

A regular column featuring lessons from Church-Planting Movements around the world



T4T OR DMM (DBS)?

ONLY GOD CAN START A CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENT! (PART 1 OF 2)

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The Spirit of God is launching Church-Planting Movements (CPMs) around the world, just as he has done at various times in history. With Acts-like DNA disciples, churches and leaders are multiplying every few months. In the glorious mystery of God causing the growth, we find that he calls us to join him in the work.

As these modern movements have emerged, the Spirit is using a variety of “models” to start CPMs. Perhaps the majority of fruitful CPM models are adaptations of two major approaches: Training for Trainers (“T4T” – developed by Ying Kai) and Disciple-Making Movements (“DMM” – sometimes called the Discovery Bible Study model – “DBS” – taught widely by David Watson). There are other approaches God is using to start CPMs, but these two major models seem to be

producing the majority of CPM results in the world.

We are often asked if we prefer the “T4T” model or the “DMM (DBS)” model. Do we teach more a “Ying Kai” model or “David Watson” model? Is a particular training more of a “Steve Smith” or “Stan Parks” approach?

To which we would all reply:

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Cor. 3:5-7 (ESV, emphasis added)

OVERVIEW OF T4T AND DMM

T4T is a process of mobilizing and training all believers to evangelize the lost (especially in their *oikos*

or circle of influence), disciple the new believers, start small groups or churches, develop leaders, and *train these new disciples* to do the same with their *oikos*. Discipleship is defined as both obeying the Word and teaching others (hence, trainers). The goal is to help every generation of believers to train trainers, who can train trainers, who can train trainers. It equips trainers using a three-thirds process of discipleship each week – 1) **looking back** to evaluate and celebrate obedience to God, 2) **looking up** to receive from his Word and 3) **looking ahead** by setting prayerful goals and practicing how to impart these things with others.

DMM focuses on disciples engaging the lost to find “households of peace” and beginning a discovery group – an inductive group Bible study process from Creation to Christ to discover truth. While they are on the journey toward coming to Christ (a several month process), they are encouraged to share the Bible stories with other family and friends and to start discovery groups with them. At the end of this initial process, new believers are baptized and then begin a several-month inductive Bible study church-planting phase during which they are formed into a church. DMM is designed to disciple the discovery group to a commitment to Christ which leads to new churches and new leaders who then reproduce this process.

The two approaches are very similar but with significant difference of nuances. They both seek to implement similar Biblical principles to get to CPM. And yet there are enough differences that many are confused about which approach to use. Both systems have their strengths and weaknesses. Both can learn from the other, and have done so already.

HOW ARE DMM AND T4T SIMILAR?

Common Goal: Healthy, Sustained CPMs

A Church-Planting Movement is a rapid multiplication of indigenous disciples and churches that sweeps through a population group. Such reproduction allows the movement to outstrip population growth. Multiplication means most disciples and churches are involved in making disciples and starting new groups and churches. Indigenous believers lead these groups, which avoids foreign and unnatural forms of church and promotes long-term health.

Both T4T and DMM practitioners aim to foster Church-Planting Movements that consist of multiple streams of churches reproducing to the fourth generation and beyond. Both of these models prioritize obedience-based discipleship that results in well-rounded, sustained movements: disciples reproducing healthy disciples, leaders reproducing healthy leaders, and churches reproducing healthy churches. Both T4T and DMM focus on the long-term health of the movement.

Common CPM Processes

DMM and T4T base their models on common biblical CPM processes:

- **Mobilization:** Since they cannot predict who will be fruitful, T4T and DMM practitioners seek to train as many people as possible to respond

to God so that good soil (fruitful) disciples emerge (e.g. Matt. 13:18-23).

- **Training:** Both emphasize “on-the-job-training,” which enables disciples to grow through a “Believe then Serve then Mature,” rather than “Believe then Mature then Serve” process (e.g. Eph. 4:11-16). Both empower and expect average believers to be used by God.

- **Movement Health Components:**

Both T4T and DMM models have built in processes for mobilizing laborers and then training those laborers to gain (or better use existing) access to lost people, evangelize them, disciple them short and long-term, form churches and develop leaders. Their models are usable by relatively new believers.

Common Biblical Principles

Additional biblical principles are common to DMM and T4T:

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SEEM TO BE A FEW
KEY VISIONARIES
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- **Extraordinary faith in God:** Only God can start a movement. DMM and T4T are not “formulas” that, if practiced, will guarantee movements. They are efforts to align ourselves with the Word of God and learn from the works of God to lay the best possible groundwork for church multiplication. Therefore, they aim to develop extraordinary faith

in ordinary believers that God is working and wants to use them. Both DMM and T4T trust that God will often work miracles to open doors and reach the lost no matter the context.

- **Authority of the Word:** These movements are built on the authority of God’s Word as the source for all belief and practice. Outsiders are not the experts, but rather guide disciples to the Word of God and to obey all they hear from it.

- **Fervent Prayer:** Perhaps it is the desperation of facing an overwhelming task in often hostile areas that drives the CPM catalysts and emerging local believers and leaders to pray more fervently than they ever have before. They pray in faith expecting God to fulfill his Word.

- **God-sized Vision:** These movements seem to arise as God gives a vision for reaching entire people groups, even regions and nations. This end-vision is a God-sized picture that grips the hearts of the believers to attempt great things for God.

