere far away. The disciples themselves create it if they don’t cut off their social networks.

WHEN THE DISCOVERY GROUP BECOMES A CHURCH

In our experience, a DBS often multiplies, resulting in four or five DBS’s from the first one. And if the DNA has been transferred well, those DBS’s also multiply. We encourage the leader of each DBS to be accountable both in their own DBS and in another DBS they have started. So each one has two places of accountability: where they facilitate and where they meet with friends in their first generation. What happens in the third generation does not connect directly with the first-generation person. But three or four DBS’s from the second generation (that a person has started) may meet together about once a month to share their experiences. We call that a “gathering.”

We avoid using the word “church,” because we don’t want to create denominational thinking. We mean a biblical *ekklēsia*, but we find it more helpful to just use the word “gathering.” During the gathering, the disciples learn from each other and discuss questions they have. Maybe they have something to celebrate or they’re experiencing persecution. As they learn from each other, issues start coming up, including some misunderstandings and desires. So mentors and indigenous leaders help them navigate these things.

We generally discourage them from building a special building—even a shelter—as a place for gathering. We encourage meeting in homes, because once a group puts up a shelter, people start asking questions that pull the group toward establishing an institutional church. We say, “The Bible teaches meeting in homes. Or you can meet under a tree.” Sometimes a group will change their meeting place, depending on the situation in the area. We give them that freedom to meet however best fits their context. It doesn’t have to match the patterns of the existing church. In most places, gatherings attract a mixed attendance: some not-yet-believers along with the disciples.

Sometimes a number of groups will get together for a “big gathering”—maybe once every few months. These meetings have clearly identified leaders. Based on our contact with the grassroots gathering leaders, we already have a sense of what issues people are facing and what kind of leadership training will be best to handle the shepherding needs. We also have an idea of what kinds of access ministries will likely be effective there and what kind of encouragement the believers need. We do our best to provide those things, as the Holy Spirit guides us.



A DIVERSE MINISTRY IN UGANDA

PETER SOZI HAS BEEN A LifeNet partner since 2004. This is his story.

I first heard about CPM in 2004, at a workshop in Sierra Leone. I was at a point in my life when I was asking a lot of questions. A friend who knew about that workshop invited me to join. I was blown away by the simplicity of the CPM concept.

I'd been moving out of one ministry and was supposed to be launching a new ministry, but I didn't know how. I was planning to do it the traditional way. Then, in that one week, I learned that I could go back home and plant a church with minimum resources—just going and trusting the Lord. That's exactly what I did. I had a congregation that had been meeting under a tree for about two years. When I got home, I asked them: "Is there a place nearby where there is no church?"

One young man said, "Pastor, there is a village not far from here with not a single church, but lots of people of another faith."

So I said, "Let's go."

We went one Saturday and started knocking on people's doors, talking to people, and looking for a person of peace. Sure enough, we found one. The person of peace said, "If you're coming to do God's work here, it's okay. Come. Start."

We discovered that one man in the village had been earnestly praying that something would happen. He used to walk many miles to go to church. We slowly began making disciples in this community and after a time, the group became a church. We also looked for ways we could bring transformation in this community: things that would meet a felt need and also provide us with relational access. We noted needs the community had: first, that they didn't have water. So we trusted the Lord and prayed, and God provided a well. We put the well at the chairman's place, and we said, "This is not for us, it's for the community." That gave us a lot of access.

We also realized they needed a school. Many of the children were not going to school. So we asked some of the disciples: "Who would be willing to help with a school?" And two girls offered themselves. So we

started a school—a free school. The head of the village was so blessed! Though he was of a different faith, he said, “These people have shown us the real gospel. I want to see all my grandchildren coming to this school.”

That’s how we started our work in Uganda. A few years later, we met Aila and he helped us move forward and relaunch the work there. We started work in other areas, and we’ve seen great things happen.

We were recently invited (with a kind of Macedonian call) to go to the S. tribe. Fortunately, their home is right next to one of the groups we already serve, so they are cousins.

Right now, we use access ministry to work—mostly in four districts of Karamoja. This is an unreached area—mainly because the people there had been so aggressive and used to kill missionaries. They killed the missionary who trained me when I was in college. He had been working with World Vision and Campus Crusade for Christ, and was gunned down. Nobody wanted to go to this area, because of the hostility of the people. It was a no-go area. But when we began to learn from Aila and to engage this area, we found a person of peace.

The person of peace was the bishop of the Anglican church. He told us, “I don’t care what denomination you belong to, as long as you will help me expand God’s kingdom in this region. We are so bad off. Our area really needs the gospel. It’s the gospel that will change the hearts of these men to stop cattle rustling and other crimes. Only the gospel can transform them. Please come alongside and help us.”

We joined him and began to engage. We started with prayer with his leadership team. He organized a retreat at a place on the border between Uganda and Kenya. We began to engage with the people there—teaching them about prayer as the basis for disciple-making. We spent a few days with them, came back, and began to re-engage—to go to all those new villages and help them start church-planting. This continued until we reached a point where we said, “We can’t spread out all over. Let’s focus on a few villages, so they can reach out to others.” Our current strategy

is using access ministry to help them start schools because the illiteracy rate in this sub-region is about 84%.

We invite local people, especially students who have dropped out, to come and offer themselves to teach these kids. Our role is to help raise up disciples who disciple others. In the communities where we've started these schools, we have leaders we've worked with and raised up. And praise God, we now have a number of leaders who were formerly cattle rustlers who have been transformed. We also have former witch doctors who have been transformed. These people are now part of the team discipling others in various villages. It's a wonderful thing to see how the Lord has worked over the years.

EXAMPLES OF RESPONSIVENESS

Last December, we had more than 10 church plants in just one month. Since then, we've committed six months of this year to training leaders to continue the work in those villages where we had the church plants. We also plan to go back in August (two months from now) to try to train others to reach out to communities. We've heard the Macedonian call. People in the northern part of that area are calling and saying they know what we're doing. They're asking, "Please, would you come and help us ignite that Disciple Making Movement in our area? We also are very bad off."

In this area, we tend to get about 90% positive response; the men are happy to sit with us and listen to what we share. We're using a story-telling strategy for normal disciple-making, because the vast majority of these people can't read. So we give them audio Bibles, using those tools to disciple them. They are not listed as an unreached people, but I can tell you they're very unreached. If you go there and look at their level of engagement, it's very little—just a drop in the bucket. But the ministry there has potential to expand and explode, if we can have more people teaching. That's what we're trying to do: focus on a few areas but also raise up leaders who can go to other areas.

A while later, we began to engage with a different tribe, in the northwestern part of Uganda. The vast majority of the people there—94%—follow a different faith, and they intend to keep it that way. At the district leadership level, they will not allow anyone to be headmaster of

a school, if they don't follow that faith. In the past, they would beat up missionaries who tried to go there. However, this has calmed down in recent years. Now there are opportunities, and God is working in the midst of that people group.

This arid region also has more than 250,000 Sudanese refugees, and God is giving us an opportunity there. He brought some key people to a recent training we had. One of the refugees who attended the training was a leader in his denomination. He said, "Can you imagine? God brought me hundreds of miles from my home, becoming a refugee, to teach me." He was an important leader, who used to traverse the southern part of Sudan. He said, "I was enjoying all the pomp, but I wasn't making disciples. I just enjoyed being a bishop, but without expanding God's kingdom. I now see that God has brought me here to teach me what I needed to have done 20 years ago." We see this as an opportunity for us to reach the refugees who have been brought to the area.

Three years ago, I was invited by another organization to do DMM in two districts. This group already had been drilling wells and teaching people hygiene and sanitation, and they invited us to come alongside to do disciple-making. We saw movements being launched in those areas, and today they testify of the great transformation that has happened in their villages. We had many people from another faith come to Christ, including many leaders. We also had witch doctors come to faith; several are now part of the movement. The basic thing is, we invite people to learn about God. We start engaging people with God's word and great things happen.

To give you an example, a man named Fred was recognized by the community as one of the chief witch doctors. And he was the only one in the community who knew how to read. When we introduced DMM and asked who would be able to read the Scripture, he was invited to read the passage. Among the questions we ask in a DBS is, "Is God speaking to you? How are you going to obey? Who are you going to share this with?" Through those questions, Fred was pricked to the heart. Just two or three weeks into the DBS, he decided he needed to give his life to Jesus. And he was not the only one. Soon, his daughter, who lived at home, gave her life to Jesus. The disciple-maker baptized Fred, and allowed Fred to

baptize his daughter. Fred took down the shrine in his home and started a DBS, which later became a church. Soon, the village was transformed. We continue to engage with them. A movement is happening there, and we are hearing lots of testimonies.

We made an ongoing arrangement with another organization. When they were going to dig a well, we would have our disciple-makers be there and engage in conversations. They would ask, “Can we begin a time for people to discover more about God?” And people were open, very receptive. People from a different faith would give us an audience because they would say, “It was the Christians who dug this well.” This allowed us to engage them. We saw hundreds of groups started in that area, mostly among people from another faith. We’ve seen great transformation and another stream of movement in that area.

In yet another district, we hear the disciples saying, “Now we’re going to reach out to the next district.” People are going farther and farther to share the gospel; it is not stopping. People hear what’s happening in one place, and they send an invitation: “Can you come and do the same in our community?”

REACHING ORAL LEARNERS

To do outreach in the areas where people are mostly oral learners, I’ve been getting donations of audio Bibles. There is no written Bible yet in the language of the A. tribe, but God has been gracious. I have a picture of a leader from another faith holding and treasuring a small audio Bible. He’s so excited that he can get to hear about God through that audio of the New Testament in his own language.

In another area (among other tribes), I’m trying to organize distribution of audio Bibles, but we’ve been teaching them via storytelling, which is very effective. We have many people who are not educated. So our disciple-makers train them in storytelling, which is very, very effective. For the A. tribe, we are trying to translate another tool we have received, called “40 Days with Jesus.” It’s basically like DBS, but in audio format.

We’ve gotten a team from that tribe to help us translate. So far, we’ve done about 12 of the 40 days. We want to put them on a micro SD chip and give them to people, to put in their phones, so they can have these

special times of learning God's word. "40 Days with Jesus" includes questions like, "What do you learn from this? How are you going to change your behavior, if God was speaking to you?" We intend to use these tools to help in discipling the believers in this tribe, which will be our focus for the remainder of this year.

As we make plans to go to the A. tribe, we want to ignite gospel fires in a large town nearby as a base. If we can engage some disciples from there, we can equip missionaries to go to the A. people. One of our colleagues there has told me he has many people there who would be willing to go. So we are going to organize trainings for them and begin to see how we can facilitate them to go and become missionaries among the A.

We were recently invited (with a kind of Macedonian call) to go to the S. tribe. Fortunately, their home is right next to one of the groups we already serve, so they are cousins. Their languages are quite similar. We did a DMM training among them two months ago and the reception was very, very positive. The attendees had not heard about this simple strategy before. Some of those in the training committed themselves to get more training and go as missionaries to a nearby tribe.

FROM DBS TO CHURCH

When we begin a DBS with a group from another faith, we begin with the creation story. It's amazing what happens when people discover what God says about creation. Their book doesn't tell about creation, so it becomes an item of fascination. They are not resistant to hearing that "This is how God created the earth." So we do Discovery studies from Creation to Christ as a foundation.

When a Discovery group reaches the point where many of the attendees have become believers, we help them discover the functions that make a church a church. We are very strict on encouraging them to do their own baptisms. The disciple-makers and coordinators all know that. We were able to attend one baptism of more than 100 people. But we were adamant: The disciple-maker baptizes his disciple, and the disciple baptizes his disciples, and so on through the generations of reproducing disciples. In that way, we maintain clarity: Who is my discipler? Not the head, or a coordinator, or something like that. After they begin to baptize

(which we try to encourage as an act of obedience), they begin to break bread (the Lord's Supper).

Of course, in some of our cultures, particularly in some areas with traditional churches, a certain concept of church is already ingrained in people's minds. They think, "Now that we're believers, we need to have a church building," and things like that. But we keep insisting that church is not a matter of having a building. And we are not going to build anybody's building. But we don't control people or tell them what they can or can't do.

We have some young men in one place who are very passionate—so in love with Jesus. They have mobilized themselves to take action. They have burnt bricks, and are building their own church building in that location. They have great favor with the people in the community. They say, "You know, those boys, and what they used to be like, but now they're completely transformed. They're doing good things that we can see, that show they have changed. Their behavior has been transformed." They have great support from the community. We are trying to encourage them to focus not just on the building project but also on how they can multiply disciples.

PASSING ON THE DNA

To pass on the DNA through the generations, we do a lot of training when we start out in an area. We know that if they don't maintain the DNA, multiplication won't happen. To maintain it, we look at certain things. First, have they found a person of peace? Is this person a real person of peace?

Second, are they maintaining the DNA of the DBS? Or are they preaching? We remind ourselves again and again: It's not about preaching. If you preach, you're going to kill it; it will never become a movement. Doing a refresher training has helped maintain the DNA: no preaching; allow people to discover. There is a great benefit when people discover God's truth for themselves. When people from another faith participate in a Discovery group meeting, they're often interested in coming back.

Once, a witch doctor attended a Discovery group that was studying the prodigal son, and he said, “You know what? I’ve discovered that I am the prodigal son. I need to come back to God.” Nobody had tried to tell him an application; they were just discussing the story. So we say, “Keep people discovering. Let them know it’s God who is speaking to them. That’s the DNA of the DBS.”

Our third DNA question: “Who are you going to share with? Can another Discovery group be started? This small group should not be content with just staying the way it is.” That has helped us in the multiplication.

The greatest number of generations we know of in any location is six. But actually, we need to go back and track more thoroughly. We have tracked to a certain level, but we don’t know what groups have started in other districts. We’ve raised up more than 300 leaders, so we need to check back and track their generations.

STRUCTURE FOR OVERSIGHT AND TRAINING

Our structure is arranged geographically. We have three coordinators. Reporting to them are district leaders, who are responsible for sub-counties in their district. Reporting to them are those in charge of a sub-county. Then we have those who oversee the parishes and then the village leaders. The leaders do their own localized training at all the different levels, so the training is also multiplied.

For oral learners, training is done mainly through stories. We share stories from the Bible that we want them to memorize, then we have them memorize them, and we show them how to share the stories and ask the relevant questions. We especially encourage that for oral learners, but in all the areas where we work, people appreciate oral communication.

IMPACTING PEOPLE FROM ANOTHER FAITH

In the process of discovery, people from another faith discover God’s grace in Scripture. They begin to realize that salvation is not all about what they’re doing. Attempts at good works cannot please God. He shows his love to sinful people. We can’t work to win his favor. We encourage

them to believe in Christ, accept his sacrifice for sin, and acknowledge that we are saved only by God's grace.

People from other faiths don't know how to sing for God's glory. After they come to faith, we say, "It's up to you to develop singing if you want to." But initially, DBS's start without singing. We also tell DBS facilitators, especially when they're reaching people of another faith and witch doctors, "Don't put someone on the spot to lead prayer." Instead, simply ask, "What are you thankful to God for?" Then allow everyone in the group to say what they are thankful for. Next, ask what problems or challenges they are facing. People from a different religion love being prayed for. So ask them, "Is there something we can pray for in your life?"

One of our female leaders shared that she was in a group of women, and felt if she asked them to pray, they wouldn't. So she said, "I need you to pray for me." She then presented her need and allowed the ladies to feel compassion for her. Then they began to pray for her. In that way, she helped them appreciate that they, too, could pray.

In our contexts, 90% of the witch doctors profess another faith. As they come to faith in Christ, they reach a point where they realize they need to get rid of their paraphernalia. As I described earlier with Fred, after the third week of DBS, his action step of obedience was to say, "I'm done with all that stuff! I'm really done with this witchcraft. I feel the power of God. I feel strong in Christ!" Then people in the village began to notice he had changed. A woman who was one of the witch doctors in another village became very ill. She was brought to Fred's village and she called for him. She said, "I heard that you have found a new faith?"

He said, "Yes."

She asked, "Will you pray for me?"

So he had the opportunity to pray for her. I don't know what the outcome was, but Fred shared this story to illustrate that she had recognized that the old practices would not help her.

Just the other day, one of our coordinators shared with us that he was called by a witch doctor who told him, "I'm tired of being robbed."

"Who's robbing you?"

"Mr. X. is robbing me: taking my goats, taking my money, taking everything. I'm tired of it. Starting from today, I want to believe in your

God. I want to be a Christ-follower.” He called his whole clan together and said to his son, “If you want to continue with these things, that’s up to you. But from today on I no longer want any part in that. I’ve decided I’m going to be a Christ-follower.”

That’s the identity the disciples most commonly use after coming to saving faith: “Christ-follower.” Of course, they say it in the local language. But they don’t identify with the bad testimony of Christian churches that people might have heard of. The person who brought the good news of Jesus to them is known as a disciple-maker. He has been befriending them. He’s been walking with them, showing them love, and speaking to them about the truth from God. They realize: “This man really loves us,” and they know he’s a Christian man. Without using the name in a way that would trigger negative connotations, the concept is clear: This person follows Christ and is aiming to be like him.

As people grow in their faith through studying Scripture, they begin to realize that this is the true word of God. Then, as they are introduced to biblical teaching about Isa—his virgin birth, his miracles, and his teaching—they begin to think seriously about it. At some point in their journey, they are introduced to Christ as Lord, and they understand who he is.

We have some urban ministry, like in one place where we have a school. That’s one location where we have a building. It didn’t used to be an urban area, but as we’ve had a population explosion, the town began to spread out. It used to be a village: the place where we started a school and the village chairman said he wanted his children to come to our school. The school functions as an access ministry. And we’ve had testimonies of two or three parents who came to faith because of their children. As we engage with the children, we say, “This is a Christian school.” We will always have prayer and sharing of God’s word. We have a Scripture for the day, which the children memorize. They think about the Scripture and indicate how they will obey. Over time, this has had an impact.

We recently had a sixth grader from another faith background decide: “I want to become a Christ-follower,” and the parents didn’t object. Note, there is a school run by people of that non-Christian faith only about

a quarter of a mile away. But many of those folks prefer to bring their children to this Christian school. They know it's a Christian school. So we tell our teachers, "This is a ministry. Let's be intentional, and help these children discover the Lord. Treat them as a shepherd would treat his flock. Treat them with love. Get them excited to come back to school tomorrow. Speak life to them, and help them appreciate who they are—who God created them to be."

HEALINGS

Here's just one testimony of the kind of miracles we're seeing. In one place, where about 95% of the population follows another faith, the chairman of the local religious establishment had a wife who was terminally ill, *very* ill. For the past two years, she had been so ill that she couldn't fetch water. She had gone to all the hospitals and everything had failed. One of the disciple-makers had started groups in the community, and a movement was happening, with people meeting every week. This woman heard that a group was meeting near her home. So she thought, "I'll just go attend, and maybe ask for prayer." She came and asked for prayer, and God did a miracle. She experienced total healing *in the meeting!* She went back home and started doing her normal work. Her husband testified, "I saw my wife walk in and get Jerry cans, saying she's going to the well. I thought, 'This woman is going to fall down and I'll be taking her back to the hospital.'" So he told one of his daughters, "Please follow your mom. There's no way, in the condition she's been in, that she can carry two Jerry cans of water. She's going to faint or something." So the daughter went with her mother, and the mother came back carrying two Jerry cans of water. The husband stared at her with eyes wide open and asked, "What has happened?"

She told him, "I went to that group and they prayed for me, and now I feel okay."

He said, "What?!" He had some reservations about that group. But his wife continued doing house chores, like she hadn't done in two years. He kept thinking, "Anytime now, this woman is going to fall down." But she was totally healed. Finally, he was convinced. He stood up in the middle of the town and said, "From now on, I'm going to serve the

God who has healed my wife.” He didn’t fear whether they were going to persecute him or not, even though he was the chairman of the local religious establishment. He became a disciple-maker. His wife joined that group, and he started leading another group.

PERSECUTION

We are reaching out to a tribe that is less than 2% Christian and 88% following another faith. Although the resistance there has diminished recently, we still have many cases of persecution. About three weeks ago, a man was almost killed by the whole clan due to becoming a Christian. So we brought him to Kampala and accommodated him for about two weeks, then sent him back to the next district, so he could begin to get back to life. We paid his rent for three months and tried to encourage him to be able to rise up. We also invited the local church there to help him.

One of the coordinators called me a week ago. A woman who recently came to faith had just been beaten and hospitalized because of her faith. Even with those examples of persecution, that tribe is now much more ready for the gospel than ever before. Today we are engaging them and doing trainings. Through DMM, God has given us an opportunity to collaborate with other ministries working in northern Uganda, and to do training with them in DMM. Some of our trainees have gone to serve in a neighboring country that is generally much more repressive than Uganda.

We sometimes get reactions from people of another faith, especially in the radical communities, like among the A. tribe. It’s been happening for many years, but the number of incidents is now decreasing. We thank God for that. Going to those areas is no longer as threatening as it was seven years ago. Now, we can go anywhere without fear of being beaten or resisted. God is giving us strategies to effectively engage the communities.

The A. people themselves have told us they are a structured tribe that respects elders, but the young people have forsaken caring for elders. So, as an access ministry, we have helped provide basic necessities in ways that increase respect for the elders. This has prompted them to open up their *oikos*. That was also one of the things that won the heart of the religious leader, who’s an older man. He has opened up his compound, to have a DBS there. The gospel God has given us is a very powerful

gospel, a message inspired by love. Because of that, there is no place we cannot go. There is no community that cannot be penetrated. One of our coordinators told me that in his entire region, only two communities are still closed. The rest are open, just waiting for disciple-makers to go there and begin to engage.

ENTERING NEW COMMUNITIES

When disciple-makers go into a brand-new community, their vocational identity depends on the community they're entering. They need a reason to be there, related to something needed or useful in the community. We encourage finding a person of peace, who then opens up the community. For instance, before I went to the Y. area, I called ahead and asked some connections if they knew of anyone who might be a good contact. They gave me the name of a doctor in the community. Not only was he a doctor but he also had started a school in a nearby town. He had a very nice health center, and a very nice school. The community there really appreciated the quality of education provided by the school. So we used that leverage to interact with the community. We always try to train workers to go with some good reason for being in the community. They pray and ask the Lord what's a good identity for them as they go.

