

Becoming the Kind of Person God Can Use to Launch Movements— Part 1

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We long for more than we see today. Though incredible things are happening and many new movements are being started across the globe, we hunger for more. We look at the world, or our current ministry, and feel a holy dissatisfaction with the status quo. This longing, even discontentment comes from the Father's heart. It is there because God has more for us. Millions remain unreached and we are called to impact them in greater ways than we have yet seen.

Whether you are an existing movement leader who has already seen many generations, or someone just beginning to catalyze movements, with our eyes on the ripe harvest, we must always look for more. How do we become the kind of people who God can trust with those greater fruits?

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As DMM practitioners we often focus on skills and strategy. This has merit. It is necessary. What is just as important, however, is focusing on becoming the kind of people God can use greatly. Some would argue that this is even more vital than having the right giftings, methodology or approach.

Most likely you've seen it happen. Someone with charisma, gifting and much potential crashes and burns as the movement begins to expand rapidly. They become proud, or their marriage suffers, or they begin to control things. Perhaps even worse, we see things like a moral failure in the lives of those whom God has powerfully used. Public failures in the lives of significant spiritual leaders are devastating to many.

What does it take? Who do we need to be for God to trust us with supernatural, extraordinary growth and kingdom fruit? Many things could be included. This list is not complete or exhaustive, yet these are some of the top things life and experience have taught me.

I see these twelve characteristics in the lives of the New Testament apostles and modern-day movement leaders God is powerfully using. These are things I aspire to continue to grow in as I pursue the launching or development of a Disciple Making Movement. In this first part, I will touch on the first six. After each one are discussion questions you can talk about with your spouse or team. Or, perhaps you'd like to journal about them.

1 They have an ever-growing relationship with God and an extraordinary prayer life.

In the first chapters of Acts, the church in Jerusalem is beginning to multiply rapidly. The Holy Spirit was moving. Compassion needs were growing. In this rapid growth environment, the apostles needed to stay focused on two things; the ministry of the Word and prayer. (Acts 6:3-4) They could not afford to allow the busy-ness and pressures of growing ministry to take them away from devoting themselves to these two top priorities.

Extraordinary prayer has been well documented as a characteristic of every move of God in history. Leaders who desire to see God work in their regions prioritize prayer. They spend much time with Jesus, alone, as well as in corporate prayer. Those close to them find them often on their knees, regularly pulling away from the crowds to be alone with their Master.



We can not afford to allow our relationship with God to grow stagnant as we give ourselves to the needs of the movement. Instead, we must maintain strong boundaries that protect our times alone with God where we receive His wisdom, guidance, and strength and where we simply enjoy our love relationship with Him.

Questions for Assessment and Discussion:

- In what ways has your love relationship with Jesus grown sweeter this year?
- Do you enjoy taking time away to be with the Lord and how often do you do this?
- How have you grown as an intercessor this past year?

2 They are bold and faithful in witness.

Numerous issues prevent us from living a life of faithful witness. Weariness, busy-ness, lack of confidence and fear of man top my list. Perhaps the greatest contributor to our failure in regular witness is a lack of a sense of urgency. Movement leaders deeply feel a sense of urgency to bring people to Christ. Their hearts are broken with the compelling needs of the lost around them. They are theologically convinced that apart from hearing about Christ the unreached are eternally lost. This moves them to step outside their weariness, busy-ness, or fears to lovingly share the message of redemption with those they meet.

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These leaders notice the people around them. The first thing they assess is whether or not someone nearby needs the message of the gospel. They are constantly looking for new opportunities to share Christ on a personal level as well as through training others to share the good news.

Questions for Assessment and Discussion:

- When was the last time you shared your testimony?
- How frequently do you tell stories from the Bible with people around you?
- What prevents you from sharing boldly and faithfully?

3 They are willing to face persecution from enemies.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus promised persecution. He said, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me...” (Matt. 5:11 NIV) Movement leaders and catalysts understand that their life is not their own and that persecution is normal. They have understood and accepted Jesus’ command to take up their cross and follow Him.

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Though we do not seek persecution, we must expect it. These leaders present the gospel in a way people can clearly understand. Using cultural bridges, they make the message of Jesus easy to understand. At the same time, they are willing to call for both repentance and shifting of allegiance. As many repent and believe, attacks from those who oppose the faith grow. This is to be expected. It is what we see as we study the growth of the New Testament Church and the lives of the apostles. In the book of Acts, there is a clear correlation between demonstrations of the kingdom (signs and wonders) and an increase in opposition. God worked, people were saved, the enemy reacted. How can we expect less?

