



THE GDI APPROACH TO MAKING REPRODUCING DISCIPLES

The Mission

GDI is compelled by the mission that Jesus articulated as His central imperative, “**MAKE DISCIPLES** of all nations.” This is powerfully restated by C. S. Lewis:

"The church exists for no other purpose but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose." - C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, 163, 169, 170.

The Problem

Yet, I think we would have to admit that by any measurement we could imagine, the church has substantially fallen short of this mission. Bill Hull states, “The crisis at the heart of the church is a crisis of product.”¹ What are we producing? A simple way to dramatize our mission failure is through a case study.

Suppose there is a newly converted follower of Christ. You are concerned that they be well-grounded in Christ from the beginning. You approach someone who is considered to be a mature believer, and offer this challenge,

“Joe or Jane has just given their life to Christ. I would like to ask you to walk alongside Joe or Jane for the next year so that they can become deeply rooted in Christ, but your mission is not complete until they can do the same for others.”

How might the average Christian respond to this challenge? How many would be ready to accept the call? We leave you to answer that question.

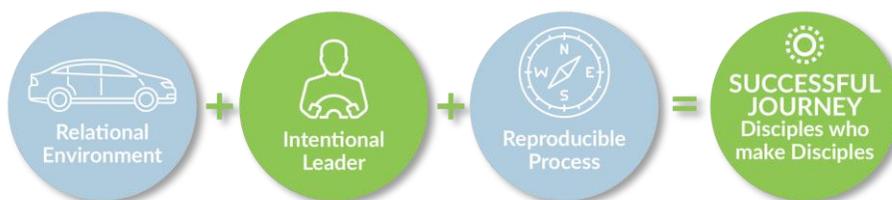
A Solution

We believe the average person would be a bit clueless as to **how** to proceed. It is the word **HOW** that dominates our focus. You might wonder: Is there a relatively simple, reproducible process

¹ Bill Hull, *The Disciplemaking Pastor*, p. 21

that the regular church-goer could practice that would not only accelerate their growth toward Christlikeness but also provide them a way to make reproducing disciples? We believe there is. Let us describe the key components through this visual image.

PICTURE OF A SUCCESSFUL DISCIPLE MAKING JOURNEY



Successful Journey: Disciples Who Make Disciples

The end goal is a church or ministry where the everyday follower of Jesus is a disciplemaker. In our training we start with a picture of the Camarillo Community Church's journey over a 5-year period which led to its radical transformation. The church went from 0 to 150 disciple groups (*aka MicroGroups* or *quads*) which ended up reshaping the culture of the church. The result was that the church took on some of the following characteristics: transformation into Christlikeness, multiplication by ordinary disciples, generosity, harmony and unity, evangelistic outreach, joy and obedience, global vision, leader development, and more.

With this outcome in mind, the following is a description of the key components of the **MicroGroup** model graphically depicted above. In our experience, a successful disciplemaking journey consists of three parts: a relational environment (car), an intentional leader (driver), and a curriculum (the GPS or map).

Relational Environment (Car)



- Container for the elements of accelerated growth
- 1 person invites 2 or 3 others (created thru personal invitation)
- 3 to 4 participants (Triads/Quads)
- Gender specific
- Meets for a year to year and a ½
- Covenants to reproduce: each person seeks to start their own group upon completion
- Meets for 90 minutes/weekly
- Curriculum based
- Meets in a safe space

Every journey needs a vehicle to get to its destination. Our car is the relational environment of the **MicroGroup** (3s or 4s).

The **MicroGroup** is a way to implement Jesus' intentional, relational model of disciplemaking. When Jesus called 12 men to be "with Him" as the primary way to shape His disciples, His ultimate goal

was to prepare the 12 (minus one) to carry on His ministry after He returned to the Father (John 17:4-5). It is no coincidence that Jesus had his own **MicroGroup** consisting of Peter, James, and John. We find that this size of a group optimizes four transformational elements. When we...

