

Jesus-Shaped Discipleship and Mission

A Brief Introduction to 3DMovements

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The Biblical Foundation

Jesus gave his disciples a clear description of their mission: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18-20) Reaching lost people with the Good News of Jesus, discipling them into his Kingdom way of life, and empowering them to do the same with others is clearly the mission of the church. But what does it actually mean to *“make disciples”* and how should we go about it?

A. Jesus-Shaped Discipleship

Many people today assume discipleship is mainly about learning certain information. It is true Jesus was the greatest teacher of all time and he has incredible information because it is revelatory truth straight from God! However, Jesus’ way of discipleship involved much more than just transmitting information. As a great Teacher Jesus invited people to listen to him (Matthew 11:15), but his call to discipleship was *“follow me”* (Mark 1:17, 7:14). This call to discipleship was an invitation to live in a relationship with him that was close enough to allow for imitation. The goal of every first-century Jewish disciple was to listen to the rabbi in order to learn to know what the rabbi knew, but also to watch the rabbi and imitate his way of life in order to learn how to do what the rabbi did. The goal was ultimately to become like the rabbi and call disciples of your own.

If we are going to fulfill the Great Commission we will need to relearn how to make disciples the way Jesus did, by inviting them into our lives so we not only teach them with our words, but also with our own imperfect example of Jesus’ way of life. Although he was painfully aware of his shortcomings, the Apostle Paul was bold enough to invite the people he was discipling to follow the example of the parts of his life that looked like Jesus. As he said to the Corinthians, *“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 11:1) In order to disciple others in this Jesus-shaped way we will first need to receive that same kind of discipleship ourselves. In the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles we see the followers of Jesus were disciples who learned how to make disciples, their disciples learned to do the same, and so on (see Luke 10:1-12; 1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:2).

B. A Spiritual Family Living on Mission

Modern people from western cultures often read the Bible through a highly individualistic lens. For that reason, many people assume discipleship is a one on one process in which a single follower learns from their teacher in isolation. However, Jesus rarely worked with people individually, rather he formed a community of disciples and trained them in two distinct contexts. First of all, he gathered regularly with a mid-sized group of people in the house of Simon and Andrew in Capernaum where everyone was welcomed. These were the people who became his extended spiritual family (Mark 1:32-33, 2:1-2, 3:20). Jesus’ mother and brothers thought he had gone crazy, so they came to that house to take him back to Nazareth. When they knocked on the outer door the courtyard of the house was full of people, so they passed the message to Jesus that his natural family was asking for him. Jesus responded by asking, *“Who are my mother and my brothers?”* And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, *“Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”* (Mark 3:33-35)

Although he regularly attracted large crowds who were drawn to listen to his teaching and witness his miracles, Jesus showed us that discipleship and mission are meant to take place in the context of an extended spiritual family that is reaching out and welcoming those outside the family of God. In fact, this was the example the first church in Jerusalem followed when they met in large groups at the Temple courts to hear the teaching of the Apostles, but gathered in extended family groups in homes where they shared meals, prayed together, and welcomed in those who did not yet know Jesus (Acts 2:42-47). As the movement of Jesus began to spread across the Mediterranean world, Paul and the other Apostles continued to follow this same pattern that Jesus had set by proclaiming the Gospel in public settings, but then gathering new believers into missional families where they began to receive relational discipleship. These families on mission were the new “churches” that were being planted and this is how the Kingdom of God grew so powerfully during the first three centuries of the church!

C. Reaching the Lost the Way Jesus Trained His Disciples to Do It

Jesus modeled and taught his followers a very specific methodology “to seek and save the lost.” When he was baptized, Jesus attracted the attention of Andrew, John, and Simon whom he invited to spend the day with him. Jesus welcomed them, listened to them, and served them (John 1:35-42). Later, when Jesus came to their hometown of Capernaum, Simon and Andrew invited Jesus into their home where they welcomed him, listened to him, and served him. Based on their receptivity, Jesus chose to eat with them, stay with them, heal the sick among them, and tell them the Good News of the Kingdom (Mark 1:29-34). This is how he began forming a spiritual family on mission. In this we see Jesus was modeling the explicit methodology he would later use to train his disciples for mission.

