



Praying through 12 Common Characteristics¹ of Disciple Making Movements

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24:14 Goal: Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (28 months)

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Robin (rls@beyond.org) and her family first moved to India one week before 9/11. After several years of seeing very little fruit birthed from among the lost, the Smiths changed ministry strategies to ones utilized by the Apostle Paul and Jesus Himself. The resulting numbers of new followers of Christ from Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh backgrounds surprised “experts,” both within and outside of the mission world. The Smiths serve with Beyond.org.

¹ These characteristics overlap significantly with (but are not identical to) David Garrison’s “Ten Universal Elements” found in every Church Planting Movement. *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), pp. 171ff.

Lord, lead us as we pray!

1. Extraordinary Prayer. In every known movement around the world, prayer plays a vital role. Prayer must be the foundation for any plan to reach a people group. Thus, the health of the messenger’s personal prayer life is crucial. The new church and its leaders will imitate the prayer life they see in the messenger.

- Pray for God to enable laborers in the harvest fields to walk in intimate conversational relationship with Him, so they bear much fruit that remains, for His glory (John 15:4–8).
- Pray that God’s people will not grow weary in doing good: in this case, the good work of prayer (Matt. 7:7–11).
- Pray that God’s people will have His heart for the lost for whom they pray. This is Jesus’ pattern (Matt. 9:36–38).
- Pray for God’s people to pray boldly, as commanded in Luke 18:1–8.

2. Authority of Scripture. In every known movement around the world, the Bible is the unquestioned authority and guiding force for the disciples—concerning everyday life, doctrine, and policy. This is true even in non-literate cultures, where the Bible is received and shared through oral storytelling.

- Pray that all who labor in the harvest will base their lives on Jesus and His word, being obedient doers, not forgetful hearers or hearers only (James 1:19–25).
- Pray for God’s Word to reach every people group in their own heart language. Pray that the Word would spread rapidly and be honored among all, because God’s Word is the source to thoroughly equip disciples for every good work (2 Thess. 3:1; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).
- Pray for laborers and disciples living and working among least-reached peoples to have their ears and hearts open to the Lord’s Word, so that when He shows them things to change, stop doing, or start doing, they will obey (Heb. 4:12).

3. Abundant Gospel Sowing. In every known movement around the world, messengers and first disciples generously tell others about Jesus. They share boldly about Jesus and His goodness—with their families, neighbors, coworkers, and friends.

- Pray for God’s children living and working among the world’s least-reached peoples, to not grow weary in generously sowing Gospel seed among the lost (Matt. 13:3–8; 2 Cor. 9:6).
- Pray for God’s Spirit to enable all who labor in the harvest to boldly witness—in season and out of season (Acts 4:18–20, 29–30; 2 Tim. 4:2).

- Pray for priority to be given to proclaiming the good news (Luke 15:3–7).
- 4. Intentional Gathering.** In every known movement around the world, lost people are disciplined in groups even before the movement begins, usually before they fully respond to the Gospel. Why? It is more effective to gather-then-win than to win-then-gather.
- Pray for disciples of Jesus to reach out to groups of people, no matter how small, instead of just individuals (Luke 10:5–7). Group decisions fit the common biblical pattern (Acts 10:24, 33, 44, 48; 16:14–15; 31–33) and provide strength (Ecc. 4:12).
 - Thank God that where two or three gather in His name, Jesus is there with them (Matt. 18:19–20).
 - Pray that disciples of Jesus will boldly ask lost people if anyone in their household or community of friends would also like to hear Good News (Acts 16:31–34).
 - Ask God to show His children (including us) who in their lives might like to be disciplined as a group, no matter how small.
- 5. Every Member a Minister.** Movements around the world emphasize and encourage the priesthood of all believers. Every follower of Jesus has gifts that he or she is expected to use, to strengthen others and extend the impact of God’s kingdom here on earth.
- Pray that disciples of Jesus in unreached places will obey His command to make disciples (Matt. 28:18–20). This task is not just for a select few.
 - Pray that disciples of Jesus in unreached places would boldly exercise the gifts God has given them (1 Peter 4:10; Eph. 4:11–12).
 - Pray for the hundreds of thousands of “Paul-Timothy” relationships currently existing in unreached places, among both men and women. Pray that Timothys would quickly become Pauls, and Pauls would quickly become Barnabases (1 Timothy 1:2; Acts 9:27; 11:25–26).
- 6. Bivocational Lay Leaders.** Movements around the world rely on lay leaders who work “normal” jobs in addition to the work of ministry. This helps to prevent leadership shortages caused by relying on seminary-trained or highly educated leaders. Spiritual leaders are developed through on-the-job training rather than institutional learning.
- Pray for God to multiply Christ-following leaders in every time zone (1 Thess. 2:4–12).
 - Pray for God to give energy and strength to His children (Ps. 29:11).
 - Pray for God to give wisdom and diligence to His children as they do various kinds of work (Acts 18:3; Col. 3:23).
- 7. House Churches.** Most of the churches in Disciple-Making Movements are small, reproducible fellowships of 10–30 members. They meet in homes, stores, coffee shops, or under trees—the normal gathering places in their societies. Many small fellowships dispersed throughout a city or community have a greater impact than a large, centralized group.
- Pray for disciple makers to stop inviting lost friends and neighbors to Christian activities, and to instead plant God’s kingdom *within* households of lost people, as Peter did in Acts 10:22–48.
 - Pray for God to multiply and strengthen house churches (simple churches) throughout UPGs, as we see in Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15; and Philemon 2.
 - Pray Romans 16:17–20 for house churches all over the world.
- 8. Disciples Making Disciples.** Biologically, shepherds can’t produce sheep. Sheep produce sheep. Disciple-Making Movements apply this biological truth spiritually. In the over 1,900 movements that exist today, local followers of Jesus (simple sheep) actively disciple their lost friends and family, planting new churches. How? When lost people become followers of Jesus, they quickly obey His command to produce more “sheep.” Thus, more laborers are found *in* the harvest.
- Pray for God’s people all over the world to follow the Good Shepherd’s example and step out of their comfort zone to pursue lost sheep (Luke 15:3–7).