Leaders who seek to be free of hardship and difficulties should not pursue the launching of Kingdom Movements. As you begin to see growth, both the enemy and other “forces” will react. Persecution, whether overt or behind the scenes, is sure to come.

Questions for Assessment and Discussion:

- In what ways have you encountered resistance from people or communities because of your message?
- How do you respond to persecution?
- What have you done to prepare yourself and those you are training for persecution?

4 They are willing to be misunderstood by friends.

Don't let their questions or negative responses discourage you. Choose to respond in the opposite spirit. Speak well of them and their work. Refuse to take offense.

Jesus was not a people pleaser. He loved those around Him and was deeply concerned for their well being. That did not stop Him from being willing to go against the status quo of what was expected and acceptable to others—even those in positions of religious power. Six times in the gospels He used the phrase “he who has ears to hear.”

Our Lord knew that some would listen and be utterly transformed by His words. Others would reject them. This did not disturb Jesus. Yet so often it deeply troubles our hearts when people reject our words, message or approach.

Movement leaders and catalysts are willing to pay the price of being misunderstood by other Christian leaders, colleagues, friends and even leaders they respect. To launch a movement, you must be willing to say no to many things. It involves a high level of focus on obedience to Christ's commands. This doesn't make you popular.

As we challenge and train people to become disciple-makers, some will feel threatened. Others will attack your

theology. Guilt, fear, and jealousy can rear their ugly heads. When you start to empower ordinary believers to baptize, serve the Lord's supper and start groups of disciples that morph into churches that start churches, many will ask you where you got the authority to do such things. They asked the same of Jesus and the early apostles.

Don't let their questions or negative responses discourage you. Choose to respond in the opposite spirit. Speak well of them and their work. Refuse to take offense. Be willing to be misunderstood by many Christians to reach those no one else will reach.

Questions for Assessment and Discussion:

- How important are your image and reputation? In what ways have you chosen to surrender this to the Lordship of Christ?
- If fear of man is a struggle in your life, what will you do to fight against this tendency?
- Have you experienced rejection or misunderstanding with others because you applied DMM principles? If so, how did you handle this?

5 They are able to innovate, evaluate and change

Those who pioneer new movements in unreached places are willing to step out of the norm and experiment with new ways of doing things. While also highly valuing proven fruitful practices, they are willing to try new approaches especially when not seeing the results they had hoped for. Creative ideas excite them and they are willing to take risks on both people and methods as long as they are in line with Scripture and basic DMM principles like reproducibility.

Instead of getting stuck in a rut, these leaders are continually seeking to improve the fruitfulness of their efforts and constantly look for new ways to see even greater multiplication.

When things work well, they accelerate those processes. They are not afraid of failure but learn from mistakes and fail forward. Prayerful times away for evaluation with their team and closest disciples is a regular part of their planning.

They do not get too attached to any particular strategy or method and are more loyal to seeing fruit and kingdom results than to a particular way of doing things. This does not mean they are short-sighted and seek immediate results at the cost of long-term impact, however.

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Questions for Assessment and Discussion:

- Describe a time you have been afraid of failure. How did it impact you?
- How often do you take time away to evaluate your disciple-making efforts in light of the fruit you are seeing?
- What could you do to encourage innovation and creativity in yourself or your team?

6 They are willing to stop doing unfruitful activities and focus on a few high impact things.

Resisting the temptation to do everything, the kinds of leaders who see much fruit are willing to focus on a few key things they feel deeply called to do. This means they become skilled at saying no to other activities that are not in line with their God-given vision. They resist the temptation to pursue every dream or idea they or others have. Though visionary, they are careful to guard their time and priorities.

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They choose the most impactful, essential disciple-making activities over many other good activities they could be involved in.

Questions for Assessment and Discussion:

- Are there any methods or strategies you feel particularly loyal to? If they failed to produce fruit, would you be willing to change? Why or why not?
- Which of your activities is producing the most fruit and multiplication? Which is draining but doesn't yield much fruit?
- What boundaries have you set in place to guard your time? Are you able to give adequate time for top priorities like prayer, leadership mentoring, disciple-making and meeting lost people?

In the next issue, we will look at further characteristics. Which of the six mentioned above do you find most challenging? Take steps to address these areas by first taking them to God in prayer. Then take action steps of how you will work on these areas in the coming month. Share those with your team or coach. 