In Luke 10:1-12 Jesus prepared to send his disciples out by teaching them to offer their “peace” to those they met and look for people who would reciprocate this offer of friendship. He also told them not to worry about those who did not respond by offering their peace, but to shake the dust off their feet and move on. By welcoming, listening, and serving others we can find those who will do the same for us. These are what Jesus called “people of peace.” When we find a person of peace Jesus said we are to stay with them, eat with them, heal the sick, and tell them the Good News. Essentially, we see Jesus modeling and training his disciples to build friendships with those who are open to us by entering into their family and then inviting them into our spiritual family. This is the primary way Jesus carried out his mission and trained his disciples to do the same. We see this same pattern repeated over and over again in the book of Acts as Paul and the Apostles followed this same methodology in planting house churches across the Mediterranean world. They simply looked for people of peace and when they found them, they began to invest in those relationships, build spiritual family, and make disciples.

D. Empowering Leaders to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples

Within the extended spiritual family of disciples that Jesus built, there was a second context for discipleship. Jesus also called a smaller group of disciples to whom he gave greater access and in whom he invested more of himself. These were the twelve disciples who left their jobs and followed Jesus everywhere he went. They were the ones who became the primary leaders of the movement after Jesus was gone and who raised up and trained other leaders to do the same (see Acts 6:1-7). Paul followed this same example by calling disciples such as Silas, Timothy, Titus, and Luke who he invited to share his life and journey with him until they were ready to be leaders in their own right and train other leaders. They were disciples who were making disciples. This intentional multiplication of leaders through personal discipleship was critical to the growth and expansion of Jesus’ movement, as it is in our day as well.

None of this would have been possible if not for the guidance of the Holy Spirit who filled Jesus' followers with his authority and power so that they could do the things he did. Jesus was clear he did not operate on his own authority and power but submitted himself to the Father and everything he did flowed from that relationship (John 5:19; 8:28; 12:49). When he commissioned his followers to make disciples, he also passed on to them his authority and power which was activated when they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Matthew 28:18-19). The entire book of Acts is the story of what happens when men and women follow the example of Jesus by his authority in the power of the Spirit. If we are going to recover the way of Jesus in making disciples and carrying out his mission, we will also need to learn how to live in his authority and the power of the Spirit given to us.

Obviously, we live in a different time and place than Jesus, in a culture very different from his own. To follow Jesus does not mean we will copy everything he did, like wearing sandals and a robe, speaking Aramaic, and living in Galilee. But Jesus lived his life with intentional rhythms of fruitfulness, specific contexts for gathering with people, and strategic ways of carrying out his mission. To follow him means we will intentionally pattern our lives after his way of life and not just study the content of his teaching. Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."* (John 14:6) Most modern Christians have focused on the Truth of Jesus, and rightly so because his truth sets us free. Many of us admire the Life of Jesus, but feel his life is so different from our own that it is out of reach. But most of us have overlooked the Way of Jesus, forgetting there was an intentional pattern to his way of life we are called to imitate. But when we learn to follow Jesus' example, as well as studying and trusting his teaching, we find that our lives begin to look more like his and we begin to bear more of the good fruit that his life produced. You could say that the Way of Jesus + the Truth of Jesus = the Life of Jesus.

Simply put, Jesus welcomed people of all backgrounds into a home where they were invited to share life and meals with his extended spiritual family. There they heard the Good News of Jesus' teaching and began to trust him and follow his example. As they grew in faith, they in turn invited others into their spiritual family and went out in Jesus' authority to seek and save the lost. Some of these disciples were called into a closer relationship with Jesus where they received training to be the key leaders of Jesus' movement. After Jesus' death and resurrection these everyday men and women were filled with the power of the Spirit and took this Good News to the ends of the earth where they multiplied extended spiritual families of disciples who continued to welcome people into God's family and demonstrate his Kingdom by their way of life.

