



Celebrating Small Wins Will Get You to the End Game

“I haven’t started a DMM yet, so I am not qualified to teach about this,” she said. My friend saw herself as someone who had not yet “arrived” in the world of Disciple Making Movements. The group of house churches this amazing missionary started only reached the third generation. She was an effective disciple-maker. Her disciples were certainly making other disciples. She embodied both the DNA and the vision to see movements launched.

“Is the bar too high?” I wondered after hearing her say this. “After all, there are less than 700 movements in the world. Those movement leaders are busy training leaders within their movement’s streams. Somebody has to teach about the multiplication of disciples and DMMs!” Why not her?

I understand my friend’s logic. I am a believer in the principle “Do First - Then Teach.” There are other factors to consider though. The indicators we have created for measuring a Disciple Making Movement’s growth are not the only ways to measure success.

“It has to have reached the fourth generation,” we say.

“They should multiply 100 groups within three years” is another one. These are important factors to track and measure. No argument there. The question remains. Are they truly what we should be looking at as we measure success in moving toward a Disciple Making Movement?

Be Careful of Unhealthy Legalism

Fixation on benchmarks like these can cause an unhealthy legalism. It throws us into the “shoulds.” Instead of enjoying the divine process of multiplication as it unfolds, we feel stressed. We may even experience a sense of hopelessness after years of effort. It’s likely we may question whether a Disciple Making Movement can ever happen through us. At times, these DMM benchmarks feel quite burdensome.

It is easy to focus on what is not happening, failing to celebrate what is. This is not God’s design for us as DMM practitioners. In pursuing the multiplication of churches

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among the unreached, we must learn to celebrate small but significant wins. At the same time, we constantly pursue the God-sized goal of launching something that becomes a multi-generational movement of disciples, one that is absolutely unstoppable.

A DMM “Failure” in the Slums of India

We lived in a small city in India. It was small by Indian standards at least. The population was around a million people. Our city contained many slum communities. The desperately poor built makeshift homes beside railroad tracks and rivers. It was there that land was available and they constructed makeshift homes. Their need for physical help was desperate. Even greater was the tremendous spiritual need. They were lost and dying, having never heard about the love of their Creator.

I knew God was calling me to shine His light in those communities, to share His salvation. Being a DMM practitioner, my natural goal was to start a movement of fellowships in the slum neighborhoods. Radical multiplication of kingdom followers was what it would take to bring transformation to those dark parts of our city. Without genuine disciples being made, there was little hope that our community development efforts would bring lasting change. A movement was needed.

I will give you a spoiler alert. We didn’t start a movement that reached the fourth generation within three years. We saw those started elsewhere. They have taken off in a number of places where I trained and coached people. We’d seen it happen in Nepal. But a movement didn’t start in the slums. *Did that mean I was a failure as a DMM practitioner?* Was I still qualified to train, speak and write about Disciple Making Movements?

We saw many amazing things happen among the needy there. As our team prayed for the sick, people were healed. They gave their lives to Jesus. We started fellowships. People who had no prior knowledge of Jesus became faithful disciples. They shared Christ with their neighbors and relatives. We taught Bible parables and they learned those stories well. They passed them on to others.

Some of the disciples started new groups as brothers, uncles or sisters came to faith. Widows were fed and cared for by local believers. That had never happened before in their localities. Suicidal women in abusive marriages were

rescued and stopped from setting themselves on fire. People who were former Shiva worshipers fell in love with Jesus and began to write songs of worship to Him. Local leaders were trained and empowered. Contextual weddings took place. God definitely worked there. But we didn’t reach the fourth generation.

Was our effort a flop? I think not.

Though what we dreamed to see in that place has not yet happened, we learned to celebrate small victories. We came to understand that those “wins” mattered to both us and God. Evaluation never stopped. We never stopped pursuing the goal that one day the movement would take off into radical multiplication that swept through the city, taking it by storm. But we refused to measure ourselves only by superficial standards Jesus never created. Instead, we rejoiced in what God had miraculously done through us there. And in faith, we looked forward to what He was yet to do.