- Ask God to forgive us, His Body, for relegating His disciple-making command and promise (Matt. 28:18–20) to trained and/or paid professionals. Pray for disciples of Jesus in both reached and unreached places, that we will all believe His promises and personally obey His command.
 - Pray 1 Pet. 2:24–25 for the world’s UPGs.
- 9. Sense of Urgency (Rapid Reproduction).** In movements, maintaining focus on the task is essential. Jesus said the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Matt. 9:35–38). He then instructed His disciples to pray for more laborers to bring in the harvest.
- Ask God to forgive us, His Body, for getting distracted from the harvest. We spend most of our time, energy, and money where the harvest is already being harvested. Meanwhile, Matthew 9:37 remains true for 42.5% of the people groups of the world (joshuaproject.net).
 - Ask God to give His children (both those living in reached places and those living among the unreached) boldness and courage to sow seed broadly, not sparingly (Matt. 13:3–8; 2 Cor. 9:6).
 - Ask God to raise up many disciples in unreached places who will follow the example set in Mark 5:19.
 - Ask God for Matthew 24:14 to finally be fulfilled in our lifetime.
- 10. Simple Church.** In the New Testament, being a church didn’t involve special buildings, seminary-trained leaders, or institutions. The church was (and is intended to still be) a group of Jesus’ followers who base their lives on Jesus and His Word. This involves encouraging each other to live lives of worship to Him, witnessing to the world, baptizing new followers, teaching and encouraging each other to obey all of Jesus’ commands, and sharing to meet needs.
- Pray for the Spirit to work in every gathering of followers of Jesus around the globe, that Jesus’ light might shine brightly throughout the earth (Luke 11:13).
- Pray that the house churches in movements would follow the example of the first followers in Acts 2:42.
 - Pray for God’s protection over the churches that have started through movements, that they will continue to find unity in humility (Phil. 2:1–4).
- 11. Enduring through Suffering.** Disciple-Making Movements often emerge in places where following Christ is costly and may lead to suffering or even death. Followers of Christ understand that in the world we will have tribulation, but Jesus has overcome the world. Those who bear fruit are pruned, so they can become more fruitful for God’s glory.
- Pray that Jesus’ promise in Luke 22:28–30 would ring loudly in the hearts of all disciples suffering persecution today.
 - Pray for God’s children to endure and have courage to persevere through trials (Heb. 12:1–3).
 - Pray James 1:2–18 for all who are currently suffering for the sake of the Name.
- 12. Signs and Wonders often Accompany Proclamation of God’s Word.** All disciples of Jesus are commanded to proclaim the kingdom in the authority of Jesus (Matt. 28:18–20). In current movements, as followers of Jesus boldly proclaim the Gospel, the Lord very often confirms the message with signs and wonders. This is one way God convicts lost people to believe in Him (Deut. 4:34–35).
- Ask for followers of Jesus in unreached places to boldly pray for manifestation of God’s kingdom, including signs and wonders accompanying Gospel proclamation (Mark 16:20).
 - Pray for God’s children to be bold enough to ask for the “impossible” so that many will believe (Matt. 17:20; John 14:12). 🟩