Our expansion into new areas comes mainly through looking for where there's a need, a lack of gospel witness. In some areas, we've had people hear what's happening in the village next door. Then they come and attend some of the meetings, and say, "What we've just seen, we want to also have in our village."

Then we contact our local leader and say, "Please go and take the gospel into that village." This is how it has been growing organically: coming, hearing what's happening, and then asking someone to come to their place—even in some areas where existing churches resisted the DMM approach, and thought, "This is a new cult, or people are trying to steal members from our congregation."

CONNECTING WITH EXISTING CHURCHES

We tell disciple-makers, "Don't struggle with the existing churches. Just continue doing what you're doing to reach the lost." Later, churches

realize this is a genuine gospel effort being made. It's not about expanding some other denomination from another place. Then they open up and say, "Please come. What we are witnessing, we also want in our areas." That's the main way we've been able to move into new areas.

We encourage disciples in the movement to have a positive attitude toward existing churches. We tell them, "We need the church. We need the existing church as a platform. Don't criticize the existing churches. We (as leaders) were part of the existing church before we knew about the DMM concept. We have to gently find a way to communicate the new truth that we've witnessed, and testify of the impact."

I've been in contexts where people have strongly criticized DMM, but later, when they saw the fruit of it, their attitudes changed. We saw this particularly during COVID-19. It brought to light the benefits of empowering members of the congregation to start small groups. The churches all closed down, and the only places people could meet were in homes—praying together and having DBS. In many cases, every church member was able to become a leader in their respective area. The Lord blessed that. So as much as we're able, we try to connect with and be a blessing to the existing churches.

THE DISCIPLE- MAKING JOURNEY

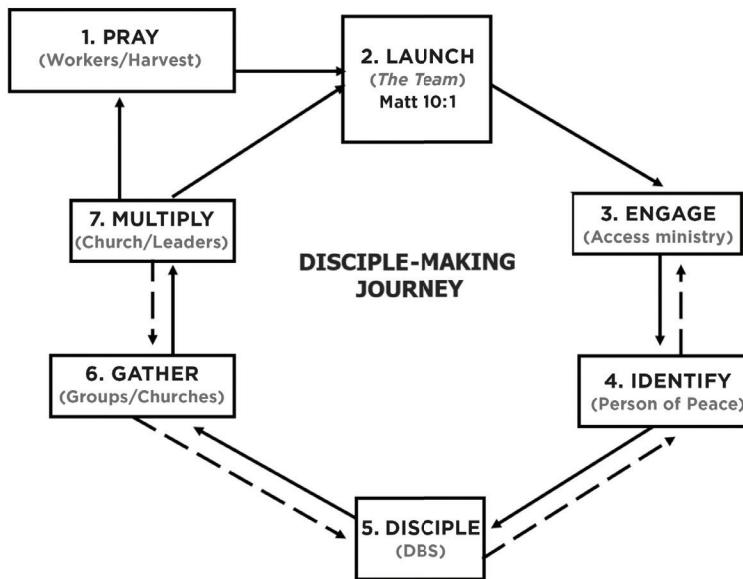




A SEVEN-STEP PROCESS

WE EMPLOY SEVEN STEPS in the journey toward apostolic (cross-cultural) disciple-making and church planting among a new group. These were modeled for us by Jesus Christ and the Early Church. Each step carries an important principle to start and sustain a Disciple Making Movement.

We use this diagram to illustrate the disciple-making journey. The dotted arrows going counter-clockwise bear some clarification. They illustrate a process of repetition—back and forth—as we begin to develop leaders, starting at engagement (step 3). Replication begins even at that stage in the process. Sometimes people have in their mind an idealized picture of what will happen, but as the process develops, they realize that everything is not perfect. They need to figure out how to go back and re-do some things they did in the previous step.



1. PRAY

A Disciple Making Movement starts with prayer. We cannot over emphasize this, as we see it modeled by Christ Jesus during his earthly life, and

even now at the Father's right hand, where he continues to intercede for us. We also see it in the prayer lives of the apostles and the Early Church.

When I returned to Kenya from Ethiopia, I saw a very significant answer to prayer. I asked God to show me the leaders of movements in East Africa. Some friends had given me names of people to talk to and to visit, but I believed I should follow the same principle as when I train: I seek God to lead me. So, I just took time to pray. I kept on praying and praying and praying, for four months. Then when I went to do a training, I saw a couple of people and felt, "These are the people I've been praying for!" I connected with them, and they have become very fruitful. That's one example of God's answer to prayer.⁴⁰

Margaret, a DMM leader in Kenya, says: "I have seen God work miracles. So my encouragement is to pray, be brave and humble, and God will go before you." This is crucial. Pray before starting the DMM process, pray during the process, and continue praying after finishing the process.

In Matthew 4, we see that Christ prayed before he called his disciples. In Luke 4, he prayed before announcing the start of his ministry. In Acts 13, we see the Early Church praying before and after setting apart Paul and Barnabas, as instructed by the Holy Spirit.

Through prayer, we get to know the mind of God and join in what he is doing. We thus align with his purpose and plan. Jesus constantly talked with the Father, seeking and obeying his will. How much more do we need to keep talking with the Lord, in order to do the things we see him doing!

If we sense the Lord would have us go to a specific area, we need to pray earnestly beforehand. When possible, we send a prayer team ahead, to break down the forces of darkness and demonic strongholds in that area. This is spiritual warfare against the Devil and his forces. Christ warned us that ruling spirits must be bound before their homes can be plundered. "*No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he*

40 For more examples, check out this podcast: "Aila Tasse—Cabbages in the Wilderness #2" (<http://tinyurl.com/3a28u6cb>).

first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house” (Mark 3:27 NKJV). The Apostle Paul often acknowledged his need for prayer support from the church. He also recognized the reality of adversaries to the work of God (2 Cor. 1:11; Col. 4:3; Eph. 6:12). We too must pray, both individually and corporately. We pray for guidance to find the person of peace. We pray for hearts opened to receive the gospel. We pray for people’s deliverance from spiritual bondage and growth in knowledge and love of the Lord.

We teach those in new Discovery Bible Study groups how to pray by our example. We let them see and hear us pray. That’s the best way to help them develop a lifestyle of prayer. As group members start to grow in their prayer lives, we note those with a passion for intercession: those constantly praying and receiving answers. We mentor these to develop a local DMM intercessory prayer team. Peter Sozi,⁴¹ a DMM leader in Uganda, says:

At the start of the group meeting, the facilitator may invite anyone present to pray. In early meetings, the prayer may take the form of thanksgiving testimonies as the facilitator gives each person a chance to share what they are thankful to God for. These focus the group on giving God glory and honor.

Albert,⁴² a DMM leader in Kenya, says:

One of the most important tools for a disciple-maker is prayer. It has to become a lifestyle. We pray because we believe that God will hear and answer. Prayer and faith are traveling companions. We know that what we are doing cannot be done in our own strength. Through prayer we invite God to move in this work. I pray as an individual. We also have corporate prayer times. My team meets once a week to pray. Once a

41 See Peter’s testimony in Chapter 19: Diverse Ministry in Uganda.

42 See Albert’s testimony in Chapter 16: Reaching a Sandwich of Faiths. Some people call Albert “Pastor Albert,” and some call me “Dr. Aila.” It’s common in African culture to use honorific titles. But I don’t encourage that, since at the most basic level, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

month, we undertake prayer and fasting. This way we involve God in all we are doing.

Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful but the harvesters are few (Matt. 9:37-38). One of our key prayer requests continues to be that the Lord would send more laborers into his harvest, which is ready and plentiful. For the harvest, we pray for wisdom to take care of them.

Many come to us wounded. Others are persecuted, while some have no prior knowledge of the gospel. We pray for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit and delivered from demonic oppression where necessary. We pray for them to understand the word of God. We pray that the harvest is sustainable and multiplies.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Is the Lord leading you to pray for a specific area or person?
- Are you teaching others to pray by your example?

2. LAUNCH

As we pray, the next step is to form and launch a disciple-making team. The team has to consist of true disciples: followers of Jesus, intent on becoming like him, such that they can say with the Apostle Paul, “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1). We understand that only a disciple can make disciples. Sometimes people try to make someone else into something that they themselves are not. Some Christians want to invite others to a *program* that they hope will result in discipleship. But that doesn’t help discipleship to multiply well. Discipleship means I am helping somebody else to become what I myself have learned from Jesus. I share with others what I’m experiencing. When the Samaritan woman invited people to Jesus, she said, “Come and see this man I’ve experienced—telling me the stories of my life.” She had an experience with Jesus, and she invited people to experience what she had experienced. This is the first vital principle of disciple-making. Albert says:

In a Disciple Making Movement, we know that you can make disciples only if you, too, are a disciple. This means that you

are a person of prayer. You are obedient to the word of the Lord. You are passionate and committed to making disciples. You have patience with them through the process. You remember that the Lord Jesus was patient with the disciples. He took time to explain the parables and even allowed them to make mistakes. Similarly, you are not afraid to release your groups to go on to form and lead their own groups.

During Jesus's earthly ministry, he sent out ministry teams at least twice. In Matthew 10:1-15 (Luke 9:1-5), we see him sending out the 12 disciples. He gave them power to cast out unclean spirits and heal all kinds of sickness and disease. In Luke 10:1-12, we see him sending out 70 of his followers. He sent these out in pairs to every city and place where he himself was about to go. In Acts 13:2, we see that the Holy Spirit specifically called out Barnabas and Paul to launch the ministry to which he had called them.

We do well to note that Jesus sent out disciples in pairs (as a team). The Apostle Paul did not travel alone on his missionary journeys. He always had with him one or more team members. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament tells us: "*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion . . .*" (Eccl. 4:9-10 NKJV).

A team includes people with a variety of different gifts, working together to accomplish the Lord's purpose. For example, Paul had an apostolic gift of proclamation while Barnabas (also called an apostle in Acts 14:14) used his gift of encouraging so extensively that it inspired the nickname by which we all know him (Acts 4:36). He could comfort, encourage, and see ministry potential that others would have missed (Acts 9:27; 11:26; 15:37-38; 2 Tim. 4:11). John Mark was sent to serve them, as leaders of the team. These different gifts rounded out the effectiveness of the team's ministry.

After Peter saw the vision (Acts 10), six brethren accompanied him to Caesarea to present the gospel to the household of Cornelius, the centurion (Acts 11:12). On Paul's departure to Syria through Macedonia, he was accompanied by seven brothers in the faith (Acts 20:4). Luke's

use of “we” (e.g. Acts 16:10-16; 27:1-28:22), indicates that he himself had traveled with Paul’s team for the later parts of Paul’s ministry.

The testimony of two or three witnesses confirms the validity of a message. While one team member actively witnesses, the other(s) may quietly pray. If one falls ill, another team member can step in. Team members can also increase one’s courage. For example, we read in 2 Kings 7:3-5 that four lepers, in the midst of a no-win situation, encouraged each other to approach the camp of the Syrian army, where they were delivered from famine and brought rescue to the whole city. In decisions requiring courage, a team can discuss pros and cons of possibilities, and together seek the Lord’s best way forward. If one gets discouraged or has a problem, the others can lift them up and encourage them.

A missionary team is more sustainable than an individual. Team members provide moral and spiritual support to each other. It is easier for an individual to throw in the towel when faced with difficulties and persecution, whereas a team can help one another to press on as they seek solutions to the problems.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Have you prayerfully identified your disciple-making team?
- Have you formed and launched the team?

3. ENGAGE

After identifying the mission field, intercessory prayer, and forming the disciple-making team, it is vital to find a way to creatively engage the people. For us to sow gospel seed, we must engage with a person or community through access ministry, which often consists of some form of compassion. Jesus showed practical love, using healing and deliverance from demonic oppression as a compassion ministry to access various communities (Matt. 4:24; 9:35; 15:30).

Interacting with lost people is not a program, but a lifestyle: deliberately nurturing relationships with the lost, and aiming to find the persons of peace in their midst. The Apostle Paul asked: “How will lost people

find salvation if someone does not go to them and tell them about Christ?" (paraphrase of Rom. 10:13-15). We also read that Christ deliberately engaged with lost people, such as the woman at the well, Zacchaeus, and others considered sinners (such as Levi's friends who gathered for a meal with Jesus—Mark 2:14-17).

We need to intentionally engage people. We need to ask ourselves: "How can I do things that bring me close to people, so I can find people of peace and engage them? How can I creatively look for ways to do it?" People will rarely come looking for us. They may feel they have no reason to do that. But you have a reason to engage them. We want to share God's love with them. So, we have to be very intentional; every day think of creative ways of connecting. That intentionality reflects our willingness.

Sometimes, we don't feel willing. But when Jesus said, "Go," he wasn't offering an option. He gave a command. The question is, "Where and when should I go?" Am I willing to find lost people where they are—in my city, my community—and go to them? Developing that willingness and discipline is very important for a disciple-maker. We see this reflected in the parables of the lost coin and the lost sheep: something is lost and we look for it until we find it. If something is lost and we're not willing to look for it, it will remain lost. When we're willing to look for it, we take steps to find what was lost. The celebration comes after the finding, the finding comes after the looking, and the looking comes after the willingness to look for the lost.

We see this kingdom dynamic also described in Jesus's story of the shepherd who leaves 99 sheep to go search for the one that is lost. That's a serious issue for me. My community is a nomadic tribe. When an animal is lost somewhere, we can't fall asleep at night, knowing that part of our flock or herd is out in the desert somewhere, in danger of being killed by a wild animal. So, we risk our own lives, to go out and look. We need that kind of willingness to go and look for lost people. That's why some of our disciple-making teams serve in places where extremists are active. The lives of lost people among those non-Christian groups are important to Jesus. They are important to us. That's why we go where they are to reach them. It's not just that we want to convert them and bring them to church. We want to invite them into the richly blessed life of the family

of God the Father, the kingdom of Jesus the King. Jesus died for them, but they don't yet know that.

A movement involves both apostolic and organic *going* to engage unsaved people. A movement spreads organically when some of the disciples have a relationship in a place. In those cases, the gospel can spread through their relational witness, through disciples who make disciples, as they go about their everyday business. But if there's no prior relationship, an apostolic team seeks the Lord to find a way to connect in that new place or group. We identify areas and people groups where there's not yet any movement, and send in apostolic teams to share the gospel and start new movements. As described in Luke 10, we encourage people to go as a team, not as an individual. When the apostolic team goes out, two by two, among people of another faith, it's always men reaching out to men and women reaching out to women. But a family can function as a good team. Or a husband and wife also can have another man or woman join them in outreach.

A movement involves both apostolic and organic *going* to engage unsaved people.

Some people cross national borders as a movement catalyst. We also have people being sent from within one movement to go to other unreached tribes. They don't do it for us or ask our permission. They go because that's what Jesus said we should do to reach the unreached. We don't have any way to keep track of all the Spirit is doing through that kind of outreach. It's way beyond our control—which is what happens when a movement is really a movement.

Jesus used a conversation at a well to draw the Samaritan woman into a spiritual discussion. She was his person of peace, who brought the whole town to listen to the gospel (John 4:1-42).

To follow Jesus's example, what compassion ministries can we use to help us engage the communities where God has sent us? How can we creatively find out the needs in the community? We do not create the need but objectively look for and find the real needs. We go into a community and begin to observe: What need does this community have that is not

being met? How can we begin to address one or more of those needs? One can organize medical camps, provide relief or socio-economic development to help raise their living standards. We sometimes raise funds—not a large amount of money—for those access ministries from individuals or teams in the ministry. We look at how the Antioch church supported the Jerusalem church. Sometimes for huge challenges like drought, some outside funds are shared as well. But we always encourage workers to use local funds to respond to needs as much as possible.

We don't begin a relationship with people by giving them something material. That would set the wrong tone and bring to the forefront other interests besides spiritual interests. We begin with relationship, and then when needs become apparent, we respond appropriately, as people who want to be helpful—first with prayer, and sometimes with other kinds of assistance.

For example, we had two men who went to a tribe along a main road from Nairobi to Ethiopia. They saw that the town was quite far from any big city, and because it had no grocery store, the people there had a need for fresh vegetables. Our team (of which these two were a part) observed trucks passing through the town, and they knew some Christian brothers who sometimes went through the town with trucks of food. They proposed the idea of opening a shop in the town to sell some vegetables. Once a week, the trucks would pass through the town and deliver vegetables. Our workers immediately became well-known in the town, because their shop was the only place where people could buy vegetables locally. As they interacted with people, they talked about various things, and that's how they found a local person of peace.

In another community, people didn't yet have digital cameras on their phones. The messenger started coming there once a week on a motorcycle and offering to take people's pictures. Then he developed and printed the photos, and people paid him for them. Each time he came, he chatted with people and taught the children some gospel songs. Through the children, he got to know their family members, and people would have him take pictures in their homes. He would also ask if they had things in their lives he could pray for. He found open people, and started a DBS there, using that creative access.

Bahizi,⁴³ a DMM leader in Burundi, says:

Access ministry ideas are as many as there are areas to be reached. We provide water filters to one community that lacks access to clean water. The project engineer is a disciple-maker who uses this compassion access ministry to reach the people. He shared a testimony of a lady who had been a drug-using prostitute. She attended the water-filter training group. She was like the woman who washed Jesus's feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and poured expensive oil on him. This lady was deeply touched that the Lord Jesus had mercy on prostitutes like her. She came to faith in the Lord, asked to be baptized, and began a Discovery Bible Study in her home. It grew into a simple church and she has baptized more than nine people.

In one area, the access ministry is sewing and design. Ladies come together to learn how to sew. These become Discovery Bible Study groups from which other leaders and teachers of design emerge to create more groups. Most groups are made up of more than 10 ladies. Many have been baptized. They have taken God's word back to their families and networks of relationships.

In one agricultural area, we discovered that many people work on others' farms to earn a living. Because of poverty, they would rent the gardening hoe from neighbors. Our Discovery Bible Study groups were able to contribute and buy one gardening hoe per family. This simple act has greatly transformed that community and opened it up for the gospel. As the distribution is done to the various families, the disciple-making teams use the opportunity to share Bible stories about farmers and farming—for example, the parable of the sower from Mark 4:1-20.

It is important to find out the gifts and talents in our Discovery Bible Study groups and use these to access communities in need of the gospel. Jesus went around doing good and telling of the kingdom of God.

43 See Bahizi's testimony in Chapter 25: Disciple Multiplication in Burundi.

We can also lead a *shema* lifestyle.⁴⁴ This is a life marked by godliness that draws people to the Lord as it shows the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This lifestyle radiates the love of God for others. We commonly use *shema* statements in our conversations with people, such as “God bless you,” or “I am so thankful to God because I had a wonderful day today.” It involves inserting testimonies of the goodness of God in our everyday conversations. We also can ask to pray for their needs. This may lead to them becoming curious about our faith, thus opening a way for engaging with them or identifying a person of peace in their midst.

When an apostolic team goes to a new location to try to start a movement, they generally envision staying in that location from six months to two or three years. So, they come with an identity and get to know people. They build relationships and start building trust right from the start. They don’t just come as strangers and start talking about the gospel. They find persons of peace through *shema* statements, access ministries, education, or compassion ministries.

Some *shema* statements that are often received well by people from another faith include “God loves you.” That’s something they don’t know from their religious teaching. Or “I’m so thankful to God today.” They commonly say, “Alhamdulillah” (“Praise be to God”).⁴⁵ If you say something like that, they might ask, “Are you also a follower of my religion?” That can begin a conversation about spiritual things. The best answer to such a question is not a direct “Yes” or “No,” which tends to end the conversation. It’s better to give a *description* of your spiritual life and relationship with God that can help filter the person’s level of spiritual interest.

If people concerned about religion ask, “Are you a Christian?” the worker might respond, “What do you mean by ‘a Christian?’” If the person describes negative moral traits (alcohol abuse, immorality, etc.), the

⁴⁴ *Shema* is the Hebrew word translated “hear” in Deuteronomy 6:4, which is used as a Jewish confession of faith. Among movement catalysts, “*shema* statement” is often used as a shorthand description for various open expressions of faith in God.

⁴⁵ Some tribes use the Arabic name for God (Allah); others use a local tribal name for the high God, such as Waaqa.

worker might say, “That’s not me. I’m a follower of Jesus (Isa al Masih)” and go on to describe a biblically holy life in Christ.

If a person is sick, you can ask if they would like you to pray for them. We have found that almost everybody, of any faith, will accept prayers for their needs.

In all these things, the key thing is to find an appropriate avenue through which to engage with the community. In the midst of that interaction, you can find opportunities to have spiritual conversations with those who are interested.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- What avenue(s) of potential access have you identified?
- How can you use this/these to access the area, community, or person you want to focus on?

4. IDENTIFY

In a Disciple Making Movement, we deliberately try to reach not just individuals, but to find persons of peace: those God has prepared in each community who will open their community to the gospel. They are open and spiritually sensitive persons who will welcome gospel messengers into their existing network of relationships. The New Testament uses the Greek word *oikos* (literally “household”) to describe this group. These may be family, friends, additional relatives, and/or neighbors of the person of peace. A disciple-maker’s role is to find, identify, and focus on such a person.

Among tribal groups, people normally have an identity as part of their tribe or clan or village. They have access to people because of their relationship, and the access is quite clear and obvious. Even in the city, they might connect with someone because they’re part of the same clan. It’s easy to visit people who are part of the same clan. But also, when people have the same interests or do the same kind of business, or both enjoy soccer, people connect through those similar interests or activities. They can build relationships around those things.

When a person of peace invites their *oikos* to a DBS, they might say, “I’ve been learning some new things; would you be interested in joining me, to learn together?” Or they might invite the catalyst to come share

stories with their family, or invite the catalyst to come to a family celebration of some sort, so they can be introduced to the family. By spending time together, they get to know each other and build a relationship. Then the catalyst is no longer a stranger. They start with relationship; not with asking people to study the Bible together.

Margaret, a DMM leader in Kenya, says:

Persons of peace are everywhere and we need to be creative in how we approach them. For example, recently I sat next to a lady in public transport. I introduced myself and we got talking. Eventually, she invited me to her village to help them begin Discovery Bible Study groups. She is my person of peace in that community.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus talked about four different types of soil. He spoke of the roadside, the rock, and the thorny soil. He also spoke of the good soil that brought forth 30, 60, or a 100 times what was sown. We can liken the person of peace to this good soil, into which we sow the seed of the gospel.

How do we identify a person of peace?

