

Multiplying Disciples

M3 Apprentice Growth Groups

Motto: **Love one another – Go and make disciples**

John 4:1-2 It was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples

John 4:1-2 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.

What is *In* the Story?

Jesus had a rapidly growing number of disciples (not just the 12).

Jesus did not baptise the next-generation disciples.

What comes *Out* of the Story?

Jesus taught His disciples to make disciples and baptise them.

Everyone would have wanted Jesus to baptise them, but Jesus refused, because he needed to train them to multiply.

How will I *Obey* the Story?

Will you teach your apprentices to go and make multiplying disciples?

Will you refuse to be the big-man who trains everyone?

Disciple Making Movements

Jesus trained his disciples to start self-replicating movements of disciple makers wherever they went. As a consequence of this training the Kingdom of God grew very rapidly in the early decades of the church.

Over the last 20 years missionaries have rediscovered Jesus' disciple-making methods and applied them with incredible results. We are learning to obey what Jesus taught – and we are seeing the same rapid growth in His Kingdom. This approach is very different from traditional approaches to discipleship and church planting. We refer to Jesus' strategy as Disciple Making Movements (DMM).

No Magic Formula

Before we start you must understand that the tools and training we teach are not a magic formula. Our "method" is no more than a collection of biblical tools which we pray the Holy Spirit will be able to use to make each of us into faithful disciples of Jesus. We have only one Master and only one Teacher – Jesus. So when you learn and apply this training, and when you train others, please emphasise that this is not a rigid unchangeable program, but a listening and learning journey for all of us. However, it is clear that Jesus' approach to discipleship is what, today, we would call an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships

Jesus trained three disciples in his inner circle (Luke 9:28) and twelve in his discipleship group (Luke 6:13). But He also sent out the seventy two (Luke 10:1) and at His death there were more than 500 disciples (1 Cor 15:6). So we try to follow the same pattern.

To do what Jesus did we need to stop thinking of the pastor as the leader or disciple-maker. If we are going to grow like yeast (Luke 13:20-21) then we must think and talk about every believer being a leader, a trainer, a church-planter. So we talk about apprentices and apprenticeships. In a Disciple-Making-Movement (DMM) everyone is both a trainer and an apprentice.

Jesus trained three disciples (Peter, James and John). Peter, James and John were apprentices to Jesus. But each of them trained three other disciples, so as well as being apprentices they were also trainers. This is what it looks like:

	Generation 1	Generation 2
Jesus ->	Peter ->	three other disciples
	James ->	three other disciples
	John ->	three other disciples
Total in Generation	3	9

Jesus had twelve apprentices in two generations. Jesus chose all twelve but trained them in two generations. But it didn't stop there. It is quite clear that the twelve were active in training up other disciples (John 4:1-2). But it seems that Jesus advised the nine to train just two apprentices each. So the nine generation-2 disciples trained up 18, and the 18 trained two each which added another 36, and the 36 trained two each which brings us to the 72 disciples that Jesus sent out on mission in Luke 10.

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 4	Gen 5
Jesus ->	Peter ->	three other apprentices ->	two each ->	two each ->	two each
	James ->	three other apprentices ->	two each ->	two each ->	two each
	John ->	three other apprentices ->	two each ->	two each ->	two each
Total in Gen	3	9	18	36	72

We don't know for sure if this is how the 72 were trained, but it is a very reasonable guess and it serves as a suitable model for us to follow.

Finding Apprentices

Like Jesus did, we aim to train three apprentices in each generation, but for new believers or young children two apprentices may be more appropriate. As a trainer, you should find three (or two) apprentices to train, and then help them to find their own apprentices. So, like Jesus, every trainer is giving care to two-generations. Your apprentices will also care for two-generations.

Being an Apprentice

Peter, James and John were giving training to the other disciples at the same time that they were receiving training from Jesus; they were apprentices as well as trainers. They formed a special growth-group together, learning from each other and going on mission together (Mark 5:37), as well as learning from Jesus. So everyone giving training is also an apprentice. And every apprentice should also be a trainer.

Apprentice Growth Groups (AGG)

During training, your apprentices should be in an Apprentice Growth Group (AGG) with their fellow apprentices (one or two others). AGG's work slightly differently from ordinary Growth Groups (GG) that we will teach later. The main difference is that a GG is for mutual discipleship and there is no "leader", but an AGG is for training so there is a trainer and apprentices.

Your role as a trainer is to help your apprentices see what Jesus put into the stories, what Jesus intended the story to teach us, and how Jesus wants us to obey it today. Your apprentices need to hear Jesus speaking to them through the stories and allow the stories to change their thinking, their priorities and their practice. We call this process Discovery which you learnt about in M02. Discovery is central to all our discipleship and training. Remember you are teaching obedience to Jesus, not a factory-line making identical robot disciple-makers.

To remind you of the slightly different approach between a GG and an AGG we use different questions; instead of the 4 GG questions we use:

1. What is *In* the Story?
2. What comes *Out* of the Story?
3. How will I *Obey* the Story?

When training your AGG you guide the discovery process to ensure that the training lesson is learnt. You should still use Discovery, but if the teaching points do not emerge naturally, you ask questions and suggest interpretations to highlight the lesson.

Training in an Apprentice Growth Group

When you gather your apprentices for their AGG you teach the training story and help them through the three AGG questions. If you have heard Jesus for yourself through the training story, you should be able to teach the story out of your own heart from memory. It is better to train out of your heart rather than from the training-guide. But if you need to, you can use the training-guide to remind you of the teaching-points from the story.

After the AGG discussion, each apprentice should feel confident that they can train their apprentices in the same story. You should give any assistance an apprentice needs to pass the training on (like Jesus, you train the three and help them train the nine.)

Likewise, each apprentice should be receiving help from two trainers: you and also your trainer. You are also an apprentice, so if you have a question or difficulty that your trainer cannot help with, you can simply ask their trainer. We see this kind of referring up the training path in John's gospel:

John 12:20 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus

John 12:20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

(Philip did not need Andrew's permission to see Jesus – remember when the disciples tried to stop people going directly to Jesus, He told them off – See Luke 18:15-17)

AGG Meeting

The structure of an AGG should come very naturally, but as a reminder you can think of Look-Back, Look-Up, Look-Forward. This is sometimes called a 3/3 group (three-thirds):

Look-Back:

1. Each share any highlights or needs from the previous week.
2. Each one should recite the previous week's training stories.
3. Report and rejoice in each person's obedience to the previous AGG training.
4. Report and rejoice in each person's passing on the previous AGG training to our apprentices.
5. Briefly pray about what has been shared.

Look-Up: Teach the training story you have chosen.

Look-Forward:

1. What is Jesus asking us to obey in the new training?
2. Discuss any problems we anticipate in teaching the new training to our apprentices.
3. Agree the topic, time and place for the next AGG.