



THE GDI APPROACH TO MAKING REPRODUCING DISCIPLES

The Mission

GDI is compelled by the mission that Jesus articulated as His central imperative, “**MAKE DISCIPLES** of all nations.” This is powerfully restated by C. S. Lewis:

"The church exists for no other purpose but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose." - C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 163, 169, 170.

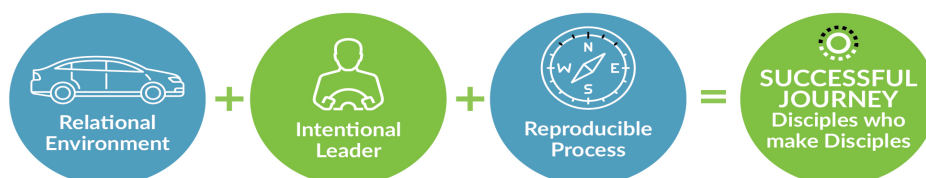
The Problem

Yet, by any measurement we could imagine, the church has substantially failed in this mission. Bill Hull states, “The crisis at the heart of the church is a crisis of product.” What are we producing? A simple way to dramatize our failure is through a case study. Suppose there is a newly converted follower of Christ that you are concerned will be well-grounded from the beginning. You approach someone who is considered to be a mature believer, and say, “*Joe or Jane has just given their life to Christ. I would like to ask you to walk alongside Joe or Jane for the next year so that they can become deeply rooted in Christ, but your mission is not complete until they can do the same for others.*” How do you think the average person might respond to this challenge? How many would ready to accept the call?

The Solution

We believe the average person would be a bit clueless as to **how** to proceed. It is the word **how** that dominates our focus. Is there a relatively simple, reproducible process that the regular church goer could practice that would not only accelerate their growth toward Christlikeness but also provide them a way to make reproducing disciples? We believe there is. Let us describe the key components through this visual image.

PICTURE OF A SUCCESSFUL DISCIPLE MAKING JOURNEY



Successful Journey: Disciples Who Make Disciples

The end goal is a church or ministry where the regular believer is a disciple maker. In our training we start with a picture of the Camarillo Community Church's journey over a 5-year period which led to its radical transformation. The church went from 0 to 150 disciple groups (described later) which ended up reshaping the culture of the church. The result was that the church took on some of the following characteristics: transformation into Christlikeness, multiplication of grass-roots disciples, generosity, harmony and unity, evangelistic outreach, joy and obedience, global vision, leader development, etc.

With this outcome in mind, the following is a description of the key components of the *micro group* model graphically depicted above. In our experience, a successful disciple making journey consists of:

Relational Environment (Car):

Every journey needs a vehicle to get to its destination. Our car is the relational environment of the *micro group* (*triads or quads*). The micro group is a way to implement Jesus' relational model of disciple making. Jesus called 12 men to be "with Him" as the primary way to shape his disciples. Jesus' ultimate goal was to prepare the 12 (minus one) to carry on His ministry when He returned to the Father (John 17:4-5). It is no coincidence that Jesus had his own *micro group* consisting of Peter, James and John. We find that this size of a group optimizes four transformational elements:

When we...

- open our hearts in transparent trust to each other
 - around the truth of God's word
 - in the spirit of life-change accountability
 - while engaged in our God-designed mission
- ...we are in the Holy Spirit's *hothouse* of transformation.



- Container for the elements of accelerated growth
- 1 person invites 2 or 3 others (created thru personal invitation)
- 3 to 4 participants (Quads/Triads)
- Gender specific
- Meets for a year to year and a ½
- Covenants to reproduce: each person seeks to start their own group upon completion
- Meets for 90 minutes/weekly
- Curriculum based
- Meets in a safe space



Intentional Leader (Driver)

Every car needs a driver. Every group needs a leader. The first step a leader takes is to form the groups. A distinguishing mark of *micro groups* is that they are formed around *the power of prayerful personal invitation*. Again, Jesus is our model. Luke 6:12-13 reads, “In these days He [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He named apostles.” Jesus chose His disciples in the context of prayerful discernment. From a larger group who had been following Him, Jesus chose twelve to be apostles (or the future leaders of His mission). This prayerful personal invitation contrasts with the usual programmatic church approach. Instead of the descriptors of a *micro group* pictured above, the church generally conducts programs. Programs are group methods we use to herd people through systems to give us an illusion of success.

The genius of the micro group size of 3 or 4 is that it makes leadership accessible to the everyday person. Why?

1. **Simplicity:** With a curriculum that is easy to use, the leader is just guiding a conversation. The larger the group the more training is needed.
2. **Leaders are trained in the group:** There is no necessity for extra leadership training or development. After several weeks of meeting, leadership within the group is passed around so that each person has numerous opportunities to lead. It is like an apprenticeship. Once their groups are complete, group members have internalized the ability and passion to have their own group.
3. **Members are learning from each other:** There is no teacher in the group. The Holy Spirit works through the truth of the biblically based curriculum and the insights shared among the group members.

Reproducible Process (GPS, Map)

The curriculum is the GPS that gets us to our destination. What could be the impact that a foundational, disciple making curriculum could have if a vast majority of people in the church or university were covering the same material? Sometimes the best way to see the importance of something is to imagine the consequences of what you don't have. Without a curriculum you will **not...**

- have a plan;
- be intentional;
- have a transferable tool;
- have a sense of progress;
- have a structure to follow.

In our case, the recommended curriculum and our basic tool is *Discipleship Essentials*. Here is a summary of the overall content of *Disciple Essentials*.

- Lessons 1 and 2 set the tone and focus: “What is discipling and who is a disciple?”
- Lessons 3-6 answer the question, “How do we stay connected *to* Christ?” These lessons provide foundational introduction to the spiritual disciplines of quiet time, bible study, prayer and corporate worship.
- Lessons 7-13 answer the question: “What has Christ done *for* us?” This is the main doctrinal section and is focused on God as Trinity; Made in God’s Image, Sin, Grace, Redemption, Justification and Adoption.
- Lessons 14-19 answer the question: “What does Christ want to do *in* us?” Micro members deeply engage with content on the transformational work of the Holy Spirit, Trust, Love, Justice and Witness.
- Lessons 20-25 answer the question: “What does Christ want to do *through* us?” These chapters cover topics that include: The Church, Ministry Gifts, Spiritual Warfare, Obedience, and Sharing the Wealth, with a bonus chapter, Money.

In Summary, This Is Our Vision

We see disciple making *micro groups* organically multiplying from generation to generation to the point of leavening the whole lump. The combination of the container, the micro group, with the content, *Discipleship Essentials*, creates an environment for the Holy Spirit to accelerate growth in the participants who are gathered around a shared covenant. From the beginning of the micro group journey, every member acknowledges their commitment to have their own group following the completion of their year to year and half long experience. The simple act of being in a group and then leading your own groups moves people from consumers to contributors; from passive to active; from feed-me to self-feeding; from coming to get to going to give. When these transformed people reach a critical mass, you will have a disciple making ministry.