

DISCIPLING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Whole Life Discipleship



What is Discipling for Development?

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In a 2006 evaluation more than 50 Nigerian participants in Discipling for Development training were interviewed to better understand the impact of the training in their ministries. When asked “Are you implementing Discipling for Development?” most answered, “Yes.” When asked to further explain answers such as the following were given:

- I am teaching the Community Bible Lessons
- I am approaching people more holistically, not just with Bible teaching
- I am using Adult Learning methods
- We have put in a well in the community we serve

As we have expanded into eleven countries in Africa, our various partners have explained the Discipling for Development ministry in similar ways:

- It is community development
- It is a rural ministry
- It emphasizes the whole person

In the pages that follow, Discipling for Development will be described as

- A discipling ministry
- A biblical worldview
- A tangible expression of a transforming gospel
- A process for engaging communities and individuals in becoming all God intends them to be
- A set of skills
- A mentoring relationship that develops mature disciples of Jesus Christ
- The name of an organization / group of people carrying out this ministry

Defining “Discipling” and “Development”

Haruna chose not to build a latrine in his compound. His family used the river nearby to dispose of their wastes, wash their clothes, and water their cattle. When he came to Christ, his discipler observed this and its impact on his neighbors. Is this a discipleship issue? Or is this a development issue?

Eventually the discipler answered these questions with the unequivocal “Yes!” It is both spiritual (“Can I really love my neighbor and live in a Christ-like manner if I am harming him and the environment?”) and physical (“Haruna needs to know how to build a latrine, improve the environmental sanitation, and keep from polluting the area and river!”). In real life and in Scripture, there is no separation between the spiritual and the “secular.” Both are created by God, for His purposes, under His Lordship, to bring Him glory.



For historical reasons when people hear the word “Development” they think physical, economic, environmental improvement. They often refer to economic development (improvement in cash per family or individual), social development (improving the lives of people) or material development (such things as wells, clinics, bridges, roads). Each perspective has a specific philosophy and practice associated with it. All hold in common the dictionary definition of *growth* or *progress*.

In *Discipling for Development*, we are defining “*Development*” from the biblical perspective of God’s plan and work. Ephesians 2:10 says

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (ESV).

For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them (NET).

For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus with a view to good works which God prepared beforehand in order that within their sphere we may order our behavior (Wuest).

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (NIV).

All these translations point to God’s plan for us and his impact on that plan:

- We are God’s handwork, workmanship, poema (Greek); as such, He is the one that has the plan and the vision for what we should be and do
- We are created specifically in Christ Jesus
- We are created for the purpose of carrying out / doing good works
- God prepared that plan / those good works beforehand (before the creation of the world)

Scripture teaches us what those good works are and how that behavior looks. But the bottom line is that “development” (growth, progress, improvement) – if consistent with the Creator of the Universe’s plan – must result in “becoming all that God intended that we would be.” And it is designed by Him, driven by Him, empowered by Him, protected by Him.

In evangelical traditions, “discipleship” has been used to describe the spiritual establishing of a disciple of Jesus. However, historically, a *disciple* was one who learned from and devoted himself to the teachings of his teacher / mentor / leader. Dallas Willard, keeping things simple, says a disciple is an apprentice (one who is learning a trade, art, or calling by practical experience under skilled workers, Websters).

From this perspective, “*Discipling*” is the process of apprenticing someone in something. One can be an apprentice in any arena of knowledge, attitude or skill. The key is being trained or mentored in a particular area.

Using some biblical frames of reference, it is always aimed at reproducing itself in others, following God’s intended plan, and for God’s glory.



“. . . and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2, ESV).”

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1, ESV).”

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . (Romans 8:29, ESV).”

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17,ESV).”

Putting these together, Discipling for Development is

*A ministry of helping people in **community** to become **all that God intends for them to be**. It is a **relational process**, empowered by God, in which experienced **disciplers** assist the **people of a community** to grow in their ability to **solve their own problems**, to take control of their lives, and to **reproduce this process** in others. Through this process the thinking and behavior of the people/community become **transformed** in ways that result in the growth of the **whole person** (physical, psychological, spiritual) and improvement of the various aspects of their community (health, agriculture, water, relationships, etc.) for the **glory of God**.*

This more complicated definition is underlining some of the key principles in a Discipling for Development ministry that will be described later. But keeping things simple, it is **apprenticing people and communities to become all that God intends for them to be**.

A Biblical Worldview

*“Having gone on your way therefore, **teach all the nations, making them your pupils**, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to be attending carefully, holding firmly to, and observing all, whatever things I enjoined upon you** (Matthew 28:19-20a, Wuest NT, my italics).”*

The making of disciples – if they are to be Jesus’ disciples – requires a biblical worldview. Not just biblical knowledge, but an integrated understanding from Genesis to Revelation of what God’s plans were from the beginning, how they were sidetracked through the Fall, and how God is redeeming all that has been broken and all He created to fulfill those plans.

