

Multiplication: The Father's Strategy

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The Creation Mandate

The idea of multiplication is not a new one. Multiplication is something God mandated from the very beginning.

And God blessed them and said to them, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it...*" - Genesis 1:28

God is a God of multiplication. He mandated Adam and Eve, before the fall, to multiply. He said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply." While certainly the idea of physical reproduction is present here I also believe God's full intent was also spiritual reproduction. Multiplication your life in the lives of your children was the idea, not just procreation. God's desire was that they wilfully chose to teach their children how to have intimacy with Him.

Jesus' Mandate

Jesus received the same mandate. In fact, Jesus, the second Adam, came to show us how God intended for us to multiply from the beginning. Then He commanded us to do the same.

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. - John 17:4

While certainly it can be argued that Jesus' main mission for being sent into the world was to die for the sins of the world, it is interesting that these words in John 17 are uttered prior to His death.

Jesus says, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." What is the "work" that Jesus had completed at this time, before His death?

The work that Jesus had completed was that of multiplication. He had invested His life in several who were now capable of reproduction. He had fulfilled His mandate. Now He says to His followers, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Jesus' mandate was to multiply.

As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. - John 17:18

Peace be with you, as the Father has sent Me, I also send you. - John 20:21

Key Questions:

* If Jesus had come only to die on the cross for our sins, why did He wait thirty-three years to do so?

Answer: He had another work to complete in conjunction with His death on the cross. That work was the multiplication of his life in the lives of others who would carry the message across the world and continue the multiplication process by multiplying their lives in others.

* Had Jesus not multiplied and made disciples, how would we know today that he had even risen from the dead?

Answer: We wouldn't, unless God had devised another strategy to tell the world of the death and resurrection of his Son. He chose the best way, the Father's Strategy - multiplication.

Jesus' Model

Jesus modelled multiplication. He not only gave us the mandate to multiply but He spent His life showing us how to do it.

He appointed twelve, designating them apostle, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. - Mark 3:13

Key Questions:

* Why did Jesus choose these twelve men "that they might be with Him"?

Answer: Jesus was modelling for us the multiplication process, the imparting of a life. Jesus was a master at imparting His life and modelled the process of reproduction.

* Why would Jesus command us in Matthew 28:19-20 to do something that he had never done?

Answer: He didn't. He commanded us to multiply by making disciples after he modelled it for us.

Paul's Model

Paul also modelled for us this same multiplication process. He made it very clear who he was imitating as he made disciples. Then he encouraged young Timothy and us to do the same.

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. - 2 Timothy 2:2

Key Questions:

* How many generations are mentioned in this verse?

Answer: There are four generations - Paul, who was discipled for three years by Jesus (Galatians 1:11-18); Timothy, who was discipled for at least three years by Paul; faithful men in whom Timothy was beginning to invest his life; and the others to whom these faithful were going to invest their lives.

* Where did Paul get this model of multiplication?

Answer: He was simply imitating what he saw in the life of Jesus. We know this to be fact because Paul made it clear who he was imitating. (I Corinthians 11: 1)

Our Mandate

Multiplication has always been God's mandate for his children, from the very beginning.

And God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it..." - Genesis 1:28

God's desire from the beginning was that we would reproduce spiritually. Jesus, God with skin on, mandated us to do the same when he said, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."* - Matthew 28:19,20

Key Questions:

* If Jesus has given us this mandate to make disciples, why are we (the church of Jesus Christ) so lax in obeying it?

Answer: I believe that we are fulfilling this mandate to a degree but much work still needs to be done in educating the body of Christ in the mission-casting the vision for peer multiplication, training in how to multiply and mobilization of our resources in multiplication. We are still promoting too much programmed discipleship and multiplication, and the heart is often lost in the task. Jesus' heartbeat was multiplication.

* If Jesus invested his life in multiplying his life in others, how can we do anything less?

Answer: I do not believe we can. As for me and my house, we will multiply and make disciples.

Definition: What is reproduction and multiplication?

Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. - I Thessalonians 2:8

The best definition I know of reproduction is found in this verse and modelled for us by Jesus and Paul, who was simply imitating Jesus (I Corinthians 11:1).

Reproduction is the imparting of a life. It is the rubbing off of one life on another. It is sharing not only of Gospel of God, but also of every area of life that the Gospel impacts. It is not just sharing the how, but it is modelling the who. It is not just the sharing of information, but the imparting of a life. It is joining with God the Father in the transforming work of making others more like Jesus (Romans 8:29). As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another (Proverbs 27: 17). The imparting of a life is the chisel the Father uses in the life of another to form the image of Jesus in us.

Multiplication is when the person you have imparted your life to now imparts his life to another.

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. - 2 Timothy 2:2

There can be no greater call than to join with the Father in his master multiplication plan of investing your life.

Multiplication- An Intentional Process

The multiplication of disciples is an intentional process. It took Jesus 3 1/2 years to get his disciples to the place of multiplication. It took Paul at least three years in Timothy's case. The length of time is not clearly stated in Scripture and truly much today has to do with where we pick people up. Many have the Bible knowledge and have been brought along considerably. They may only need a short investment to begin multiplying. We see this in Paul's life after only a year with the church at Antioch the non-believers in the town were calling the believers "mini-Christ" or "Christians" (Acts 11:26). Go Paul!! Why weren't they calling them Paulians or mini-Pauls? The answer is because what Paul was multiplying was Jesus. Paul was intentionally imparting his life, Jesus Christ.

When Christ, who is our life... - Colossians 3:4

The nonbelievers in Antioch looked at these believers, and their words and lives so reflected Jesus that they called them Christians after only a year. The multiplication of disciples must always be viewed as an intentional process. The process may begin at various levels. Sometimes it begins with people who are not yet believers and other times with people who have been believers for twenty years. God allows us to pick up people at various points and wants us to move them toward a multiplication life-style. He desires that we model multiplication.

The Joy of Transformation

There is an incredible joy one experiences when they lead a person to the feet of the Saviour and watch them bow there and receive the free gift of salvation. Many say that leading a person to Christ is a joy beyond comparison. This is truly one of the great joys of the Christian life. This is the joy of transformation. This is the joy of watching a life transformed. Jesus experienced this joy as he shared the parable of the lost sheep and talked about how all of heaven rejoices when a sinner repents.

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! I tell you in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. - Luke 15:6,7

The Joy of Reproduction

Yet, there is a joy that goes beyond this - it is the joy of watching someone you have invested in, imparted your life to, and multiplied in, share their faith and experience the joy of watching someone pass from darkness to light. This is the joy of reproduction - knowing that there are now two, the person you have discipled and you, who can share the story. Jesus experienced this joy as he watched, listened and rejoiced as the seventy disciples returned from the harvest field and reported how they saw God work first hand in their lives. Jesus saw the first-fruits of multiplication.

At that very time he rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit. - Luke 10:21

The Joy of Multiplication

There is still a deeper joy to be experienced and that is when you watch a the person you have discipled, invest their life in another and reproduce, making another disciple maker. This is the joy of multiplication, knowing that there are now three_the person you have discipled, the person they have discipled, and you, who can all share the Good News. Is this not the joy that Jesus was speaking of in Philippians 2 and is now experiencing?

"Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross..." - Hebrews 12:2

I saw this recently in Dann's face as Ernesto began teaching him Jesus' strategy. Dann taught me and I taught Ernesto.

Multiplication Internationally

Advantages to multiplication internationally

I believe the multiplication of disciples can take place much more rapidly internationally (in Latin America as well as other places outside the US) because:

* *Latin culture is heavily structured on relationships, not on time.* Relationships are the key to multiplication. In the United States when I meet with a high school student or leader and they say that they want to be discipled, we first pull out our calendars and look for a time when we can begin meeting. We struggle greatly to arrive at a one-hour slot that we can get together. A one-hour slot a week for the multiplication of your life will end up taking you four to five years in my experience. When I meet with a Latino and they say they want to be discipled, they want to begin today for four hours and will be by each day just to spend time with you. You can multiply yourself much more rapidly in a relational environment. It is much more conducive to multiplication and much more like Jesus' style.

