

# Optimizing Discipleship Groups for Fulfilling the Great Commission

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How can we fulfill the Great Commission in our generation most effectively? Gladly many of us have learned that multiplying discipleship groups (DGs) is the most effective way to grow and expand the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> It is the best strategy that would produce mature Christians, radical disciples, sacrificial servant-leaders, holistic ministries, contextual theologies, rapid church multiplication, and effective global missions to reach the remaining unreached people groups (UPGs) effectively.

This article will show that to be fully effective and strategic, DGs have to be optimized into disciple making groups (DMGs). We will cover the theological basis, historical background, key principles, optimizing DGs, and optimization options of DGs to become DMGs.

## THEOLOGICAL BASIS

The main purpose of DGs is to make disciples who make disciples (2 Tim 2:2). This concept was popularized by the megachurches who formed DGs as their tool in church growth through cell multiplication, following the models of Moses in the Old Testament (Exod 18:21-25) and the early church in the New Testament (Acts 2:42-47).

At the same time among mission agencies, DMGs were being formed as the effective units of the Disciple Making Movement (DMM) strategy. Entire villages and tribes may be reached for Christ through multiplying DMGs for church multiplication and kingdom expansion, following the models of Jesus (Mark 3:13-15) and Paul (Acts 19:8-10).

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From the church-based side, is the rise of megachurches in the cities around the world in recent decades. They started as “churches with cells,” mainly following the model of Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) founded in 1958 by Yonggi Cho in Seoul, Korea.<sup>2</sup> This model spread in the ‘80s to major cities in the North and Latin America, Africa and Asia, as he promoted this through his Church Growth seminars and conferences, and later also by the Prayer Movements worldwide led by Peter Wagner

1. This has been confirmed by the American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead who said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

2. David Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Seoul: Seoul Logos Co., 1997); and Paul Yonggi Cho, *More Than Numbers* (Waco: Word, 1984). Also see Young-gi Hong, “The Background and Characteristics of Charismatic Mega-churches in Korea,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3.1 (2002), 99-118.

of the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary.<sup>3</sup>

Then in the ‘90s, “seeker-friendly churches” (like Bill Hybels’ Willow Creek<sup>4</sup> and Rick Warren’s Saddleback<sup>5</sup> in the U.S.A.) combined with the “cell church” (two-winged: celebration on Sundays and cells on weekdays only). They aimed to grow “churches of cells,” popularized by Lawrence Khong in Singapore as taught by Ralph Neighbor, Jr.<sup>6</sup> More recent models have focused on developing leaders for these cells, called “Government of 12” (G-12) developed by Cesar Castellanos in Bogota, Colombia, or “Discipling of 12 (D-12)” by Christ’s Commission Fellowship and Victory Christian Fellowship in Manila, Philippines.

At the same period, among mission mobilizers, inspired by reports of the “gospel explosion” of the house churches in China, Jim Montgomery founded the Discipling a Whole Nation (DAWN) movement in the Philippines with Nene Ramientos of Philippine Crusade (now changed to Challenge), which propagated the Christ the Only Way (COW) Movement in the late 1960s through Lay Evangelistic Group Studies (LEGS). It had the initial mission to have 10,000 LEGS to initiate saturation church-planting.<sup>7</sup> In 1982, DAWN initiated this same strategy (called 50,000 churches by 2000) with planting at least one Bible-believing church in every barangay to achieve saturation evangelism. By August 2001, DAWN reported that the target number was achieved by including preaching points and house churches in the count.

By 1999, David Garrison reported on the “Church Planting Movements” (CPM) that he had been researching on, and highlighted DMMs as the way forward in missions. This validated what Ralph Winter compiled into the “Perspectives” course that featured how disciples of McGavran and Patterson have been doing to reach UPGs. With his US Center for World Mission, Winter propagated Frontier Missiology that emphasized that DMGs have to be highly contextualized to effectively result in saturation evangelization among UPGs.

3. C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches* (Ventura: Regal, 1998).

4. Bill Hybels, *Becoming a Contagious Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

5. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

6. Ralph Neighbor, Jr. *Where Do We Go from Here?* (Houston: Touch Publications, 1990).

7. From 1971-1974, I was applying what I was trained on how to grow and multiply DGs, as a student leader of a college campus chapter of Inter-Varsity Philippines.