Marita is a member of the Kirambo Friends Church in southwestern Rwanda. God has done an amazing work of grace in her life.

Marita is HIV positive. Her husband left her long ago. Abandoned, infected and alone with two children, she lived in abject poverty. She owned only one set of clothes. She was an alcoholic. Everywhere she walked she kept her head down and avoided eye contact. She hoped no one would talk to her because she felt ashamed of who she was and of her poverty. In her words, “I deserved to be thrown away.”



Marita demonstrates the brokenness that resulted from Man's rebellion against God in Genesis 3. She was alienated from God, had lost all sense of dignity and self respect, was alienated from those around her, and had no sense of stewardship or ability to use her environment to make a living. Pastor Tertullien Nsabimana and his team from the Friends Church in Rwanda, after gaining a new vision for his church through Discipling for Development, invited Marita into a discipleship group. They encouraged her through the Word and prayed for her. Her eyes soon began to open concerning the truth about her worth in Christ. She started following Jesus and began to realize that He had given her abilities to help herself and her family to survive. She learned, for example, how to earn money by selling at the market and how to save part of her earnings. She soon accumulated enough savings to acquire goats, a small parcel of land to farm, and she built a small house for herself and her children.

Now, when Marita looks into the mirror there is no more shame. Her head is lifted up, her eyes shine, her voice is animated and she is full of joy! She is currently teaching her children how to take care of their own animals, to help pay for school supplies or other expenses. She now proclaims, "I may have HIV but I haven't died yet!" Someone asked her if she would forget about God now that her life is going better. She responded, "I am a woman Jesus has totally saved. After all that He has done for me I will never leave my Jesus!"

In this brief testimony we can see a restored relationship with God, a sense of dignity and rediscovering the mandate to steward the things around her, and a new relationship with others manifest through her new friends and church family. Marita exemplifies four broken relationships being restored and resulting in hope for the future.

Jesus' life and ministry were holistic. He was addressing all of these broken relationships as he traveled from Galilee to Judea. Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, he spoke and good news happened, and he *was* the good news. What he brought into being in Luke 4 he lived out throughout his ministry years and continues to accomplish today.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19)."*

"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21)."

Discipling for Development embraces this whole-life, biblical view of our world and is not satisfied compartmentalizing certain parts of life (e.g. spiritual) as more important than other parts of life (physical, social, environmental). It is a gospel of the kingdom that describes and demonstrates kingdom behavior. Kingdom citizens live kingdom lives whether it seems to bring results or not. As a couple working in Rwanda said during their one-year assignment in the US, "Discipling for Development is part of who we are. We found ourselves operating from that perspective everywhere during our US assignment."



A Transforming Gospel

When Jesus spoke, nothing stayed the same. People changed, water turned to wine, authentic repentance occurred. When he healed, sins were forgiven and people were healed. When he confronted Paul, Paul was never the same. When authentic seekers encountered Jesus, transformation was the result.

So if we don't see transformation – of behavior, values, and worldview – what does that mean? Paul, in describing this power to the Thessalonian believers said

“... our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (1 Thessalonians 1:5a, ESV).”

The transformation was so obvious and complete that the whole region of Macedonia and Achaia had heard how they had “turned from to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9b, ESV).”

In Ephesians he prays for the believers' hearts to be enlightened regarding “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead (Ephesians 1:19, 20a).”

When a holistic gospel comes in the power of the Holy Spirit to an individual and a community and even a nation, authentic and obvious transformation should be the result. When such all-encompassing transformation is missing, we need to ask, did the good news truly visit this place? Where is God's kingdom come and his will done in this place as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)?

The goal of Discipling for Development (Transforming Communities) is always aimed at transformation of worldview (Romans 12:2), not just behavior. Based on the impact of the gospel in the New Testament, it is reasonable to expect that

Authentic Gospel + Holy Spirit + Obedience = Transformation.



A Set of Principles

Another section of the Coaching Handbook will address the key principles in Discipling for Development in more detail. Suffice it to say that understanding and applying these principles (as opposed to merely implementing activities and steps) is an essential part of realizing Transforming Communities. This icon demonstrates the interconnectedness of the principles, which are summarized below.



Spiritual Formation

Ongoing transformation of the messenger is a prerequisite for transformation of communities.

Incarnation

The messenger identifies with the community in order to create understanding and demonstrate the good news.

Empowerment

Effective community development empowers the community to become all that God intends for them to be. Empowerment is equipping people to achieve the results they seek.