- a. This person shows interest in conversations about God. He or she may be of a different faith or pagan in their beliefs. They may listen keenly as you speak, ask questions, or respond in other ways. Look for persons like this.
- b. We see some biblical examples persons of peace, such as Cornelius (Acts 10) and Lydia (Acts 16:14-15). These people have influence in their networks and maybe their communities.
- c. These persons are hospitable and welcome the Lord's messengers into their homes. They introduce us to their families and other relationship networks. God uses such persons to give us access to the community.

Albert,⁴⁶ a DMM leader in Kenya, says:

46 See Albert's testimony in Chapter 16: Reaching a Sandwich of Faiths.

Persons of peace could be in our family, offices, schools, and neighborhoods. It is crucial for the disciple-maker to know what characterizes a person of peace. This will be an individual or individuals hungry for spiritual things, taking every opportunity to ask questions. Some are approachable, friendly, and kindhearted people who welcome you into their lives and activities.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Have you identified a person of peace around you?
- What are you doing to develop a relationship with that person?

5. DISCIPLE (DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY)

In the Discovery Bible Study (DBS), we introduce a group of seekers to Scripture. This group has been gathered by the person of peace, so they already have relational connections with one another. God uses that one person to introduce their disciple-maker(s) to a whole range of relationships. Discipleship *in a group* is very important, so that seekers can share and learn from each other. We may encourage them on an individual basis, but we let them learn through the group rather than trying to provide all the answers.

In the DBS, they begin to discover Bible truths for themselves and eventually realize their need for the saving grace of Christ Jesus. Instead of converting them, then trying to make them disciples, the journey of Discovery Bible Study disciplines people into conversion. This might happen in the first meeting, but it usually takes longer. In all cases, the disciple-maker ensures that interested seekers continue learning, discovering, and obeying Bible truths. Jesus said: *“It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me”* (John 6:45).

The basic format of DBS involves reading or listening to a Scripture passage. This is repeated a few times to ensure all those present have understood the passage. Then we ask what they have learned through the passage. We allow God, through his word and the power of the Holy Spirit, to speak to each person.

Discovery questions may include, “From what we have just heard or read, what did God speak to you about himself?” “What did you learn about mankind?” “What did you learn about yourself?” Peter Sozi,⁴⁷ a DMM leader in Uganda, says:

Many times, I have heard people testify, “I’ve never heard this before!” or, “It has never occurred to me that this is what this Scripture is talking about!” In areas where we work with people of another faith, I am always amazed at the way they perceive Scripture meaning. They say, “Yes! God is also speaking to me. I feel God is saying this . . .”

Mere learning of information does not make one a disciple or lead to transformation. We need to ask *how* they will obey what they have learned, and *with whom* they will share what they have learned. Peter Sozi explains:

Because each person believes that God has spoken to them, our next step is to ask, “Now that you have heard the word of God for yourself, how are you going to change, how are you going to behave and live?” This helps everyone leave the meeting with an obedience resolution.

At the next meeting, we start by praying and asking how they are. “What is stressing you? Is there anything we can pray with you about?” This type of question helps teach those in the group to care about one another. At the same time, it makes known prayer needs and other needs. Then we ask the group, “How can we meet these needs?” This nurtures a relationship of brotherly love.

It also is important to nurture a culture of accountability. We do this by asking how they obeyed and how they shared what they learned last time. We make a point to encourage those who may have been discouraged or fearful of sharing with their friends or family.

After this initial sharing from people’s lives and application of the previous week’s text, we ask people to tell what they are thankful for, or how they have been blessed. Then we introduce the Bible text of the day.

⁴⁷ See Peter’s testimony in Chapter 19: Diverse Ministry in Uganda.

Different groups will choose to study different biblical topics. A group largely made up of seekers with no Christian background may start from Genesis, moving systematically through the Bible to lay a solid foundation for understanding God, sin, and the message of salvation in Christ.

In Luke 10:5-7, we see Christ instructing that once we identify a person of peace, we stay with them. We don't go from house to house; rather, this person introduces us to their wider network of relationships.

Sometimes missionaries are too quick to take seekers to church. This may only alienate them, especially if they are from a different culture than the church members. They may remain relationally disconnected from the church community, and thus conclude that Christianity is not for people like them. In some unreached contexts, they may not understand the church language. It is important to disciple them through DBS, so they can discern the relevance of God's way for their own lives and situations.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN THE DBS PROCESS

We always encourage seekers to share with others in their families and networks, as immediate obedience is key. However, we must accept that in some contexts, such as where there is deep hostility to Christianity, this may not be possible due to the life-threatening danger it would pose. Sharing begins their spiritual journey. We help them to launch their first Discovery Bible Study with family, friends, and community. If a spiritually hungry person lives in a fanatical context, where their family and friends are not open, we might do a DBS with that person as an individual, but still encourage them to look for opportunities to bless their family and live out a good witness among them. We don't want to lose a whole family because we've extracted the one person who was initially most open to the gospel. We encourage them to be patient and shine the light of Jesus through culturally appropriate loving relationships.

We had a case of a female high school student who came to Christ like I did, at boarding school, but she kept her faith secret. Her discipler encouraged her to pray for her family, and then she started talking to her sister who was sick and was having nightmares. She offered to pray for her, and prayed in the name of Jesus. When she prayed, the problems

immediately stopped, which demonstrated clearly to both of them the power in the name of Jesus. Then the secret believer started sharing with her sister how she had come to believe in Jesus. That sister also came to faith.

Later, after their father died, they shared with their mother and she also came to faith. Now they have a small community. Later on, their uncles found out about their faith and were upset, but they couldn't push them out of their home because the mother owned the house. And because they were relatives, they wouldn't directly harm them. They put great pressure on the mother, but their small community survived the pressure. If it had been just one believer, they could have chased her away. But they couldn't chase them all away. In that country, the law says people of different faiths have the right to worship, so eventually everyone left them alone. Many people avoided them, but they continued with the church that was planted through the DBS that had started in that house. Later on, we did a medical camp there, and used their home as the base to provide blessing to the whole community.

Some ministries experience challenges with people from a different religious background who seem to make a good start in following Jesus, but then revert back to their previous religious patterns. We've not had much problem with that.

Some ministries experience challenges with people from a different religious background who seem to make a good start in following Jesus, but then revert back to their previous religious patterns. We've not had much problem with that. In our experience, that generally happens only if the people have not been discipled well. When those who have been discipled from the beginning (i.e. through a DBS process) make the decision to follow Jesus, they stick with it. Sometimes, people who have come to faith in other ways, without good discipling, end up reverting.

When people are new to the Scriptures, they may come up with ideas that are not accurate. We just keep them in the process and continue asking questions to guide them into discovering a better understanding.

For example, anyone in the group can ask, “Which part of this text do you see that idea in?” We don’t shame people, but we help them see that the goal is to stay close to what’s actually in the text of Scripture. The facilitator might do that, or others in the group might also do that.

We also try to keep people from sharing things like, “I heard somebody say . . .” or “I read in a book . . .” We train them to stick close to just what the biblical text says. A catalyst from outside will usually facilitate three or four meetings before handing facilitation over to someone from inside the group. They will stay around for a few meetings, then start to meet separately at a different time with the inside facilitator. By the fourth meeting, everyone in the group knows the general pattern of the study, because it’s not many questions, and it’s the same questions every time.

Ruth,⁴⁸ a DMM leader we met in Chapter 10, describes how she overcomes the challenge of illiteracy:

Because many persons of peace and disciples from among the nomadic people are illiterate, I give them oral accounts of Bible stories and teach them to memorize Bible passages that they use to spread the word among their fellow nomads as they travel with the livestock.

We encourage people to start new DBS groups rather than adding to an existing one. In more open contexts, however, we don’t stop people from joining an existing group. They might feel they need to strengthen their faith before they start facilitating their own DBS. A DBS will ideally consist of about seven people, because we want everyone to participate in the discussion, and we don’t want it to take forever.

Discovery Bible Study is the essence of disciple-making. J, a DMM leader in Tanzania, describes the process this way:

After identifying the person of peace, we organize the first Discovery Bible Study. The person of peace invites people from his or her network of relationships to this first Discovery Bible Study. My role is to facilitate the session.

48 See Ruth’s testimony in Chapter 10: Ruth Proclaims the Redeemer.

On the agreed-upon day, we study a Bible passage. Where we begin the Bible reading depends on the group's level of biblical literacy. We read the word of God a few times. We then give each person a chance to say what they have understood from the passage of Scripture. In this way, each person discovers biblical truths. We then move to application. We each say how we are going to obey the Bible truths we have discovered. We also indicate with whom we will share what we have learned. After this, we agree on the date for our next meeting, pray, and depart.

At the next meeting, we begin with thanksgiving and prayers. We also intercede for any needs brought forward. We then report how we each obeyed the truth discovered the previous week, how we applied it, and who we shared the discovered truth with. As they tell how they shared, they learn the importance of sharing the gospel with others. This creates a disciple-making foundation in their hearts. After this, we move on to that week's study section and repeat the process as during the previous time.

At the third meeting, we do three things. First, we give thanksgiving testimonies. This lays a foundation for teaching them to worship God with thanksgiving, as they hear what he has done. We then pray for each other. This is a way to teach them to pray for themselves and for others. After that, we hear any needs and ask if anyone can assist with the needs. This teaches them to love one another, helping each other where they can. It also teaches them to learn to rely on each other and not on the facilitator, or to expect an organization for assistance. This avoids developing a syndrome of dependency.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Have you set a date for the first Discovery Bible Study?
- How will the group obey and apply what is learned?

6. GATHER (TRANSITION FROM DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY TO DMM CHURCH)

The DBS group ideally will grow (both in numbers and obedience) and emerge into a DMM church. This transition prevents stagnation. The group should aim to multiply even as they grow into doing church ordinances and functions. They will often also grow in their influence in the community. In Acts 16:5, we read that the Church “grew daily in numbers.” We also see that happening in many places, because the disciples are actively reaching out to the community and sharing.

Not everyone in the group may have made a decision to follow Christ at this point, but that should not deter those already believing from transitioning the group into a church. The group should have at least six or seven members who are believers when they begin transitioning to become a church. Unbelievers are welcome and encouraged to keep attending. We trust the Holy Spirit to also lead to Christ those yet to believe. Our goal is the journey of disciple-making, not just an event of conversion.

Before transitioning a group to become a church, we help them do Discovery studies on the functions of the Church, as in Acts 2:42-47. We help them discover all the things involved in being a church. Do they continue to learn, obey, and share the Scriptures? Do they baptize new believers? Do they break bread in communion? Do they pray together? An outside leader is always coaching the process, to help them discover for themselves the biblical teaching on the subject.

We've noted the importance of transition points between all the places in the circle, in the diagram on page 187. When a person starts a DBS group, they know that the DBS is not an end in itself. After the majority of a DBS group has come to faith and begun growing in the Lord, the messenger's role transitions to coaching or mentoring⁴⁹ as

⁴⁹ We see a lot of overlap between coaching and mentoring. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but I look at coaching as development of skills, and mentoring as developing capacity. We want to increase both skills and capacity, so we don't always make a clear distinction and announce: “Now we're doing coaching” or “Now we're doing mentoring.”

they help a group launch their first church. We consider it important to instill this vision in believers from the beginning of their commitment to Christ—when they get baptized—rather than trying to do it later in the process. Each catalyst will make sure that the group looks forward to that at the appropriate time, helping them start discovering church, via DBS in the book of Acts. We intentionally introduce the functions of the church, including baptism, so when disciples have been baptized and start doing those things together, they know they are a church—even while some in the group may still be on the way toward full commitment and baptism. The transition to identity and functioning as a church plays an important role in maturing the movement and the disciples. They learn about church by seeing it in Scripture and experiencing it for themselves; not by putting up a sign in front of a building.

When the DBS group transitions to become a church, they might join together with another group, about once a month, for a celebration gathering. But they will continue as a DBS group, because that's what keeps their focus on obeying the Scripture. We don't want people to stop taking fresh steps of obedience after they become followers of Christ.

When the group starts to do the functions of a church, it becomes self-sustaining, self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-leading. They, in turn, will start to plant more churches as their own DBS groups grow and mature.

Justin,⁵⁰ a disciple-maker and DMM leader in Rwanda, describes the DMM church born out of a Discovery Bible Study group:

As a church, the DBS group begins to break bread in Holy Communion. They love and pray for each other. They study Scriptures and share the gospel with unbelievers. They develop inside leaders to lead other new groups. At this stage, they start to perform baptisms and weddings. We lay the foundations as the Early Church did in Acts 2:42. We see that the Early Church did four key things: they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking

50 See Justin's testimony in Chapter 24: Catalyzing Movements in Rwanda.

of bread, and to prayer. We teach the new church to express brotherly love for each other, meeting members' needs as they are able. As a church, the group works on the vision and strategy of evangelism. This self-sustaining and multiplying church belongs to Christ Jesus and works with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

One of the unique features of a DMM church is that the word of God is presented through a DBS. The people break up into appropriate-size groups for a DBS, for 40-60 minutes, and discover God's truth and its application for their lives. Then they come back as a large group for celebration. The leader or speaker for that day will give some exposition of the same Scripture text that was studied in the DBS.

A DMM church is usually larger than just one DBS group. Among those from a more antagonistic religious background, a church will average about 15 people. Among disciples from more open backgrounds, the average is 23-25 people or more, depending on the size of the village and how many from that village have come to faith.

Sometimes people move away, but everyone who's part of a DBS group also has their own DBS that they facilitate somewhere. When the DBS they have started grows into a church, they leave their previous DBS, in order to focus on coaching and mentoring the disciples in the new church. They still maintain relationship with their previous group, and get together to share and learn from one another.

Once a year, we have a commissioning Sunday, where we send out people to focus on new work. They continue as part of the network, but they no longer attend that particular church, so they can concentrate on the new ministry God has given them. The goal is not to bring new people to the existing church and make it big. The goal is to keep starting new churches, as people mature and reach others.

In contexts of high persecution from the majority faith, people do have some fear of a group being compromised and reported to the authorities. So, they never bring an unbeliever to an existing group of those who already are disciples. And if groups don't need to know each other, they remain separate, so that if one group is compromised, it will not directly endanger the others. In those places, a DBS would consist only of people

who already know and trust each other. People come through relationship, because betrayal can happen easily in such contexts. We have a good number of DBS groups in such situations, but not a huge number.

To establish, strengthen, and grow a movement, we seek to equip reproducing leaders. In every group setting, we look for persons with leadership abilities. People who display potential for leadership are identified by the catalysts. We don't tell them we see them as potential leaders; we just help them grow naturally. We look at their obedience, giftings, and personal qualities. The first thing we look for is obedience to God's word. We note that some people have more natural leadership potential than others. The main factor determining whether natural leadership ability grows into spiritual leadership ability is obedience to God's word and the spiritual growth that results from that. Natural ability can never make up for a shortage of obedience to the Lord. As the Lord leads, we work on developing their leadership skills. Without telling them they're a leader, we start coaching them on the side to help develop their gifts. We give them some small leadership roles and see how they do. Those who are faithful in small things are entrusted with more.

After those with leadership potential come to saving faith, we teach and mentor them into DMM leadership roles. We also teach them how to identify additional leaders. But even before a person becomes a believer, a key question is, "Who are you going to share with?" As people share with others what they're learning, often some of those will be interested to start discovering from God's word. When that happens, we encourage people to start a new Discovery Bible group. We teach them how to facilitate their own Discovery Bible Study group, which is not hard since they're just replicating the pattern they've already been experiencing.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- What signs indicate that a Discovery Bible Study group is maturing in faith?
- How can you tell when a DBS group is ready to transition into a church?
- How do you recognize potential leaders?

7. MULTIPLY

The Lord's goal does not end with the launching of a biblical church. He intends the church to multiply, with disciples making new disciples and churches starting new churches. This is the nature of organic growth, common among living things. To sustain ongoing growth in the number and quality of disciples and the number and quality of churches requires ongoing growth in the number and quality of leaders. As will be described further in Chapter 23, a Disciple Making Movement is a Leadership Development Movement, because a movement can only proceed as leaders are identified, nurtured, trained, and mentored.

Churches multiply as disciples look at the harvest still waiting, and pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest field. Then, just as we see happened in Matthew 9:37-10:7, the Lord answers those prayers through the sending out of new laborers to proclaim and demonstrate the good news of God's kingdom to those who need to hear it.

These steps of obedience return the cycle to the first steps of prayer and sending, at the reproductive level of the next generation.

TEN LESSONS WE'VE LEARNED

Here are some key lessons we've learned through making disciples over the past few years, as the movements have developed. We keep asking ourselves: "What are we learning? What is God teaching us?" These themes have arisen time and again as our country leaders and coordinators have discussed what is bearing fruit and what we can discern about patterns and reasons behind that fruit.

1. Be a disciple to reproduce multiplying disciples.
2. Always pray and trust God for fruitfulness.
3. Be intentional.
4. Be led and guided by the Holy Spirit in your engagements.
5. Have a discipled lifestyle; a discipline of always learning, obeying, and sharing.
6. Focus on discovery of, and obedience to, the Scriptures.
7. Guard the DNA of multiplication at all costs in your work.

8. Don't just tell people what to do; model for them. Knowing is doing (bearing fruit).
9. Do not fear to fail; learn by failing and correct from the failures.
10. Reproduction comes through simple faith and obedience.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Do you have an expectation of, and a plan for, multiplication in your ministry?
- Which of the 10 lessons above do you find most helpful? Most challenging?



TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN KENYA

AFTER BEING INTRODUCED TO Disciple Making Movements, Mark has seen many generations of churches multiplying among diverse tribes. This is his story.

When I came to Christ in 2011, I joined a traditional church in our village. After one and a half years, I was looking for a college because I really wanted to learn more about Christ. While I was sitting under a tree and thinking about how to get to college, a friend of mine came and told me, “We have a week-long training coming up. Can you join?” I joined that training from Lifeway, where they were teaching Bible knowledge and basic DMM.

While I was at that equipping center, one of the leaders said, “I would like to hold a basic training in your community. You could coordinate and invite some people to come, and then we would come and lead the training. I agreed. Up until then, people in my area had never learned about DMM. This brother came in 2015 and trained us in DMM. Since then, I’ve been pursuing DMM.

We now have teams in a number of different regions. The workers are all self-supporting. Lifeway gives us various trainings, but that cannot sustain the movement because we have so many regions. We sustain the movement from within. I learned from the beginning: If we want the ministry to be sustainable, we have to start something that the local people own themselves. I tell them, “If you want the training, you host it and start by contributing the food, even if it is for two days. Then we can come and facilitate the training. We’ll bring the trainers and the practitioners to you, so that you can see what is happening. You just provide food for the people you invite to the training.” Sometimes we even tell them, “You also need to facilitate the transportation,” so that they own the vision, they own the process. We learned from Aila and from our early mistakes. I don’t want to give anyone the impression: “We can take care of this expense and cover that expense.” The local people need to take responsibility, so that when we leave, they can continue without financial assistance from us.

FROM DBS TO CHURCH

The process begins when we start a DBS through the person of peace. They gather everybody in the house: father, mother, children, and maybe other relatives—who come to start discovering the truth. After they come to faith, they begin to move toward becoming a church. They discover in Scripture the functions of a church: to worship, to break bread, to fellowship, and all the other things involved in functioning as a church. They discover the truth for themselves, and begin practicing the functions of the church. Then the group becomes a church and that DNA is the energy transferred from group to group, and the groups mature.

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION; COMMUNICATING GOD'S MESSAGE

Believers come to understand salvation by grace through faith. As they discover this concept in the Bible, they say, “Oh, it is not by laws. It is by God’s grace.” When they read the book of Romans, they understand all this. We introduce and facilitate the book of Romans, then Paul’s other epistles. The teaching happens through discovery. No lectures, even in the church meetings. Everyone contributes to the discussion. We ask, “What have you learned? What will you do with it? Who will you share it with?” We also have intentional sending in groups of two or three. We say, “Go to this street, go to that town, go to the market buildings.” We just go where the people need to hear the gospel. But no preaching; no crusades.

GENERATIONS AND TRIBES

The original group I started many years ago now has multiplied to the ninth generation. We regularly call together the leaders of all the generations we coach. We mentor them, so they can mentor the rest of their team. We don’t even know some of the group members; the only ones we know are the key leaders of the region.

The movement among the Massais has grown to the ninth generation. Among the Kipsigis, it’s a second generation, and the Jamus are not even in the first generation of indigenous partners. At present, all of those we’re bringing to faith are from a background of African tribal religion.

We have been praying for a fourth group since 2016, and recently they called me to go and train a group of pastors. While doing that, I found

a person of peace in the training. I plan to go back more often because whenever I go to a place, I'm very intentional about making disciples. When God calls me to go to a place, I think, "This is an opportunity; I need to use this opportunity to look for persons of peace and invest in them and they become high-potential people." They become disciples who make disciples.

REPLICATING DNA DOWN THE GENERATIONS

To stay in touch with the various generations and ensure DNA is replicating properly, we periodically call the leaders together and evaluate the health of the movement. That helps us see where we are weak and where we are strong. We see our shortcomings and then we work on those. When we evaluate, we might find, for example, that in generation four or five, there's a problem with the DNA. When that happens, we don't address it only with that generation. We start from a couple of generations further back and call the leaders from the relevant generations to one of our equipping centers. We consult together, and after that, we work on whatever issues have arisen.

To do the evaluation, we ask questions like, "What challenges are you facing? How many disciples do you have now? How many are new disciples? How many trainings have you held? How many churches are there and how many DBS's? After looking at all this, and comparing with reports from the previous quarter, we ask any questions that arise from the data.

CONFIRMING ACCURACY OF NUMBERS REPORTED

Sometimes, we send a member of our team who the person doesn't know, to do some reconnaissance. They go to one of the DBS groups or churches and just observe. Other times we may call leaders to come for a training, and we take time to ask them what they're doing. After we see or hear what they are doing, we may realize that something is missing. If we notice someone has tried to cook up results to make us happy, we say, "This is not right." We call their leaders and we address the matter. But we don't pressure them for results or great numbers. We tell them, "If you have not done anything, just report zero. Even zero is a report. Just

one is a report.” That is how we avoid false reporting. This is God’s work. It’s about the kingdom. It’s not about me. It’s not about Lifeway; it’s not about anybody. It’s about God’s kingdom. And God knows what each person has actually done and why they’ve done it. We aren’t doing this to

please men. If someone is not seeing much fruit, it may be that they have family problems, financial problems, a mechanical problem, or some calamity has befallen them. We care about the people more than the numbers.

