**Factors that Multiply Movements**

By Shalom and Trevor

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For six years I (Shalom) was involved in engaging one of the hardest people groups in our region of Africa. Then the Lord spoke to me that we needed to focus on a greater vision for *all the unreached people groups* in our region. We realized that we needed to do something differently in order to achieve the Great Commission among these people groups. We had zeal and commitment but didn’t know how to effectively engage them. Our results from traditional ways had been good, but compared to what needed to be done, they were inadequate.

As we began applying the principles of Disciple Making Movements (DMMs) listed below, and we began to see God moving us into a true multiplication paradigm: multiplication of disciples, leaders and churches. In just three years (2015-2017), our movement saw over 13,500 baptisms and over 3950 churches started. On average, 3.6 churches are being planted every day and 45 new disciples come to the Lord. Also, more than twenty new local, indigenous partners are being developed every year. The principals we have been applying can be summarized in this way:

1. The first factor that ignited this movement was that God created a **healthy dissatisfaction** among us. He convicted us that good is not the best and led us to stop being content with a small amount of fruit. While I was wrestling with this healthy dissatisfaction, an international church planting coach approached me in a friendly way and stirred up that conviction with DMM principals.

2. We looked at Scripture and recognized a simple, powerful pattern in Luke 10 and Matthew 10. Jesus clearly said, go and do a specific thing. Look for the person who God has prepared ahead of time – a **person of peace.** That person will not only welcome you and your message, they will also pass it to their family and/or neighbors.

*Trevor*: We call these people **key persons**. A key person may be the first person who believes and passes on the gospel. Or they may someone who legitimizes those who share the gospel, finance them, or share “gossip” about miracles. Whether or not they personally come to faith, key persons open the door for the gospel into their social group.

3. Another key factor is the importance of **aiming for** **multiplication** rather than addition. Although it’s good to add new people to an existing church, addition tends to pull people away from their social context. We’ve learned that multiplication happens **if new believers stay close to their social group** **and their context**, so multiplication can happen and happen quickly.  I saw that in chapter after chapter of Acts God gave the early church rapid multiplication. And we have seen a similar dynamic as we shifted our aim to rapid multiplication rather than addition.

*Trevor*: Focusing on multiplication makes us rethink all we do. It requires that we **harness the power of pre-existing social bonds** between local people. The gospel is added into pre-existing social groups.

1. Another factor that contributed to the movement was our shift from knowledge-based discipleship to **obedience-based discipleship**. When we looked at the Great Commission, we saw that the heart of Jesus’ command was “make disciples” which means we must teach them to *obey all the Lord’s commands*. That truth impacted us deeply. Knowledge is useless without obedience. So we integrate obedience into everything we do.

*Trevor*: Movements multiply quickly when the **Word is immediately applied**. We shorten the pathway to maturity in Christ by immediately applying God’s Word, because believers become *doers* of the Word.

1. We focus on **reaching families** – the *oikos*. If we focus on reaching individuals, they end up disconnected from their family and their natural network of relationships. That makes it hard for gospel to spread. The book of Acts very rarely describes just one individual coming to faith by themselves. The overwhelming majority came as households and groups. Over and over we see the *oikos* as a basic unit of God’s kingdom: Lydia and her household, the Philippian jailer and his household, Cornelius and “his relatives and close friends.” Individuals are not an end in themselves. They are a doorway to the family. That has made a big difference. We always ask our people: “With whom are you going to share? With family? With friends? With extended family? The family focus is very integrated into the fabric of our movement.

*Trevor*: “Family” boundaries are flexibly negotiated between people in many contexts where we focus. Besides the nuclear family, other relatives, friends and coworkers mutually “act like brothers” to each other, cooperating with each other to accomplish their shared goals. The gospel spreads through these “**constructed” families**.

We aim for **indigenous incarnation of the gospel**, so the churches we plant “smell” like the community. It’s not like one tribe is giving their Jesus to another tribe. We want people to feel: “This is *my* Jesus. He speaks my language. He talks like me.” That kind of incarnational ministry has contributed a lot. As much as possible, we try to reduce cultural barriers. We try to give people nothing but the gospel and allow the indigenous people to contextualize to whatever fits in their community, without compromising the full truth of the Word of God. That way they are not robbed of their culture and the gospel is not foreign to them. *Trevor*: In our country, the gospel must be **fitted** **for each context** in 130 different Unreached People Groups, and many religious variants. Our near-culture workers do cultural research to discover dialog themes that local people prioritize. They use these themes in **transformational dialogs** with local people in their social groups. Local believers then imitate this pattern of cultural research to develop transformational dialogs of their own. This pattern of research to fit transformational dialogs to context has enabled group multiplication to bridge over to 47 Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in 12 countries. By the third generation of group multiplication, discipleship has become very strongly fitted to each context.

