

## 5 major factors for multiplying disciples and simple churches by Charles Kridiotis

There are many factors that characterise people who are effective in the Kingdom and multiply disciples and simple churches. I have just chosen what I believe are the five essential factors. These come mostly from my observation of effective disciplers (past and present) and partly out of my personal experiences. Surprisingly, none of the factors relate primarily to gifting, anointing or leadership ability. That's encouraging – any disciple of Jesus can make disciples who make disciples and start simple churches to a greater or lesser degree.

The major factors are also, not surprisingly, centred on the person of Jesus, His great command and his great commission:

- Love God
- Love Others
- Go and make disciples of all people groups and teach them to obey (hold to) all that I have commanded (instructed) you.



### **MAJOR FACTOR 1 – Friendship with God including Prayer and Fasting**

I have sometimes taken for granted that disciples working in the harvest have a personal and vital relationship with the Lord. I don't any longer. I ask questions like, "How is it between you and Jesus? What has he been ministering to you? Have you done what he last told you to do?" The answers to these and similar questions give a good indication of the person's spiritual temperature – their love for God, people and willingness to do God's will.

Effective disciples:

- Cultivate their personal relationship with God by taking uninterrupted times of communion with God (through fellowship with the Spirit, time in the word and other creative ways as they go about their daily life).
- Learn to dialogue (talking and listening) simply and naturally with God throughout the day, no matter what they are doing and whatever situation arises.

- Are dependent on fellowship with the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to them and the will of the Father for their lives, families and ministry.

Built on this solid personal base, disciples:

- Pray regularly, individually and with others, for the Kingdom of God to come and God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven among the people they meet where they live, work and play.
- Take seasons of fasting (abstaining from food), either by themselves or with others. They do not use fasting to force God to do something they want. They fast to be more sensitive to hear what God wants to do, how he wants to do it and for an awareness of the Spirit's power within them to do it.

When they pray, ***they do not pray for revival*** (no such prayer in the New Testament) nor do they pray to receive things that the Bible clearly states we have been given in Christ Jesus (more of the Holy Spirit, more power, authority and so on) – they believe the words of Jesus and the scriptures, so their prayers are different.

They pray:

- What Jesus told his followers to pray for.
- In line with what the Apostles and early believers prayed and what the epistles encourage us to pray for.
- For boldness to share, proclaim and gossip the gospel of Jesus and the Kingdom.
- For God to confirm the gospel with signs and wonders, miracles and healing.

And finally, when they pray, they believe God has answered and act accordingly.



## MAJOR FACTOR 2 – Kingdom Paradigm

The Kingdom of God is built on the person of Jesus, what he taught the disciples and what he instructed them to do. Building a foundation on anything other than Jesus and the Kingdom will not produce multiplication of disciples and simple churches. Jesus is both Saviour and Lord with power over all things visible and invisible. He is Lord of the harvest and head of the Church worldwide and every local church. He cannot and will not be owned by any denomination, tradition, organisation or “ministry.”

The (inherited) paradigm most Christians have is downside up:

- first, ***ecclesiology*** (church, dogma, style and practices);
- secondly, ***missiology*** (mission – how to attract people to our church community or building);
- and thirdly, ***Christology*** (so we can tell them about our church and Jesus).

The Kingdom paradigm is, however, upside down:

- first, ***Jesus and the Kingdom*** (His person, His Kingdom);
- secondly ***mission*** (go and make disciples);
- and thirdly, ***church*** (which is built by Jesus and the consequence of disciples making disciples).

Working from a Kingdom paradigm means people come to Jesus (or discipled to him), continue in transformational discipleship, and church forms out of who they are and what Jesus is building amongst them – not out of a church system that we impose on them. This means that simple churches and networks vary in form and style even though they have a common foundational Kingdom DNA. Consequently, the gospel spreads quickly and naturally through households and people groups without the constraints of restrictive traditional, denominational and organisational boundaries with their religious biases, forms and styles. This primary allegiance to Jesus and the common foundational DNA facilitates unity, cooperation and expansion: simple churches may be different, even within the same network as well as from network to network, but all are disciples joined to Jesus and His Body.

A Kingdom mindset not only frees us from all the “-isms” but also from restrictive and niched “movements” like prayer, healing, inner-healing, deliverance, bible-study, community, youth, prophetic and the like which are often founded out of a person’s or group’s giftedness or bias and

promoted as the solution to bring about “revival.” There is only one thing Jesus said he would build: His church! Some of these things may be part of the Kingdom but they are not what Jesus is building. When these things are the primary foundation **we** build on, they may be effective for a while, but they are not long-lasting and, in some cases, do more harm than good. If churches are not the result of disciple making and gospel planting then we need to question what kind of seed we are planting and whether we are really making disciples.

