

THE M:28 STRATEGY

Five years ago, International Students, Inc. (ISI) began implementing a Disciple-Making Movement (DMM) strategy they call M:28. President Dr. Doug Shaw had invited David Watson to be a keynote speaker at the 2006 National Conference in Seattle where David introduced Discovery Bible Studies (DBS) to the ISI field staff.

The Dallas-Ft.Worth staff team was intrigued and began experimenting using DBS with the international students with whom they were working. There were great successes and great failures. Trying to switch existing Bible studies to the DBS format failed in particular because there was no commitment to obedience.


Starting new DBS studies with students who were not people of peace had mixed success. The students liked the discovery format, but again had little commitment to obedience. A few multiplied, but most did not. Most of these studies were comprised of isolated students who had few previous social connections with one another, much less deep relationships. As always there were a few exceptions.

The M:28 strategy that later ultimately resulted from this trial and error process is a slightly simplified version of the original Watson DBS. When we began working with people of peace, we found that they used their existing social networks, and, unsurprisingly, we saw multiplication. The multiplication was typically just one generation, but in one case to the third and, in another, to the fourth generation. A university graduate from that fourth generation group relocated to a large city because of a job offer, and today she is working to start DMM groups and to reach university students in her new home city.

The transient nature of students is both positive and negative. It can be positive (as in the example above)

when one student takes DMM to another location. On the negative side, stressful study schedules and heavy academic loads in a second or third language make scheduling small group meetings difficult. And some graduate students who do work-study are only available nine months before moving.

With the field experience gained in Dallas-Ft Worth, ISI began teaching DMM to all of the staff. The vision of International Students, Inc. is that every international student in the U.S. would have the opportunity to hear the gospel. Despite a staff of more than 380, supplemented by 24,000 volunteers, the only way to realize the vision is for international students themselves to take the gospel into labs, small group meetings on campus, residence halls, and apartment complexes where students live. One of ISI's key strategies involves international students themselves beginning DMM in all of the countries that send students to the U.S. for university training.

Conservatively, International Students, Inc. has had the privilege of sharing M:28 with more than 100,000 people. The most rapid multiplication is happening outside the U.S., thanks to the number of returned former students who are learning it and sharing it. In 2015, we had the privilege of meeting with 60 returnees in China who wanted to learn DMM. Results in India are, likewise, very encouraging. Using a translator, one of our staff trained a small group in China via Skype. One of those trainees went to the local university, found a person of peace and began a study with that person. He invited his friends and the entire group became believers after several months. One of the students in that group began another group through a friend. This is the heart and promise of DMM! 

BY **DERRAH JACKSON**

djackson@isionline.org

<http://www.isim28.org/>

Derrah Jackson and his wife Pam have served with International Students, Inc. for 28 years as campus minister, training director, regional and national field director, and now as National Director of Research and Innovation. Prior to ministry with ISI, he served as a psychologist with the State of Texas and as Pastor of Counseling and Education for a decade at a large church in Austin.