1. Another very important factor for us is **access ministry**. This is genuine ministry that serves a need of the community and creates a bridge between disciple makers and the community. We say: “Access ministry is answering the prayer of the lost.” Access ministry shares the love of Christ not only with our mouths but also through our deeds, bringing a holistic gospel message. We see our Lord Jesus serving the needs of the community as well as sharing the message of the Kingdom. He asked us to do the same. We seek to discover unique access for each place, focusing on whatever the Lord brings into our hearts.

*Trevor*: We integrate **need-based ministries** with multiplication of believer groups. Need-based ministries give *access* to new communities. They also *solidify* a movement’s social role in the wider community. Local leaders empower other believers to meet the needs of their neighbors. This increases both the quality of their shared life in Christ and their social legitimacy, reducing security risks. Need-based ministries also develop *bonds between local leaders* as they work together to serve others.

1. We intentionally develop **indigenous leaders** from within the harvest. Without indigenous leaders, it’s very difficult for the gospel to spread. So we intentionally focus on grass-roots leadership development. The leaders emerge from the community and are identified by the community. Most of our leadership training happens on the job in short segments.

*Trevor*: We begin developing indigenous leaders by entrusting first generation groups to **local facilitators** by the fifth week. Leaders’ groups equip these new leaders and keep them growing. We “knit together” **bands of brothers/sisters**. These brotherhood bands cement relational bonds between local leaders. These bands oversee believer groups in each region.

1. Another multiplication factor is our **generational focus**. We measure everything in terms of generations, whether disciples, churches, or leaders from the harvest. We call it a movement *if* it is at least four generations of churches, with 100 churches in a social segment or people group in less than four years. We have seen 14 movements in this region. Some of the movements have churches up to 19generations.

*Trevor*: Our slogan: **“3rd Generation not 1st Generation”** changes an activist’s paradigm from focusing on their own ministry to empowering their spiritual children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Once their people get to multiple groups in the third generation, a “cluster” of about 10 believer groups is linked and chooses elders. When small believer groups multiply into a linked cluster of groups, it is healthy enough to keep multiplying.

1. We as an organization are not working alone. There’s no ego or logo in this movement. This is God’s movement; God the Holy Spirit is initiating and doing this. Nobody should take credit for it. We are a **kingdom-centered network working together** to get to movements. We come together from many denominations, churches and indigenous organizations. The goal is not to make our ministry bigger but to make the kingdom bigger, because God’s kingdom is much bigger than our denomination or our ministry. The Great Commission is too big to do alone. We need each other. We don’t compromise critical elements, but we share a voluntary commitment to work together in focusing on kingdom movements.
2. Our organization has a responsibility as catalysts. We are like “**hot coals**” burning, and we pass the hot coal to start the fire elsewhere, with a high focus on certain unreached people groups (UPGs) and unengaged UPGs (UUPGs). Then those communities become another movement, which becomes another hot coal which can jump over to another UUPG. We’re moving from being a harvest field to a harvest force –sending out the hot coals. We’re now sending workers not only within our region but also beyond our region. This hot coal strategy has worked so effectively here, we’re planning for it to go further.

*Trevor*: Poor local laborers and university students are two types of people who most often become “hot coals”. These new believers adopt our fruitful practices, move for work, then multiply groups in new areas and people groups. This “**jump over” fruit** multiplies clusters and then movements. These movements are empowered by mentors who do **follow-the-fruit trips** to equip local leaders.

1. Local ministries regularly share fruitful practices and best practices with each other. We have strategy coordinators and movement leaders and grassroots leaders discussing “What is working?” They are iron sharpening iron. We discuss honestly: “What things do we need to start doing? What things do we need to continue doing? And what things do we need to stop doing?”

*Trevor*: Our **focus on fruit** encourages us to discover and share fruitful practices. This involves: a) seeing “God as the Fruit Lover, we as his coworkers,” b) prioritizing fruit rather than activity, c) experimenting to discover fruitful practices, d) leaders sharing fruitful practices inlearning communities, and e) Bible study on how Christ reinterpreted honor through humility, which makes leaders’ learning communities possible.

1. We intentionally focus just on the word of God, using a simple discussion model that leads people to obedience and transformation. We call it **Discovery Bible Study** (DBS) – a simple tool that enables groups of lost people to discover for themselves God’s will for their lives. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, we take them on a journey from lostness to falling in love with Jesus. This enables them to come to the Lord with their family and get baptized and form a faith community. This simple DBS approach has a powerful transformational impact. It’s also a great way for believers to grow in maturity and obedience in Christ. They continue to discover: what the Scripture says, how to say it in their own words, and what God wants them to obey.

*Trevor*: Our principle of “**Groups not individuals”** means we always work in groups, from pre-evangelism through leader development. Our DBS model of facilitating groups uses seven questions to turn social groups into greenhouses which provide good conditions for spiritual growth.

*(Sidebar:)* **7 Question Model (Discovery Bible Study):**

1. What are you thankful for?

2. What challenges are you facing?

(Read the text. Have someone retell the story.)