## KEY PRINCIPLES OF DGs

1. The main purpose is to make disciples who grow into mature spirituality. It's not just building friendships and have intimate Bible studies, but to also spur one another to spiritual growth unto Christlikeness (Col. 1:28-29). "Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else," as C.S. Lewis says. This requires intentionality in the curriculum, discussion questions and overall direction.
2. Prioritize relationship-building through sharing, prayer & group activities, providing an open space to know one another deeply, share life together and walk through joys and struggles side by side. DGs are a way to live out the "one another" commands to love, encourage, bear burdens with, and even confess sins to. They serve as the context for "every member ministry," where all believers use their spiritual gifts to build the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16).
3. With healthy accountability, DGs provide a context where members feel safe to share about their spiritual life, temptations, growth areas and personal goals/plans. Members should have become best friends to each other who they can carry happy memories of their time together.
4. Equip and empower leaders - With such a high expectations, DG leaders need to be identified and trained, given opportunity to apprentice to lead discussions, to host the group and eventually to multiply the group.
5. Keep the group small; limit up to 6-12 members only. The largest megachurch YFGC has aimed to limit membership to only 6-8. Members are usually also encouraged and trained on how to evangelize their kin and friends to join their group. As Francis of Assisi said, "Every Christian should give birth to another Christ." So, when the DG grows larger, it can multiply into two or three groups, or encourage some members to start a new group.
6. Provide structure and consistency. DGs meet regularly (weekly or bi-weekly) at the same time and place, or rotate among a few homes. They need to have clear agenda with time for fellowship, Bible discussion, prayer and vision-casting. They should be provided resources like discussion guides, or trained to find materials through the internet and automated intelligence (AI).
7. Multiply and reproduce - from the start, cast the vision for the group to multiply; regularly discuss what it would look like for the group to divide into two groups and what it would require (just do this once in a while). When the time is right (usually six to twelve months), guide the group through multiplication process, and celebrate the launch of a new group. Then repeat the cycle again.

## OPTIMIZING DGs

Most cell churches could not achieve the success of the megachurches because they have lacked in organizational development, particularly institutionalizing evangelistic, replication and holistic programs into their DG vision and structure. Even megachurches will gradually decline if they neglect integrating these three programs into their DG structure.

**Evangelistic programs.** For recruiting new members to multiply DGs, the YFGC uses altar calls in most of their large gatherings, including most of their Sunday worship services. This is a constant source of potential members who can form new DGs. At the same time, there is active recruitment and training of new potential leaders in the DG system: each DG leader disciples one or two apprentices who are also being training in their Cell Leaders' Training School.

In the early years of the cell church movement led by Khong and Neighbor from Singapore, they avoid adding other activities, such as prayer meetings and fellowships. Each church member must be a member of a cell; hence church members have only one other involvement in the church: the Sunday worship services.

With their centralized structure to meet more needs from their increasing membership, most of them have slowly added many other evangelistic projects and fellowship activities. Because of their size, they have the financial capacity to develop any program that the central leadership decides is necessary or feasible, even if these new projects would later become huge budget outlays. In the end, they are no longer strictly cell churches.

Since most of these churches are theologically Pentecostal-charismatic, they also emphasize "power evangelism" or "signs and wonders" as they pray for the miraculous healing and other spiritual manifestations (like tongues, "resting in (or slain by) the Spirit," etc.). In association with other independent (and mostly also with the same theological bent) ministers and churches, they wage "spiritual warfare" through prayer walks as they seek to evangelize and make disciples in their locality, such as the "Prayer (or Harvest) Evangelism" program of Ed Silvano in Argentina.<sup>8</sup>

**Replication programs.** Each church has limited reach to only a few kilometers radius from its location. Hence the number of DGs it can multiply can be restricted, too. The church leadership needs to plan for church multiplication, too, especially to other towns and cities. In the years 2000s, most megachurches began their church replication programs. For instance, VCF planned to plant one church nationwide in at least a shopping mall in each capital city per province

<sup>8</sup> Ed Silvano, *That None Should Perish*. Ventura: Regal, 1994.

as well as in the capital city of each country in Asia. They have done this by sending a church-planting team of a pastor and a group of recruits from among their youth and professionals. Actually it can be done just by casting the vision for any DG to grow into a church in their neighboring locality.

**Holistic programs.** Many of the DGs have lost their effectivity in growing and multiplying capacity mainly because they missed the “servant evangelism” aspects of the regular life of the earlier DGs. In YFGC, the DGs had been led mostly by women, who enjoy visiting and serving the families of their members and friends. In Ed Silvoso’s “Prayer Evangelism,” their DGs go to bless and supply the needs in their neighbor’s homes. In CCF, DGs are encouraged to serve in their communities.