The principles and the DNA are the same, but we apply those differently, depending on a group’s culture.

If we become aware of anyone cooking the numbers, we call them in and have a conversation. We address the issue generally and explain, “We are doing this for the kingdom and for the glory of God. If it is zero, just report zero.” It’s not a direct confrontation with the person; we want to remove any pressure on them. We just confirm the reports in love and with joy and a lot of grace. After that, they started reporting well: what is really happening. If it is 10, they report 10. If it is zero, zero.”

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRIBES AND AREAS

The culture of the Maasai is different from the culture of the Kipsigis. Likewise, the culture of urban Maasai is not the same as the culture of the interior Maasai (the traditional Maasai). We have to understand these differences by doing research. We send our research team out among these people, to identify the areas of spiritual warfare and the strongholds. The strongholds are different among each tribe: where they worship, what they worship, and how they do their rituals. These things differ from one community to another and from one place to another. We need to know all this so we know how best to enter a community. The principles and the DNA are the same, but we apply those differently, depending on a group’s culture. We need to be very creative, very observant, and very prayerful, to get the leading of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. If we know these things, then building a relationship with them is not a problem.

For example, one group believes in god, but their god is physical: He lives in a tree. When people from that background come to faith, it's usually a gradual process of discipleship. Even after they come to Christ, it takes time for them to change. It is a process of transformation. But as they change, it is easier for them to reach the rest of their community. They know all the dynamics; they know all about people's interests; they know what is happening there. They know those people better than we do. So we just empower them to help people discover God's will in the Scriptures, be transformed, and go share with others.

DBS WITH WITCH DOCTORS

We have one Discovery study with witch doctors—the old men of the community. They don't go to church; they stay at home and I go there. Sometimes, I use an audio Bible; I keep it there and they listen to it. It's in their language, and they say, "This one is right! This is very wise. Who is this talking to me? This man is very wise." I often stop the recording and say, "Can you repeat these words, so you can use this wisdom tomorrow in whatever meeting you have?" They have started passing on the stories on the following days, which is very exciting, even to them.



REACHING IDOL WORSHIPPERS

MESHAK AND JOSEPH ARE LifeNet partners who have engaged the idol-worshipping Samburu people of northern Kenya. We asked them to share about their ministry.

I (Meshak) have been involved in DMM since 2010. I got involved after interacting with one of the teams in LifeNet. Before that, I was doing church-planting using the old church model. But after we started using the DMM approach, our vision expanded, and we started making many more disciples. It made a huge difference in our ministry. I have nine generations of churches, and Joseph has 13 generations.

Our area is mostly the home of the Samburu people, though there are people from some other groups in the urban areas. The Samburu are mostly idol worshipers—traditional African believers. They worship rivers, big trees, and mountains, and offer sacrifices to those gods. Their nomadic way of life is a big challenge for ministry. They move from one place to another, searching for pastures for their livestock. We might have disciples in one place, and then suddenly, they move somewhere else. We don't completely lose contact with them, though. When the rains come, they return.

PATTERNS OF OUTREACH

Our most useful access ministries include medical camps, food distribution, and audio Bibles, which we get mainly from the “Ending Scripture Poverty” project.⁵¹ That’s a very important way of accessing our focus people.

The way we decide where to do fresh outreach is first of all through prayer. We ask God for direction, and he speaks to us and tells us what villages to go to. Then we go and do a survey. We find out whether a church has ever been planted there. If not, we start engaging that village.

Our first goal is to find a person of peace. We introduce ourselves to people, and God leads us to know which person is ready to accept

⁵¹ <https://newgenerations.org/ending-scripture-poverty> (<http://tinyurl.com/3mcs9uhr>).

us in that village. We stay with that person, pray with them, and share Scriptures with them. Through them, we can reach other people. We ask them, “Do you have relatives or friends in this village who might be interested to come and hear the same things we are sharing with you?” The person of peace opens doors for us to be able to connect with other people. They become the door-opener for reaching the whole community. We speak the Samburu language, so we are like family. When we go to a village, we introduce ourselves by saying who we are and from which family we come.

They will understand, “Yes, we know that family and where they live. What else?”

Then we tell them, “We are Christ-followers and we want to make disciples. Will you allow us to share with you the good news of the kingdom?”

We often hear somebody respond, “Oh yes, we want to listen.” When we see a person speaking positively on behalf of others, we realize that this one may well be a person of peace, so we get to know that person better.

If someone’s not a person of peace, those in this people group will not reject anyone harshly. But we can discern that a person is not accepting the message when they begin to ignore us and not pay attention to what we’re saying. When we see they’re not paying attention, we don’t force anything on them. We just say, “I am leaving now, and I will come back again another time. God bless you.” It is always good to promise to return, and good to actually do it. Sometimes, when a person doesn’t seem interested the first or second time, we might see them responding on the third visit. So, it’s not good to give up after the first try.

When we enter a village, we go to the homestead, where five or six or even 10 families are staying together. In our culture, men and women don’t mix. Normally, men have a place where they stay together, and women have a place where they stay together. So we have to choose whether we want to go to the women or go to the men. The warriors also have their own place. You can choose to talk to each of the groups separately or, if you get a person of peace, it could be easier to call all of them together and begin sharing with them all together.

It’s generally best to speak with a small group rather than speaking to a large group. It’s much easier to identify a person of peace in a small

group, because you can more easily see people's reactions. In a larger group, it takes more time to identify a person of peace. So we might go among the women and speak to them, then go among the men and speak to them, then go among the warriors and speak to them. That's how we do it. If, for example, two male disciple-makers go there, it's fine for them to talk with the women, as long as it's not a man talking to a woman alone, which could be misinterpreted. We always go with a partner, two by two.

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDIES

When we find a person of peace, we ask if they will allow us to do a Discovery Bible Study. We normally do these studies via storytelling because most of our people are illiterate. They don't have Bibles in their houses. So it is our responsibility to prepare ourselves before we go. That way, whenever they give us an opportunity to share with them, we're ready. If they consider it a good story, they will want us to come again and share another story.

One of our favorite stories is the creation story from Genesis. That tells about how God created, at the beginning of all things. When we narrate that story, they will pay attention. They are interested to know there is a book that actually tells us about God doing all these things. Those are always the first stories we share with our people.

Let's say, for example, we go to a village and tell the story. Then, when we go again to do a DBS, we ask them, "Do you remember the last story?" Their answer will tell us whether they were paying attention to the story last time. If they can tell the essence of the story, then we move to another story and continue on through the series of stories. After we narrate a story, we ask the full set of DBS questions for discussion as part of their discovery.

Illiterate people will always understand less than the literate people. An oral learner will come to understand things differently than a literate person. So, the storyteller might tell the story two or three times, then ask two or three of those in the group to retell the same story in their own words. The facilitator asks them questions after they have digested the whole thing. This all takes place orally, in the Samburu language.

If a DBS consists of both men and women, the men often will be quicker to answer questions, but the leader won't allow just men to answer everything. They make sure everyone gets involved. Everyone in the group must respond to each question. We also have found it's very good to have some older people with less education and younger people with more education together in the same DBS. The more educated can raise the level of understanding of the less educated.

A typical DBS group consists of seven to 10 people. If it exceeds 20, they should divide into groups of five to seven people, so they have enough time for everyone to take part in sharing, explanation, and discussion.

COMING TO FAITH AND BECOMING A CHURCH

The number of DBS stories needed before people understand the gospel and are ready to receive Christ depends on their level of understanding. If the members of a DBS group can quickly understand, five or six stories will be enough for them to come to faith and be ready for baptism. But if all the people in the DBS are older and illiterate, it takes a long time. The old traditions are deeply rooted in them, so transformation takes a long time for them.

We explain to them that salvation is a gift. It's not by your works or your sacrifices; it's only by the grace of God who gave his Son, so that all who believe can receive salvation. We help them understand that it's not through circumcision or through worshiping idols. Those things will never bring salvation. It is through Jesus that we receive salvation and eternal life. The Samburu people have a common prayer: "God, give me a life beyond this." We often use that as a bridge, and explain that Jesus is the only one who can give us a life beyond this. We sometimes use that bridge even before starting a DBS; then in DBS, we use Scriptures to reinforce that message, including many texts from Romans.

When people come to faith in Christ, we help them discover God's will about forsaking idols through Discovery Bible Study in Acts 17:29-30. We also take them to John 3:16, so they understand God loved the world so much that he gave Jesus Christ. Jesus became the bridge. Then, when they study Acts 17, they understand: In the past, we worshiped other gods, but now we are supposed to worship Jesus Christ, and accept him as the

way to God. We also allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to other passages that will help them understand, and illustrations that can make them smile and keep them engaged.

After people come to faith, the DBS becomes a “gathering.” That’s where people learn the word of God in depth. It’s also where baptism takes place, and where leadership development happens. All the functions of the church happen in the gathering. Teaching normally happens through DBS. We praise and we worship, but DBS is the heartbeat of the gathering and the key to the movement.

The gathering meets mainly on Sundays, but we also have DBS during the week. The gathering is bigger than a DBS, and some DBS’s grow into gatherings. It depends on the leader of the DBS. He’s the one who organizes the regular meeting—on either a daily or weekly basis. We give room for our disciples to work things out for themselves, and we also encourage them to do DBS daily in their families—each evening or morning or noontime—whenever they have opportunity. A family may be a nuclear family or an extended family, or even extend to neighbors.

The gathering also includes leadership development. The leaders trained there will then move to another place—to find another person of peace and begin another DBS, which can become another gathering. And that gathering does leadership development, so the process goes on and on. It repeats itself as it expands into various villages and areas.

GENERATIONS AND LEADERS

The Samburu tribe has a circumcision ceremony every 15 years, and that’s how they count a generation. The younger generations are much more educated than the older ones, and also more civilized, because they have been to school. For this reason, they accept the gospel much more easily than the older generation (those over 50). Most men of the older generations have not accepted Christ or become disciples. But we have three generations that are more civilized and more open than the first

The Samburu people have a common prayer: “God, give me a life beyond this.” We often use that as a bridge.

Samburu generation. These younger generations are mainly the ones coming to faith and making disciples.

It is like the light is coming, and the darkness is moving out, because education is bringing the light. Civilization is also bringing light, along with the light of the gospel. We look forward to a very good future, where civilization and the gospel will permeate the whole group.

The local leaders of gatherings meet together weekly—every Monday—to discuss how things are going in the ministry. Those groups usually consist of about 15 leaders. Every generation has a system for weekly leaders' meetings. The meeting is a whole-day event, since some of them travel 20-25 miles to attend the meeting, and not all the leaders have their own motorbikes. The regional leaders meet monthly. All of these people are herders, though they might do other work as well. This means they have quite flexible schedules.

At these meetings, we pray together, hear reports from all the leaders about what is happening on the ground (challenges and victories), and plan for our outreach. We try to work through some of the challenges at that time, and other issues we just pray for, depending on what they are.

My greatest joy in DMM is that we are reaching many generations of people with the good news of salvation.

UNLEASHING DISCIPLE-MAKING LEADERS





FINDING AND FORGING LEADERS

A DISCIPLE MAKING MOVEMENT is a Leadership Development Movement, because a movement can only proceed as leaders are identified, nurtured, trained, and mentored. Many movements have collapsed for lack of sufficient leaders.

From the beginning, as a new simple church takes root, the movement leader must give careful attention to helping the church identify and develop indigenous leaders. We have only to look to the example of Jesus and the Early Church to see how they developed and empowered inside leaders from among those being transformed by the gospel. Leadership development relationships included Jesus and the 12 disciples; Barnabas with Paul; Paul with Timothy and Titus.

Paul's final address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38) gives us insight into how church leadership should take care of a spiritual flock. Potential leaders (biblical elders) within a group could be recognized by their character, their obedience to the Scriptures, their wisdom, their care for people, and their initiative. Sometimes these qualities are evident within two to three meetings; sometimes it takes longer.

Ruth, who leads movements streams among two different religious groups, comments: “After a group has been doing Discovery studies for three or four months, and some have started following Christ, we look to see who in the group has leadership potential. We equip those and raise them up as leaders.”⁵²

Albert,⁵³ working among a “sandwich” of religious groups, says:

As groups grow, we watch for potential leaders, and work to develop them . . . when we grow indigenous leaders, rather than depending on outsiders, we see the multiplication becoming a movement. Each church—among groups from all the different kinds of backgrounds—normally has a plurality of leaders, depending on the functions and growth within

52 See more of Ruth's testimony in Chapter 10: Ruth Proclaims the Redeemer.

53 See more of Albert's testimony in Chapter 16: Reaching a Sandwich of Faiths.

the gathering. A group may have two, three, or four leaders, depending on the situation.

THE FOUR CS

We've identified four characteristics we look for in potential leaders, which accompany their vision for the lost and passion for God's kingdom. We call these characteristics the four Cs of leadership: Calling, Charisma, Character, and Commitment.

- a. **Calling** is something a disciple senses personally from the Lord, but it is also confirmed by others who are mature, as they see the fruit of whatever ministry the disciple puts their hand to.
- b. **Character** reflects the heart and conduct of an emerging leader, because it reflects the nature of Jesus. While character is evident from the very start of one's leadership journey, it should continue to grow as the leader progresses in ministry. Each new season of leadership provides fresh opportunities to grow in Christlike character.
- c. **Charisma** is a God-given passion for ministry. Charisma is valuable, but it is not enough, unless it is built on the foundation of Christlike character beneath it. Charisma and character need to be in balance. If a person ministers based just on their charisma, but has significant character issues, they will eventually be exposed by their deficiencies.
- d. **Commitment** is needed to carry a leader through the challenges that will arise along the way. Effective leaders have both a commitment to Christ and to the people being reached through the movement.

All four of these key characteristics can be seen in great biblical men of God from Abraham and Moses to Jesus and Paul.

DEVELOPING INSIDE LEADERS FOR SIMPLE CHURCHES

As we review the multiple movements that God has birthed across eastern Africa, we can detect a consistent progression of mileposts along the way.

1. **Pray.** Every movement begins with prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit: that he would show us the leaders he has chosen for this group. Prayer not only begins the movement, it guides each step along the way. Ado, who coordinates movement ministry in two different countries, says: “We learned that we first needed to start with prayer, which can open things that wouldn’t open any other way.”⁵⁴
2. **Identify.** We begin by identifying at least two potential leaders, and begin training them on the side. This happens without telling them we are training them as leaders. We model leadership for them, talk with them—about how they’re growing, what challenges they’re experiencing, and how they’re handling those challenges.

We don’t begin by telling them they are leaders, because in our context, when you tell someone they’re a leader, it changes how they think and how they behave. Jesus’s disciples struggled with that when they argued about who was going to become the leader. Jesus responded by saying, “Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant.” We talk to potential leaders about their lives, and check on how things are developing on their spiritual journey. We ask about their personal disciplines and daily habits. Along the way, we comment on some of the things we observe.

For example, I might ask a potential leader, “Tell me your thoughts behind doing X, Y, or Z.” I also let them accompany me in ministry and give them opportunities as I assign them ministry-related tasks and see how they respond. For example, I might have them lead a DBS, then ask them how they did it. Or I might send them to do ministry somewhere instead of my going. Then I’ll give feedback on what they did, and note things I appreciate. Sometimes, I’ll do something unexpected, just to see their reaction. I want to know how they react under pressure. Other times, I may ask about their family and pray with them

⁵⁴ See more of Ado’s testimony in Chapter 9: Reaching Another Faith.

about personal and family issues. They don't yet realize they're being groomed for leadership, but I already see their potential, so I invest in them. I just watch how they grow, and guide them in the process.

3. **Empower.** We empower the emerging house-church leaders with information and knowledge, and gradually allow them to take a leadership role in the group meetings. Albert comments: "In the very strict areas. . . . we need to train them well, because we as outsiders don't hang around in those places. We equip and empower them, then disappear so we don't expose them to undue suspicion within their community."⁵⁵ Allowing them to make mistakes allows them to learn from those mistakes.⁵⁶

A key element in empowering is to train them in Bible knowledge, deepen their personal devotional life, develop leadership skills, and build networks of resources from within their community of believers. Among oral learners, instruction doesn't happen through just telling them something. It happens through relationship and conversation, asking questions like: "How is your prayer life? When do you pray? How do you pray? How do you lead your group? Who else are you bringing alongside you to pray with you, so they can learn from you how to pray?"

When I ask these questions, it's not like I'm giving them a quiz. It's just a conversation, not a formal session where someone has prepared material and makes an appointment to come present it.

55 See more of Albert's testimony in Chapter 16: Reaching a Sandwich of Faiths.

56 I (Aila) tell cross-cultural messengers they need to realize that differences in culture result in significant differences between the role of an inside leader and the role of an outside leader. An outside leader will probably not be the one to start a movement. Their role is to develop an inside leader. I always tell them: "Don't get confused about your roles." If an outside leader tries to fulfill the role of an inside leader, they'll start having relationship issues. If they're going to be in a community for only six months to two years, why would they want to do something that's just going to end when they leave? From the very beginning, outsiders should envision their departure, and choose ministries accordingly.

I don't want them to tell me what they *think* I want to hear. When people feel relaxed, they may share all kinds of things that were not on some official agenda. In this way, we can learn more of what's really happening.

Nomadic leaders, for example, are very intelligent, but they are oral people. They're very good listeners, and they can remember things for a very long time, but we've learned that it works better not to talk about a lot of things at one time, and the conversation can't be a monologue. It has to be a dialogue; that's how they learn. When we tell them a biblical principle, we add a proverb or tell a story, then always ask a question about the story we've told them. That way we can be sure the message will stick with them. This is how we make the most of oral-learning dynamics in multiplying churches among nomadic people groups.

One of the golden rules for leadership development is: "Don't do for people what they could do for themselves. That doesn't empower them; it weakens them. Focus on doing the things that are uniquely yours to do. Your role is to help them be able to succeed when you leave, as they take up responsibility within their own context."

4. **Coach.** Coaching involves growing leaders through developing their skills. We do this in a relational way, through ministering together and debriefing after ministry experiences, asking key questions to highlight strengths and shore up weaknesses. As we coach emerging leaders, we see the development of both their capacity and their skills. Each emerging leader has unique skills and capacities, and by working with them over time we

Potential leaders (biblical elders) within a group could be recognized by their character, their obedience to the Scriptures, their wisdom, their care for people, and their initiative.

can see their deficits strengthened, and their abilities developed to their fullest capacity. Thomas, doing movement ministry in the midst of war zones, says: “I’m an outside leader, so when I go there, I aim to instill in them the right DNA, so the gospel not only can take root but also multiply effectively. They still have challenges and questions, so I still coach them and help them to grow.”⁵⁷

5. Release. In this stage, let them take full responsibility. Jesus developed disciples and told them to “Go.” When I look at Matthew 28:19, I don’t see any command to “come back.” He just says, “Go,” and (elsewhere), “*I’m* coming back.” In my mind, release doesn’t mean you disconnect yourself from them. You empower them to go and do the ministry. Along the way, you pray for them and encourage them, because their real power is not from you, but from the Holy Spirit who is already within them.

Too often, leaders want to hold on to the people they’ve developed, but then those next-level leaders don’t have the autonomy to be reproductive themselves. They’re always functioning in the shadow of the person who holds the real authority. Release means “let them go and do what God called them to do.” As we release them, we become a resource for them in the background. When they need prayer or encouragement or some mentoring, we’re available, but their accountability is ultimately to Jesus.

I have applied this principle of “Release” with each of the members of the Lifeway Network, as illustrated in each of the testimony chapters in this book. They, in turn, have applied it with their coworkers, who have applied it through the various levels of leadership, all the way to the simple church leaders being raised up. I tell people: “Catalyze a movement, give it away, and don’t expect it to come back to you. Keep on coaching the process and trust what God’s Spirit will do as the movement goes further and further away from you, carrying the healthy DNA of

57 See more of Thomas’s testimony in Chapter 15: In the Midst of Wars.

biblical discipleship. It doesn't need to have our logo on it; it's the expansion of God's kingdom. That's what movement is all about.

6. **Evaluate.** In Luke 10:17-20, we see that after Jesus sent out the 70 disciples on a ministry trip, he did an evaluation with them when they returned. They gave a report on what they saw and experienced, and Jesus gave his commentary on it. So, we assess the growth of emerging leaders, and help them bridge gaps and move beyond whatever weaknesses they may have. They might have some areas of ministry that haven't been well developed, or I might notice something that's missing or not as strong as it could be. We might encourage a leader to go back to school, or get more training in a certain area.

For those at the level of a movement leader, we do recommend theological training. They're no longer just DBS leaders, church leaders, coaches, or mentors. They now have roles in which people are asking them theological questions, so they need to have accurate knowledge. They need to be able to interact with theologically trained people who may want to come and argue about some things. I have a broad perspective because I'm a movement leader, but I also have training that can help me respond to certain concerns and give me a broader understanding. We need leaders who can interact with the broader world, and with conversations outside the world of their specific context and movement.

Besides the measure of theological training available within our network, we often send emerging leaders for an MA in biblical studies. It's similar to, but not exactly the same as studying the Bible. We have a school in Kenya that is a good place for some of our leaders to go for that training, but now we also are developing our own training from inside the network, so that leaders can come to Lifeway and take a course.

7. **Teach** them to develop other leaders (2 Tim. 2:2). Jesus himself modeled this during his three-year relational-training program with his 12 disciples. He could have done all the ministry himself,

but he very intentionally involved his disciples in what he was doing, and gave them opportunities to try their hand at ministry themselves. He knew a time was coming when he would no longer be around in the flesh, so he gave them a pattern to follow in equipping others. Andrew*, who works among a variety of groups, including refugees, comments:

I do the leaders' gatherings at different levels. . . . After I meet with the leaders in their respective areas, they go and meet with their teams and other leaders down their stream of the movement. Most of them have chosen to meet with their group of leaders once a month. But some of them meet on a weekly basis to share their testimonies and challenges, and pray together.⁵⁸

8. **Mentor** the leaders. Leaders need to hear from God, and they also need to hear from others who speak into their lives. We see, for example, how Barnabas mentored Paul: recognizing his gifts, giving him opportunities to minister, and even allowing him to exercise his apostolic gifts and calling, becoming the more prominent member of their ministry team over time. Mentoring involves capacity building, skills development, and team building. For example, if the person I'm mentoring is involved in DMM in just one country, having them see what DMM looks like in a different country gives them exposure to new facets of the Lord's work. They can learn from what's happening in a slightly different context and from what others are doing, as they learn from other leaders who have done well in sustainable ministry.

