
What Is “Operation Multiplication?”

2 TIMOTHY 2:2

“And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

New church members require much more than a handshake when they join your church. They need a Christ-centered *friendship* with someone who will walk by their side and make them feel welcome. This new friend should be prepared to introduce them to other church members, answer their questions, lead them to a small group Bible study, and serve as a role model for their spiritual growth.

“Operation Multiplication’s” mission is to help churches train disciple-makers to personally befriend and equip each new member with the needed ministry skills to enjoy a lifetime of spiritual growth and evangelistic multiplication.

Most churches simply *hope* their new members will find a dedicated Christian friend and learn the basics of spiritual growth. They also *hope* their new members will attend a small group Bible study and learn how to share their faith. However, instead of *hoping* – many growth minded churches are now establishing an *intentional process* which will ensure that every new believer and new member receives the personal care and instruction they need. This is the heart of the “Operation Multiplication” strategy!

For years, churches have been overlooking their most valuable resource for evangelism – new believers. Why are new believers so special in terms of evangelism? Because they still have natural *relationship bridges* with non-Christians. When we walk with these new members and show them how to grow spiritually and share their faith, they begin to witness and spiritual multiplication takes place naturally.

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in the faith just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.” (Colossians 2:6 & 7)

WHY ONE-TO-ONE PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP?

Jesus expressed His deep concern about the spiritual nurturing of new Christians when He asked, “*Peter do you love Me?...*” When Peter said, “Yes,” the Lord replied, “*Feed My lambs.*” (John 21:15- 17) When you invest your time discipling new Christians, it is an evidence that – you love Him!

Increasingly, churches are realizing the importance of one-to-one personal care and new member assimilation. Across the years, various methods have been utilized in an effort to close the church’s “backdoor,” but the problem still exists. To address this need, many concerned churches have offered excellent new members classes, but experience has demonstrated that this approach, though desirable, is still inadequate when used alone. After extensive field-testing in numerous cultures, we have concluded that the most effective method for new member assimilation is encouraging *Christ-centered friendships*. We believe there are several reasons why this relational early church model has proven so successful:

FRIENDSHIP FACTOR

Studies show that unless new church members soon establish one or more meaningful relationships, they are likely to quietly leave through the “back door.” This is why “Operation Multiplication’s” disciple-making process is designed to build an environment of friendship and meet the immediate spiritual needs of each new member. “*But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...*” (1 John 1:7)

INDIVIDUAL CARE

Many new members enter the church as “new borns” and require special attention. “Operation Multiplication’s” friendship-based disciple-making process provides this opportunity naturally. The Bible says, “*But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.*” (1 Thessalonians 2:7)

FREEDOM OF DISCUSSION

Through friendship, a spirit of openness typically develops naturally. This allows personal questions to be asked privately and discussed in a Biblical context. As a result, positive life transformation takes place. “*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

When new members are being encouraged and equipped for ministry, those who are serving as disciple-makers are challenged to keep growing as well – “*...as iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another...*” This New Testament methodology (2 Timothy 2:2) creates the positive motivation for continued spiritual development and multiplication. “*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” (2 Peter 3:18)

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE

Utilizing “Operation Multiplication’s” highly effective training format, when a disciple-maker or new member is unavoidably detained from meeting, they can simply reschedule for another day. In this way, important material is never missed and spiritual growth is consistent. “*He who walks with wise men will be wise.*” (Proverbs 13:20a)

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR “OPERATION MULTIPLICATION”

The Scripture has a great deal to say about disciple-making, once we understand that equipping the saints is primarily a ministry of *example*. Paul expressed it this way, “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 11:1) This clear principle echoed Jesus’ earlier words to His disciples when He said, “*Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.*” (Matthew 4:19) The unmistakable emphasis of both invitations was to learn by observation. This principle, so common to life, was the cornerstone of early Christian education, because spiritual instruction took place in an environment where *relationships* were the primary means for gaining personal growth.

CHRIST-CENTERED FRIENDSHIP

Love, integrity, truth, and ministry skills were first transmitted in the caring context of a personal friendship. The environment was one of personal trust and mutual encouragement. Spiritual discipline was personally observed, and then emulated by each new generation of believers. This balance between *teaching* and *training* was so natural that spiritual vitality simply flowed from one Christian life to another. Perhaps Philippians 4:9 best demonstrates this foundational principle, “*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice...*” What we *hear* equates to *teaching* and what we *see* equates to *training*. Both forms of instruction are essential elements of the discipling process. Philippians 3:17 says, “*Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*”

The classic phrase, “More things are caught than will ever be taught” defines one important aspect of Biblical disciple-making. Although many aspects of spiritual growth can be transmitted through the use of Christian literature – personality, enthusiasm, laughter, and the twinkle in one’s eye cannot. These experiential aspects of personal friendship are indispensable components of a successful disciple-making ministry. While the cognitive aspects of discipleship are numerous, there is an intangible quality of spiritual life which only flows through the friendship itself.