* *Latins have a deeper sense of their own sinfulness and the urgent need of redemption.* This sensitivity to sin leads to a repentance full of fruit that multiplies. You do not have to convince a Latin that they are a sinner. They are brought up with a strong sense of their own sinfulness in light of the holiness of God.

* *Latins know not only dependence on God but also interdependence on one another.* This interdependence stimulates multiplication vs. independence which stifles multiplication. Latins are team players and because of their state economically and socially they learn early a deep interdependence and loyalty which are greatly needed in multiplication.

* *Latins rest their security not on things, but on people.* This focus on people for security and not things makes them invest in others and not in insurance companies. This security issue is big when it comes to multiplication. To multiply you must trust and be vulnerable. You must be secure in the relationship. Latins rest their security in people.

* *Latins can distinguish between necessities and luxuries.* This ability frees them from the chains of personal comfort to multiply much more rapidly. They are a mobile force, not tied to properties or the hope of an inheritance. They know very well how to live in need and under very tough conditions and survive.

* *Latins have no exaggerated sense of their own importance, and expect little from competition and much from cooperation.* This spirit of cooperation frees them to cooperate in a multiplication movement without feeling like they are competing against others. They have a humility that leads to a deep sense of gratitude and desire to cooperate.

* *Latins can wait on the Lord, because they have acquired a kind of dogged patience born of acknowledged dependence.* Multiplication takes time and a lot of patience. They are willing to let the process of multiplication take place and relax in it.

* *When Latins have the concept of multiplication preached to them it sounds like the strategy to spread the gospel around the world, not like one of many options.*

* *Latins can respond to the call of multiplication with total abandonment because they have so little to lose and are ready for anything.* Having few of this world's possessions frees them to go to the ends of the earth and multiply. They will abandon it all because the all is so little. They will give their lives to a cause.

These in many ways are the advantages to being poor as well. I believe the Son's Strategy is multiplied much more rapidly among the poor of this world. I believe we would be wise to consider how we might follow the Master's example and place the strategy in the hands of the poor. I believe they will take it and multiply much more rapidly than we can ever imagine. That is why I believe Jesus gave the gospel most intensely to the non-educated and the poor (Matthew 11:5). It is interesting to note that no scholars like Nicodemus or wealthy like Joseph of Arimathea made it into the Twelve. You would have to look hard to find much scholastic or material wealth in Jesus' pick of people to multiply himself in.

Key Questions:

* Are we really committed to multiplication? If so, do our personal and corporate use of resources reflect this commitment?

* How can we stimulate multiplication internationally?

* How can we help those who are poor, to multiply?

Where to begin multiplication internationally

Jesus model was very clear in respect to where to begin multiplying. It is interesting to note that of the Twelve, all but Judas Iscariot came from Jesus' home province of Galilee. Jesus started in his own province in his own country. He modelled that multiplication begins first in our own culture. Yet Jesus' intent was clearly to send these first disciples cross-culturally to multiply. We need to be identifying those who are good multipliers among their peers and then mobilizing them to go to other cultures.

Key Questions:

* Are we actively identifying multipliers?

* What are we doing to mobilize these multipliers to move cross-culturally?

The Who of multiplication internationally

Jesus never gave us this step while he walked on planet earth but he definitely commanded it and his disciples modelled it. We have Philip immediately going to the Samaritans in Acts 8 and also catching up to the Ethiopian eunuch and entrusting him with the gospel for his people. We also see the early church sold on cross-cultural multiplication as they lay hands on Paul and Barnabas and send them out in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:14). In every town Paul went to he trained faithful nationals to carry on the work of multiplication. It is obvious that God wants us to multiply

ourselves in nationals. This should be our first priority and the bulk of our resources should be placed at multiplication through nationals. They know their culture better and have the mandate to reach their culture for Christ.

Key Questions:

- * Why are so few multiplying their lives in nationals? Are we really multiplying our lives in nationals? How many nationals have we disciplined to reproduce themselves?
- * How can we be more effective in multiplying through nationals?
- * How can we mobilize more nationals to multiply themselves?