In the same way, we also try to give leaders exposure to different roles within the movement, to see how they handle these roles that are outside their context. Along the way, we also provide member care to these apostolic leaders, including debriefing them, especially as they work cross-culturally. Some of the questions we use include: "How is your personal prayer life?

58 See more of Andrew's testimony in Chapter 13: Holistic Mission and Witch Doctors.

How are your marriage and family life? How are you handling issues and challenges that have arisen? What have your children experienced and how are you handling that? If a family member or extended family member has died, how has that affected you? How are you processing key incidents that have happened in the field? What are your feelings about your cross-cultural experiences?"

We allow them to talk through various things, pray with them, and help them get some rest and time for reflection. For those working cross-culturally, we bring them back for a three-week debrief after six months. We have specific things they work on during that time.

Multiplication of inside leaders is crucial to the growth and continuance of a Disciple Making Movement. To help ensure sustainability and accountability, we utilize leadership teams than relying just on individual leaders. Having a leadership team avoids the problem of having an issue between a team member and an individual leader. Intentionally utilizing a leadership team protects the ministry and provides a broader range of help for the emerging leaders.

Because we live in a fallen world, we've also had to create a process for removing a leader when needed. The approach we take is this: We don't question their calling; that's why they are in the field. We don't judge their commitment, because we see it. The most important issue to focus on is character. If character goes wrong, it affects everything. So, if we hear of character complaints about a leader, we may pull them out of an area. If, for example, they have become arrogant, or not a team player, or disrespectful to people, when we notice that kind of thing, it's better if the person leaves quickly, lest they do damage to the group and cause pain to everyone involved.

Apostolic leaders always report to somebody who is mentoring them: someone who checks in on them from time to time. Ministering with a plurality of leaders also helps when working through challenging issues.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Have you identified possible leaders from your DBS group?
- What are you doing to develop their DMM leadership potential?

THE DMM LEADERSHIP PYRAMID

We have observed six levels of leadership in the movement. To show how these six levels relate, we developed the Leadership Pyramid. The initial idea for this pyramid builds on a concept from David Watson. To adapt it to our context, I spent about two years crafting a specific Lifeway version of the pyramid. The leadership pyramid guides DMM leaders in their development from level one to level six. The disciple-maker keeps this pyramid in mind when identifying, developing, and mentoring emerging leaders—starting from the Discovery Bible Study group level.

Let's examine each level of the DMM Leadership Pyramid.



1. **Person of Peace.** Even though the person of peace may not end up becoming the Discovery Bible Study group facilitator, they function as one type of leader, because they already have a sphere of influence, such as their network of existing relationships within their community. Most often, these persons of peace open their homes for the initial DBS group meetings. They also allow the disciple-maker(s) to network with others within their sphere of influence or circle of friendships. Justin, leading a movement in Rwanda, says: “We see that ‘the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few,’ so we aim to have the person of peace become another worker. We continue to learn with them and help them become disciples of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁹
2. **Discovery Bible Study Group Facilitator.** This is an emerging indigenous leader who starts facilitating the Discovery Bible Study after the outside (apostolic) leader has initiated it. Following the example of the outside initiator, this inside facilitator begins to take responsibility to help the group process all the basic DBS questions: “What did you learn? How did God speak to you? What are you going to obey? Who are you going to share with?” Then, beginning after the first meeting, the facilitator continues the pattern of the outside initiator by asking the group, “With whom did you share what you learned? How did it go?” After the inside facilitator comes to faith, he or she often assumes the role of the disciple-maker.

The outside leader gets the group started, and then gradually passes on leadership to the inside leader. The inside leader begins leading while the outside leader is still present in the group, so that when he or she leaves, the group doesn’t fall apart. The inside leader already has learned how to lead, and the group is used to that leadership. Andrew* notes: “We have seen the great importance of the indigenous person. An indigenous leader can

59 See more of Justin’s testimony in Chapter 24: Catalyzing Movements in Rwanda.

speak their language and relate very well with them.”⁶⁰ A good indication of a sustainable group is when it becomes self-led. By this time, most of the group may have become believers. The DBS facilitator might also be the person of peace, but at other times another leader may rise up within the group. Various people have various gifts, so one of the jobs of the outside leader is to recognize and nurture the leadership potential of individuals within the group. Some will be more gifted than others, but everyone has God-given potential.

3. **Multiple Group Coordinator.** As the outside leader identifies multiple persons of peace leading to multiple Discovery Bible Studies, he or she becomes a Multiple Group Coordinator. In one area, he or she may be over five DBS groups, each with a dedicated facilitator. The coordinator gives oversight and mentoring to these facilitators. For example: once a week, for about two hours, the coordinator spends time with these leaders and discusses what they will do in the coming week, asking questions such as, “How is your group doing? What did you learn? What are the challenges?” In this way, we train them based on what they are experiencing. The function of the coordinator corresponds to the establishment of elders who shepherd others in ministry.⁶¹ This is hands-on learning, on-the-job training. The material for the mentoring grows out of the experiences the facilitators are having in real time. It is very reproducible, and doesn’t depend on outside information or expertise. We love this type of mentoring, because when people learn from practice, the questions they ask are questions of concrete learning, not questions of theory or philosophy.

Too often, in traditional education, when students say, “I don’t understand,” it is because they are not putting anything into practice. But when they are learning in a cohort, they each

60 See more of Andrew’s testimony in Chapter 13: Holistic Mission and Witch Doctors.

61 In addition to “The Four Cs,” described earlier in this chapter, Scripture lists the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

learn from what they are experiencing and putting into practice. At this level, we guide the new simple churches to appoint elders for their churches as they identify and develop emerging leaders from within the DBS groups. They identify these emerging leaders by asking, “Who are we developing as leaders in this group? Who has that potential?” Occasionally, the coordinator might visit a DBS group, just as a quiet observer, so they can see the facilitator at work and how they interact with the group.⁶²

4. **Mentors and Coaches.** The Mentors and Coaches have developed, been mentored, and now oversee several Multiple Group Leaders or Coordinators. This may include Multiple Group Leaders in a certain region or among a cluster of people groups. The relationship is not like that of a boss and employee. Their interaction consists mainly of monthly or bimonthly visits to encourage the leaders. They listen to their stories and ask questions to find out issues that need to be addressed. Those issues then become topics for a DBS, which they do together. They also may share some lessons or training on relevant topics, sometimes bringing them together with others for mutual learning. The mentor’s main function is to develop the coordinators’ skills and capacity to train and mentor their DBS facilitators. They often do this by giving opportunity to speak on certain lessons or lead a training on a topic. In this way, leadership develops from the grass roots

62 Occasional visits are one of the ways we guard against false reporting, which happens occasionally but rarely. False reporting occurs if facilitators perceive some benefit to having bigger numbers. But because we have people working in teams, those giving reports are accountable to their teams, not just to the movement leader. We call this a shepherding movement. That means the role of any data is to help each leader as a shepherd to understand the condition of their sheep. It’s not about *the movement leader’s* sheep, it’s about *the sheep* they’re shepherding. The numbers just mean those for whom *they* are responsible. If they think the numbers will impress someone from outside, that can lead to temptation. Or if someone is applying pressure for bigger numbers it can tempt them. We try to avoid those dynamics, to help leaders be responsible before God for whoever the Lord has entrusted to them. In fact, we’re now creating training on how to shepherd a movement.

upward, creating momentum and growth that sustains the movement. We call this “flipping the pyramid.”

5. **Movement Leaders.** We consider someone a Movement Leader when the ministry has grown to at least four generations of churches reproducing churches, including at least 100 churches, with multiple leaders in each generation. We develop these leaders mostly through practice, along with relevant training. Right now, one of my key roles is spending time with each of the Movement Leaders in East Africa. We have about 45 Movement Leaders, but I mainly interact with 18 top country leaders (many of whose testimonies are included in this book), to whom the others report. I cover topics with them, such as how to facilitate a movement with multiple streams and multiple generations. That’s quite different from just leading DBS groups.

When the work reaches four generations with multiple streams, some leaders aren’t able to lead it. They need ways to structure things, so they can continue to facilitate the movement. They have to learn how to develop networks and collaboration, how to recognize potential new leaders, and how to build leadership teams. We provide learning for many new skills such as these. At this point in the development of the ministry, many of the DBS groups have become growing churches. They now need not just DBS leaders; they need to develop people with pastoral gifts. We have developed equipping hubs, where we present basic Bible knowledge: things like Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, study of church from Ephesians, leadership from the book of Joshua, and so on. At this point, it’s not just a DBS, but deeper training to cover the need for pastoral gifts to lead a church.

6. **Global Catalysts.** This is where the movement leader grows to become a catalyst beyond their movement to launch new movements among Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in their own and other countries. We can also describe these catalysts as apostolic disciple-makers. We compare them to red-hot embers, used to

kindle a new fire in a different location. When this happens, we have a movement starting a new movement. Global catalysts use their experience in growing movements from the first to the fifth level to help other nations launch their own Disciple Making Movements. They serve to catalyze, mentor, and coach the movement leaders, and launch new movements in yet-unreached People Groups and places.

For launching into new UPGs, we always encourage ministry in teams. The team could be just one couple, but never an individual. Their ministry focus might not be on just one people group. Deciding which group or city to engage is a group decision. In a city, we usually find a mixture of people groups, so we focus on the unreached people in a particular part of the city. We always consider three categories of peoples or places for engagement: *those with existing ministry, those with new ministry, and those still unengaged*. We list everything we do under one of these categories. The unengaged always remain in our prayers. Our strategy involves *not* focusing all our effort and resources on places already engaged.

In engaged places, we keep on encouraging multiplication and sustainability. In new places, we focus on engaging the unreached by launching the DMM process with an access ministry and searching for a person of peace. We keep praying for the unengaged, and then send research teams to find out important information for prayer and initial engagement. We always keep before our minds the pattern of these three kinds of places, so we keep moving toward the unengaged and don't get stuck focusing on those already engaged. Throughout the process, we build networks with other Disciple Making Movements, with whom we can collaborate and share best practices from what we are learning through Scripture and our experience.

The DMM Leadership Pyramid also illustrates a pattern of growth in three dimensions, as we look at these things from the perspective of a growing movement. At the bottom, we have a growing breadth, which reflects the catalyzing of new groups at

the grassroots level, taking the gospel to increasing numbers of tribes and language groups. Out of those engagements, we find new persons of peace at the first level.

The ascending dimension of the pyramid describes the direction of a leader's growth in DMM from their origins as a person of peace to their development into a global catalyst. The descending dimension reflects the leader's growing depth of influence and maturity: impacting successive generations of *other* leaders in the pyramid.



MENTORING AND COACHING EMERGING LEADERS

In Disciple Making Movements, leaders must have the DNA of finding their replacement, so they have freedom to move on to initiating new groups. The “Who is next?” question is crucial, from the beginning of the Discovery Bible Study group meetings. The person of peace is the first level of leader—whether they themselves become the first group leader or introduce the disciple-maker to a potential leader. The apostolic leader, intending to start a movement, is an outside leader, so they need to find an inside leader. The question we always ask is, “Who is the next leader?” We keep asking this question, whether it's the leader of a DBS or a church that has emerged out of a DBS.

This is why we see a Disciple Making Movement as a leadership development movement. No leaders, no movement. That's why leadership development is critical. Jesus started developing leaders very early. Matthew makes this clear in Chapter 4. Jesus called potential leaders right at the start of his ministry, and he developed them by doing ministry *with* them. He didn't launch a ministry and get it well under way, and *then* start looking for leaders to pass the ministry on to. He did ministry and leadership training simultaneously. The disciples watched while he did all kinds of ministry, so when he left, they knew just what to do through the power of the Holy Spirit. They did what they had watched Jesus do, over and over. So, we always ask ourselves: "As I am doing this role right now, who is the next person to be doing it?"

Some ministries don't transition well because they go out recruiting and bring in leaders from outside, who don't have the same movement DNA. If a leader just comes in and wants to change everything, they don't resonate with what has been happening before they arrived. This is why we place so much importance on developing *inside* leaders, indigenous leaders, from day one. Of course, it takes time and relational investment for them to become an effective leader. But for effective multiplication, each leader must lead others through the same process they themselves experienced in becoming a leader. Wilson, leading a movement in the ghettos of Uganda, describes it this way: "I coach leaders, mentor them, train them, mingle with them, relate to them, and we share life. It's a relationship; it's not just about talking. What they learn from me, they pass on to someone else."⁶³

We provide channels for these leaders to emerge, on-ramps for that, and are always intentional in the process. Mentoring and coaching the process is equally critical in developing a movement. We can never assume emerging leaders know what to do next, as the movement unfolds. It's a daily process of relational investment. We tell people: "When you stop learning, you stop growing. And when you stop growing, something dies." We all still have so much to learn; we've got to keep learning every day.

63 See more of Wilson's testimony in Chapter 28: Light in the Ghettos.

EXPOSING LEADERS TO DMM MODELS IN OTHER CONTEXTS

Disciple Making Movements look different in different contexts: urban vs. rural; formal religion vs. folk religion; literate vs. non-literate. Approaches and methods differ greatly in each of these contexts. In villages, people mostly belong to one tribe; in urban areas, people aren't separated by tribe, so we look for different kinds of "tribes," affinity groups or occupational groups. We might have a special focus on street children or those who love sports. The gospel and the principles of DBS remain the same, but the contexts differ. The DBS texts chosen may be different because of different worldviews or religious beliefs that people hold. (See Appendix C.) The words chosen to express God's eternal truth must be words people understand in ways that really make sense to them in their context. For example, with people from some other religious backgrounds, we may call the believer's groups a "gathering" instead of a "church." We give each group freedom to decide what to call God's unchanging truths to suit their context.

Growing movement leaders and apostolic leaders must be exposed to these truths in their context. This enables them to reflect on their current practices, to see if they can improve or adjust them for greater fruitfulness. The leaders may become part of a Disciple Making Movement network as one way to gain this exposure. One example is the Global Disciple Making Network (GDMN), which we started just two years ago. It consists mostly of people using a DMM approach; but for us, DMM is just a form of Church Planting Movement, because the outcome of DMM is churches planted.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- How might the DMM Leadership Pyramid be relevant to your ministry?
- What principles or patterns could you apply to facilitate a movement?

RESOURCING AND SHARING

Movements cannot survive without a network of like-minded practitioners, so any practitioner who is not part of a network needs to either

find or create one. Networks come in many forms, such as people, tools, and financial resources. We share training materials and sometimes embed a trainer in a movement for maybe a year, to give them coaching. The network allows an exchange of information and ideas in an informal setting. It creates an avenue to develop a long-term relationship where all parties benefit from the interaction.

Collaboration is working together to complete a task or achieve a goal. Some people are involved in networks but don't know how to collaborate. We aim to not only get people involved in networks, but also help them understand how to collaborate and work together to achieve desired outcomes.

The greatest source for a DMM network is the disciples, and connecting leaders and catalysts to other movement networks with whom they can collaborate. Each network is filled with people who have different gifts and resources, and sharing these resources can help one another. Some may have skills and gifting in training, coaching, and counseling, while others may have access ministry skills such as business or agriculture, all of which are useful for the sustainability of a movement. Some in the network may have tools to share such as Bibles, audio Bibles, videos, the Jesus Film, or finances. How can we network these skills and resources to strengthen one another's work?

An important part of leading a network is training leaders to intentionally pursue the resources in their growing network, to achieve kingdom goals and raise up new disciples of Jesus. I was recently sitting with some leaders from East Africa, and I heard one of them say, "We are family." When something moves from being just a network to people feeling like they are family, the relationships have grown into the kind of kingdom movement that is filled with trust, allowing for increased effectiveness that brings greater glory to God.

In effective networks, people cross-pollinate, learning from each other as they hear what God is doing in various places. They may then adopt and adapt what they have learned to their own contexts.

**Collaboration
is working
together to
complete a
task or achieve
a goal.**

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Are you involved in a network that helps you move ahead in the ministry God has called you to?
- Do you have trusted people with whom you can share in ministry and collaborate?

SABBATICAL AND REST

Ministry patterns that work well in a slow-growth context prove very inadequate for a rapid-growth context. But movement leaders have a lot on their plates, including much travel and time spent engaging with a variety of people and situations. That's part of the rhythm of a movement. So, we encourage rest times and sabbaticals. I take one week off in August and three weeks in December –to spend time with family, and to rest and renew my energy.

In the same way, we encourage all of our movement catalysts to take two years to begin a work and start seeing indigenous leaders raised, and then we encourage them to come out of that context for a month or two of sabbatical, to see how the next generation will do in their absence. In this way, we intentionally create a leadership vacuum, so that new indigenous leaders can emerge and grow. That's part of a gradual change from directly catalyzing to mentoring. After that initial brief sabbatical, the catalyst can check back in to see how the emerging leaders are doing without them. A key to movement development is how well the next generation can function without the catalyst on site.

I sometimes gather next-level leaders and tell them: “Assume your leader has gone to be with the Lord. What would you do?” Many movements stop because they have no plan for handing over the leadership. We always remind ourselves that God is in charge. It’s *his* work, and none of us is going to be here forever.

Sabbaticals allow movement catalysts to recoup their energy, reflect on their work, and listen to God. This time also allows the movement catalyst to reflect on the DMM they have been involved in, to see how the movement fares without them. Does it function and continue to multiply?

Do they see fruit that will remain (John 15:16)? We can trust God to give new insight, new energy, and new strategy for the work ahead.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Have you scheduled times to take a sabbatical?
- How did the movement fare in your absence?



CATALYZING MOVEMENTS IN RWANDA

LIFENET PARTNER JUSTIN HAD his ministry transformed as he incorporated movement principles into his work in Rwanda. We asked him to share his story.

I got involved in DMM in 2010, when I met with Aila at a training in Kenya. Seven or eight months later, in 2011, Aila came to Rwanda to train our leaders. After I learned about making disciples, I came back home and started looking for a person of peace in the community. Before that, I had been a bishop in the church, so I had some ideas about making disciples, but I didn't really know how to do it. I had started a house church, but it was like a traditional church in a home.

After the training, I started following the DMM cycle: finding a person of peace and so on.⁶⁴ We started with one group, and the people in that group had connections with their families. So we reached out from that initial district to the north, south, and west, and experienced multiplication of groups and churches. We now have groups in almost the whole country: 29 out of the 30 districts.

At this point, we have seen 26 generations of churches started since 2010. Last year, we had 21 generations, and last month, when we did research and gathered leaders from different corners of the country, we learned that five more generations of churches had started.

Those being reached come mainly from backgrounds of traditional religions and Roman Catholicism. We also have some from tribes who worship the god Twa.

In our context, we use seven critical steps in training people, to fulfill God's vision for reaching the world. When the disciples gather as a church, we remind them of the vision God has given us for reaching the world, and review these steps. We dramatize the steps, so every disciple has them in their physical memory, as well as in their mind.

The seven steps are: 1. Pray and go, 2. Make disciples, 3. Train them to obey the Scripture, 4. Baptize them, 5. Send them to share their

64 See diagram on page 187.

testimony in the community, 6. Gather them as a church, and 7. Send them, using on-the-job training. All the disciples, from the first generation to the 26th generation, know how to do these seven steps.

We connect prayer and going as the first thing. We train the disciples in how to pray and discern where God is working. When they go to find a person of peace, they aim to build a relationship. Most of the people we're trying to reach know about God, but they don't have a relationship with God. So after we find a person of peace, we show them God's love in practical ways. As we love people, they open their hearts to us. Then, we help them understand the truth from God's word.

Our disciple-makers' lifestyles include daily prayer and going to find people of peace. When they find a person of peace in a community, they help that person discover the truth in God's word. It takes some time for the person of peace to fall in love with Jesus and become a believer. So, until they begin to profess that Jesus is King in their lives, our role as a disciple-maker is to continue to be with them. As Luke 10 says, "Don't move around."

We see that "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few," so we aim to have the person of peace become another "worker." We continue to learn with them and help them become disciples of Jesus Christ. We normally do that through Discovery Bible Studies with a group, which becomes a new church after the people come to faith. We equip people to follow the *oikos*—their household or group of people close to them—to focus on seeing a *group* become believers. Everyone has a family, so that's where we want to start. Sometimes, we do a DBS with one person, but to the best of our ability we try to reach a group of people and keep them connected. In African culture, we live as groups of people who are connected. We like to take people to meet our grandmother and our brother and so on. We can easily use that dynamic to reach other people who are related. It's much more valuable to meet with a group than to meet with just one person. Groups can also reach out in other areas by following the *oikos*—reaching family members in different locations.

We train them to obey only the Bible because in their background, they had obeyed other things. A first step in their obedience is to be

baptized, so we baptize them, and then send them to share their testimony with neighbors and those close to them. That simple testimony includes their life before Christ, how they received Christ, and their life now. During that process, we already see changes in their lives.

Then we connect them to a simple church around where they live. Sometimes we see five or six people come to Christ together, so after they are baptized and share their testimonies, their house becomes the meeting place for a new simple church. We also have gatherings where the disciples learn how to cast vision, so they can become disciple-makers and do outreach and bring other lost people to Christ.

Our concept of making disciples is not to have people just come and sit in the church. We want people to become *disciple-makers* who make other disciples. We equip them to do that through on-the-job training. When they first go out, we go with them and they learn to pray effectively. They see that you don't find a person of peace without God bringing that person to you. So, we train them to pray and have a lifestyle of prayer, so they can see where God is working.

In our area, sometimes traditional church people think we are Jehovah's Witnesses just because we go out two by two. They don't understand, because they don't have a pattern of going to the lost. They wait for people to come to their church. We continue going out, however, because it's an effective way to train new disciples on the job.

I first model the process of sharing, then I give them the opportunity to do the sharing while I watch and pray quietly. Soon, the new disciples are able to do it without me, so we separate and each takes another new disciple. This is how the movement develops different streams and new generations of disciples.

Obedience is key for growing in the Lord and making new disciples. Obedience is the natural response to God's word, as his Spirit applies it to their hearts. We equip and empower the disciples to know very well what the Bible says—the true doctrines taught in the Scripture. This is vital, because in our area we have many false teachers. So we need to train the believers to understand the sound doctrine of the Bible. We teach them God's word, book by book, and we help them understand it. We also translate some materials into our language, so we can train the people

in the simple churches to understand God's word. That way, they are equipped to resist false teaching that may come from outside. Sometimes, a person will enter a group and try to bring in erroneous teaching, but the group members see what God's word actually says, and they immediately recognize that what the person is saying is not good teaching.