Holistic ministries are demonstrations of spiritual maturity (Christlikeness) through doing justice & loving mercy (Mic 6:6-8; Isa 58). The sheep who inherit eternal life are those who minister to the needy people (Matt. 25:31-40), even if they didn’t realize that the spiritual discipline of almsgiving (6:1-4) done privately has eternal reward, besides its transformational impact in realizing Jesus’ reign on earth. Through the servant evangelism of DGs, the church fulfills its role to be salt and light in their world, so that their neighbors will glorify God (Matt 5:13-16).

#### **OPTIMIZATION OPTIONS FOR DGs TO BECOME DMGs**

Yet from the perspective of the missiological community, there are more spaces for optimizing DGs into disciple making groups (DMGs), which aim to win entire communities and people groups strategically. As the DGs enhance their vision and activities to developing into DMGs, they can become more effective ambassadors of God’s kingdom among the nations, in at least these three ways: become entrepreneurial through cooperative development, become viral through disciple multiplication movement, and become incarnational through indigenous movement.

**Optimization #1 = Become entrepreneurial DMGs (cooperative development).** First, DGs can become holistic DMGs through cooperative development. Jesus-followers can be the solution to the poverty areas and the economic inequality in the world today. Gladly, last April 18th 2023, the vast majority of the United Nations’ General Assembly officially resolved to build the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) to help achieve their 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. SSE is built mainly on cooperativism, which is coordinated globally by the International Cooperative Alliance founded since 1895, which consists of at least 12% of the world’s population in three million coops which contribute to sustainable economic growth and stable, quality employment

worldwide. There are now about one billion coop members in the world today, that’s about 12.5% of the world’s population. If we double every 2 years, we’ll be 25% by 2026, 50% by 2028 and 100% by 2030.

Our DGs can be mobilized to join the SSE from the bottom up as we propagate economic koinonia (cooperativism) as “law of the land.” This legislation exists globally in the form (with various names) of social democracy or welfare state. It aims for each citizen to enjoy Jubilee “from the cradle to the grave,” which for us means reviving bayanihan (solidarity) and walang iwanan (leave no one behind) in the Filipino way of life.

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**Thus all Jesus-following DGs, churches and organizations should teach their constituents to turn their homes & buildings into ministry centers and do Matt. 25:31-40 services, implementing the laws of Jubilee to fulfill Jesus’ mission Those blessed with intelligence, health, talents & wealth should share their lives and possessions with those with less— because everything we have are God’s gracious gifts meant for the common good and not for private use only. Freely we receive, freely we share. We are created in the image of the Triune God who is eternally sharing generously as equals.**

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Isaiah 65:21-22 shows a New Jerusalem on earth where justice prevails, where each one’s labor is rewarded accordingly, following the ideal of “each man sitting under his own vine and fig tree” (Mic 4:4) and the Mosaic laws of gleaning (so none will be poor, Deut 15:1-6) and Jubilee (when every fifty years all lands are returned to the original families, Lev 25). In the NT, the DG of Jesus shared a common fund (Judas was their treasurer), and so did Paul’s (Acts 20:33-35), following the practice of the earliest church in Jerusalem (2:42-45; 4:32-37). Paul taught that caring for and sharing with one another for equality manifests in full the mutual love ethic among the Jesus-following communities (2 Cor. 8:7-15).

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We are created in the image of the Triune God who is eternally sharing generously as equals.

The best (or even the only) structure of cooperativism where out of love for neighbors, people contribute towards a common fund which they democratically save, plan and work together to entrepreneurially do business together for the common good. Following the Exodus 18:21-25 structure mentioned above, each group of 5-10 families can go into business together by saving, planning, working and sharing profits together. Each DG can link with about four other groups (coordinated by leaders of fifties) to form primary coops and organize secondary coops (federations led by leaders of hundreds) and tertiary coops (confederations led by leaders of thousands), like in the structure .

This is happening nowadays among house church networks (HCNs) in China, India & Philippines, too, and a few are starting to cooperativize.<sup>9</sup> In the Philippines, anyone who wants to learn about economic DMGs just needs to connect with any of us and we will find someone to disciple them in person or online, or just refer them to our website: <https://stargrass.dalipuga.com/housechurch>.