1. open our hearts in transparent trust to each other,
2. around the truth of God's Word,

3. in the spirit of life-change accountability,
4. while engaged in our God-designed mission,

...we are in the Holy Spirit's *hothouse* of transformation.

Intentional Leader (Driver)

Every car needs a driver. Every group needs a leader. The first step a leader takes is to form the groups. A distinguishing mark of **MicroGroups** is that they are formed around *the power of prayerful personal invitation*. Again, Jesus is our model. Luke 6:12-13 reads, "In these days He [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He named apostles:"

Jesus chose His disciples out of prayerful discernment. From a larger group who had been following Him, Jesus chose twelve to be apostles (or the future leaders of His mission). This prayerful, personal invitation contrasts with the usual programmatic church approach. The church invites people to programs; Instead, Jesus invited men to Himself to follow Him. The **MicroGroup** is a way to maximize the relational investment following Jesus' model.

The genius of the **MicroGroup** size of 3-4 is that leadership is accessible to the everyday person. Why?

1. Simplicity:

With a curriculum that is easy to use, the leader is just guiding a conversation. By keeping the groups small, there is no need for special group dynamics training that is required for groups of 8-12.

2. Leaders are trained in the group:

There is no necessity for extra leadership training or development. After several weeks of meeting, leadership within the group is passed around so that each person has numerous opportunities to lead. It is akin to apprenticeship. Once their groups are complete, group members have internalized the ability and passion to have their own group.

3. Members are learning from each other:

There is no specified teacher in the group. The Holy Spirit works through the truth of the biblically-based curriculum and the insights shared among the group members.

Reproducible Process (GPS Map)

The curriculum is the GPS that gets us to our destination. Just think what impact a foundational, disciplinemaking curriculum could have if a vast majority of people were covering the *same* material? Sometimes the best way to see the importance of a curriculum is to imagine the consequences if there is none. Without a curriculum you will **not** have a...

- plan;
- focused intention;

- transferable tool;
- sense of progress;
- structure to follow.

The recommended curriculum is the workbook named *Discipleship Essentials*, which we use as our basic toolbox. Here is a summary of the overall content.

- **Lessons 1 and 2** set the tone and focus: “What is discipling and who is a disciple?”
- **Lessons 3-6** answer the question, “How do we stay connected *to* Christ?” These lessons provide foundational introduction to the spiritual disciplines of a Quiet Time, Bible Study, Prayer, and Corporate Worship.
- **Lessons 7-13** answer the question: “What has Christ done *for* us?” This is the main doctrinal section and is focused on God as Trinity; Made in God’s Image, Sin, Grace, Redemption, Justification and Adoption.
- **Lessons 14-19** answer the question: “What does Christ want to do *in* us?” *MicroGroup* members deeply engage with content on the transformational work of the Holy Spirit, Trust, Love, Justice, and Witness.
- **Lessons 20-25** answer the question: “What does Christ want to do *through* us?” With a turn to an outward focus, these chapters cover topics that include: The Church, Ministry Gifts, Spiritual Warfare, Obedience, and Sharing the Wealth, and Money.

In Summary, This Is Our Vision

If you’re not dead, you’re not done! We see discipling *MicroGroups* organically multiplying to the point of strengthening the whole body of believers. The combination of two simple components creates a transformative setting and the means for multiplication. The two components are *context* and *content*. When you put a biblically-based discipling curriculum (content) into the high relational **MicroGroup** (context) you have the environmental conditions for accelerated growth and multiplication.

From the beginning of the journey, every person makes a commitment to have their own **MicroGroup** after they have completed their original group. The simple act of being in a group helps to move people from consumers to contributors; from passive to active; from feed-me to self-feeding; from “coming to get” to “going to give.” When these “perpetually being transformed” discipling makers reach a critical mass, an intentional ministry develops.

As a result, prayerful, Spirit-led disciples make disciples in a relational environment that continues from generation to generation because **MicroGroups** are not just another add-on to an already full schedule. This method is not “just another program” or “just another Bible study”—it’s a *lifestyle* change to become a discipling maker, one **MicroGroup** at a time.