

# Multiplying Disciples & Communities

How will Discipling Communities facilitate growth?



## Growth is a Natural Outcome of Disciple-making

*Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

When we talk about growth in connection with Discipling Communities, we're not just talking about the personal growth that is expected individually, but the addition and multiplication of new disciples and new communities where people can connect, grow, and engage.

Just like a family grows through birth, marriage, adoption, etc., so does a church. As a family grows, new subsets of that family are started that still see each other at reunions. As a church grows, **new** Discipling Communities **birth** that still gather for corporate worship and community fellowship. This is a healthy dynamic.

Effective Discipling Communities bring about mutual development by connecting, growing, and engaging as disciples who make disciples, just like the early church experienced. If we are living as disciples, the natural outcome will be new people becoming disciples.

### How do we see growth happening?

*Growth will happen in the coming years proportionally to the degree that we embrace, advance, and insist upon groups that are **small** and **new**.*

The reality is that new groups typically reach more people than established groups. We also know that participation in a small Discipling Community accelerates growth largely because it is harder to hide. For this to work it means continually launching new communities (like what happened in the Book of Acts). Plus, it's just hard for people to walk into an existing group, especially without some type of real relational connection.

We must embrace the truth that programs do not reach people; people reach people. We're not interested in more groups for the sake of more groups, nor do we define 'success' in any other way than people growing spiritually as evidenced by the *7 Marks of a Healthy Disciple* manifested in the disciple's life.

## How do we foster the making of new disciples that lead to needing to birth new Discipling Communities? It happens via:

### Disciples being disciples

If the love and wonder of Jesus has captured us, then we can't help but want to tell the people we know about Jesus and invite them to surrender their lives to Him and be a disciple. It happens as we seek to complete the Great Commission by engaging our world in dependence on the Holy Spirit's empowering through prayer and evangelism in relationships that BLESS.

### Disciples working together

A Discipling Community works together to reach friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. This goes back to the whole idea of biblical community. It really isn't about us as individuals, but about working together to accomplish the Great Commission. For some people, a Discipling Community might be their first connection to FACT.

For example: a group joins together to pray for and reach out to a group member's friend or co-worker, building relationship bridges and inviting them into the context of the group to be exposed to Jesus, His people, and a choice. For a great example of this, check out Luke's story on Vimeo (<http://vimeo.com/38998440>). When that person surrenders to Jesus, envelop them into the group they already know. Be ready, though, because the more this happens, the time for a community to birth to allow for more growth and more opportunities to welcome people into discipling will get closer and closer.

### Groups & Leaders seeking out new people

This means being on the lookout for new people who aren't yet connected and engaging them in conversation. Find out where they are on their discipleship journey. Invite them to check out your Discipling Community, or help them find a suitable one if it's not yours. Instead of being passive, be active. Pray the Lord will open connections with people who are ready to grow as a disciple.

Instead of "*Small groups are important! Go find one.*", our culture is expressed as "*Getting into a small group is important. We will help you find one. In fact, we believe that it is such an important step in our discipleship process, you can expect a group to come find you!*"

## How do we know it's time to start talking about birthing/multiplying?

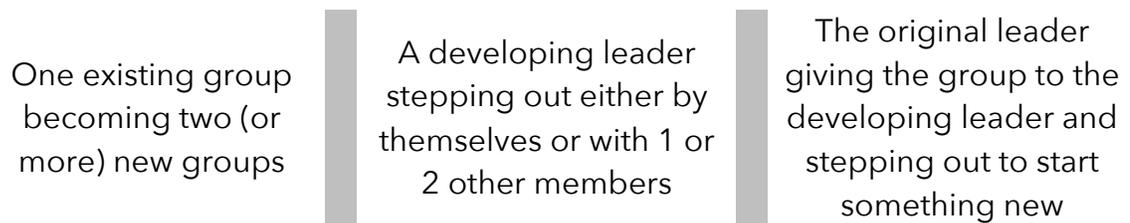
Hopefully, this is a conversation that is ongoing in the life of the group, and a value that is built in from the very beginning.

## How do we birth new Discipling Communities?

- **Existing communities birthing new communities.** This is the natural outcome when a Discipling Community and its members engage the world like illustrated above, but it is hard. The typical approach of “let’s make what we like bigger so others can experience it” works against the very essence of a Discipling Community. Once a group passes a certain point, the very things that made it an effective biblical community begin to get lost. We need to draw new people in to experience the greatness of community, but we must also make sure groups don’t get too big so that they stop being a Discipling Community and instead become a closed, ingrown group that no longer experiences healthy, biblical growth.

This value is a basic value of a Discipling Community, and something that group leaders will be expected to keep at the forefront of group life as they develop leaders within the group.

This can practically happen by:



This can be hard, but it is also a reason to celebrate. Obviously, there is more to it, and church leadership will serve as a “midwife” in the birthing process. Once birthing happens, we encourage those groups to maintain contact and occasionally meet together to catch up and celebrate relationship. Birthing doesn’t mean the end of relationships, but the expansion of relationships.

- **Identifying potential leaders and establishing new Discipling Communities in anticipation of growth or identified need.** Instead of simply responding to needs, we want to anticipate and be in front of the growth. What might need to happen that isn’t? Who could be reached that currently isn’t? In addition to developing leaders within Discipling Communities, we will identify and develop potential leaders through ministry, membership, and elders.

Just like a family grows through birth, marriage, adoption, and in other ways, so does a church. As a family grows, new subsets of that family are started that still see each other at reunions. As a church grows, new Discipling Communities will birth that still gather for corporate worship and community fellowship.