

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Leadership, Discipleship and Church Growth

by Dan Trygg

“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, and to each one as the Lord gave. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷ So then neither the one planting is anything, nor the one watering, but God who causes the growth. ⁸ But the one planting and the one watering are one; but each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's coworkers; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, but another is building upon it. But let each person watch how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no other foundation is able to be laid beyond the one being laid, which is Jesus Christ.” -- 1 Corinthians 3:6-11

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” -- Matthew 28:18-20

“And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints (i.e., all of us) unto a work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the conscious-experiential-recognition of the Son of God, to a mature person, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but truthing in love, we are to grow in all things into Him, who is the head, Christ, ¹⁶ out-from whom the whole body, being jointly-fitted-together and jointly-knitted-together through every ligament of the supply, according to the inworking in measure of each individual part, produces the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” -- Ephesians 4:11-16

As we begin to consider the question of leadership, discipleship and church growth, it is wise to ask ourselves what our objective is to be? **What is it that we are trying to accomplish? What is it that Jesus has asked us to be doing?** What is it that was the vision of the leaders in the early days of the Christian movement? What was it that Jesus Himself accomplished in His ministry? **Was the goal just to preach the gospel? Was it to start and establish churches? Or, was it to make disciples,** ...people who grow into the image of Christ Himself, ...people who are serious, active followers and engaged partners with Jesus Christ? **This is a fundamental question that will determine our focus and our methodology.**

So often, the assumption is that we are to focus on growing churches. Can you show me where you find that in the NT? **Obviously, churches were established, ...but was that the goal?** And, of course, the “churches” of the NT era looked nothing like the modern churches we might have in our minds. They were gatherings of believers, who met in homes, for the purpose of building *one another* up and teaching *one another* how to minister in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit to *one another*. I don't know if you noticed the repeated phrase in that sentence, ...“one another”. **They were focused on making disciples, not just gathering “converts”. Converts, if they were genuine, were expected to join with others to learn not only theology, but the discipleship skills of ministering to one another.** They “practiced on” one another. Each one had an assignment: How can I express the truth in love to my brothers and sisters in Christ in order to encourage them in their walk with Him? **Churches in the early days were highly relational and interactive.**

Note in the passages above that in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul planted the seed, but after he left Apollos “watered it”. **They were “servants” (diakonos) to whom God gave the opportunity to speak the truth in love to those they ministered to.** They were co-workers with God. They understood quite clearly that they were not the ones who were causing the growth. God was doing that. **God was working in and through them to build up or edify those they were called to serve.**

In Ephesians 4, we are *all* called to be “equipped unto a work of service (diakonia)”, which is further defined as “unto a building up or edifying of the body of Christ”. We are all being prepared to build up or edify one another. **We are all servants (diakonos) who are to learn the discipleship skills of ministering to one another according to the giftings of the Spirit which are activated in our lives.** Note that in verse 16, *it is the body* that produces *the growth of the body, as each part is functioning in their giftings*, and getting their direction from Christ, the head. **Clearly, the vision in Ephesians 4 is about interactive ministry, and the goal is the maturation, training and activation of each person, ...discipleship.**

The church growth movement initially was based upon the observation that attempting to use Western methods and strategies was largely ineffective in a different culture. Just establishing a “mission station”, trying to evangelize people and bring them to a Western-style church service often was not readily acceptable or productive in growing churches or making disciples. **It was critical to study the culture to find culturally relevant expressions for presenting Christ and maturing disciples.** In our more recent times, in the United States this approach has been adapted to attempt to attract those who would not be interested in a traditional church experience to attend a different style of church service. The “seeker sensitive” service approach is designed to remove old fashioned religious expressions, and create an environment and experience that would be more acceptable to non-Christians or “seekers”. The function of the church service is to gather a crowd of people and make it a fun, entertaining experience. In that environment, the claims and gospel of Christ are presented. Discipleship was intended to happen in small groups. **A problem associated with this strategy has been**

the inability of getting people to move from the large group meeting to engage in discipleship groups. Because the focus, is on the large group meeting, that seems to be where most of the resources, attention and participation takes place. Often, even the small groups are issue-oriented, not effectively addressing total multiplying discipleship.