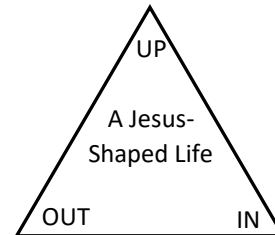
The Foundational Language and Tools

The mission of 3DMovements is putting Jesus-shaped discipleship and mission back into the hands of everyday people. We are a global movement of missional disciple-makers focused on equipping and empowering people to make disciples and carry out the mission of God the way Jesus did. This movement of missional discipleship began in northern England over thirty years ago and has now spread around the world, empowering people in many different cultural contexts to make disciples who can make disciples and lead families on mission who are reaching those outside the walls of the church. Over these three decades of training and multiplying missional disciple-makers, we have developed a transferable biblical toolkit designed to be used in concert with two of Jesus' key vehicles. The following is a brief description of our most important tools and how they fit into these two vehicles.

A. The Shape of Jesus' Life

We believe that to pattern our lives after Jesus as his disciples, we need to be clear about the relational shape of Jesus' life. In the Gospels' description of Jesus, we see the three relational dimensions of his life: He lived in an intimate relationship with his heavenly Father who was the Source of his supernatural love, wisdom, authority, and power. We think of this as the "upward" dimension of Jesus' life. He lived in close community with a houseful of disciples from whom he chose twelve key leaders to train by giving them full access to his life. We think of this as the "inward" dimension of Jesus' life. He was constantly taking his disciples outside the familiar bounds of the religious community to engage with those who were not yet part of the family of God. We think of this as the "outward" dimension of Jesus' life.

1. UP with the Father
 - i. Luke 6:12: Jesus prayed all night
2. IN with the disciples
 - ii. Luke 6:13-16: Jesus chose 12 disciples
3. OUT with the world
 1. Luke 6:17-19: Jesus ministered to the lost

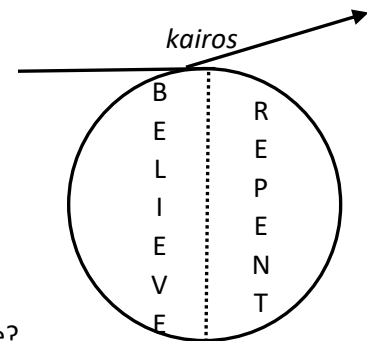


This is the abundant Jesus-shaped life that we seek to learn, imitate, and pass on to others. We use this simple triangle as a tool to help us remember and pass on these three relational dimensions that are meant to form our lives. We measure everything we do by this standard and ask the Holy Spirit to keep leading us in the footsteps of Jesus and forming us into his way of life.

B. Responding to Jesus' Voice

Jesus said he is the Good Shepherd who "calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." (John 10:3-4) We believe that in order to follow Jesus we need to be able to recognize his voice and respond with concrete steps of faith that move us in his direction. When Jesus called his first disciples, he announced his public ministry by saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15) We understand Jesus' language to mean:

- "the time is fulfilled" (Greek: *kairos*): this is a crossroads in time when God's Kingdom is breaking in
 - Key Question: Jesus, how are you getting my attention right now?
- "repent" (Greek: *metanoia*): this is a change of perspective created by hearing Jesus' voice
 - Key Question: Jesus, what are you saying to me personally?
- "believe" (Greek: *pisteuo*): this is a concrete exercise of the faith Jesus' word produces in us
 - Key Question: Jesus, what is the next step of faith you want me to take?

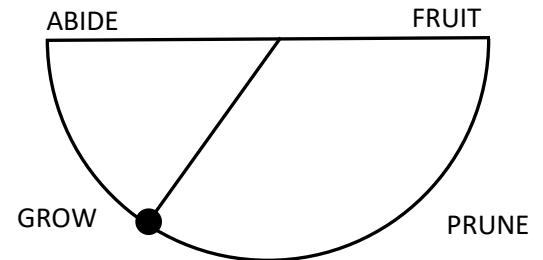


As Jesus said, the wise person is the one "who hears these words of mine and does them" (Matthew 7:24). We use this simple Circle as a tool to remember and pass on to others this crucial process of hearing what Jesus is saying and responding with concrete steps of faith. Daily repenting and believing is what keeps us moving forward on this journey of discipleship.