Those who are effective:

- Recognise it is the King of the Kingdom and Lord of the harvest that has planted them in the field he has chosen for them (where they live, work and play). This develops a “sense of destiny” to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and produce fruit where they are.
- **Cultivate a whole Kingdom and Bible mindset** and avoid narrow paradigms that overemphasise one or more Kingdom aspects at the cost of others – they know that this only produces unbalanced and immature disciples.
- Are as clear as the Bible is clear and unclear as the Bible is unclear. They major on the majors and let peripheral things remain on the periphery. They avoid interpreting the scriptures through the spectacles of their own spiritual background (denomination, tradition or organisation). They take the simplest meaning of the text in context and apply it (and compare it to other similar texts elsewhere).
- Build on the foundation of the King according to Kingdom principles and values, in Kingdom ways and in demonstrations of Kingdom power (signs and wonders, deliverances, healings and miracles).
- Build away from themselves (and or their denomination, tradition or organisation) to Jesus. They resist every temptation to draw people to themselves or make people dependent on their “ministry.” To them believers are not “my disciples,” they are disciples of Jesus; the church of gathered disciples is not “my church,” it is “Jesus’ church”; and they do not make territorial claims “this is my territory” but rather have an “our territory” attitude and cooperate with others to bring in the harvest.

This paradigm recognises that the seed of the gospel the Kingdom of God is powerfully at work, and that disciples work together to bring in this huge and ready harvest to King Jesus.



**MAJOR FACTOR 3 – Network with others who are also multiplying disciples and simple churches**  
*This is the one factor, in my experience, that will determine whether you are going to be effective in the long term or not (even though you may have all the other factors in place).*

I have met leaders of churches who may be smiling on the outside, say all the right words, but on the inside, are lonely, tired and depressed because they “go it alone.” They may come to gatherings, conferences and may talk about cooperation but they are “lone wolves,” isolated, fearful and insecure. The opportunities to benefit from team work and networks are there but they don’t take it. Ego and the prevailing individualistic mindset of “I need to be seen to be strong” and “I don’t need help from others, I can handle it myself” is devastating. This attitude is detrimental to both personal growth and the expansion of the Kingdom. Most of those with this attitude eventually drop out of Kingdom work, and some, sadly, are not following Jesus as they once did.

I have also seen people join a network, benefit from it and then think they do not need to carry on networking. My observation is the group or groups they are leading initially grow but, sometime after they leave, they lose inspiration, personal support, lose direction and the work loses impetus and, in some cases, eventually implodes. They have not understood that Kingdom networking is about teamwork, being friends on a life-long mission together with Jesus.

Here are some observations I have made over the years:

- If you work alone, you will be alone.
- God has not given any one person all the abilities, acquired skills, spiritual and ministry gifts that are required to do the job. God’s way is teamwork in the local church and in trans-local work. Those you are discipling and the churches you are starting need input from trusted and gifted people outside your situation.
- If the people you are discipling and the churches you are starting are isolated from others they strongly run the risk of being unhealthy, weak, immature and underdeveloped in some areas.

## Effective disciplers and church multipliers:

- Network with others who provide friendship and healthy accountability without control if you personally want to stay physically, mentally and spiritually healthy.
- Network with others if you want the people you are discipling and churches you are starting to develop and mature in a healthy way.
- Network with others because, out of their gifting, they will help you, the disciples you are making and the churches you are starting to be apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, teaching and pastoral.
- Network so that the Holy Spirit can also connect you to people and situations where you and your gifting will benefit and be a blessing to others.

Networking also goes a long way in avoiding sectarianism (“we have the whole truth, others do not”), elitism (“what we do is best and nobody can tell us what to do”) and authoritarian or hierarchical practices (“you are under my umbrella so you need to submit and be loyal”). These tendencies not only suffocate disciple making and multiplication but, if allowed to continue indefinitely, will be harmful to disciples and discredit Kingdom work.

Find a missional network in your city or region where friendship comes before function so that you get the personal support you need and where you can genuinely cooperate in practical ways to see the Kingdom advance.



#### **MAJOR FACTOR 4 – Obedience and Perseverance in carrying out the Great Commission**

*Go, or more correctly, “as you are going (about your daily life)”, keep on making disciples (by preaching/sharing the gospel, healing the sick, casting out demons and teaching them to obey all that Jesus instructed his disciples to do.*

Without obedience to Jesus and perseverance in his instructions nothing will happen. You may pray, you may have a Kingdom paradigm, you may network with like-minded people, but if you do not personally obey the instructions of Jesus, nothing will happen. Obedience is the litmus test of your love for Jesus and your availability to be the answer to the prayers you are praying. Obedience reveals whether your Kingdom paradigm is just a fuzzy concept or a concrete way of living. No person can obey for you nor persevere in the things God has called you to, except you. If nothing happens it is your responsibility, not the fault of others.