How to begin multiplication with a national

The steps to multiplication with a national are best modelled for us in the life of Christ, who really was in all respects a cross-cultural multiplier, leaving his heavenly divine culture for the sin filled, prideful culture of the Jews.

Philippians 2 gives us the best summary of how Jesus came to multiply cross culturally and how we must go as multipliers.

Step One: Attitude Check

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5)

Your attitude will make or break you as a cross-cultural multiplier. Why am I going? Do we possess a superiority attitude that says, "My culture is better and more upright than yours?" This was Jonah's problem. We need the attitude of Jesus, who for His great love for us came. Do we possess the attitude of Jesus?

Step Two: Being made nothing

... but made himself nothing (2:7)

We need to enter any new culture as a learner. Jesus modelled thirty years of learning and living in an ungodly culture. He knew what made a Jew tick. He made himself nothing and became a child so that he might learn. We need to first of all be learners as we seek to multiply cross culturally. Learning the language and the culture is like becoming a child once again.

Step Three: Servant Leadership

taking the very nature of a servant (2:7)

After checking our attitude and learning the culture we must seek to live and model servant leadership if we are to be successful in multiplication through nationals. Jesus modelled this servant leadership as he washed the feet of those he multiplied his life in, and then commanded them to do the same for those they would multiply in (John 13:4). There is no substitute for servant leadership. It is Jesus-style leadership. The leadership he modelled and we would do well to study and emulate.

Step Four: Humility

he humbled himself (2:8)

In order to multiply into nationals cross-culturally, we need to develop humility. We need to learn how to allow the nationals to lead the movement and how to turn it over to them. Jesus modelled this humility as he empowered those he multiplied in to carry the message to others (Luke 10). Learning to let go is the greatest sign of humility. Jesus multiplied and then let it go. That doesn't mean that we abandon those we have multiplied in, but that we humbly support them behind the scenes, allowing them the opportunity to lead and fail, learning deeper dependence on the Father.

Step Five: Obedience

becoming obedient (2:8)

Jesus modelled for us a dependent obedience on the Father that we can not fail to instill in those we multiply in, an obedience to the Father no matter what the cost. As Jesus struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane about whether or not there might be another way to save the world, crying great drops of blood, he submitted to the will of the Father and became obedient even unto death on a cross. This model of dependent obedience in the Father is our highest priority. We must teach those we multiply in to be dependent on the Father to lead them. They must view the mission of making disciples and multiplication as their mission, not just ours, becoming obedient to it.

Multiplication Model

Before Leaving: Check your attitude for why you are going. Learn as much as you can about the culture ahead of time.

Year One in Country: Enter the culture as a learner. Identify key leaders who want more and build a friendship with them.

Year Two in Country: Begin investing your life in three key leaders who have the potential to reproduce. Begin by modelling servant leadership.

Year Three in Country: Continue imparting your life and have each of the people you are imparting your life in chose three people to impart their lives in. Begin moving out of the picture and allowing them to take over the ministry.

Year Four in Country: Allow the nationals to run the ministry and be obedient, taking responsibility for their own culture.

Conclusions

The Who

* We would be wise to consider carefully the people Jesus chose to multiply His life in and chose the same types of people. He could have chosen the religious leaders, the intellectual or the wealthy of His day, but He did not. Jesus chose ordinary people. The who of multiplication is critical and we need more study and time in this area.

The How

* We need to examine how we are multiplying. Are we truly following Jesus' example, method and style of multiplication?

* We need to look long and hard at how we can mobilize more nationals to multiply.

* We need to ask how we can put Jesus' cross-cultural multiplication strategy in the hands of every culture on earth.

The What

* We need to examine carefully the use of the resources God has allotted to our care and make sure they are focused on multiplication.

* We need to explore the balance between quality control and "giving it away." We need to wrestle with how to manage or control a multiplication movement. I believe at times we have been guilty of hindering multiplication by our lack of control and our desire to stay in control. What is the Jesus balance?