

Disciple Making Movement Jumps to Another Continent

By **KEN MORRIS**

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Every year Lifeway Mission International hosts a Global Disciple Making Movement Catalyst Camp at its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The gathering provides training and allows Disciple Making Movement (DMM) practitioners to share best practices and network with other movement leaders from around the world.

In 2018, two friends attended the conference, a mission pastor from the US and a nonprofit African leader from another country, whom we'll call James*. The two men had already been working together for six years, advancing education and community health in a village near James' home. They came to the DMM Catalyst Camp hoping to learn more about DMM and ways DMM principles could be integrated into this ministry. Toward the end of the conference, they began to pray together that God would provide persons of peace through whom a Disciple Making Movement would grow.

James returned home, and a few days later he got an unexpected phone call. The senior government



official in the village wanted to meet. The chief told James, "Many groups and organizations have come to serve this poor community. But I can honestly say yours is the only organization that has actually changed our community. I see you as a man of wisdom. As chief, I have many difficult decisions to make. I would like for you to meet with me once a week and help me gain wisdom from the Bible."

Word spread quickly about these meetings, and other local leaders asked to join. Soon, 18 community leaders were attending. At least two of the leaders were Muslim. Several mentioned they were not interested in talking about church. James promised to teach them *only* how to hear and obey God through the Bible.

One of the Muslim community leaders worked as a guard for a wealthy family nearby. Within a few weeks, the guard's employer noticed a difference in his behavior and asked what was going on. The guard told his boss that he was now reading and obeying the Bible, to grow in wisdom. The businessman called James, and a couple of days later, James found himself in a beautiful home sharing coffee with Padar* and his family, talking about Jesus. James texted his American friend, "This is an Asian family, Hindus. They have touched the Bible for the first time."

James taught the family how to study the Bible by reading a passage and asking simple questions to

discover the meaning. They started with the book of John. The family met each evening to read and study the Bible. James visited them about once a week. One evening, they asked James if Jesus really was Lord over all the gods their ancestors had worshiped for generations. James pointed them back to the Scripture, and encouraged them to keep reading and asking the discovery questions.

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This continued for about six weeks. The family studied through the book of John and continued reading. In Acts 10, they "found themselves" in the story they were reading. When James arrived at their home one Friday evening, they were excited to share this discovery. "This is us!" they told James. "We are the Cornelius family. And you are like Peter!"

By now, there were 13 of them. The original family of nine had been joined by a nephew, his wife, and their two children. But that was not the only change. Religious artifacts were gone; the family shrine had been dismantled and a Bible was in its place. They no longer burned incense or marked their foreheads. They asked James to baptize them all.

James returned the next day to make sure they understood what they were asking. He spoke to them about different sins and bondages they would need to address as followers of Jesus. Padar asked, "What if we break all these sins and bondages that have been holding on to us before we get baptized?" And so beginning with the father, family members began to openly confess their sins to one another. James stood in awe of their honesty as they wept over sin and acknowledged their need for a forgiving savior.

At about midnight, a profound sense of the peace that comes with Jesus' forgiveness filled the room. Then family members spontaneously started singing a Hindu song, inserting the name of Jesus in the places where they would have mentioned the name of a Hindu god or ancestor.

James later told his American friend that he did very little the entire evening. He just listened as family members confessed to one another.

Baptism for all 13 was set for the next Friday. Padar asked James if he would do the baptism in their pool so it would be a private ceremony. But when James arrived that Friday, he was shocked to find that 26 guests had been invited to the baptism, all Hindu friends and family members.

Padar was first to be baptized. Facing James, Padar spoke in a loud voice so everyone could hear,

Let the heavens join with us as the old me gets buried forever. Let the name of Padar be written in the book of life as I declare that from the day Jesus came into my life until the end of time, my family shall never worship any other god but the true one through His son Jesus Christ. Today history has changed in my life as my inner being bows down to my Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To His name be all the glory!

As Padar rose from the waters, his family was laughing and crying. The other 12 followed him and were baptized, each one making their own statement about personal faith in Jesus. James saw expressions of surprise on the faces of the guests as each family member professed their new faith.

After the baptism, everyone went back into the house, and Padar explained the meaning of what he had done. He was careful to explain that Jesus is not simply another god. He communicated clearly to the friends and family gathered that they were placing trust in the one true God. James said later that Padar's words had the weight of a bomb going off in the room. But everyone responded politely by clapping their hands for the decision Padar, his family, and his nephew's family had made.

Then Padar left the room to change out of his wet clothes. He returned wearing blue jeans, a T-shirt and tennis shoes. Everyone in the room started laughing. The guests and even his own family had never seen Padar dressed so casually. He was powerful and important, and always dressed the part. But this inner change was impacting his outer appearance.

Padar then publicly renounced proclamations he had made within his extended family and said he would no longer fulfill the Hindu traditions and duties for which he had been responsible.

The newly baptized believers had planned to take the Lord's Supper for the first time that day. With the guests looking on, they gathered in a circle and shared communion. James had not planned any of this and he was aware that the guests were asking questions.

It was a glorious day. Later, Padar told James he had spent all his life focused on business and making money. Now, he wanted to focus on people. As God allowed, he wanted to reach as many people as possible for Jesus. His young adult children were already talking about how they could respond to the questions family members were asking.

The family had decided that instead of inviting others to be part of the church in their home, they would offer to train others in how to have a Discovery Bible Study. Each family would be encouraged to invite interested family and friends to their group. Padar's oldest daughter was especially eager to help other groups start.

The Spirit continued to move as the new disciples obeyed. Some members of the family followed God's call to return to their homeland. In obedience to God's leading, they took specific actions to renounce generational curses. Miracles happened, including a dramatic healing that confounded local doctors.

And God had prepared persons of peace there. Disciples multiplied rapidly among family and friends, and along other relational lines. This advancement of God's kingdom was not without cost, as disciples were arrested, questioned, and deported. But the disciples kept multiplying.

One movement leader was jailed and tortured in a South Asian nation with a government hostile toward followers of Jesus. His interrogator began asking questions and ultimately became a disciple. God led him to reconcile with estranged relatives in a nearby country, and disciples multiplied there also.

Back in the African country where the movement began, God was still at work. More business people were asking questions and some were secretly gathering to study the Bible. More than 40 have now chosen to follow Jesus.

Meanwhile, after Padar baptized his Muslim guard and his wife, streams of movement flowed in other directions in Africa through this couple—both to Muslim and animist tribes.

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Within two years, these movements have brought new life to thousands of people, many of them in largely Unreached People Groups. Disciples have been beaten, jailed and even martyred. Yet more often than not, the movements accelerate after these hostilities. This is all happening as ordinary people with simple, extraordinary faith share with others what they hear from the Father through His word.

This story just began a few years ago. Streams of disciple-makers continue to branch into new areas, finding persons of peace. This has led to open doors to other Unreached People Groups.

To date, this movement has flowed into more than eight countries on two continents. In some places it is merging with other movements. God's kingdom continues to grow by the Spirit's power and the obedience of everyday disciple-makers. 