Community

Impact is magnified as a unified community (i.e. team) ministers among communities. This includes interdependence in the Body of Christ.

Integration / Holism

Effective community development integrates all of life and community.

Transformation

Transforming the mind / heart is always the ultimate goal; Personal transformation precedes communal transformation.

These principles work together, in the background, like the engine under a car. They make it run, but no one really sees them.



A Set of Skills

While the foundation of Discipling for Development is a biblical worldview, agreement with God's plans for individuals and communities, and operating from a set of principles, it also includes specific skills and a methodology for engaging communities to help them become all that God intends for them to be.

While coaching a group of Nigerian missionaries, Sam Soita was asked the question, “How can we add this on to our current ministry? How do we integrate D for D into our current ministries?”

Sam asked the group (representing various mission agencies) what some of their primary activities were in their roles as missionaries, the things their leaders expected them to do. He got a list that included the following:

- Bible Study
- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- Settling disputes
- Farming
- Church planting
- Training
- Healthy family life
- Infrastructure development
- Meetings

This group had been coached in Discipling for Development for more than two years, so Sam asked them what skills, attitudes, and knowledge were new to them since they became involved with Discipling for Development. The following list represents some of those things.

- Adult Learning methods
- Approach to Community
- Mobilizing skills
- Maturing in Christ
- Research skills (appreciative inquiry, resource mapping, problem analysis)
- Integration of discipleship and development (holistic ministry)
- Loving my neighbor
- Time management
- Servant leadership
- Humility

Finally, Sam asked them which of the responsibilities in their ministry setting had become more effective related to various new knowledge, attitudes, and skills. He matched the new skills with the responsibilities they are involved in. Within minutes, the whole group was laughing and said, “This is not an additional activity. It is actually helping us be more effective in what we were already doing! In fact, we could call it ‘mission made easier.’”

The reality is, in acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the Seven Outcome Areas (Adult Learning, Community Development, Cross-Cultural Communication, Discipleship, Leadership, Team, Spiritual Formation), all the team leaders have become more effective in the ministries and roles in which they serve.

Having pointed out this important reality, there is an additional set of skills that does require significant time for them. By recruiting and training team members to help communities reach their potential



(becoming all God intends for them to be), the Five Phases of Discipling for Development become an authentic way to engage them in a transforming process.

Five Phases: A Way of Engaging Communities

These phases were developed from models primarily in rural communities, modified from approaches used around the world, but particularly in Africa. They incorporate lessons from anthropology, sociology, missiology (how peoples and cultures best encounter change, the gospel message, etc.) in addition to community development and adult non-formal learning. They are not isolated experiences of the Discipling for Development team and organization.

Discipling for Development embraces a culturally sensitive, team-based approach towards ministry that empowers the team to enter poor and unreached communities to engage in biblical holistic ministry. The following phases summarize the approach towards entering and leaving a community. At times, the phases overlap. But essentially, they are the building blocks of our strategy in long-term community-based development.

Preparation Phase: Participants begin to develop a **personal vision** for community transformation. After attending core workshops called Foundations for Discipling for Development and Skills for Discipling for Development participants carefully **form ministry teams**. They disciple and train them with the same training that they have received. On average, this can take about 18 months.

Exploration Phase: The team creates **community selection** criteria and prayerfully begins to make field visits to explore potential communities in which to minister. Proper protocol and **relationships** with community officials are strengthened during this phase.

Mobilization Phase: The ministry team receives permission by community leaders to **enter the community** and begins to **raise awareness** within the community about creating a vision for their future. Strengths and **available resources** within the community are identified, along with the **obstacles** (spiritual, social, physical) and **root causes** that are preventing them from reaching their potential. The community members take **ownership** for what priorities they should address to improve their community and the training they will need to move forward.

Empowerment Phase: Based on the priorities chosen, leaders in the community are **discipled** in appropriate disciplines to improve their communities that could include: spiritual growth through the Word and prayer, agriculture, health, micro-economic development, appropriate technology, conflict resolution, etc. Mentoring is carried out in a **non-formal learning style** that can be replicated by the community in the future through a Problem Solving Process with the goal of worldview transformation and new skills for addressing resources and problems. The role of the original ministry team begins to diminish as **transformation** progresses and the community learns to solve problems and mentor each other.

Reproduction Phase: As the process is evaluated, the community develops a **vision for other communities** and begins the same process themselves, this time as the messengers. The role of the team becomes that of coaches, available to temporarily encourage and assist the community as it carries out its vision. Through this reproduction, numerous communities engage in equipping each other to become all that God intends them to be.



And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 2 Timothy 2:2

What is a Win in Discipling for Development?