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We use many methods to teach God's word, but we primarily use the discovery approach. In our context, the process of becoming a real disciple includes breaking the traditional mindset, in which one person becomes the boss of a group. Sometimes, we have a group in which none of the people can read, but they are able to memorize. So we tell them the Scripture, use Scripture songs, and dramatize Scripture stories. The songs and drama help them memorize what the

Bible says. This enables them to share with others through storytelling, drama, and songs. Most of our people are not educated, so they don't know a lot of things. They need to receive appropriate-sized bits of information, which they can then share with others, without making it complicated.

We help them discover spiritual truth in the Scripture as they answer simple questions. We want to train them to become good disciples of Jesus, so we continually provide appropriate training to help them understand, grow, and share with others. It's not a matter of one person reading the Bible by themselves for just 10 or 15 minutes. It's a group studying together in the simple church, where we practice 1 Corinthians 14:26. ("*When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.*") We encourage everyone in the group to participate and share with the others. Through this, we see people growing spiritually, growing in their understanding of the Scripture, and feeling equipped to share with others.

DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Most of the people in the movement are from a Catholic background, and some from a traditional background. We have a few from another religion, but not many in our context. We had one religious leader who came to faith a few years ago and was reaching others from that background, but after a while he wanted to be a star and broadcast on YouTube and have big debates with people from that background. We tried to help him understand that making disciples is not a matter of fighting and arguing with people, or of getting rich by broadcasting and having people send you money. But he didn't accept our approach and wanted to go his own way. So, we don't work with him anymore. That kind of thing is not our calling; our calling is making disciples.

We help those in our network who come from another faith background to understand the Scriptures and share their faith. But we have only a handful of people from that background. That group is only 8% of our country's population, so there aren't many of them around, and they are harder to reach. Catholics are familiar with hearing about Christ, but many of them don't have a relationship with him. Those from another religion often don't even want to talk with us or hear what we want to share. Even if we start to build a relationship with them, some of their friends may tell them, "Be careful. Those guys want to turn you to their religion." That's a challenge, but we know God is powerful and he's working among them. We pray for them and we believe one day we'll see a breakthrough there. We pray for a good leader who is from that background to help us continue reaching many others from that background.

We work in both rural and urban contexts. One difference between those contexts is that in the urban areas, people are very busy. For this reason, the movement has grown faster in the rural areas. In the urban areas, disciple-makers have to be more creative. They might have a DBS in a coffee shop or wherever people are comfortable.

We have many women in our movement. Rwanda is divided into districts, regions, sectors, and villages. Every village has something the government calls "the night of women." The women get together, all over the country, and they have a cooperative savings program for women

only. We have disciple-makers among the women as they gather, and they share the word of God in the group. These women have baptized many people and planted many churches in the villages. This is why we have many women leading simple churches.

For example, we have a Twa woman whom God called to reach her tribe, the Twa (or Batwa). If I were to go there to share God's word with them, they would look at me as if I'm an expert—because they view me as "Rwandese"—an outsider. But because she's from that tribe, they welcome her more than they would welcome anyone from the outside.

God is using all kinds of people in the movement. Back when I was a bishop, I didn't believe what anyone said unless I considered them to be on my level. But now I have a different attitude, and it's my greatest joy in the movement. I see God using ordinary people to make disciples, and to reach *more people* than I personally am reaching. It fills my heart with joy to see ordinary people making many disciples of Jesus.

GREATEST CHALLENGE

My greatest challenge is some people's religious mindset. We feel sad to be rejected by people who say they serve the same God and claim the same vision for reaching the lost, but because we don't have the same strategy or organizational structure, many of them find it difficult to accept us as fellow-believers. I first faced that challenge in 2010, when I began to work toward DMM, and it hasn't gone away.

My wife was once at a bus station and got a ride in a car with some other people. She was singing a song, and one of the men in the car asked her, "Are you a Christian?"

She said, "Oh yes, I am!"

He asked, "Where is your church?"

She explained, "It's in my home. We gather to pray and worship in my home."

He said, "Who is your pastor?"

She answered, "My husband is the pastor."

This man, who was himself a pastor, said, "Stop the car!" And he kicked her out of the car right on the spot, because her description of church didn't match his pattern.

This illustrates the kind of challenge we have faced from some traditionally religious people, as we make disciples. Some are suspicious of us, and try to stop people from listening to us. Because we don't have a denominational name for our churches, we experience some persecution. But COVID-19 closed a lot of churches. For one year, no one could go to a church building. All the believers worshiped in their homes. They learned that God doesn't live in a special building. Now, they understand that the church can meet anywhere and at any time. They've seen that we are successful at making disciples and planting churches, and many of them have begun coming to learn what we are doing. When existing churches are open, we offer trainings to try to help them understand. Our role as disciple-makers is to catalyze a movement of Jesus's disciples, not to come against the traditional church. We try to help them understand the global mission of reaching the lost.

REFLECTION ON THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

In Rwanda, Hutus and Tutsis all speak the same language. But many Rwandese have come from different neighboring countries. When I was a pastor in a traditional church, 95% of the people in my church came from Burundi—because I was born in Burundi. My father was a refugee there and we came back after the genocide. If you came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, most of the people who joined your church would be people who came from Congo. If a pastor came from Uganda, most of the people in that church would be from Uganda. In some people's minds, that meant division. But in the movement, there is no division. There's no sense of separation because people come from different areas. We are mixed. This is different from the pattern in most churches here. For us, the vision is to reach the lost. It doesn't matter to us where people came from. If people need to know the Lord, we are here reaching out to them.



DISCIPLE MULTIPLICATION IN BURUNDI

BAHZI WAS A REGULAR church member when he began to pursue disciple-multiplication strategies in the East African country of Burundi. This is his story.

I have been involved in DMM for 11 years. A friend of mine invited me to a training by Dr. Aila in Rwanda. That was the first time I heard about DMM: looking for a person of peace and how to make disciples. I was not even a pastor; I was just a member of my denomination in Burundi. I wasn't qualified as a preacher or evangelist, but I learned this simple way to be a disciple who makes disciples.

After the DMM training, I went back to my area in Burundi—Bujumbura—and I started by identifying people who I thought would be well-suited to begin this work. I went to pastors, bishops, and big evangelists. I gathered them and tried to do a training with them. but after six months, I found out that nothing was happening. So I went back to my notes, and checked to see what was wrong. I found that I needed to pray that God would provide a person of peace, and from the person of peace, to start a Discovery Bible Study. The person of peace was the key to a community.

At that time, I was working in the South African Embassy in Burundi and also doing money-changing business with the Forex Bureau. One day, when I was driving into the South African Embassy, I stopped at the gate and asked the security guard (the gate keeper), “Can I talk to you?”

He said, “Yes.”

I asked him where he lived and about his family, then said, “I'd love to visit you at your home sometime.”

He invited me to come to his area. So I went from Bujumbura City, where I live, to Bujumbura Rural—the area where he lives. When I arrived at his house, I found that he had gathered friends and family—about 18 people! I asked them, “Can I share some Scripture with you, so we can discover together?” They agreed, so we started to read the Scriptures, with me asking discovery questions. They were very excited about this process.

After three months, we had 12 new believers from that group, asking to be baptized. This was the first time I had ever thought about how to baptize people, because I was not a pastor. Bujumbura is a small city; everybody knows each other. So if I were to do the baptism in Lake Tanganyika (which is just five minutes away), everybody would see me and ask me what I'm doing baptizing people, because I'm not a pastor.

My in-law had a big house inside a compound, and I had seen that he would sometimes pump water into a big sheet of plastic in a hole in the ground, for the children to swim in. I asked him if I could use it for baptism. I thought, "I need to baptize people where nobody else can see, because I'm not a pastor." Because of our mindset at that time, this was a struggle. I had become a disciple-maker, but inside myself, I had a struggle between obedience to God versus how religion says things should be done.

But we got set up and I pumped water into the plastic, then I exhorted those who wanted to get baptized, and got ready to baptize them. But by the time I finished baptizing the first person, all the water had run out of the plastic! I thought, "What am I going to do with these people?"

In my heart, I felt God was telling me, "You have to go and do it in Lake Tanganyika." Then one of the disciples told me, "You should take us to Lake Tanganyika, because it's just five minutes from here. If you don't have money for transportation, we'll contribute to take a bus and go there." I had some money, so I said to them, "No problem." A few days later, we took a bus to Lake Tanganyika, and when we arrived at the lake shore, people were shouting, "Bahizi, Bahizi! Did you become a pastor?"

They were very shocked. I pretended I didn't hear them, until I got into the water. I told the baptismal candidates, "I'm not going to exhort you right now, because I already did it the other day at the house." Then they came and I baptized each one of them. After I finished, all my fear was lifted. I stood on the shore and began to speak about Jesus to the people who were calling to me. Many of them asked, "Can we have your phone number, so we can meet with you? We want to hear more."

From that experience, I was very encouraged by the Holy Spirit. I decided to train the security guard and these new disciples in how to

start their own groups, facilitate a DBS, and make disciples. Within eight months, we had about 48 new groups! I thought, “What am I going to do with all these people?” We had to do something, because the number of disciples and groups kept growing.

I asked Brother Aila what to do, since he was the one who had taught me how to be a disciple who makes disciples. I said, “We are seeing the number of disciples multiply, but I don’t have any skill in leadership. Can you come and give us some help?”

He was able to come, about a year after we had started using the DMM approach. He found that we had already multiplied to 189 groups, and we had baptized more than 800 people. When he came, he gave us a training in how we could start to work together as a team, how to select leaders, and how to develop new leaders. After that, I had a team of leaders who could help me overcome some of our obstacles.

We’ve had many challenges with growing people’s mindset to comprehend DMM. When they heard the vision for making disciples, they would say, “This is God’s vision.” They would catch the vision, but putting it into practice went very slowly. We look for ways we can impact the denominations that are open, so they can start making disciples. But because they already have established denominational patterns, it’s not easy. Getting to four generations is a challenge for them.

But where we’re working with ordinary people, we now have 28 generations. We currently have about 12,000 disciples in the movement. Not long ago, we had an assessment team come to our area and train us in how to do interviews: how to check the DNA and how to track the generations. We discovered that people had multiplied generations, but in some cases didn’t have clarity on maintaining good DNA.

The number of disciples making disciples and starting groups was growing, but in the case of existing (classic) churches, we struggled a bit. If they see disciples multiply, they want to bring them together in their building, and they want to grow something big in one location. We’re still praying for these folks, so they can overcome this mindset.

We have learned that a good vision plus a good strategy brings good results. So we remain focused on how to grow disciple-makers, not just grow something for ourselves. We want to see God’s kingdom grow.

DIFFERENT GROWTH IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

In our country, about 62% of the population is officially Roman Catholic, 24% is Protestant, and 2.5% is of another faith. The movements are growing fastest among the unbelievers, Catholics, and those of another faith. Those in the Protestant churches are not growing quickly. But from those of another faith, unbelievers, and Catholics, we have disciples who can make disciples.

The groups that have multiplied to 28 generations are mostly among people from a Catholic background. In the Catholic Church, they had one idea of what *ekklēsia* (church) is. Now, they've learned from the New Testament what *ekklēsia* is. It was foundational for them to understand that the church can meet wherever they can meet –in houses, where they are working, or where they are selling things.

The people in Makamba Province have a mixture of backgrounds: non-believers, Catholics, and people of another faith. As they come to follow Christ, the groups tend to include people from mixed backgrounds, because that's how they live and relate normally. Even within families, you can find a mother is Catholic and a father who is of another faith. In Burundi, we don't have radicals of another faith.

We do have a group of people from another faith background, who we have trained in how to share about Jesus among those with the same background. Sometimes, people have a public discussion between Christians and those of another faith. Our team is behind them. After people realize the truth of Christianity, we try to see how we can help them become disciples. Before we did this, they were taking these people to the existing churches and they were just becoming religious Christians, like they used to be religious in their previous faith. Now, we help people to become disciples who make disciples, instead of just being members of a denomination.

We have some groups that started among people of another faith and became churches. I have a coworker who has a long beard and looks like a wise man among them. He's good at living among them and communicating by telling stories. When we have someone from that faith come to Jesus, we don't ask them to leave their previous place of worship. We train them in how to tell their friends and family about Jesus, while they're still

attending. Sometimes the father or aunt or other relatives of the person come to Jesus. God has different ways of bringing them to Jesus.

We've heard the testimony of one lady who was a disciple-maker—selling small fish. A woman from another faith often came to buy from her. When they talked, the disciple-maker would tell her, "You know, I love you, but there is someone who loves you much more."

The lady would ask, "Who is it?"

"It's Jesus."

"No. How can Jesus love me when I'm not even a Christian?"

"Jesus loves everybody: Muslim, Catholic, nonbeliever, whatever their religion."

After a while, the woman asked, "Can I come to your house some day?"

The disciple-maker said, "How about if I come to *your* house?" So she went to the woman's house, and when she got there, she asked, "Is your husband around?"

"No. He's in a different province, because he got a job there. Can I hear about this person you told me of, who loves me more than anyone else?"

The disciple-maker started telling stories of Jesus. She started with the story of the woman caught in adultery, who was about to be stoned. When the woman heard that story, she said, "I've discovered that Jesus can love me, even though I am not a Christian. I feel I want to know more about Jesus." They kept on meeting and learning together about Jesus, and I have a picture of the disciple-maker baptizing that lady.

One day, she asked the disciple-maker, "Can we pray for God to touch my husband? I'm afraid that when he comes back and discovers me telling Jesus stories, I don't know what he will do."

So they prayed, and when the husband heard that she had come to Jesus, he said, "It's okay. I want to know more about Jesus. My wife has been telling me, 'Jesus will change you.'" The wife is now doing a DBS with her husband. He hasn't come to faith yet, but he keeps asking to learn more.

KINGDOM GROWTH AMONG THE UNEXPECTED

We aim to go and meet people's needs where they are. For example, we might find that many people in the community are farmers. So we

bring along a tool (like a hoe) to help them, and while working, we ask them, “Is there something in your life for which you’d like to give thanks to God?” Then, we bridge from what they share to tell them stories of Jesus.

Even while they are farming, some people have started DBS groups. When we bring DBS groups to the community, and people learn how to be good facilitators, the multiplication begins to happen—even from the early steps when they don’t yet understand a lot.

We saw this happen in the province of Bubanza in Burundi. We found a group of people sitting and drinking local beer. When we arrived, we introduced them to one of Jesus’s stories—the story of the rich man and Lazarus. One of them told us, “Don’t waste your time with this bunch. I want you to come to my home, because I want my two wives and children to hear this story.”

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So we went to his home, and he started to tell the story to his family. He was already drunk, but he told the story, just the same as we had told it. Then one of his wives asked, “Can we tell this story, too?” And she began retelling it.

The man informed us that some people had left their village because of one man who was a witch doctor. He said, “I need to go and share this story with the witch doctor.” After hearing the story, the witch doctor burned all his paraphernalia. He said, “I don’t want to finish like the rich man, but I’ve done a lot of bad things.” Then the two men went as a team into the village, to share the story with others.

Later, those who had left the village heard that the witch doctor had become a storyteller and was talking about Jesus. They came back to the area, and many people heard the gospel. Now, that area has no more problem with witchcraft. We have baptized the former witch doctor and he is making disciples.

BAPTISM AS A MARKER OF SINCERE FAITH

We see genuine faith evidenced in a variety of ways. Some people come to Jesus and testify of how their lives have changed—even though they've not yet studied a Scripture like Romans 10 or repeated a certain prayer of repentance. We lead them to discover through Scripture how God wants to forgive their sins and transform their hearts and lives. Some spontaneously tell us, "I want to get baptized now."

One man came to my house out of the blue, while I was doing a DBS with my DMM team, and asked, "Can I get baptized today?"

We asked him, "Why are you asking us to baptize you today?"

He said, "I want to testify about the death and resurrection of Jesus today. I don't want to wait." He had a sense of urgency to testify, that evidenced a significant change in his life. But some others take more time.

I asked the rest of the team, "Can we stop now and go to the lake and baptize him? Then we can come back and continue our DBS?" We went and baptized him, and then came back and finished our study.

A woman in Makamba Province had been making disciples, and we discovered that she had planted 23 new groups. She was involved in baptizing the people in these groups, but she herself had not yet been baptized! She said, "I need someone to baptize me!"

We asked her, "Do you want to be baptized by someone you have baptized? Or what?"

She said, "I feel you who have come to train me should baptize me."

After that, she testified about how her life had changed. She previously had heard that we can make disciples who make disciples, so she was training people in the steps she had learned. But it wasn't until she herself was baptized that she came to a deeper understanding of new life in Christ. God is working powerfully, but the fruit doesn't always follow a neat preset pattern.

BECOMING A CHURCH

When a majority of people in the group speak about their life transformation and get baptized, the group shifts from being a Discovery Bible Study for unbelievers to being a church. We still study the Scripture using DBS, we worship (in song), and we talk about what

we are going to do outside the group. The gathering also includes the Lord's Supper, prayers for the lost, learning how to function as a church, and so on. We have church under trees or wherever space is available.

Altogether, Burundi has 18 provinces; we have groups meeting in 14 of those, with a total of more than 900 churches.⁶⁵ We would like to strengthen our patterns for recording what is happening, but we find that challenging because of weak infrastructure for communication. Yet the Lord is working in great ways to spread his kingdom in our nation.

65 The article “Movements Spreading as God Leads His Children,” in *Mission Frontiers*, Jan/Feb 2023, 12-13 (<http://tinyurl.com/34ckxejf>), describes the spread of this movement, crossing boundaries of province, people group, and nation. Chapter 19, “Bahizi” (pages 111-113), of *From Megachurch to Multiplication* by Chris Galanos (Experience Life, 2018) also contains a brief description of this ministry.

DISCIPLE- MAKING MOVEMENT DYNAMICS





THE LIFE CYCLE OF MOVEMENTS

AM CONVINCED THAT we will be able to finish the work of the Great Commission only through movements. Movement does not mean human motion; movement is God-driven. It involves a sweeping tide of God's kingdom permeating all levels of society. A gospel movement goes from "everywhere to everywhere" as God uses ordinary believers who obey and share their faith with others. It is a viral movement of believers using their relational networks to propagate the gospel.

The Early Church experienced a gospel movement created and sustained by the Holy Spirit through believers who learned, followed, obeyed, and shared with others. The movement flowed and grew through their relational networks. Christian communities emerged from this. The Church was a living organism that grew and produced much fruit. The Lord pruned it as leaders addressed problematic issues that arose.

This first gospel movement continued until Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. In AD 313, Emperors Constantine and Licinius agreed to legalize Christianity. In AD 380, Emperor Theodosius issued the Edict of Thessalonica that made (Nicene) Christianity the Empire's state religion.

This brought freedom from persecution and widespread acceptance of Christianity. It also led to the institutionalization and domestication of the Church, as it changed to become a more structured organization. As a result, the gospel has often remained largely stuck within the walls of church buildings.

We need to return to the original functioning of the Early Church. We need to shift from viewing church as an organization with buildings and management structures, to seeing church as a gathering of those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ. If we do this, we will see various forms of church take shape, as the Early Church did. The church will no longer be contained within the four walls of special buildings. Instead, we will rejoice to have simple churches: churches in public buildings, churches under trees, or even in coffee houses and bus stations—churches anywhere and everywhere!

SUSTAINING A MOVEMENT

In order to ensure a movement's sustainability, we must include some key elements from its very beginning. These include facilitation systems and structures.

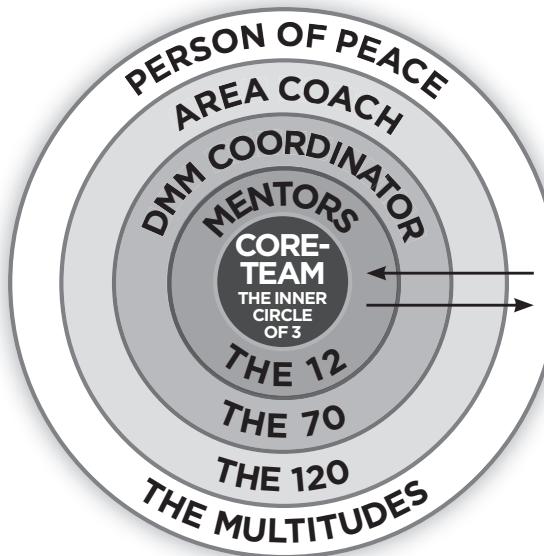
A movement is not an organization, so we can't develop a structure that involves control. We don't want an organizational chart that involves a power structure with official positions and all. Instead, we've developed facilitation systems and structures that facilitate the Disciple Making Movement—systems and structures that can multiply rather than trying to control. For our leadership structure, we use a circle for facilitation. We consider:

- How can we have a functioning core (apostolic) team?
- How can we develop mentors and coordinators?
- How can we develop leaders in multiple generations?
- How can we develop grassroots equipping and training?
- How can we facilitate a movement rather than trying to control it?

We facilitate by creating things that help the movement thrive. These are all organic; they don't have to be structured. These systems come alongside the movement as it develops. It doesn't revolve around one person or move in only one direction. It goes in a variety of directions: for multiple generations in multiple streams. We develop leaders at each generational level.

We discuss these issues in our second-level training. Leaders at that level take responsibility to make sure that as the movement multiplies, the DNA is guarded. They ensure that the DNA stays consistent, even as the movement goes out in multiple directions. We keep creating whatever is needed so there's a system to do all that. We also bring these leaders together in DMM gatherings. We coach and mentor them for leadership development, and help them learn from each other. We have events like the DMM Catalyst Camp and DMM consultations. These strategic consultations provide opportunities for cross-pollination, sharing case studies, and learning from each other's failures and successes.

DMM Leadership Structure and Multiplications



It's important to start with DMM-appropriate systems and structures so the work has the DNA of sustainability. Sustainable DNA can't be added after the work is already multiplying. Many emerging movements plateau and die when they reach the fourth generation because they lacked the foresight to instill sustainable DNA with DMM-appropriate systems and structures, so each generation of new churches gets further and further from the original patterns of the first generation. By the time a ministry has multiplied to four generations (which usually also involves 100 new churches), the leaders often start thinking they want to organize themselves into a denomination, to maintain some patterns and standards. Some elements of movement still remain, but the leaders are not intentional about maintaining the movemental DNA, so they start controlling and trying to manage things at that level.