#### **Optimization #2 = Becoming viral DMGs (DMM).**

The second direction is to multiply DMGs virally or exponentially through disciple making movements (DMMs). The four-step process for disciple making is: Model, Assist, Watch, and Leave (MAWL), like what Jesus did. First, he ministered and his disciples watched him. Second, he allowed the disciples to assist in the ministry. Third, the disciples did the ministry themselves. Finally, he just watched as the disciples ministered to others. The modern version of intentional discipleship is "I do, you watch"; "I do, you do"; "You do, I watch"; "You do, I don't watch."

To transform the world, Jesus just trained his disciples to evangelize the villages of Galilee (eventually to all nations) by simply sending them two by two without bringing outside resources into the community (Luke 10:4) to build any new structure there. They just had to find a local "person of peace/shalom" (vv. 5-6) and disciple that person to disciple their kin, friends and neighbors (vv. 4b-9), transforming them from "wolves" into "lambs" (cf. V .3) from house to house (not by the outsider, but by the insider, v. 7). If there is no such person in a community, they can just leave and go to another one (vv. 10-16), as simple as that.

And that's how the apostles and the early church extended the kingdom, through forming house (oikos) church networks (HCNs) in each place.<sup>10</sup> across

9. On HCMs, see my "Asia's House Church Movements Today," *Asian Missions Advance* 52 (July 2016): 7-12. Cf. Wolfgang Simson, *Houses That Change the World* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), and Rad Zdero, *The Global House Church Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2004).

10. *Oikos* is best translated as "household" for it is composed not just of the family, but also of friends, tenants and slaves, as seen in the instructions given in Eph.5:22-6:9 & Col.3:18-4:1 (cf. my "God's Kingdom as Oikos Church Networks: A Biblical Theology," *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 34.1-4 (Jan-Dec 2017), 25-

the Roman Empire and beyond.<sup>11</sup> The formation of house-based DMGs was the practical outcome of the "priesthood of all believers" as each Jesus-follower was empowered to use their homes to serve and bless their neighbors where they lived and worked. It's simply discipling every believer to become "mature in Christ" to serve as God's priest (minister) in and through their household.

How then is the earthly New Jerusalem to be organized globally as it is implanted as small groups (family-size) in society? Jesus did not form a formal structure, but introduced a cellular system that subsists in the constant reproduction of "new wineskins" (Mk.2:22) in the structures of society. Each DG forms a part of a HCN, where authority rests on the lowest units ("leaders of tens") which are consulted and assisted (but not supervised nor controlled) by the "higher" coordinating units, as they become leaders of their local community.<sup>12</sup> In the NT, these local leaders were simply called "elders." This is different from the denominational hierarchies of local churches with episcopal, presbyterian or congregationalist structure.

In a DMG, to disciple means to equip someone with just three spiritual disciplines: (a) hearing God through prayerful meditation (lectio divina) to turn His word (logos) into a personal word (rhema) to be obeyed (2 Tim.3:16-17); (b) making disciples through facilitating a 'HC' in praying and Bible sharing, thereby each one learns how to do personal devotions with fellow believers (Heb.10:24; 1 Cor.14:26); and (c) doing friendship evangelism to share what they learn of God and His will with their non-believing networks of friends.

This is what the mainstream of the Philippine Missions Association (PMA's) flagship program has focused on mobilizing the Filipino diaspora (mostly migrant laborers and immigrants) to help fulfill the Great Commission through multiplying DMGs in the world.<sup>13</sup> We have aimed to raise the largest and perhaps the most effective Evangelical mission force among the nations since 2001 until now,<sup>14</sup> through training and deploying a million tentmakers -

35. This means that each oikos church crossed many cultural barriers, particularly gender, age, class and ethnicity as they gathered and "broke bread" together around the same table as equals (cf. Gal. 3:28).

11. Interestingly, Paul also started with only 12 disciples to reach the whole Asia Minor in two years (Acts 19:1-10).

12. This is commonly called the "subsidiarity" principle.

13. As the main missiologist of PMA, here are three works on my DMM missiology, see "Towards a Radical Contextualization Paradigm in Evangelizing Buddhists," *Sharing Jesus in the Buddhist World*, ed. David Lim & Steve Spaulding (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003), 71-94; "Catalyzing 'Insider Movements' Among the Unreached," *Journal of Asian Mission* 10.1-2 (March-September 2008), 125-145; and "Effective Tentmaking Made Simple," *Blessing OFWs to Bless the Nations*, ed. Ana Gamez (Makati: Church Strengthening Ministries, 2012), 108-113.