So what is a Win in Discipling for Development? *God-glorifying transformation of the four broken relationships: with God, with Self, with Others, with Environment.*

- It always includes individuals *and* communities (Genesis 12:1-3; Deut. 4:6-8)
- It is generational (2 Timothy 2:2)
- The BIG WIN is a Transforming Community (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

Focusing on the Four Broken Relationships makes more practical our end goal of “Transforming Communities” looking for very specific examples: How is this person’s / community’s relationship with God being transformed? How is their relationship with others being transformed? How is their view of themselves being transformed? How are they better stewarding and caring for all within their environment?

It is helpful to remember we are not satisfied with a few individuals, but want to see the whole community transforming. Additionally, we always work in a way that is generational and reproducible by the local disciples of Jesus. We plan for and expect that it will be passed on to others.

Discipling for Development Mentoring Program

How does the process described here become part of the lives and ministries of kingdom citizens who are living out kingdom lives especially among the unreached?

Where there is no local mature gathering of believers who can be trained in Discipling for Development, placement of a residential Discipling for Development team takes place. They learn local language, build relationships and determine which communities to engage in seeking God’s plan together.

Where there are local believers who are mature and sense a call to the Discipling for Development approach, the Discipling for Development Mentoring Program is implemented.

The Discipling for Development[®] Mentoring Program is a three-to-five year relational commitment involving Discipling for Development mentors and, typically, a partner organization that has a vision for whole-life transformation of communities. Potential team leaders within these organizations are identified and become the focus of mentoring. Discipling for Development mentor-disciplers follow alongside these individuals as they build their own teams and minister in communities. The actual training mixes classroom training (5-day workshops) interspersed with on-site coaching by experienced mentors.

Discipling for Development is outcome-oriented. Our disciplers continually measure progress in the personal lives and ministries of the team leaders. From the beginning of a mentoring relationship, it is the goal of the D for D Mentoring Program that:



Over the next 3-5 years a Discipling for Development® team leader who has completed the D for D training will develop in the following areas:

1. **Spiritual Formation:** The D for D team leader is a mature disciple actively pursuing Christ-likeness.
2. **Discipleship:** The D for D team leader effectively discipled others.
3. **Leadership:** The D for D team leader is a Kingdom leader effective at leading a D for D team.
4. **Team:** The D for D team leader effectively leads D for D “teams.”
5. **Cross-Cultural Communication:** The D for D team leader is an accepted and effective messenger of the gospel in their cross-cultural context.
6. **Adult Learning:** The D for D team leader effectively uses the Adult Learning approach when influencing others in learning.
7. **Community Development:** The D for D team leader has effectively led a team and community through the Reproduction Phase of the D for D process.

If team leaders (and by extension, their team members who then will work with the communities) develop in these areas, they will have the skills and heart to continue to develop themselves and the communities with which they work.

Discipling for Development Summary

In summary, the scope of Discipling for Development includes:

- Discipling = Apprenticing
- Development = Becoming what God has intended for you to be
- A Biblical Worldview is a holistic worldview
- A Transforming Gospel should always mark our ministry
- A Set of Principles helps guide our decisions and methods
- A Set of Skills equips D for D practitioners to be more effective in all their roles
- Five Phases to Reach the Unreached (model for rural ministry)
- God-glorifying transformation in the four broken relationships
- Jesus Christ lifted up as the Spirit empowers individual and community transformation
- Discipling for Development as a Mentoring Program

Keeping these things in mind as a mentor-discipler will help prevent falling into a pattern of applying D for D as a program or set of activities without having the larger picture in mind.

A Final Word

Discipling for Development is not about quick fixes or easy answers. While we believe the principles are clear and – in one sense – simple to follow, they take time, effort, perseverance and require sacrifice on the part of the messenger. In short, this is not the “mass production” approach to community development.

It seems that human beings operate so much more securely under the law rather than under the Spirit. We prefer programs, curriculums, and lessons that lay out all the pieces for us. We want to know exactly



how each step should go and what each piece of content should look like. We often ask for recipes, presuming that they will remove the necessity of judgment or application of the “art” of development and discipleship.

Yet, as important as knowledge is, God has modeled and commanded that we make relationship take priority over knowledge. When he told the Israelites that He would not accept their sacrifices, it was because they were following a form, but the relationship with Him was dead.

When Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself,” He was placing relationship ahead of theology (although true theology is “practical”, lived out theology). The priests followed the rules, but sidestepped relationship. The Good Samaritan was relationship-oriented.

In the same spirit, Discipling for Development is about *relationship*. It requires viewing the disciple as an individual and communities as people and entering into loving, mutual relationship with them. This requires being led more by the Spirit and our relationship to God than by a curriculum. It presumes respect for the other person and a desire for relationship.