Again, we need to ask, "What are we trying to accomplish?" If the goal is to have a large group gathering, maybe this would be good, but if we are trying to make disciples, and fulfill the Great Commission, we will never be successful. Even if we were to be able to establish a new 1,000 member church *every day*, we would never be able to be as effective as fulfilling the discipleship mandate of Jesus. We would have a lot of noise, a lot of activity, a lot of cost (facilities for such large gatherings are expensive), but we would never be able to even keep up with even the population growth of the world.

The Power of Multiplying Disciples -- God's plan for expanding His Kingdom relies on the same principles we see in nature for the rapid reproduction and spread of any species. God's plan is designed around multiplication. Paul describes this in 2 Timothy 2:2, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful people who will be able to teach others also." This represents four generations, ...Paul, Timothy, "faithful people" and "others". This is the method Paul used in his attempt to carry out the great commission of Matthew 28:19,20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,"²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." **The key to this strategy is quality. There must be a wholehearted pursuit to learn to do all that Jesus said, and a clear determination to pass along this challenge to other faithful people, who will commit to passing it along to yet others. Without this follow-through, the multiplied effect is lost.** With this follow-through, however, it is possible to spread across and win the world in a relatively short amount of time. **Jesus' plan relies on multiplication, instead of addition.** If we only "add to the church", we are still falling behind the world population growth, which is *multiplying*. **ONLY BY MULTIPLICATION can we effectively catch up and hope to overtake the burgeoning growth and expansion of the human race.**

To illustrate the power of multiplication versus addition, I have listed below by year in the left-hand column what would happen if someone were to meet with one other person for a year, to teach and train them, and then, in each following year, each would pick another person to train and disciple. In the right-hand column, I list what would happen if you were to lead 1,000 people to the Lord, or plant a new 1,000 member church *every day*. If each year you continued at that same rate, how would that compare over time with the multiplication method?

Year	Number of Multiplying Disciples	Total Number of Converts @ 1,000/day	
1	2	365,000	
2	4	730,000	
3	8	1,095,000	
4	16	1,460,000	
5	32	1,825,000	
6	64	2,190,000	
7	128	2,555,000	
8	256	2,920,000	
9	512	3,285,000	
10	1,032	3,650,000	
11	2,064	4,015,000	
12	4,128	4,380,000	
13	8,256	4,745,000	
14	16,512	5,110,000	
15	33,024	5,475,000	
16	66,048	5,840,000	
17	132,096	6,205,000	
18	264,192	6,570,000	
19	528,384	6,935,000	
20	1,056,768	7,300,000	
21	2,113,536	7,665,000	
22	4,227,072	8,030,000	
23	8,454,144	8,395,000	
24	16,908,288	8,760,000	
25	33,816,576	9,125,000	
26	67,633,152	9,490,000	
27	135,266,304	9,855,000	
28	270,532,608	10,220,000	
29	541,066,216	10,585,000	
30	1,082,130,432	10,950,000	
31	2,164,260,864	11,315,000	
32	4,328,521,728	11,680,000	
33	8,650,043,456	12,045,000	

Note how much more quickly the numbers seem to add up in the "ministry by addition" column. It seems like hardly anything is happening at all in the multiplying discipleship column. The apparent lack of visible results can cause disciples to be discouraged, and tempt them to give up to join the movement that *seems* to be getting more results.

There have been few, if any, ministries that have won 1,000 people a day to Christ consistently. If there *were* such a ministry, how many of these converts would grow to maturity? The discipling model *requires* that those involved grow up and mature enough to lead and work with others.

In our illustration, it would take 23 years to "catch up" with the converts from the "addition model", but in 10 more years multiplying disciples could reach the world, while the other method *never* could!

The keys to success are clear vision, a strong commitment, perseverance and not abandoning the Biblical plan for multiplying disciples.