For that reason, at every successive fourth generation, we start equipping trainings at an equipping hub. That provides a reinfusion of DNA to go another four generations. Through these hubs, the work multiplies to eight generations. At every four generations, these hubs equip grassroots leaders, just as we would with a brand new movement. That maintains the

DNA to greater numbers of generations: to 12 generations, 16 generations, and so on. At present, the movement in Rwanda is about 18 generations and Burundi is 28 generations.

One key element to sustain the movement is formation of a core (apostolic) team. The Antioch Church of Acts 13 gives us a wonderful example of how a facilitation structure ensures the sustainability of the ministry. From the start, this church had a group of leaders with diverse gifts, including teachers and prophets. Diversity of gifts within the core team is critical for ensuring sustainability. We need to avoid having everything revolve around the movement leader. Jesus put together his diverse team of 12 disciples at the start of his ministry. He also put together and sent out the evangelistic team of 70 disciples in pairs.

**We need to shift
from viewing
church as an
organization with
buildings and
management
structures, to
seeing church as
a gathering of
those who believe
in and follow
Jesus Christ.**

We train, mentor, and send out this team as disciple-makers to reach others and catalyze new groups. As part of leadership development, we also send out mentors and coaches to encourage the coordinators. Barnabas served to encourage Paul (Acts 9:26-28; 11:25-26), who later grew to function more strongly in apostolic proclamation. Some disciples have strong community-engagement skills that need a team member like Barnabas—gifted in sustaining a group and a movement. Such people have skills to help the primary disciple-maker by praying for them, holding them accountable, and encouraging them.

As the movement expands, the need develops for regional teams. These are led by a coordinator and develop a strategy for their region. They may focus on a specific people group, geographical region, or affinity group.⁶⁶ They consider the three kinds of places or peoples already

⁶⁶ Groups who have something in common other than blood relationship, such as youth playing sports, deaf people, drug dealers, or street children.

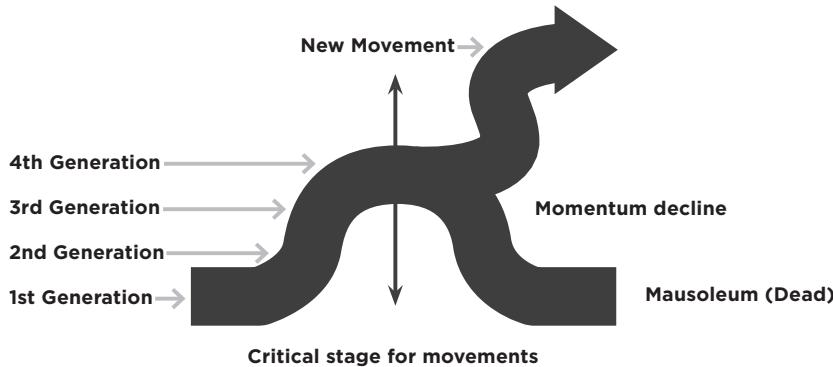
mentioned: those with existing ministry, those with new ministry, and those that are unengaged. They take initiative to start new ministries and send apostolic teams where new engagements are needed. The idea is to leave no place or people remaining unreached. We see a pattern in Acts 1:8. For us, Jerusalem is like the place where a movement starts, and Judea is when it spreads out among similar people in that region. Samaria is the launching of cross-cultural ministry, and the ends of the earth are all the places not yet reached. Regional teams help this kind of expansion to take place in every region.

The groups are tied together through these facilitation structures, as we see in the circle diagram (p. 269) and the pyramid (p. 242). Jesus had something similar, as we see in the lower part of the circle diagram. Leaders begin this process when they, as catalysts from outside, find persons of peace. Then the persons of peace may become or find DBS facilitators, leading their families or friends in a DBS. When a number of groups have started, we have a coordinator—a person coordinating multiple DBS groups. Then we have mentors and coaches, who have multiple church groups, after some of the DBSs have already become churches.

Some people want to know: “In DMM, how do you elect or appoint leaders?” Movement leaders are those who have created multiple networks or streams, and have seen four generations of groups among Unreached People Groups.

The pyramid describes leadership growth, and also talks about how to facilitate a movement, starting from the person of peace and developing all the way to apostolic catalysts: disciple-makers who go to new places, new tribes, or a new country.

LIFE CYCLES OF MOVEMENT



A critical stage is the fourth generation, when fresh equipping needs to begin, so the movement doesn't plateau or die. That's why we have the equipping hub: to prevent the plateau and decline of the movement. We continue with lots of coaching and mentoring of the fourth-generation leaders, so the movement can continue growing with the same healthy DNA. These structures serve as relational links that enable the various leaders to pray for and support each other, to visit each other, and to work together.

BUILDING SYSTEMS

A Disciple Making Movement has a strategic focus. Leaders who want to sustain a movement must do the following:

1. **Catalyze.** Help others learn and do disciple-making.
2. **Harmonize.** Create an easily-understandable form or rhythm, as described above. In this way, all those involved know what is meant whenever they talk or hear about DMM and its systems.
3. **Analyze.** Read, understand, and describe new trends being observed in the movement. They must have an in-depth understanding of DMM to perceive, analyze, learn from, and share about new trends with others. This is a critical skill for movement leaders and catalysts.

4. **Multiply.** Movement leaders and catalysts multiply the movement by launching apostolic work into new peoples and places.
5. **Develop Strategy.** Successful disciple-making requires developing strategy, both in areas of existing ministry and in new (unengaged) areas. In new areas, the strategic focus is how to effectively launch a movement (as described in “The Disciple-Making Journey” in Chapter 20). In places with existing ministry, leaders’ strategic focus is sustaining the movement. If we notice something strange or questionable in two consecutive quarterly reports, we send a team to check on what’s happening and fix whatever may be headed in a wrong direction. Even after a movement reaches fourth-generation reproduction of churches, there’s no guarantee that the entire movement will remain healthy. Sometimes one or more streams of a movement may have a problem. For that reason, we always check into the quality of the ministry on an ongoing basis.

In addition, every five years, we do an Internal Qualitative Assessment to check the DNA, look at team structures and trends, and identify any areas where a ministry may be struggling. Occasionally, we have to develop a “re-catalyzing” strategy to keep a struggling movement alive.

6. **Build Networks and Collaborate.** Through building networks and collaboration, one can create a DMM Strategic Consultation, or join an existing one, if one already exists in the region. When a movement takes root and grows in a country or among a people group, the catalyst will bring the leadership together for consultations. Here they can learn from each other and process new ideas about movements. They also can identify best practices: the ways they are seeing God work to bring fruitful harvest. At Lifeway Global, we hold an Annual Global Catalyst Camp where we bring together many of those we have trained. Here workers can share what God is doing, learn from each other, collaborate, and network.

DMM INITIATIVES—TRAINING FOR BELIEVERS

We do DMM training at four levels. (See Appendix B: “DMM Training Levels” for an outline of each.)

Basic Level: DMM Awareness. This is a two-day seminar for believers who have never had any prior DMM training. We usually do this with a small group of people or an existing church’s leadership. It involves Discovery studies, which always work better in a group. We highlight the need for DMM by presenting the big picture of the Great Commission, the lost world, and the reasons we must go out and make disciples. We show people where the lost are—the fruit of research about unreached groups in their area. Also, the condition of the church: what challenges the church currently has, what is being done to reach the lost, and what needs to be done to effectively make disciples. We want the church to understand why it’s important to make disciples. If they don’t see that, they’ll just keep enjoying whatever it is they’re currently doing. Our goal at this level is catalyzing them to catch the vision for DMM.

Level One: From the initial meeting, we identify those eager to pursue the idea of DMM. After two or three weeks, we go back and take these people through the Level One DMM Basic Training. This three- to four-day training covers all the basics about DMM. We train attendees on understanding the Great Commission, finding the person of peace, obedience-based disciple-making, how to facilitate a Discovery Bible Study group, understanding church, and leadership development. After this training, they apply what they have learned, and after two or three months, the facilitator checks on their progress.

Level Two: This focuses on leadership development, as described in Chapter 23 and earlier in this chapter.

Level Three: This equips the mentors, coaches, movement leaders, and catalysts in strategy building for DMM. This includes building networks, collaboration, and strategy development for existing ministry and new (unengaged) areas.

THE DMM LEADERSHIP TEAM

The DMM Leadership Team consists mainly of indigenous people. It is not structured around positions but rather around people’s giftings, to

maximize the diverse gifts of those within the team. We always work as a team, not as individuals, so even in leadership, we function in teams.

In addition to teamwork, another of our strengths is that we pray together consistently. The support team in the office prays together every Tuesday and Thursday for half a day. Field teams pray together on Fridays. Another strength of the team is its diversity: It's not made up of people from just one group or region. We all come from different tribes and areas, which gives us a diversity of perspectives.

DBS also is a key element for our team, so we spend every working day from 9:00-10:00 a.m. doing DBS together. Right now, we're going through the book of Acts, verse by verse. Another strength is that we have multiple networks. We build networks with people, bringing new people in quickly—if they are willing to do DMM. In this way, we can open new areas for disciple-making.

The role of foreigners has been building capacity, coaching and mentoring, training, and resourcing.

KEY OUTLOOKS, ATTITUDES, AND SKILLS THAT HAVE SUSTAINED ME AND BROUGHT FRUIT

1. Prayer. This has truly been my greatest resource—accessing intimacy with God.
2. Staying in God's word all the time. What I do is sustainable when based on the word of God.
3. Developing leaders. God has spoken clearly to me about this: It's not all about me.
4. I have always believed I should indigenize what I am doing. It must be owned by the local people. When they own it, it costs less to me and becomes sustainable—because it belongs to them.
5. Networking and collaborating with people doing similar ministry. It is not about my ministry or my name. As long as I see God helping us make disciples, it doesn't matter whose name is on it. That's why we jump into any opportunity to contribute what we have learned about disciple-making. The most important thing is finishing the task.

KEY FACTORS IN PROGRESS

1. Prayer and fasting have been very key. Everything came out of that. Even today, we look for what the Lord is doing and focus on that.
2. Majoring in outreaches.
3. We always depended on people in each community to continue what we started. This was a big factor in indigenizing and sustainability.
4. We believed there were people in the communities who had resources. We trained business people, and we had ways of watching for those resources. We didn't bring in resources from outside. We sent people on mission using local resources. In northern Kenya, they used corn flour. They said, "If five of you come together, you can share corn flour." Each one shares a certain number of kilos to provide for each other. Sharing of needs has been very key to us.
5. Building a network and working together in teams, rather than as individuals. Most of those we send out are in teams, so that, when challenges arise, they can take care of each other. Teamwork fits the culture of the people, so it's very key.
6. Access ministries. When we started, I wasn't familiar with the term "access ministries," but I was practicing the concept: I developed a literacy program called LEP (Literacy Evangelism Program) to teach people how to read and write, while also discipling them. Among those of another faith, the men would always go out with the animals while the women and children remained behind. In the morning, the church planters would do a kindergarten, and in the afternoon, they would teach the women how to read and write. They started reading the ABCs and such, then started reading the Scriptures.

I also trained a friend of mine who was a veterinarian, and he began training people to give medicine and injections to animals. That helpful interaction provides numerous opportunities to build relationships and initiate conversations that can lead to

spiritual matters. And I've already described in Chapter 20 how two workers creatively provided fresh vegetables to a town far from any grocery store, and thus gained access to build relationships and start Discovery Bible Studies through the business.

7. Ministering by faith. In all my life I have never raised funds, either for myself or for the mission—not because we couldn't or because someone taught me not to. What happened was that I read missionary biographies a lot: Samuel Zwemer, Hudson Taylor, lots of missionaries. I was particularly influenced by the life of Hudson Taylor, the father of faith missions.

Then God started sending various people to provide resources. For example, I met an American woman who was sent by World Relief to work in northern Kenya as a project of USAID. She was living as a believer among Muslims. She came into the meeting looking for fellowship because she was in northern Kenya. God used her in many ways, and she was the one who got us the first Bibles and the flipchart and the tape recorder. She just brought it when she saw what we were doing; I didn't ask her.

God used many people, especially local people, to do the same. Somebody would go to Nairobi for business, find something, buy it, and bring it back. That's how we worked, and that DNA remained in us somehow. But as the ministry became larger and larger, one of the things that helped us was assistance to have a facility for our training. But even that was not all from outside funding; it really has been by faith. Whatever the need is, each area of need has been met differently.

Some people have asked me, "What's your budget?"

I answer, "We don't operate on a budget because when you have a budget you need a place to raise the money. Where would we raise it? We are an indigenous ministry."



INTO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF Congo is a massive, multi-ethnic nation in the very heart of the African continent. Garcin is implementing DMM principles there and catalyzing multiple movements. This is his story.

I minister in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I've been there 10 years, and I like it. I feel like I'm Congolese. I've been involved with DMM since 2009. I met Dr. Aila at a meeting in Kigali (Rwanda), and I was touched by the testimony he gave there, so I committed myself to making disciples in my own country. Before that, I had been just serving in my church's tech ministry. It was just what God had me doing at that time. It wasn't bad, but I was tired of that ministry. When my calling expanded, I talked with my pastor about my new understanding of what God wanted me doing.

I'm a university lecturer, so I started speaking to my students about what God had done for me. Through that, I started making disciples—both in villages and in the cities. I started by sharing from Matthew 28:18-20, and the believers who heard were amazed: "We have a *job* to do in God's kingdom!" That's what's igniting the process.

In Congo, we have many religions. Some are Folk Religionists and many are Christian but mix in elements from their background of Folk Religion. They say, "We like Jesus," but in reality, they're still Folk Religionists and believe in the power of their ancestors. One particular region has quite a few from another faith background. A couple of families from that background have come to faith in Jesus, but they're experiencing a lot of persecution because they no longer attend their previous place of worship.

We now have many generations of churches, which tend to spread within whatever tribe the people are from. At this point, we have reached 46 tribes, out of the more than 350 tribes in the Congo. Some tribes have more generations of churches than others. One tribe has 20 generations of churches, and the smallest movement has six generations of churches.

We started in one town where a couple had their own business. They traveled quite a bit, and spread the movement in two other regions of the Congo.

Most of my work is in rural areas in the eastern part of the country, but at one point a few years ago I was invited to minister in Kinshasa, a megacity with a population of 21 million people. The person of peace who invited me to come there was a lecturer, like I am. I started a DBS with him, then returned to my area. I heard from him two years ago that he was able to start many DBS groups and baptize many people. He came to the DMM Catalyst Camp in Nairobi, and testified, “I’m doing well in Kinshasa, but I need your prayers and I need you to come visit for a week to give encouragement to those who have joined us.” So I’m planning to return to Kinshasa to help the leaders grow in their leadership.

DBS BECOMING CHURCH

We’ve seen a lot of churches start through DBS. We first look for a person of peace, and when we find one, that person gathers some people from around them: family, neighbors, or others from their village. That group will gather once or twice a week to study the Scriptures together. Using that pattern, in two or three months, we usually can see a church established in that place. When the group gathers, they share the word of God, and everyone participates in the discussion. They all hear from God through his word and through what others in the group share. When people come to faith, they get baptized, and then the DBS transitions to become a church.

We use many different Bible stories. I’ll mention just a few of the favorites. One we use very commonly is the story of Zacchaeus, because people appreciate hearing about God’s forgiveness. We also use the story of the Samaritan woman, in John 4. Women especially relate well to that story, because many women here live in shame, because of their backgrounds. But when they hear this story, and see the mercy Jesus has toward us, many of them come to faith through that Scripture. We also use the story of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) to help people discover the need to be baptized. After they become a church, we take them to Luke 10, to help them understand that now it’s their turn to go and share with others. If

people hear the biblical text in a trade language, they then translate it, retell it, and discuss it in their own mother tongue.

At the beginning of a DBS, it's often not clear who's a believer and who's not. After a few meetings, it becomes clearer who already knows the Lord, based on their testimonies. As they study the Scriptures, those involved in ancestor worship begin to realize that they need to let go of that practice.

A DBS typically has 10 or 11 people. If it becomes larger than that, we encourage some of the people to go start a new DBS. The goal is multiplication; which is how we reach more people. We don't aim to have a large gathering. Also, most of the houses won't hold 20 people. Even if the group meets under a tree, we tell them that because of security issues, they need to stick with gathering only in a small group.

In a typical worship gathering, we don't have a preacher. We have a facilitator, whose role is to help the disciples express for themselves what they are learning from Scripture and what God is doing in their lives. On one occasion, we were in a particular village and a pastor came to test us. He asked, "Is this a church?"

"Yes, this is a church. We've gathered because we believe in Jesus."

"Why aren't you singing songs?"

One of the brothers said, "If you have a song, feel free to start singing it. We'll join you in praising God because the Bible says, 'When you gather, if someone has a psalm or a song or a revelation, they should share it.' So please share your song and we'll sing with you. No problem." There's no rule that says, "Now it's time to sing; now it's time to pray." We don't have a set ritual. We all share as the Spirit leads us.

We have a number of security challenges in the Congo. For example, just two weeks ago, a war broke out in one of the provinces, though I hear it's now safe again in that area. Or if we're traveling on a road—by motorbike or vehicle—sometimes people will block the road and rob us.

If people hear the biblical text in a trade language, they then translate it, retell it, and discuss it in their own mother tongue.

As disciple-makers, we experience many dangers. Someone might be on a mission and get attacked by people who live in the bush. But when we reach a village, security is less of a problem, because the people know who we are and will protect us as someone bringing peace to them. Some of the provinces where we work are more dangerous than others.

HEALTHY REPRODUCTION AND EXPANSION

We ensure healthy reproduction of the DNA through our coordinators and core leaders. We aim to gather our coordinators and leaders every three or four months, according to geographical area. We don't have the resources to gather all our coordinators and leaders every quarter. I call the leaders from various generations to come to our facility for training. We meet with them there for three or four days. Then when they return to their area, they can pass on the training to those in their generation and their generational streams.

Our people also use a communication app to share their experiences and what is happening in their locations. Some leaders recently came from other parts of Africa and trained our leaders in how to do an internal qualitative audit. We look forward to sharing that information with our entire team. I expect that will be a good way for us to know more clearly the condition of the churches.

The DRC has 26 provinces, and our disciple-makers have reached only six of them so far. We have a big job ahead of us. Our goal is to reach the whole country before 2030. That's quite a challenge, but I have faith that it's possible.

CHALLENGES OF LANGUAGE, LITERACY, AND BIBLES

When we have a leader who is very committed to disciple-making, our team includes people who can speak many languages, because the tribes we're reaching have many different languages. We have four national languages, and many people know two or three languages, including some tribal languages. When leaders are sensitive to the various local languages and cultures, the message spreads easily.

If most of the people in an area are oral learners, we use a storytelling strategy, which works powerfully in that context. We also try to find

someone who is literate and can communicate the written word. But oral learners love stories, and when they know Bible stories, they include those in everyday conversations—about daily news, business, the economy, or whatever people are talking about.

The leaders might have a Bible in French or Swahili or Lingala, depending on the location, although we have a shortage of Bibles, which is a problem. But people can use a soft copy of the Bible in French or Swahili, so we share that with people who are literate. But for illiterate people, the leader will help a key person to memorize the biblical stories. When four or five stories have been memorized, the person can share those in a DBS, and the group members also learn the story and make it their own for sharing with others.

If people hear the biblical text in a trade language, they then translate it, retell it, and discuss it in their own mother tongue. I don't know all the tribal languages, so I can share the story in French or Swahili, and someone who knows the local language translates it for the group, which works powerfully.

One challenge, though, is when people know just five stories, they need more. And it may take many months before the leader can get back to some of the villages to share the next set of stories. Of the 46 tribes we're reaching, only 14 have Scripture in their own language. And even for those, not many Bibles have been produced, and very few are available. We're not allowed to photocopy the Bibles; they're copyrighted, so we must wait. Those Bibles also are available only in hard copy; there's no oral version. That's a huge need for us. I could share 100 pages of needs, but we move ahead by faith, knowing that God will open the door to reach people with the truth of his word. I'm grateful for all that God is doing. It gives me great joy.



LIGHT IN THE GHETTOS

WILOM HAS A HEART for impoverished communities in the ghettos of Uganda's urban centers. We asked him to share his story of how DMM is transforming lives in this challenging context.

I serve in Uganda. I was working as a banker, and in 2012, God told me to leave the bank. He didn't tell me where to go or what to do. I started just sharing the gospel with people in the ghetto, including a lot of drug addicts. After a while, I gave them an invitation: "Why don't we discover Jesus together?" So we met day by day and discovered God's purpose in the Scripture—story by story. As time went on, many of them stopped doing drugs. After a while, I learned about DBS, and the groups started multiplying.

Our work is currently at 11 generations. During COVID-19, we went broader but didn't expand. We had to maintain. Some groups left the city because of COVID-19, and some people were thrown out of their houses, so we had to rebuild after that. Life in the ghettos is very different; people live from day to day. They have no savings, no safety net.

My first generation of leaders consisted of former drug addicts. They were messed up, but those were the people God gave me to reach and raise up as leaders. I often use the story of the four soils. We don't know which soils will actually bear fruit until it happens. So I invest in the people God brings to me and I watch for obedience—the mark of good soil. When we do a DBS, people share what they're going to do to obey the Scripture we studied. Some people don't really do it, but others obey what they heard and come back with testimonies to share.

I also give potential leaders small things to do (like, for example, managing a small amount of money), and watch how they manage it. Too many leaders don't know how to be faithful in managing money. But Jesus said those who are faithful in little things can be trusted with more. I'm looking for faithful people. About 51% of those we're reaching are women, so I'm raising up many female leaders. We use the term "contagious" to describe how the gospel is spreading: One person catches it and passes it on to another.

When people come to faith, they show their commitment through baptism, which is usually done by the person who has led them to faith. That was somewhat controversial, but we looked at what the Bible says, and we saw it described as part of the process of making disciples. And disciples make more disciples through connections, starting with the relationships they already have—with family, friends, or neighbors. You can't start sharing with someone before you connect with them. The more deeply you connect, the deeper you can go in that relationship. Before saying anything about Jesus, disciples build relational connections. And the movement continues to grow through relational networks, which makes the growth local and rapidly reproducible.

