

How to train missional community leaders

by: Rob Wegner

The way we've come at this was, first, through missional communities in India. We've been a part of an indigenous church-planting movement there for about 10 years, and it's not the typical approach.

We've actually been directly involved in training the indigenous leaders, and most of the churches are what many people would call missional communities. They're groups of 20, 30, 40, or 50 people, each reaching unique pockets of people or unique people groups. But what's unique about it is they're actually small and reproducing.

We've developed a 15-month coaching process. The first level of training is called the *Kingdom of God* training. It basically walks them through five modules of training. They gather in batches of about 30 – similar to an intensive training for 2 to 3 days – and it takes them through the startup of a missional community.

It starts with a focus on being missional-incarnational - identifying the pocket of people you are called to - and then we do what we call *relational mapping*. We have them sit down and say, "Okay, let's write down everything you do in a month. Alright, now I want you to assign a name to that."

So suddenly they have a map of the people they are actually doing life with.

We help them see that, "This is your church. Now, these are the people that you need to start discipling."

Then, they go from that missional-incarnational focus to disciple-making. This is a layered approach that is a practitioner-based model, where each one of these batches is led by a trainer and a coach who has successfully led a missional community. Then, they stay in touch with the folks in their coaching batch every week. So there are intensives, then there is weekly coaching, and you don't move on unless you are actually implementing the first one.

And it is not like, "Did I get the information, and can I pass the test?" It's like, "No, you're actually living it. And if you're not, you don't go on."

Basically, we have taken a similar model, and we're doing that back here at home. So each missional-community person is an ordinary revolutionary here at GCC who will receive ongoing training. Among our over 1,000 churches planted with 120,000 people in it, we have an application process where folks are coming in at such a high quality of disciples that virtually no one drops out.

The training is tri-perspectival, focusing on the head, the heart, and the hands. So it is a combination, training in theology, practical skills, and character formation. We're employing the same kind of coaching model, so that training is in small batches of 15 to 30 leaders at a time, over a process of 12 to 15 months. We have regular meetings with occasional overnight intensives. And with each batch, we're raising up new coaches and new trainers. So, from day one you're telling everyone, "Hey, you're going to be the coach. In fact, you're coaching somebody right now. So go!"

So the expectation is reproduction. Reproducing is maturity.

I grew up in a church that was definitely the information-transfer deal. Discipleship was me sitting in a class, filling out notes, having a little binder. Don't get me wrong...I'm grateful for the sheer amount of knowledge the church I grew up in transferred to me, but in high school, I encountered a real disciple-making model.

Our pastor was assigned to "receive the kids." So he really reformatted the whole youth ministry around life-on-life disciple-making that was obedience-based.

He got me hooked up with this guy named Brad, who used to be in gangs and sold drugs, and then he met Jesus, and he just flat out loved Jesus like no one I'd ever met. I remember the first time I prayed with this guy, he kept on praying, and it was the first time I had any experience with the palpable presence of God. I grew up in church, prayed thousands of prayers, but this guy kept on praying, and I was like, "I don't think I know how to pray."

Things just happened that I'd never experienced before, and he just did life with me - he taught me how to pray, how to study the Bible, how to be a man of integrity. So, I had this experience in high school that is very rare and shaped how I began to see and model discipleship. This is the model we're trying to implement with our leaders.