C. The Rhythm of Jesus' Life

Jesus was intentional about the rhythms of his life and this was the secret of his incredible fruitfulness. On a daily, weekly, occasional, and seasonal basis Jesus practiced deep abiding with the Father while resting with those closest to him. From this place of Covenantal oneness with the Father he was able to swing into tremendous Kingdom fruitfulness in the work they shared together. This is the rhythm he taught his disciples to follow by his example and when he said, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5) We understand this rhythm to include:

- Abiding: resting in the Father’s love and drawing near to him and to those closest to us
- Pruning: allowing the Vine grower to remove those things in us that are keeping us from more and better fruit
- Growth: the natural transformation that flows from our times of abiding
- Fruitfulness: the inevitable outcome as we step out in faith is good fruit that lasts



Those who follow Jesus are meant to live in these same rhythms daily, weekly, occasionally, and seasonally. When we follow this pattern of Jesus’ life, we discover the abundant life is bearing more, better, and longer-lasting fruit just as Jesus did. This simple semi-circle is a tool that helps us remember and pass on to others the importance of intentionally practicing these rhythms with those closest to us.

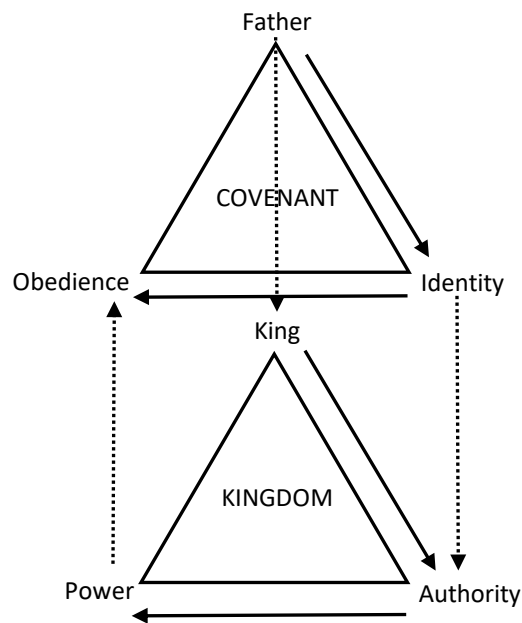
D. The Source of Jesus’ Power

Jesus is the Word of God and everything he does flows from that same Word. In order to find the power we need to follow him, we must understand how he operated in the Word of God. When we look at how Jesus read the Bible, how he taught his disciples, and how he sought and saved the lost, we see two distinct themes that make up the heart of God’s Word:

1. COVENANT: God created Adam and Eve in his image, which denoted the closest kind of relationship between a Father and his children. When this relationship was broken by sin, God sought to restore that relationship through a series of covenants recorded in the Scriptures. Jesus established the New Covenant of grace by his death and resurrection which once and for all made it possible for us to be restored to our right relationship with our heavenly Father as his daughters and sons. We see this theme of Covenant relationship woven throughout the entire Bible
2. KINGDOM: God created Adam and Eve to have dominion over all of creation, which meant they were authorized to represent the King of the universe and act on his behalf as stewards of creation. When the creation was broken by sin, God continued to call his various Covenant partners to represent him and carry out his rule of creation. When Jesus came as the perfect representative of the King, he was teaching the Good News, welcoming the outcasts, healing the broken, and delivering the oppressed to demonstrate the Kingdom of God by doing God’s will on earth as it is in heaven. We see this theme of Kingdom representation woven throughout the entire Bible.

When Jesus launched his public ministry, the Father declared his unconditional love for his Son in the baptismal waters of the Jordan river and the Holy Spirit was visibly poured out upon him. This was the inauguration of the New Covenant of grace in Jesus. Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert wilderness to overcome the power of the devil by representing his Father the King and speaking the Word his royal Father had given him. This was the inauguration of the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed in word and deed. From this desert wilderness

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and carried out his mission by the authority and power he received from his Father the King. We highlight what this means for us by showing the relationship between the Jesus-shaped Covenant and Kingdom in this way:



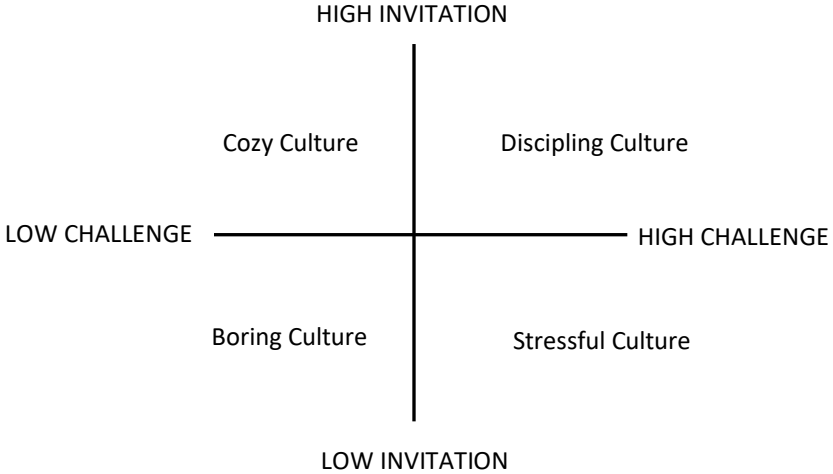
In the New Covenant Jesus reveals God as our Father and restores us to our true identity as his beloved sons and daughters. This gracious love fills us with the desire to obey the good will of our good Father. However, trapped in sin we are unable to do God’s will by our own strength. And so, in the Kingdom of God Jesus reveals God as our King and us as his royal children. By virtue of our identity we discover that we carry the authority of our Father the King! As we learn to exercise that authority by faith, the power of the Holy Spirit flows through us to obey by doing the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. This was the source of Jesus’ authority and power which he has now passed on to those of us who know and follow him. The Covenant and Kingdom triangles are simply tools to help us remember and pass on to others what it means to live in our true identity and carry out God’s will by the authority and power Jesus has passed on to us through the Holy Spirit.

E. Jesus’ Development of a Discipling Culture

When we read the Gospels, we notice that Jesus not only taught Covenant and Kingdom, but he lived it out with his disciples. This is how he rooted them in their true identity and empowered them with God’s authority. There were two primary ways that Jesus interacted with his disciples:

1. INVITATION: Jesus invited the disciples into the closest kind of Covenant relationship in which he gave them full access to everything he had and invested himself in them. This was a transforming experience of healing love and restoring relationship.
2. CHALLENGE: At the same time Jesus challenged his disciples to live out the Kingdom by doing God’s will on earth as it is in heaven no matter what the cost. He told them that to follow him would cost them everything, but in turn they would receive so much more.

When Jesus took the disciples to Caesarea Philippi for their final retreat with him, Simon responded to the question *“Who do you say that I am?”* by declaring his faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Jesus responded by giving Simon the family name (“little rock”), entrusting to him the keys to the Kingdom, and offering to make him a building block in God’s renewal of all of creation. However, when Peter resisted his prediction of suffering and death, Jesus challenged Peter and all the disciples to take up their cross follow him to Jerusalem. (Cf. Matthew 16:13-28) This is a classic example of Jesus calibrating high levels of Covenantal Invitation, while at the same time calibrating high levels of Kingdom Challenge. It was the interplay between these two dynamics of invitation and challenge that created a discipling culture in which the disciples were able to quickly learn the Way of Jesus and do the same with others. We use a matrix to explain how the different emphases on Covenant invitation and Kingdom challenge produces different kinds of cultures:



We find that some leaders offer high levels of relational invitation and support but are hesitant to actually challenge those whom they are leading, perhaps out of fear of losing them or losing their approval. This creates a very “cozy culture,” but it does not develop discipling leaders. It tends to develop ineffective leaders who feel certain levels of entitlement. On the other hand, some leaders offer high levels of missional challenge, but don’t really invite people into their life, give them the tools they need, or train them to succeed. The result is a highly “stressful culture” because these people are put in a position where they are being asked to do something they are not being equipped to fulfill. The result is often burn out and broken relationships. When both invitation and challenge are lacking it produces a “boring culture” where nothing significant is being invested in people’s lives and nothing significant is being asked of them. The result is stagnation and spiritual death. Jesus offered his disciples both high Covenantal invitation and high Kingdom challenge. The result was an empowering culture of discipleship that empowered men and women to live fruitful lives of significance and meaning far beyond their wildest dreams. This is the culture we are seeking to develop by intentionally calibrating high invitation and high challenge in discipling leaders.