- **CPM Catalysts:** The sheer magnitude of a vision that often includes seeing millions reached is so audacious that the initial catalytic team is forced to focus not on “what can we do” but “what must be done.” This shifts them from being church planters to being catalysts that empower reproducing churches to be started.

- **Person God Uses:** In each of these movements there seem to be a few key visionaries that God uses to birth the movements. Their posture of abiding in Christ, willingness to hear and obey God, and tenacity to fulfill God’s vision are crucial. God seeks out those whose hearts are fully surrendered to Him (e.g. 2 Chron.16:9; John 15).

• **Obedience-based Discipleship:**

DMM and T4T practitioners seek obedience-based discipleship over knowledge-based religion. Obedience arises from loving God and obeying his commands (John 14:15). Both have systems in place for encouragement and accountability to help one another obey the Lord, resulting in strong disciples (e.g. Heb. 10:24-25).

• **Leadership Development:**

CPMs are leadership multiplication movements. T4T and DMM heavily incorporate mentoring and coaching elements. Mentoring deals with character and capacity of leaders. Coaching is to perfect skills. Since a CPM is an indigenous-leader-based process, the outsider's primary role is to develop key leaders in whom to invest and help them do the same with other emerging leaders (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:2).

• **Immediacy:** In CPMs the number of disciples, churches and leaders multiplies rapidly. But the goal is not rapidity. Rapidity is a result of the ethos of immediate obedience to Scripture and immediate sharing of truth learned – i.e. to be doers of the Word and not hearers only (James 1:22-25).

• **Other:**

- Church formation processes infuse the new church with the healthy, reproducing DNA from the beginning.
- Simple format churches allow for high reproducibility in a number of contexts.
- Every effort is made to avoid creating dependency on outside leaders, funding, and resources.
- Planning and evaluation are critical to gauge the health of the movement and guide it appropriately, including adjusting CPM models and processes.

HOW ARE T4T AND DMM DIFFERENT?

While the majority of T4T and DMM components are similar, there are some key differences. Within each model there are customizations and variations. In fact, many CPM practitioners blend together elements from both. However, the following would be generally true:

• **Length of gospel sharing:**

T4T shares the gospel quickly (one presentation – e.g. Creation to Christ or the Bridge - or perhaps several sittings), issues a call to commitment and then disciples those who accept Christ. DMM has a long evangelism track (anywhere from 10-26 Bible stories from Creation to Christ). DMM practitioners view this evangelism track as a discipleship track since the lost persons are being disciplined toward commitment to Christ.

• **Discipling the saved versus discipling the lost:**

T4T disciplines the “saved” while DMM generally disciplines the “lost” in the initial phase. DMM leaders feel that the latter approach offers a better opportunity to change worldview by the time a lost person accepts Christ and that those who make it to the end of the discovery series are very firmly in the kingdom. T4T practitioners try to deal with enough worldview issues in their gospel approach and then disciple new believers to solidify their kingdom walk (including through baptism and confessing Christ before others).

• **Time to get to church:** In DMM, it is normally at the end of the evangelism track (usually 10-26 weeks) that the groups of new believers are baptized and then formed into churches. T4T, on the other hand, forms new groups



into churches starting at about the fourth or fifth week after receiving the gospel. Baptism usually happens within the first month after professing faith (often within days).

• **Initial inductive Bible study versus lesson taught:**

DMM uses inductive Bible study approaches from the beginning and through the developmental stages. Evangelists and trainers are only facilitating the group to hear from God; they generally do not answer questions. Initially, T4T has fairly well scripted contextualized gospel presentations and short-term discipleship lessons for the first few weeks before moving to an inductive Bible study approach for long-term discipleship.

• **View of the Holy Spirit in discipling** – T4T practitioners focus on discipleship after conversion. They believe that discipling people who have the indwelling Holy Spirit results in a more effective discipling process. DMM practitioners are comfortable with the concept that the Holy Spirit is working in the whole process as they “make disciples” by discipling the lost to the point of commitment shown in baptism and then continuing that discipleship by teaching obedience to Jesus’ commands.

• **Starting with a group or an individual:** DMM almost always tries to evangelize/disciple a group of people—a person of peace and family/friends. When this group believes *as a group*, it is easy for it to become a church and to stand against opposition. T4T, on the other hand, can start with a group or an individual. Practitioners train anyone who believes—whether it is one person or several people—and then help them immediately reach their family and friends. While there are exceptions, many T4T practitioners may not try

to evangelize a whole group but get to group by helping the new believers to reach their *oikos*.

WHICH TO USE?

Determining which model to use depends greatly on your situation, your style of leadership and your convictions about some of the nuances. By the power of the Spirit, both have born the fruit of healthy CPMs. The reality is that many CPM practitioners blend elements from both. In Part 2 in a later issue of *Mission Frontiers* we will take an in-depth look at the methods of implementation and how they compare. Included will be some examples of how CPM practitioners are blending the two models and why.

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This should enable you to evaluate which would be most appropriate for your situation, or how to adapt and improve a model you are currently using.

The Spirit of God is blowing across the earth creating a harvest in every nation. Yet to move with this wind, we must raise the sails of methods and processes that cooperate with the Spirit. In other words, we need a way to respond to His leading. May your CPM model move the way the Spirit moves! 