What Disciple Making Movement Success is Not

Success as a DMM practitioner is not about numbers. It is not about how many people you’ve baptized, how many churches you’ve started, or what generation you’ve reached. Success is not about making sure that you have ticked off the list of David Garrison’s Elements of a CPM. It is not about following all the Fruitful Practices the Vision 5:9 group came up with. Nor is it doing everything perfectly according to the T4T or DBS books. Formulas don’t start movements, God does.

He sees your heart and efforts to obey. God is pleased with your willingness to join Him in seeing His kingdom multiply. Many DMM practitioners are exceedingly hard on themselves. This doesn’t move us forward toward multiplying movements.

What Does a DMM “Win” Look Like?

How do we continue to pursue the vision of DMMs while relaxing and allowing God to do what we cannot? We learn to celebrate small victories, giving God praise for what He is doing. We focus on the good, proclaiming joyfully the testimonies of what God has done. Evaluation continues as we discern whether what we are doing is leading to multiplication. When it’s not, we make adjustments, or start afresh.

- Did a disciple who had never shared the gospel, learn to tell their story (testimony)? Did they share it boldly with their relatives for the first time? That is a big win!
- Did a new believer hear a Bible story, reflect on it and decide to obey God's Word? Did it lead to transformation as they began to love their neighbors when previously they had hated them? That is also a major win!
- Did a Hindu woman, who thought she had no value, become a confident daughter of the King? Has she started discipling others? Training them to make more disciples? Huge victory! Give God glory.
- Are you starting to see a new DNA in the disciples, where everyone participates in the church? Are they seeing themselves as royal priests rather than only looking to the pastor or leader to do the work of the ministry? That's amazing!
- Are new disciples developing a burden to pray for their lost relatives and neighbors? That is a big step forward!

The list could go on and on. Each of these are important steps forward in the journey toward launching a Disciple Making Movement. Each one is worthy of real celebration.

Holding on to the Long-range End Game

I want to be clear. I am not saying to throw out the goal of a rapidly multiplying, multi-generational movement of disciples who make disciples. Don't discard the vision of seeing a movement launched that will grow quickly and organically. And I'm not saying that reaching 4th generation is a bad measuring point.

There is definite validity to DMM targets and benchmarks. They have been determined by those analyzing the growth of numerous movements around the world. These things give us something to aim for. Regularly tracking our progress toward them is important. It makes us more likely to realize the vision of releasing new movements in unreached places.

But don't forget to rejoice over each step along the way. Don't belittle that progress, or consider it less valuable. Reaching the fourth generation, or the 100 group mark is only another notch on the measuring stick. It isn't the ruler itself.

Our ultimate goal is to see God's glory cover the earth.

- Is God being glorified in your disciple-making attempts? Then you are successful as a DMM practitioner.
- Is your heart still full of faith that the God who spoke to you to pursue a movement is able to bring that to pass? Then God is thrilled with your trust in Him. He rejoices over you.

Launching a movement is amazing. Seeing a massive number of people meet Jesus, introducing others to him in a natural, organic way...it brings deep joy to our hearts. When God inspires unreached people to reach their own people, we stand in awe. Our mouths agape, we watch Him transform whole communities. We are humbled that we got a chance to participate with Him in that incredible transformative work.

DMMs are worth pursuing. They are not an interesting option or faddish idea. Without them and the multiplication they create, we will not see the overall percentage of Jesus followers in the world increase. The 31 largest Frontier Groups will never be impacted without the release of many, many new Disciple Making Movements.

We cannot give up. Nor can we allow ourselves to become disillusioned when our efforts don't meet the criteria of what a DMM is...yet. We must press on, try again, learn, grow, and adapt what we are doing until we see His kingdom spread like wildfire among unreached regions and peoples.

Let's stay encouraged by learning to joyously celebrate the significant wins that come along the way.

Whether you are just beginning to pursue a movement or have already seen one take place, stop for a moment to celebrate what God has done. Take time to notice and give thanks. He has been at work, both in you and in those you are trying to reach. What has He done that you can rejoice about? Let gratefulness and joy fill your heart.

It may seem like such small progress, but it is forward movement nonetheless. If you can't see anything, then ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to perceive what He is doing under the surface. After giving thanks, boldly and courageously cry out to Him for more. He will answer our faith-filled prayers for greater fruit. It's His great delight to give us the nations He told us to ask for (Ps. 2:8). 