Two Key Vehicles for the Jesus-Shaped Life

As we read the Gospels, we see Jesus seeking the lost, making disciples, and carrying out the will of God through two key vehicles. First of all, he entered into the extended family of Simon and Andrew in Capernaum and formed a new kind of family. His natural family in Nazareth rejected his vision of the Kingdom, but this new extended spiritual family was defined by doing the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. It was in this extended family (Greek: *oikos*) that Jesus taught the Good News, welcomed outcasts, cast out demons, and began to train disciples. This is how we understand this key missional vehicle which Jesus and his followers built and multiplied:

1. Missional Community: We believe that an extended spiritual family gathered in a home is the primary vehicle by which the followers of Jesus are meant to carry out his mission of seeking and saving the lost and making disciples. This is meant to be a place where all are welcome, where newcomers are invited into God’s family, and where we begin to learn how to live the life Jesus modeled for us by sharing life together. We typically call this organized expression of this vehicle a “Missional Community,” but it can also be expressed more organically as “a family on mission.”

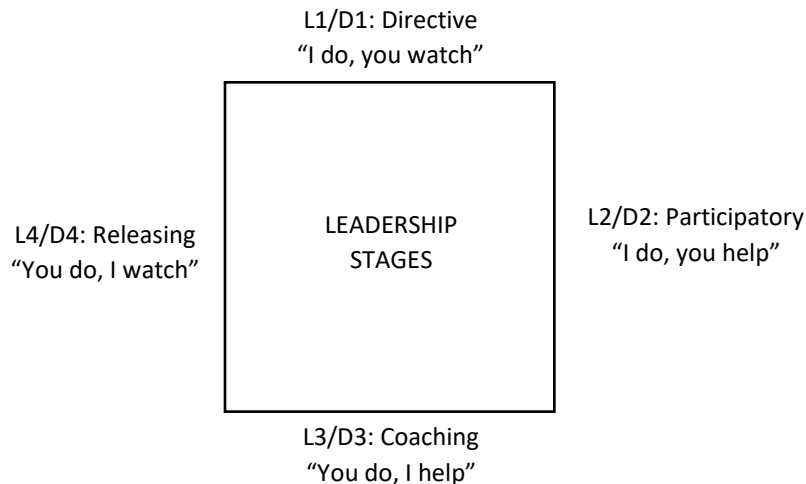
In the context of the extended spiritual family on mission Jesus built in Capernaum, he also intentionally called some of the members of that family to a higher level of commitment. After a whole night of prayer Jesus specifically chose twelve of his followers into his inner circle. This meant Jesus would give them full access to everything in his life and invest all he had in training them to lead and multiply spiritual families on mission. In turn, this meant that these twelve disciples would leave their jobs and invest themselves full time in following Jesus, walking in his footsteps, and learning to live the life he modeled for them. These were the disciples who became the key leaders who learned how to make disciples who could make disciples and extended the Kingdom of God by multiplying families on mission. This is how we understand this key discipling vehicle which Jesus and his followers used to multiply leaders:

2. Leaders Huddle: We believe that intentionally calling a small group of discipling leaders to share your life and investing what you have received in them is the key to multiplying spiritual families on mission who reach the lost and extend the Kingdom of God. These “Huddles” meet regularly to learn the Way of Jesus, discuss what God is saying to each person, and respond in faith by making accountable plans to take concrete steps of faith in the footsteps of Jesus. These leaders comprise the core group of an extended spiritual family, help to lead a Missional Community, and ultimately are empowered to form their own Huddles around which they build a new extended spiritual family on mission.