14. At the Lausanne Forum at Pattaya in September 2004, the Filipino delegation publicly declared their commitment to deploy 200,000 missionaries (mostly OFWs as tentmakers) into the 10/40 Window by 2010; and in 2009 PMA extended it to 1,000,000 (with 3,000 career missionaries) by 2020, which would constitute 10% of OFWs. Evangelicals and Pentecostals have been about 10% of the 110 million Philippine population since the start of this century.

“Overseas Filipino Workers” (OFWs)<sup>15</sup> – to catalyze DMMs among the unreached people groups (UPGs).<sup>16</sup>

Our DMM strategy is multiplying DMGs in the form of “Company-3” as our flagship program.<sup>17</sup> Like what Jesus did in equipping and sending his disciples into their world as “apostles” (Mk.3:13-15), “disciple multiplication” is God’s simple strategy to “disciple all nations.” Every Jesus-follower can be mobilized and equipped to multiply disciples where they live and work.<sup>18</sup> Anything more is a diversion from God’s simple plan to disciple the world speedily.

Company-3 consists of three parts per session: First is “Sharing our lives” when each one shares their praise and prayer items. Second is “Hearing from God” when each one answers questions to a biblical passage about God, people, what to do, and who to tell the lessons learned. And the third is “Conversation with God” when they pray for each other’s needs, and for opportunities to bring specific others one-step-closer to Him and start a DMG with them. It’s just like what happens in ordinary DGs, but can now be used to make DMG multiply virally.

**Optimization #3: Becoming incarnational DMG (indigenous movement).** The third direction for DGs is to become incarnational DMGs through indigenous movements. In the Statement “Reimagining Missions: Discipleship in Asia” issued by the recently held 11th General Assembly of the Asia Evangelical Association in Ulaanbaatar, Chansamone Saiyasak averred that discipleship must be culture-friendly or culture-sensitive. In order to advance the Christian mission in Asia, we should be: “Nurturing indigenous Christians to develop their identity within the Asian context, equipping them to effectively share and adapt their faith to local cultures, raising up leaders who understand and can navigate local traditions while discipling new believers,” and “ensuring the church becomes more locally sustainable and culturally relevant.”<sup>19</sup>

We need to relearn how Jesus trained his disciples to do his mission contextually (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-17), which he also illustrated cross-culturally among the Samaritans in Sychar (John 4) and among Gentiles in Decapolis (Mark 5:1-20; 7:31-8:10). When entering other cultures, Paul practiced “becoming all things

to all people” (1 Cor 9:20-23), in fact “making himself a slave (doulos) among them” (v. 19). As for the local converts, his mission – now called “Insider Movements (IM)”<sup>20</sup> – included three dimensions: incarnational (1 Cor 7:17, 20, 24), contextual (vv. 18-20) and transformational (vv. 21-24).<sup>21</sup>

Through the “person of peace” in each community, people begin their faith journey by contextually remaining in the majority religion (or non-religion) of their family and community (esp. vv. 18-20). They simply developed their faith with a simple spirituality, with each one learning how to live a “love God and love everyone” lifestyle (Matt 22:37-39; Rom 12:1-2) in their society. Jesus did not (nor trained his disciples to) set up any structure separate from the existing homes, communities and structures where they lived and worked.

The rich harvest that Jesus expected from his disciples are being reaped nowadays through simply multiplying indigenous DMGs. By just following Jesus in his “zero-budget missions,” every disciple just leads someone (usually a relative or a new friend) to trust and obey King Jesus in love and good works. As they serve one another, the people (esp. community leaders) around them will take notice of “how they love one another” (and their neighbors) and will soon also ask for their help. They then naturally rise to become leaders in the community.

Moreover, our DMG members need to understand that all secular things – including all natural (God-created) places, assets and talents, and cultural (human-made) ideas, artifacts, gadgets, traditions, customs, worldviews, etc. – can be redeemed and sanctified through faith expressed in prayer to God in Jesus’ name and obedience to His word (1 Tim 4:4-5, cf. Jas 1:17). So there is no need to build religious facilities, for all properties of Jesus-followers belong to (and can be used for) His kingdom (John 4:21-24; Acts 7:48; 17:24-28),<sup>22</sup> for true worship can be done anytime and anywhere (cf. Rom.12:1-2; 1 Cor 10:31), even in Buddhist temples, Communist classrooms and Muslim mosques.

