

Mobilizing Near-Culture Movements to Reach Frontier Peoples

By CYNTHIA ANDERSON

C. Anderson is an experienced field practitioner and leader. The past 27 years, she served in Asia with YWAM Frontier Missions. Anderson trains and coaches both international and indigenous church planters toward the launching of Disciple Making Movements. She blogs weekly about DMM related issues at dmmsfrontiermissions.com. Other articles on member care, language learning, visa stress, etc. are available at missionarylifeline.org. Her 30-day devotional for church-planters, *Faith to Move Mountains*, can be purchased on amazon.com.

It happened a bit by accident. Perhaps it was God’s plan, his working behind the scenes. During the COVID pandemic, our online training programs rapidly exploded with new growth. We trained thousands of Global South believers who wanted to learn how to multiply disciples. Thrilled by the growth at first, we were also concerned. Many of these trainees were not from unreached peoples groups (UPGs). “Are we drifting from our focus?” we asked ourselves. Our vision was to see movements among UPGs and unengaged, unreached people groups (UUPGs).

We trained Global South Christians how to be disciples who multiplied disciples in their own people groups.

Yet, God brought us Christians who were hungry to learn how to multiply disciples. As is so often the case, his ways were higher, bigger, deeper, and more profound than my flimsy efforts and plans! Over the following years, we trained Global South Christians in how to be disciples who multiplied disciples in their own people groups. Their hearts were opened to the needs of frontier peoples around them. Today, many of our trainees and alumni are praying for, engaged with, and catalyzing movements among the least-reached people groups in their nations.

Mobilizing near-culture Christians to reach frontier peoples is one of the most effective ways to reach the least reached. Should we intentionally focus more efforts on this task?

Filtering for Movement Potential

I began working with an apostolically gifted woman in West Africa about three years ago. I noticed her right

away from her comments in some videos I saw.¹ She was not only insightful; she also demonstrated sincerity and the capacity to dream big with God.

Filtering for and noticing potential leaders is an important DMM/CPM trainer’s task. I kept my eye open for more comments from her. I reviewed her End Vision statement and listened to the Holy Spirit. After she completed a few modules, I felt a strong sense that she was someone with significant potential to launch a movement. I then reached out and offered a coaching call.

Our first call had to happen through an exchange of audio messages. Her internet was too poor to sustain video communication. She spoke with a thick accent and because of my West African upbringing, I was able to understand her well. Immediately, I noticed she was different from many other trainees. She lived in an area

¹ For more information, see my disciple making movement training at www.dmmsfrontiermissions.com/online-training/.



of the country with large numbers of unreached people. However, most of her evangelism and disciple making work was not among them. She primarily worked among animists and backslidden, nominal Christians, people from already-reached groups.

Yet there was something about her that compelled me to invest time, prayer, and to be intentional about regular follow-ups. What did I notice? She had an obvious apostolic gift, a deep life of prayer, and a humble spirit. She also carried a distinct air of confidence flowing from her deep, burning passion for lost people to know Christ.

After finishing the course, this trainee immediately implemented everything she learned. She also began training many others.

Groups started, leaders were equipped, and they began to multiply.

We made an onsite visit to meet her and others there in that nation. We planned to eat together and see what was happening. We met her husband and kids, spent time building relationships, and ate *swallow* along with other local African foods.

I encouraged her to do a bonus course called “How to Invite Muslims to Follow Jesus.” Not long after that, her children participated in a short online course that Disciple Makers Increase (DMI) offers for Global South youth called “Next Steps in Missions.” That simple but engaging course explains more about unreached peoples and why we must reach them.

The groups this sister started continued to multiply into several generations. More and more people came to know Jesus. Organic growth increased. Along with it, these new believers developed a deep commitment to obey the Great Commission, including the part that talks about *all peoples*.

Today, the movement in that nation has grown to 13 generations. In the last six months, over six hundred have become disciples, and scores of new house churches have been started. They’ve also begun to send out apostolic teams to frontier people groups (FPGs) in their nation.

In an onsite training session last year, they were challenged to go to the FPGs around them. Many stood in response to God’s call, saying they were willing to go, even if it cost them their lives. It has. This movement has had five martyrs this year. Others stood and declared, “We will send them!” And they have done that, too.

Many stood in response to God’s call, saying they were willing to go, even if it cost them their lives.

New streams of the movement are now emerging in untouched and very dangerous areas of their land. Unreached people are coming to faith and being disciplined. At least three new movements among frontier peoples have emerged from this first movement, which was *initially* predominant among what we’d classify as a “reached” people group. All this is happening without one dollar of outside money being sent to them. We are praying for many, many more frontier movements to grow from this movement and other near-culture movements we work with.

An Acts 1:8 Strategy to Mobilize

Jesus said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NIV). I wonder if we could think about this verse as saying something like, “The Holy Spirit is ready to give his power to you. Wait for it. Ask for it. Receive it. When you do, make disciples among your own people group, then go to nearby places where lost people are, then intentionally reach those in your area against whom you have a natural aversion or prejudice. And don’t forget to witness and share my

love with people who are culturally and physically far away from you as well.”

This passage gives us a beautiful strategy for mobilizing frontier workers.

5 Ways to Engage Frontier Peoples Through Movements and Churches

1 Recognize we need the Holy Spirit's power.

Little can be done apart from a manifestation of his power through us. While we immediately train everyone to share their faith, we also must help them to be filled with the Spirit and learn to exercise the Spirit's gifts.

2 All believers must learn to make disciples in their own people group in their own "Jerusalem."

As I consider the Global Church, my heart longs for every congregation to train members to make disciples rather than just show up at an entertaining service. If European and American Christians became disciple makers first among their own people groups, they'd be far more likely to be used by God to reach Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists. Every disciple must learn to make disciples everywhere!

3 Disciples need to learn to reach out to other towns and villages around them.

Casting vision broadly enough is important. As the church or movement begins to send out ordinary people whose jobs or work takes them to nearby towns and areas, new groups can begin there as well. What would it look like if when people had to travel or move for work, we "sent" them to start new movements in those locations, rather than just saying goodbye and we hope you find another church there?

There is great potential in mobilizing near-culture believers to the frontiers. But this process also involves training them first to make disciples at home.

4 Disciples need to learn to share God's love with people from groups they dislike.

Take a moment to think about the makeup of a movement or church you work with. Are there any people groups or classes of people with whom they don't have a natural affinity? Perhaps some barriers have historical wounds. How could you intentionally train disciples to overcome these challenges and build relational bridges of hope?

5 Disciples must be taught to care about and engage all people.

One of the best ways to do this is to begin with prayer. Once you motivate believers to pray for people groups around the world, you're halfway there. God will begin to call people to go. Be intentional about catalyzing kingdom movements that have a heart for all people.

Primed to Reach Frontier Peoples

A colleague recently said to me, "I've been told that movements don't naturally jump over into UUPGs around them." Given the example above, I was surprised to hear this. Emerging movements are primed and ready to reach FPGs! All they need is a little information and some encouragement to do so. Disciples who are learning to reach lost people and start new groups are the best people I know to motivate to reach UPGs and UUPGs, especially if they are culturally or geographically nearby!

Why wouldn't we look to those in Nagaland and Mizoram to impact the Hindus of Assam? Or to those in Christian areas of Pakistan to reach the majority people? One key is to first equip them to be disciple makers in their Jerusalem rather than just church attendees. We must train them to make disciples, not just converts.

There is great potential in mobilizing near-culture believers to the frontiers. But this process also involves training them first to make disciples at home. Are you ready? 