ONE-TO-ONE MINISTRY

Why is Christian disciple-making the critical link for successful evangelism? Dr. Herschel Hobbs wisely said, “The work of evangelism is never complete until the one evangelized becomes an evangelizer.” *A breakdown in the initial follow-up or foundational equipping process can short-circuit the tremendous potential of this cycle of evangelistic multiplication.* Consider compounding interest, the reproductive cycles of nature, or the world’s biological population explosion. Soon it will become clear why multiplication is God’s primary method for replenishing the earth.

SPIRITUAL MULTIPLICATION

Billy Graham has said, “One of the first verses of Scripture that Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, encouraged me to memorize was “*The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*” (2 Timothy 2:2, KJV) This is like a mathematical formula for spreading the gospel and enlarging the church. Paul taught Timothy; Timothy shared what he knew with faithful men; these faithful men would then teach others also. And so the process goes on and on. If every believer followed this pattern, the church could reach the entire world in one generation! Mass crusades, in which I believe and to which I have committed my life, will never finish the Great Commission; but a one-to-one ministry will.” (The Holy Spirit, Waco: Word, 1978, P. 147)

For the church, spiritual multiplication is the essential key for fulfilling Christ's missionary mandate (Matthew 28:19&20). Through just one committed new believer who is growing consistently, sharing his faith naturally, and personally training others to do the same, the entire world can eventually receive the good news of Jesus Christ! This amazing process of spiritual multiplication is so personal, enjoyable, and effective, that worldwide, any church can do it. It simply requires a

THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL MULTIPLICATION

- ♦ If you were to witness for six months and reach *one* person, and then disciple him/her for the next six months, at the end of the first year there would be *two* of you.
- ♦ Then if both of you reached *one* person each and discipled them, at the end of year two there would be *four* growing, reproducing Christians. If the four of you each prayerfully continued this lifestyle of witness and follow-up, you could impact the world for Christ in one brief lifetime!

Year	People reached and trained
First year	= 2
2 years	= 4
4 years	= 16
6 years	= 64
8 years	= 256
10 years	= 1024
12 years	= 4,096
13 years	= 8,192
20 years	= 1,048,576
30 years	= 1,073,741,824
32 years	= 4,294,967,296
33 years	= 8,589,934,592

This is more than the current world population!

"...and you will be My witnesses..." Acts 1:8

2 Timothy 2:2 vision and the commitment to train disciple-makers to personally work with every new member who joins the church. Through Christ-centered friendship, those who are trained in “Operation Multiplication” learn both “why” and “how” to disciple others. This progressive cycle of spiritual growth and lifestyle evangelism is the contemporary expression of New Testament disciple-making.

CUTTING EDGE OUTREACH

You may be thinking, “If the world can be evangelized in only one generation, then why hasn’t it already happened?” *Personal evangelism will not result in spiritual multiplication in isolation from effective disciple-making.* In other words, long-term personal instruction and personal evangelism must be seen as interlocking parts of a comprehensive and intentional ministry plan. Making disciples is our highest ministry priority, but that requires a long-term commitment to an equipping process. Ultimately, through this New Testament lifestyle, disciple-making becomes as natural as praying. Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19 are then experienced as the normal Christian life.

Years of field testing have taught us that Christian friendship and disciple-making should start as soon as a new believer makes his or her decision to receive Christ. In one major study, a church learned why 90 percent of its new members successfully completed their several month discipling process. The primary reason for their success was attributed to the fact that *every* new member was personally assigned to a trained disciple-maker within *72 hours* of making their spiritual decision. Speed is important!

Concerned churches are purposefully moving toward protecting their new members because they face a wide range of worldly temptations and distractions that tend to erode spiritual devotion. The Lord’s parable of the seed graphically illustrates this need. “*Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.*” (Mark 4:7)

In today’s nomenclature, personal disciple-making is at the very heart of effective new member assimilation. Each Christ-centered friendship functions like a tutor pointing the way to the many other equipping and educational ministries of the church.

As Christianity restores the relational principle of observation (1 Corinthians 11:1) to its early place of prominence, God is raising up a new generation of witnesses equipped for a lifestyle of service. Luke 10:2 says, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.*” Our challenge as Christians is to live by faith, trusting God to accomplish His sovereign objectives as He answers our prayers. May your church members catch this time-honored vision of multiplication and become authentic “salt” and “light” in their spheres of spiritual influence. International Evangelism joins you in that Great Commission vision!

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19&20)