Therefore, we should be teaching a biblical spirituality which requires less and less religious practices. Following Christ does not require public displays of religiosity – in fact, Jesus literally discouraged such (Matt 6:1-18), which included almsgiving, praying and fasting, which are all to be done in private.<sup>23</sup> As each walks humbly and simply for God’s glory (Col 3:17; Mic 6:8), their community will experience shalom and enjoy life with love and justice (1 Tim 2:1-2). Their spirituality does not need

15. The International Labor Organization lists 11 million Filipinos living abroad as of March 2022, which is 10% of the population. “Why are OFWs Heroes of the Philippine Economy?” at <https://www.bria.com.ph/articles/why-are-ofws-heroes-of-the-philippine-economy/>.

16. On PMA, see my “History and Ministry of Philippine Missions Association: Leading the Global Shift to Tentmaker Missions.” *Asian Missions Advance* 41 (October 2013), 2-6.

17. For the missiology and strategy of “Company 3,” see Robert Claro, *A Higher Purpose for Your Overseas Job* (Makati City: Church Strengthening Ministries, 2003).

18. This was first popularized through Dawson Trotman (since 1933) & the Navigators. I think that the main reasons why this movement has not achieved its goal of world evangelization is due to the same weaknesses that we encountered in PMA (see below), which are to have church-supported staff and to become literate (depending on printed materials like Bible Study materials).

19. <https://weamc.global/aea-contextual-discipling/>.

20. On the IM of Jesus, Paul and the early church, see my “God’s Kingdom as Oikos Church Networks: A Biblical Theology,” *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 34.1-4 (Jan-Dec 2017), 25-35.

21. Paul claims he teaches this universally in all the churches (v. 17b).

22. Israel had only one temple, not one in each village, city or region. The Jews began to build synagogues only circa 200 BC to serve as their community centers in their diaspora.

23. The Sabbath was for rest, not public worship.

to develop elaborate theologies, ethics, liturgies and hierarchies (cf. Amos 5:21-24; Ps 131). It will simply be “more generosity, less religiosity.”

As our world modernizes and globalizes further, as science and technology advance rapidly, and as we form DMGs contextually, the socio-religious traditions in our pluralistic world will lose relevance and will be reduced and/or transformed into less religious forms. Through high-tech and social media, people even in still fully oral cultures will become more and more secularized (and materialistic and hedonistic), and will overcome their fears and guilt feelings, which have been the roots of superstitious practices, lucky charms and elaborate religious rituals.

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We just have to focus on promoting “more Jesus, less religion.” “More Jesus” means simply practicing the simple spirituality (three habits of holiness/discipleship), in low-key ways, amidst the busyness and noise of urban and cyberspace. This applies also to the over-supply of online Christian programming that add to the multiplicity of chats and services in Facebook and YouTube. We need to be reminded that historically all “gospel explosions” and spiritual revivals were high-touch and hardly high-tech. We just need to focus on “gossiping” the essentials (prayer and the Word) relationally and not be diverted by the media (print, radio, TV and internet) for spiritual formation and transformation. Online ministry will work only when friendship and trust have been established first. Can high touch “friendship” (in DMGs) happen in Facebook or any social media? Perhaps possible with lots of time (man-hours) invested in personal and group chats, as I have done more and more since the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## CONCLUSION

We have shown that our existing DGs (Discipleship Groups) in our churches and mission-fields can still be optimized to multiply Jesus-followers who can multiply disciple-makers more effectively, so as to transform whole communities and workplaces Christward – with contextualized, holistic and transformational sustainable communities that are truly replicable: self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating and self-theologizing.

We will be multiplying DGs and planting churches that will be copied by future generations of Jesus-followers, so we should avoid transplanting denominational churches (= complex Christendom) which are often decontextualized (= foreign-looking, if not actually foreign), hence have almost always produced marginalized believers who are separated from their communities – despised and rejected by their family and friends, not because of the Gospel but because of their extra-biblical forms.

Through optimized DGs in DMMs, Christianity will then return to what Jesus Christ originally intended His Kingdom to be: every human having a personal *relationship* with God through simple faith in Him (liberated from sin and the complexities of both primitive/animistic/folk religions and major/great organized religions), which results in works of sacrificial love for Him and His creation/creatures (liberated from sin’s effects on the poor bound to their poverty and on the rich bound to their prosperity). No more need for elaborate *religiosity* with elaborate theologies, liturgies, temples or clergies. His kingdom and mission is to bring forth a *spiritual* (read: moral) transformation rather than just a *religious* reformation.

May God use each of us to multiply optimized DGs and DMGs, so that God’s kingdom can expand in powerful ways. May we be faithful to the vision of kingdom expansion through DMGs, so that the knowledge of the glory of God will fill the earth as waters cover the sea.



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