**Jesus said
those who
are faithful
in little
things can
be trusted
with more.**

When people come to Christ from a different faith, they usually come as a family. Often, the husband (father) will come to faith first, then the whole family will believe. When women from that background come to faith by themselves, they often remain alone, so we aim to do DBS with whole families, rather than reaching people one by one.

DBS is the most effective method we have for reaching people. It brings people to faith in groups and begins the process of discipleship very early on, so they become true disciples who endure in the faith. We aren't looking for numbers; we're looking for real commitment. We don't treat people as a project. We build real relationships with them and walk with them through a process of coming to faith and growing as disciples of Jesus.

The stories we use in a DBS with unbelievers depend on where they are when we start. For those of another faith, who have never heard the gospel, we start with creation and work our way through the Old Testament until we get to stories of Christ. We have accountability for obedience to each story before we move on to the next story in the series. The number of stories a person studies before coming to faith varies widely, depending on where the person is spiritually. People from another faith might do DBS every week for a year before they really understand and are ready to receive the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus.

With others, it can take only three or four months of DBS. As they come to faith, we disciple people toward obeying all the commands of Jesus and all the “one another” commands of the New Testament.

To ensure healthy growth and sustainability, we do a lot of training, which is passed down through the generations. The leaders of each generation train the leaders of the next generation. And all the leaders have many groups; some have as many as 10.

TRAININGS

In general trainings, we teach people about DBS, the basics of prayer, listening to God, and obeying. It's not just about talking to God, but God must talk to you. And when he talks to you, you must obey. We use the golden rule of 48 hours. If someone does not obey within 48 hours, they likely will not obey. If you hear God and it's within your means, obey it within 48 hours. If God tells them to go to a certain place, they go there and look for a person of peace in that place.

We teach them how to recognize a person of peace. And when they find a person of peace, we tell them, “Don't be in a rush; you have to really connect with them. The deeper you connect with a person, the deeper you go.” We must take time to relate. It's not just sharing Jesus; we walk a journey with that person and connect with that person as much as possible, until the questions come up naturally: “How are you handling life? How is this? How is that?” We disciple them slowly. Then, when that person really believes, it's not our job to gather the people around them. We ask the person of peace: “Do you have friends, neighbors, or relatives—people who believe in you, who you can call together? We want to share this together.”

When the person of peace gathers people, we might lead the group maybe two or three times. Then, after modeling how it's done, we assist them to facilitate the DBS—either the person of peace or some other group member who shows potential. The next time the group meets, we come just to watch and see how they do at leading it. Are they doing it right? When they get it, we leave that group to go start others. We pass on leadership as quickly as possible, so we begin leadership development even at that stage.

From the time a group starts, one vital ingredient is the final question: “Who are you going to share with?” It’s a simple one, but it makes sure that the message is being passed on. Each of us must be able to go and share. Then, we have accountability when we come back: “Did you share? Did you obey?” When we share, we multiply. Every person must be taught to multiply. That’s where the generations come from.

Our training approach depends on the particular segment. We have a one-month training for leaders that focuses mainly on church-planting. We talk about DMM and discipleship: things like “What does a disciple look like? What should you do to disciple someone?”

WHO WE'RE REACHING

We focus mostly on unengaged peoples; we don’t want to go where others are already serving. We currently have about six movements going on, because a movement starts a movement. We started in the ghetto and that has been the main focus of our movement. But that also opened doors to other groups and work among refugees—because we’re surrounded by wars in various countries. We try to make sure that, as much as they’re willing, the refugees learn about Jesus while they’re in the camps—so that when the war is over and they go back home, they can spread the good news about Jesus there. So we’ve started more movements, not through our decision but by God’s own design.

We recently adopted⁶⁷ another people group—a nomadic tribal group. One of our disciples, a leader, made contact with them in a totally unreached, unengaged area. It was somewhat dangerous; they have guns because of the war in a nearby country, but he was able to talk with the chief. The chief called together the tribal leaders, and this disciple explained to them, “I want to live among you long-term and share with you about Jesus,” and they allowed him and made a space for him. We see God opening up doors like that.

67 The term “adoption” is sometimes used to describe a commitment to special effort on behalf of an Unreached People Group – including ongoing intercession and other efforts to see them reached with the gospel.

We also have an emerging movement in a very difficult area. It's in another country where we don't personally have direct access. But the gospel has spread to people there, and there are currently 52 groups there. We can't do training in that context, but the disciples there are baptizing one another. It wouldn't be safe to connect with them by email or phone, but we can connect with the leaders by Signal (a secure messaging app). We also can't bring them out to a Christian country or training, or someone might get suspicious and follow them. So we bring six or seven of the leaders at a time and do training with them in a different location. Last year, 10 of the leaders were having a meeting in a house, and the police came and arrested and tortured them. But they stood fast in their faith.

GOD'S WORD AND HIS SPIRIT

Our movements have a shortage of Bibles. We'll often have many people, or a whole group, sharing just one Bible. But many people we minister to are illiterate, or are not used to reading. They're more comfortable with the traditional pattern: a family sitting and listening to the grandfather telling stories. That's how traditions are passed from grandfather to father to son, down the generations. So having an audio Bible is very important to us. A written Bible can be read by one person, but an audio Bible can be played and heard by many people. They can share it and listen while they work. They can hear God's word in their own language. And they understand that the goal is not to just know a lot. The goal is: When you learn one new thing, you obey it. Then you come back and learn some more. We know that when Jesus walked on earth, he didn't hand people a Bible. Printed Bibles came much, much later. He taught people face to face, in a relationship. They saw him praying and fasting, and saw how he treated people.

So when Jesus was taken away and the Holy Spirit came, the disciples continued to do what they had learned from Jesus by being with him. Then, when religious leaders commanded them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, the apostles replied, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Discipleship is first of all a matter of what people *see*, then *secondly* of what they hear. The Bible is very important, but since we don't have many of them in written form,

people generally listen to an audio Bible as a group rather than just as an individual. But they love it so much that sometimes a leader will just turn it on and listen all night long—even while they’re sleeping.

One of the ways people in the movement see the Holy Spirit at work, down through the generations, is through miracles (such as the healing of broken legs, described in Chapter 16, and the healing of the religious leader’s wife, described in Chapter 19). When people see God at work, they get attached to him. It’s not about us and our capabilities; it’s about God and his power in people’s lives. I don’t need to be in a place for great things to happen. The Spirit lives in all God’s children. And he leads us toward obeying God’s will.

RAISING UP LEADERS

We can see a difference between the leaders who are more fruitful and those who are less fruitful. Those who are more obedient are more fruitful. Leaders reproducing leaders is critical. Without leaders, the whole thing collapses. Jesus took three and a half years to focus mainly on equipping 12 leaders. If we first focus on leaders, they can plant churches and multiply the work. One mistake I made in the beginning was starting a lot of groups. I’d start one group, and then another group. But they crumbled for lack of leadership. Leadership is key.

I coach leaders, mentor them, train them, mingle with them, relate to them, and we share life. It’s a relationship; it’s not just about talking. What they learn from me, they pass on to someone else. They meet together, and even if I’m not there, they know what to do; they can carry on. I have 11 leaders in the first generation. These leaders all have planted churches. But the first thing to make sure of is that a leader is really a disciple. What I look for mostly is their level of obedience to God and what God is telling them through his word. I don’t look for someone who is very dynamic or highly educated. I look for consistent obedience. And I look for humility—those who are able to become servant leaders.

GENERATIONS

Our first generation has 11 leaders, the second generation has 27, the third has 59, the fourth has 104, and it continues like that. These leaders

start groups and manage the groups. If I have a question about what's happening with a leader in the fourth generation, I'll ask his leader in the third generation, and maybe we'll go together to pay a visit. If I visit a group in the fifth generation, for example, I don't go as a leader or go to dictate anything. I'm just a visitor, a learner. I'm not the boss of anybody. I go there and just sit in that group. If I hear a mistake in that group, I go back and correct it from the first generation. If I try to fix anything in the fifth generation, it might still be a problem in the third and fourth generations, spreading through those streams. It's messy, but that's how movements are!



CONCLUSION

EMBRACE THE VISION

AS WE LOOK BACK over God's work through LifeNet's ministries in East, Horn, and Southern Africa, we want to invite you to come and join God in making disciples that make disciples, churches that multiply churches. We want you to share in God's vision – to cultivate a great harvest of cabbages in the desert.

This chart summarizes each activity needed in three critical areas—starting, multiplying, and sustaining—in order to catalyze a Disciple Making Movement and have it thrive.

Starting (Launching)	Multiplying (Expanding)	Sustaining (Maturing)
1. Prayer mobilization	8 Teams	16 Leadership development
2. Team formation and launch	9. Trainings	17. Training and equipping
3. Access/compassion ministries	10. Access ministries	18. DMM facilitation systems
4. Focus on finding persons of peace	11. DBS Groups	19. Mentoring and coaching
5. Start DBS groups	12 Evangelism/missions	20. Resource Mobilization
6. Groups and gatherings	13. Gatherings/Churches	21. Building networks/Collaboration
7. Leader development	14. Developing leaders	22. Strategy building
	15. Partnerships	23. Reporting and data collection

Some items are mentioned more than once. That's because things like access and DBS groups are needed for starting, but also needed for multiplying. If the DNA of multiplication is present at the start, the work will multiply. For sustainability, some activities need to be done somewhat differently. For example, for leadership development: When

a person is starting, they need to know how to identify potential leaders. Who has potential to facilitate a DBS, and who is effective at sharing with unbelievers and including them in their faith journey? When a person has multiplying groups, they need to be able to multiply leaders for all the groups. They also need to raise up indigenous leaders as DBS groups transition to become churches. A catalyst and coach needs to always nurture multiplication. They ask questions like, “As you develop leaders, are they multiplying leaders? As you start DBS groups, are those groups multiplying?”

Sustainability requires mentoring and coaching, to lead groups multiplying to four generations in multiple streams. Most leaders need additional skills in order to do that well. Some leaders at this level may profit from some Bible school or seminary training, as their spheres of influence bring them into interaction with other church leaders or denominational leaders. That doesn’t stop the movement, because they have already experienced movement and it’s multiplying generationally without depending on them. And at that level, it can be helpful to have more theological education, to defend the movement from various attacks. Each stage of growth requires a deeper level of leadership development, in order for the work to multiply and become sustainable. So to make sure that these essential functions don’t get overlooked, we list them again in each place where they need to happen. What one starts needs to multiply, and what multiplies needs to be sustainable—not only multiplying to more and more generations, but continuing as lasting churches of disciples following the Lord.

Lifeway Global functions as a catalytic organization based in Kenya, focusing on three types of ministry:

1. *Equipping* and training leaders who want to launch movements and see those multiply beyond four generations in multiple streams. This includes leaders outside our region of East, Horn, and Southern Africa.
2. *Engaging* people and places with DMM where it doesn’t exist. This involves going to the final frontiers, through partners or whatever means God prepares. It includes sending apostolic disciple

makers and church planters cross-culturally. Our major focus will be the “Go North” initiative—from sub-Saharan Africa to the north, along the Swahili coast and the Gulf region. Many Africans are also migrating to Europe and other places. This creates new opportunities to engage migrants there. We want to train these disciples to engage their host countries.

3. *Catalyzing* among existing churches globally to help them understand and embrace DMM, and join the kingdom movements happening around the world.

As movement leaders, we keep in mind three areas of ministry:

1. Existing areas: where a movement (or at least church planting ministry) already exists among an unreached group.
2. New areas: where we have sent apostolic disciple makers to engage the group with the gospel.
3. Unengaged areas: where we pray and trust God for a way to engage those peoples or places.

We make sure not to focus all our energy and effort on just one of these areas. Where a movement already exists, we focus on sustainability. For the new areas, we engage in order to start new work. For the unengaged areas, we make a list and start mapping the gospel gaps. We start praying and planning so that someday we can get to those peoples and places. We can send “Joshua Initiative” teams to start praying and investigating the areas. Then we share that information, so others can develop a vision for reaching those areas. We always keep in mind the goal of “no place left”⁶⁸ where Christ is not known—no people group remaining unengaged; no place remaining without a gospel witness. So our movement leaders don’t focus just on developing the work we’ve already started. We keep in mind the existing areas, the new areas, and the unengaged areas.

We keep exploring: “How can we network or partner together to see it happen? How can we best work in collaboration with others?” We don’t

⁶⁸ as the Apostle Paul described a few particular regions, in Romans 15:23.

aim to expand our brand. When a new movement takes shape, we don't want it to be run as Lifeway. We want people to feel free to connect and flourish as God leads them. Lifeway wants to come alongside to catalyze, coach, resource, and do whatever we can, so they can take it and run with it. We don't expect it to come back to us.

As we rejoice in God's faithfulness until now, we praise him for the fresh vision he has given us for the future. God's work through our annual DMM Catalyst Camp has resulted in many people asking us for help—within Africa and on other continents.

Building on what we've been doing there for the last five years, we recently launched the Global Disciple Making Network (GDMN), as we see God taking us beyond our region to be a blessing to the global body of Christ. A person or group doesn't need to be part of Lifeway to be part of this network. This network exists to catalyze and accelerate Disciple-Making Movements among UPGs globally. It's a place for connecting, learning, and sharing.

I would like to highlight two things in conclusion. First, God gives vision and he can accomplish the vision he gives. In my life and ministry, he demonstrated that reality by fulfilling the vision of cabbages in the desert. He began at the small place where I came from, in the desert of northern Kenya, and opened doors and grew the ministry over many years to become what he is doing through the ministry today. The Lifeway Network is touching many nations with the gospel and continues growing with the launch of the Global Disciple Making Network.

The main point of this story is not me or Lifeway. We're just an illustration of the greatness of God and his loving plan to reach all nations and peoples with his saving love. He brought me out of darkness into his glorious light through the gospel. He called me to share that salvation with many others. Then he led me from a ministry of decision making to a ministry of disciple making that has borne much fruit through multiplying movements.

Second, I want to stress the importance of what God is doing through movements. The task of the Great Commission is possible for us, because God has made it possible. I want every reader to believe that Matthew 24:14

and 28:19-20 can be fulfilled in our generation. We can't guarantee we will be alive to see it, but we have clear goals we aim for, to accomplish our part of that vision. We have been pursuing gospel proclamation among a multitude of people groups. We began by focusing on 14 tribes in northern Kenya, and we're currently engaging 162 tribes in 24 countries across East Africa.

I promote Disciple Making Movements because those are the best vehicle we know for effective gospel proclamation among the unreached. Jesus commanded us to make disciples, so we shifted our focus from decision making to disciple making. Jesus promised that the gospel would be proclaimed to all nations—all *ethnē*. He is working powerfully to make that possible in our day. He takes things that look impossible and makes them possible. And he calls us to labor diligently to each play our role in fulfilling that call.

As you read these stories of God's work, I hope you feel encouraged to believe this is possible. What we have written here is not the end of the story. We expect the story to continue—not only the story of the various ministries and movements connected with Lifeway, but also the many other families of movements around the world, each multiplying disciples among their own people and the nearby peoples who have not yet heard.

God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things when we walk by faith. We don't have to be superhuman to have God use us. I read stories of God's past faithfulness in using ordinary people and believed he could do it again. Moyale is a humble place that God has used to show the role of ordinary people who trust in God. We can trust God. He has provided everything we needed to accomplish what he has placed in our hearts. No one should look at themselves and say it's not possible. God can use anybody to do it. Lifeway Global is a story of what God has done through me. What would he like to do through you?

Many more stories are waiting to be lived out and written down for the Lord's glory among all peoples. Disciple making will continue until

**We want
people to
feel free to
connect and
flourish as
God leads
them.**

Jesus comes. It's not a church program or an organizational project. It's a movement of disciples making disciples, which must continue until Jesus returns—even if he doesn't return for another thousand years.

Our job is to continue sharing Jesus's vision and doing our best to implant reproductive discipleship DNA that can endure through generations. May the Lord bless you as you give him praise and pursue your role and calling in making disciples among all peoples.

APPENDIX A

THE LORD'S WORK IN MY IMMEDIATE FAMILY

When my father was pressuring me to recant my faith in Christ, my mom already knew something about it (because of finding the Bible), but she hadn't said anything to anyone. She wondered where I had gotten the Bible and had contact with Christians, but she didn't ask about it. She knew my father was a very harsh man, so she didn't want to tell him anything, but she already had noticed a change in my behavior.

My mom passed away 21 years ago, but she had become a believer before she died. I had kept on witnessing to her, and sharing with her about Jesus, even though she said, "I will die in my religion."

Then she was diagnosed with cancer just before I got married, and at the time of my wedding she was undergoing treatment. Then one evening while she was in the hospital, she had a vision. (She was not really asleep.) Someone came to her and said, "Never walk in darkness again; walk in the light," and gave her a candle.

When the vision ended, the person was not there. She said to herself, "That must be Jesus." The next day, a pastor friend of mine went to visit her. (She already knew him as a friend of mine.) When he arrived, she told him about the vision. She said, "It wasn't a dream; I wasn't asleep. That must have been Jesus. I don't want to walk in darkness. I want to walk in the light." That's how she opened her heart and came to faith.

When my dad heard about it, he blamed me and kicked her out of the house. She moved in with my new wife and me while continuing her treatment. Then as the cancer progressed and she got much weaker, my dad came and took her home. She lived another six months after that. During those months, she witnessed to all our family members, neighbors, and everyone in the community. People came to visit her because she was very ill, and she kept boldly witnessing to everyone. Even after she lost her memory, she would sing a song in the local language. It would

translate in English as: “Come and see the wondrous works of the Lord; come and see his wonderful work.” She loved that song.

She never complained about pain or anything like that. She died on a Tuesday, and my dad gave his life to the Lord on the following Sunday. He went to a church that was being led by one of my disciples, and gave his life to Christ—without even telling the family. After that, my younger brothers came to the Lord, and my youngest sister, and another brother. The sister three years younger than I, and one of my brothers, are still Muslims. But all the rest of the family came to the Lord. We say, “God used our mom to bring the family to the Lord. By calling her home, he called the rest to Christ.”

My dad is now 86, and not in good health. But he has been following the Lord for more than 20 years. When he came to faith, he also experienced all the antagonism I had experienced, from the mosque leaders and others in the community. They pressured him to return to Islam, but he held firm in his faith in Jesus. Also, because many family members had come to Christ, they could strengthen and encourage each other in the Lord. And by that time, there were many more believers in the town than there had been when I came to faith. (*A description of that transformation during the 1990s is found in Chapter 5: “The Mission Begins.”*

APPENDIX B

DMM TRAINING LEVELS

The following is a very brief overview of the material we cover in our DMM trainings, to give you an idea of the general scope and content. Those interested in further detail or in receiving training can contact us through our website: lifewayglobal.org.

1. DMM Awareness Training (2 days)

- The challenges of Unreached People Groups and the world (Matt. 9:35-38)
- Understanding the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20)
- Becoming a disciple and making disciples (Matt. 4:18-22)
- Launching disciple-making teams
- Understanding the whole DMM process
- Doing DBS as key to multiplication
- Church-planting and leadership development

2. DMM Level 1- Basic Training (3-4 days)

Part 1—Starting and launching sustainable DMM

1. Why make disciples? (Hab. 1:5, 2:14)
2. Understanding Bible-based DMM
3. What is disciple-making? (Matt. 28:16-20)
4. Obstacles to disciple-making
5. Obedience-based discipleship
6. Seven-key journey in the disciple-making process

3. DMM Level 2 - Leadership Development

Part 2- Multiplying Disciple Making Movements

1. Understanding Christian leadership
 2. Developing inside leaders
 3. Building leadership teams
 4. Mentoring and coaching
 5. Leadership and spiritual disciplines
 6. Resourcing movements
4. **DMM Level 3- Strategy Building**
Part 3 - Sustaining Disciple Making Movements
 1. Leadership mapping and creation of training hubs
 2. Developing people-group profiles and information
 3. Data collection, development of regional teams, and networking
 4. Resource development, partnerships, consultations, and visits
 5. DMM facilitation structures and building systems

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY LESSONS:

Creation to Christ (27 DBS Meetings)

We have found that a strong biblical foundation is vital for effective discipleship. Just as God took time over many years to reveal his truth and his will to humanity, we take time to lay a doctrinal foundation for those on the journey toward faith in Christ. We want people to follow Christ based on a clear understanding of essential biblical truths such as the person and nature of God as Creator, the sinful nature of humanity, the importance of blood sacrifice for forgiveness of sin, and God's provision of redemption through the perfect man: God's Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. We have included this sample set (not a required model) to show an example of the kinds of biblical texts we have found useful, especially for those coming to faith out of a non-Christian background. We have many additional sets of commonly used DBS lessons that cover topics such as new birth, confession of sin, justification, saving faith, discovering God, baptism, etc. These are used and adapted by each local group, as fits their context and the current needs of those coming to faith.

1st Phase

- God Creates—Gen. 1:1-25
- God Creates Man and Woman—Gen. 2:4-24
- Man and Woman Eat the Fruit—Gen. 3:1-13
- God's Curses—Gen. 3:14-24
- God Regrets His Creation—Gen. 6:5-8
- God Saves Noah and His Family—Gen. 6:9-8:14
- God's Covenant with Noah—Gen. 8:15-9:17

- God's Covenant with Abram—Gen. 12:1-8, 15:1-6, 17:1-7
- Abraham Gives His Son as an Offering—Gen. 22:1-19

2nd Phase

- God Spares His People—Ex. 12:1-28
- The Commands of God—Ex. 20:1-21
- The Sin Offering—Lev. 4:1-35
- God's Righteous Servant—Is. 53
- Jesus Is Born—Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20
- Jesus Is Baptized—Matt. 3; John 1:29-34
- Jesus Is Tested—Matt. 4:1-11
- Jesus and the Religious Leader—John 3:1-21
- Jesus and the Samaritan Woman—John 4:1-26, 39-42

3rd Phase

- Jesus and the Paralyzed Man—Luke 5:17-26
- Jesus Calms the Storm—Mark 4:35-41
- Jesus and the Man with Evil Spirits—Mark 5:1-20
- Jesus Raises a Man from the Dead—John 11:1-44
- Jesus Talks about His Betrayal and the Covenant—Matt. 26:17-30
- Jesus Is Betrayed and Faces Trial—John 18:1-19:16
- Jesus Is Crucified—Luke 23:32-56
- Jesus Is Resurrected—Luke 24:1-35
- Jesus Appears to the Disciples and Ascends to Heaven—Luke 24:36-53

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