You are called to obey and persevere in prayer AND TO:

- Plant the seed of gospel in any way you can (with words, demonstrations of power, and acts of kindness),
  - whenever you can (taking every opportunity),
  - in whichever place you can (where you live, work and play),
  - as well as wherever you go or are sent,
  - and with everyone you can (all people groups)doing this with respect for personhood and honouring biblical principles.
- Heal the sick whenever and in whatever place you find them (with respect for personhood and honouring biblical principles).
- Deliver the demonised whenever and wherever you find them (with respect for personhood and honouring biblical principles).
- Find people of peace and meet them and their families and friends in their homes (or wherever they invite you). Accept their hospitality and share the gospel and heal the sick in their homes.
- Do Acts of Kindness to people (practical demonstrations of love). There are over 40 instructions in the New Testament that we are to do for “one another” – these are not meant to be done only amongst followers of Christ but to all people.

To make disciples, present the whole gospel: repentance from sin (and “dead works”), faith towards God (trust in Jesus alone), water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit as well as being joined to other believers and being church together. When you do this, it is more likely that when new people do repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ, they will immediately want to be baptised in water and straight away be prayed for with laying on of hands to be filled with the Spirit, and consequently be joined to the church (or a new simple church started if there are a number who have come to faith at the same time) for ongoing transformational discipleship and service.



## **MAJOR FACTOR 5 – Simple reproducible practices results in Disciple and Church multiplication**

The simple and reproducible practices that I will share with you flies in the face of conventional religious wisdom. People who have (or think they have) strong communication and teaching gifts usually do not like these recommendations, despite the obvious results in lives of disciples and churches worldwide. The reason for this is the leadership models and roles that have been passed on since, primarily, the time of Constantine (combining Empire leadership with Old Testament practices). This has not been helped either by seemingly *successful* leaders, preachers and teachers in churches or big campaign evangelists. As one well-known leader in this sphere confessed to others, “We are good at drawing a crowd, but lousy in making disciples.” My question to you is, who is the greatest teacher and disciple maker who ever lived? Your answer will be Jesus, of course. My next questions are, how did he teach? What was most important to him? Preaching or teaching large crowds or teaching, discussing, talking and training his disciples? Look too at the apostle Paul who did not regard himself as an eminent speaker but was the most influential apostle. How did he teach and train and make disciples? The answer to these questions will be decisive if you want to make disciples who make disciples and churches that multiply. Will you choose significance through preaching and teaching crowds of people (which Jesus and the apostles did do, but not as frequently as we think)? Or will you choose to teach and train the few (which Jesus and the apostles mostly did) and impact the multitudes through them?

Here are some fundamental perspectives that are needed if you are going to make disciples:

- Only share and demonstrate what others can easily do when you are not present.
- Do not restrict being church to a meeting or to the number of people present. Church happens whenever and wherever disciples gather.
- Cultivate a simple discipleship lifestyle rhythm for people where they live, work and play as well as when they meet.

The following are recommended practices for when disciples meet:

- Eat simple meals together and, during the meal, break bread to remember Jesus’ death and resurrection (using simple words or reading relevant scripture).
- Ask them what their “ups and downs” were during the last week. Turn their “ups” into simple worship and thanksgiving. Turn their “downs” into **short** faith-filled simple prayers.
- Help them to discover biblical truths and hear God for themselves through “Discovery Bible Study” – Read the text together, ask the following questions: What does the text say (about

God, about human beings)? Is there something you must do (and what will it cost you to do it)? Who can I share this with? Every time you meet ask how the previous week's lesson was applied before doing another "Discovery Bible Study" – healthy accountability is an important aspect of our responsibility to help each other build on rock and not sand.

- Train them to pray, hear the voice of God and share what they hear (or see) with others.
- Train them to minister to one another in simple ways with their spiritual gifts, natural abilities and acquired skills.
- Train them in simple giving to needs (amongst themselves and in their community) as well as to the spread of the gospel (through trustworthy apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic and teaching ministry gifts who travel in exercise of their ministry and thus cannot fully support themselves or their families).
- Train them to share their testimony simply (in a couple of minutes).
- Train them to share the gospel simply (in a couple of minutes).
- Practically demonstrate healing the sick and sharing the gospel (testimony and gospel story) by doing it with them in real life situations.
- Train them in simple "acts of kindness" and practising simple hospitality.
- Train them to be making disciples as they go about their daily lives. Ask for testimonies from those who have shared their testimony or the gospel with in the last week when you gather (as you are eating may be the best time).

There are many other simple practices but just doing those I have mentioned will go a long way into making disciples who in turn make disciples – disciples who love Jesus, pray, have a Kingdom paradigm, relate to others in healthy accountability, obey the instructions of Jesus, persevere in doing good and pass on simple reproducible practices to others.