3. What do you learn about God from this passage?

4. What do you learn about Isa Al Masih from this passage?

5. What do you learn about people from this passage?

6. What will YOU do/apply this week after reading this passage? What will WE do this week?

7. With whom will you share what you learned from this passage?

1. We **don’t focus on religion**; we focus on spirituality. If we try to give people our religion, they miss the bigger message. Jesus told us to pass on a *life,* having himself as the model. Our goal is not transferring our religion, but sharing Jesus. That’s the message. That’s where the life transformation happens.
2. **Prayer** has been a major backbone of the work. Actually it should be the factor listed first. Without prayer we cannot do anything. Trying to experience a disciple-making movement without prayer is like trying to fly without wings. We prioritize informed intercessory prayer. Each of the movement leaders engages in serious prayer – for the harvest field as well as the harvest force. In movements, spiritual warfare is very real. Therefore we have to mobilize intercessors who will stand with us.
3. Connected with prayer is God confirming his word through **signs, miracles, healings, deliverance and visions**, especially among the UPGs on whom we focus. God confirms his message by revealing himself to people in very unique ways, in relation to their situation. He shows his power in their lives and in their families’ lives. Showing God’s care for people in need is a key factor in the growth of this movement.
4. **Every believer has a part in implementing the Great Commission**. Obeying the Great Commission doesn’t require a special calling. We believe the Matthew 28 calling to make disciples is different than the Acts 13 calling to apostolic work (see factor 20 below). Every believer has a part to play in making disciples – from the new believer to the person who has followed Christ for a long time. In fact, those who have been believers for two years or less are the most effective disciple makers and church planters. They have a passion, a commitment and a boldness to share with their families the sweetness of Jesus.

*Trevor*: A key multiplication factor in our model is **apostolic agents**. This works with Shalom’s point above, a movement grows based on active disciple making by every believer, so apostolic agents need to catalyze believers to actively make disciples. This is how movements occur. Finding these specially gifted apostolic agents and helping them maximize their catalytic service helps initiate movements. Movements then need a multiplication pattern that grows beyond the first apostolic agents. Training of leaders must multiply to generations of leaders who do not know the first leader. A model in which 1st to 4th generation leaders equip 5th through 8th generation leadersis a pattern that keeps on multiplying.

1. We have **redefined church** according to the model we see in the New Testament. The church is not a building. The church is a group of baptized believers who gather to worship the Lord as a community, and then go out to implement the Great Commission. It’s a very reproducible and organic community of faith. They meet and reproduce. We always ask: “Is this reproducible? Will they be able to do this without us?” We call it a rabbit strategy rather than an elephant strategy. As much as possible, we try to minimize the number of believers in each group – on average, 25 people or a minimum of two families. We don’t mean just two or three people. That’s the seed that grows to become a church. These churches meet in different kinds of places. Some meet at different times, like Friday evening or Saturday morning. Some even meet every day. It depends on the situation and their availability, but it’s not just a Bible study. *Trevor*: An **organic, Biblical model of a community of believers**  is vital for multiplication. We must recapture the biblical ideas that 1) healthy communities of believers naturally multiply, and 2) healthy communities of believers are linked in a network system, they are not independent groups. The church didn’t have buildings or organizations in New Testament times, so we know these elements are not essential. Believer groups existed in three sizes in the New Testament: small home groups, city-wide networks, and region-wide networks. These believer communities of different sizes and ethnics linked into a brotherhood. Organic *ekklesia* has two wings: local churches plus missional bands that give birth to the churches and link them.
2. We use an **equipping strategy appropriate for the context**. The majority of our context is that of oral cultures. People learn a lot by *doing*. So we show one thing, teach one thing and do one thing. It’s very simple and reproducible.
3. The movement **leaders have conviction to focus on movements**. They as catalysts *own* this vision. This model has not been imposed on them. They eat, breathe and speak disciple-making movements. They see everything through the glasses of movements. The Lord has used these key leaders and their conviction to transform their denominational circles as well as local churches.

**Conclusion**

These are some of the factors the Lord has used to facilitate rapidly multiplying disciple-making movements in our Africanand Asian contexts. We believe these things could be useful and used by God in any context. God is a God of movement. So we challenge you to open your heart toward the leading of the Holy Spirit. Maintain intentional obedience to God’s word. Stay committed to communicate the gospel of the Kingdom – without adding to or subtracting from the Truth. And when God starts moving, remember to give him all the glory because without him we can do nothing. In all things and at all times God’s glory must increase and we must decrease. To him be the glory for ever and ever.

Questions for Reflection

* How might you harness the power of pre-existing social bonds for church planting in your context?
* What would a “focus on movements” look like in your ministry?

For Further reading:

Butler, Bobby. “Indigenous Movements: How People are Reached.” *Mission Frontiers*. Mar-Apr (2018). <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi64NisltfdAhUFPK0KHeM-BzQQFjAAegQICRAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.missionfrontiers.org%2Fissue%2Farticle%2Findigenous-movements&usg=AOvVaw3JKuZnAsBvbJgTOcLV2UHw>

McGavran, Donald. *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions.* Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers (2005).