Two Leadership Development Tools

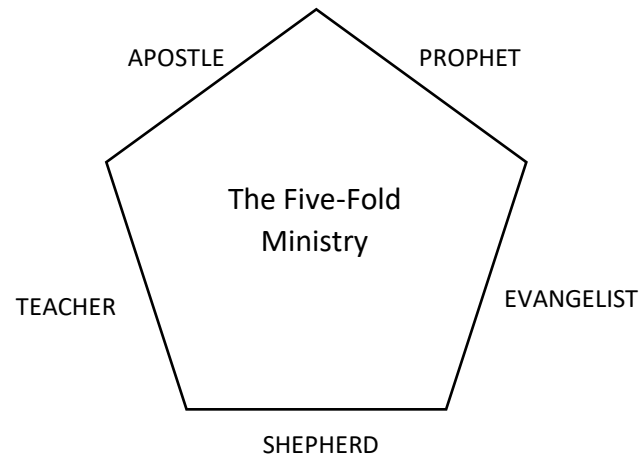
In just three years Jesus was able to train his core disciples to do what he did and ultimately they were empowered to carry out God’s mission by making disciples who could make disciples, multiplying spiritual families on mission, and extending the Good News of the Kingdom all the way to the ends of the earth. There are two more biblical tools that can help us to develop the same kind of leaders:

1. The Leadership Stages: When we read the Gospels, we see Jesus developing his disciples in four distinct stages using four intentional types of leadership:
 - a. L1/D1: “Follow me.” When he started out Jesus used a very directive style of leadership. He led them and they followed. We can characterize this as “I do, you watch.”
 - b. L2/D2: “Give them something to eat.” Jesus then moved into a participatory style of leadership. He invited and challenged the disciples to join him in carrying out his mission. We can characterize this as “I do, you help.”
 - c. L3/D3: “When you go into a town offer your peace.” Jesus then shifted to a coaching style of leadership. He began to send them out in pairs to do the things he had trained them to do on their own and then come back and report to him for more training. We can characterize this as “You do, I help.”
 - d. L4/D4: “Go and make disciples.” Finally, Jesus employed a releasing style of leadership. He gave his disciples their final marching orders and sent them out to keep on doing what he had trained them with the promise he would be with them. We can characterize this as “You do, I watch.” At this stage the Disciples become the Leaders and they use the same stages of training to disciple more leaders.



2. The Five-Fold Ministry: In Ephesians 4:11-13 Paul writes, “*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...*” This list is a little different than his other lists of “spiritual gifts” because here he is describing the person in their function, not just a function. When Paul says in v. 7, “*grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift*” we believe that means each of us designed to function primarily in one of these five roles, but that all of us are also called to learn how to function in the other four as we grow up into “*the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*” Here is a description of each of these key roles in the body:

- Apostle: Those who help us to see the new vision and territory God has in mind for us and lead us forward into this Kingdom future.
- Prophet: Those who help others and whole groups of people hear what God is saying to them and find the faith to act on what God has said.
- Evangelist: Those who refuse to forget or give up on the lost and lead the community to seek and welcome these outsiders.
- Shepherd (or Pastor): Those who comfort the hurting by comforting the hurting, healing the broken, guiding the confused, and empowering others to do the same.
- Teacher: Those who clarify the truth in word and deed so that others can be enlightened and set free.



While this reading of Ephesians 4 may challenge some comfortable assumptions about spiritual gifts, we have found that embracing Paul’s description of the five-fold ministry raises the level of spiritual leadership exponentially. We use the simple shape of the pentagon to remember that we are made to function in one of these five roles and are called to learn the others.

An Invitation

We hope this brief introduction has been helpful to you. If you are interested in living a life that looks more like Jesus and carrying out your mission in a way that produces more of the fruit that Jesus produced, we would love to help! For 30 years the leaders of 3DMovements have been developing strategies, building tools, and investing their lives in training leaders in this more Jesus-shaped way of discipleship and mission. For a more complete introduction to 3DMovements read [Empowering Missional Disciples](#). Another shorter introduction, [A Jesus-Shaped Life](#) offers a is written for everyday people who don’t like to read long books. We have a two-year long intensive training process for teams, called a Learning Community. We have an [extensive library](#) of books and resources that support this training. For more information visit www.3dmovements.com. Bob Rognlien is the Director of 3DMovements in western North America. If you have any questions or would like more information, contact him at bobrognlien@3dmovements.org.