

Pod #101 The Best Explanation of DMM You've Ever Heard!

The heart of DMM is the empowerment of ordinary people

A Life Captivated By The Kingdom

SPEAKER_01 0:10

Welcome to the Practical Missions Podcast. I'm your host. A few weeks ago, I found myself in a bit of an argument with somebody about DMM and different methods of church planting. One of the things that struck me about the guy I was arguing with was that he doesn't just have a theoretical perspective on these things, but he has some real life experience. He's also very passionate and very articulate. So I knew I had to have him on the pod. I said, hey, listen, I'm not going to argue with you this time. I'm just going to listen and learn. And learn I did. Listen, I know you've probably been to a million DMN trainings, but I think this is going to be the best conversation you've ever heard about disciple making movements. So brace yourself for impact. I really do have the perfect guest for you today. So stay with us. So I think you and I have been in missions for exactly the same time. Did we come out? Did you come out in 2008? January 2009. I got a year on you. You probably have a lot more experience than I do, so I'm excited to learn from you today. That year shows. I mean, mixed it. Yeah. A guy told me yesterday he had LASIK surgery done on his eyes, and he said, Oh my goodness, I didn't realize how many wrinkles you have. It's like, okay. Praise the Lord. All right, let's get to know you a little bit. Who are you? What are you passionate about?

SPEAKER_00 1:32

And what has kept you motivated on the field long term? I'm married. My wife and I have three teenage kids and one little

toddler, which is exciting and unexpected. That's been quite an adventure for us. I work at a school. I work in education as part of, you know, kind of the vocational role I've played here the entire time that I've been here on the field. But I would say my passion for me, the kingdom of God, the more I discover it, when I when I truly behold it, it is just, it is captivating. It is inspiring. It fills life with just such passion and purpose. I love seeing people catch it. You know, I love seeing people pulled into this story that is something they never imagined for themselves. When I was growing up, I loved, you know, The Brave Heart, Lord of the Rings, that whole genre. I think that for me, life on the field is an in in in there's a danger there. I don't want to try to, you know, make it over-grandiose or hero complex the thing, because that's a pitfall for sure. But in, you know, in a very real way, you find yourself caught up in a story that is more epic than you could have ever imagined. You feel drawn, led by Jesus into the lives of people that you never would have otherwise met and the stories of nations that are so far removed from where you came from. And there's something about like the Hobbit leaving the Shire, you know, in that journey. I think all these years later, I'm still, I'm still astounded by it. I'm still floored by the privilege. And so I think that I think that my passion is helping people discover that. You know, help people discover it's like when Gandalf says to Bilbo, you know, there's more to you than you think. And this idea that God has put more inside you than you think. He has more to your story than you think. And I think seeing people find that, seeing people really carry that sense of vision and empowerment, man, I just, it never gets old. And same time, I think what sustains me is those moments of feeling so small and so drawn into something so broad and so beautiful is the kingdom of God.

SPEAKER_01 3:26

You and your wife are both very passionate people, and you're just drawing this great big passionate picture of what it's like to be called to places and people you never imagined you would

be. Have you ever dealt with burnout or cynicism along that journey?

SPEAKER_00 3:42

I think that probably both my wife and I, in our in our own different ways. I think she would probably articulate this as a bigger kind of raw place in her journey, but just the reality of disappointment that you get your, especially when you you start to journey with someone and you begin to see what God is up to in their life, and you begin to see a glimpse of man, this, this is what this person is, this is who they're meant to be in the kingdom. And yeah, you you just begin to feel it. You be it, you know, you begin to to to believe to really like taste and see it. And then, you know, persecution comes or they lose interest or they choose a uh an all-consuming career. You know, six months later you're you have to like finally admit to yourself, hey, that didn't, that didn't pan out the way I thought it would. And that happens all the time, right? That's like that is is so that is so part of the journey. So I think that that is probably the sorest, the, the, the kind of the pain point uh and the place where I think burnout is a very real concern, especially for, you know, because my wife and I, you're right, are both, we both thrive on the vision piece, you know. We we we're captivated by it. Especially when I think in the first couple of years, you can just hit restart over and over again. You're like, ah it's all good, you know, maybe that seed will bear fruit later. You know, you have you have your verses, you have your self-talk that keeps you moving, but the emotional reality, eventually, if you don't deal with it, if you're not, if you can't process it, name it, then it begins to just eat away at your capacity to hope. And so definitely face that. And I think I think my wife has really led me in that area of like naming it and processing it. At the end of the day, faith is a gift of God. Like we have to surrender that even those places where we're trying to hold it up, we're trying to white knuckle it together and just surrender and let God renew faith in us. But it's definitely a part of the journey.

SPEAKER_01 5:27

This is such an interesting topic because it's so true. Man, I feel like you hit on something so tender. Just something I was talking about with some guys this morning. We've got a guy in our community who has who his faith has just tanked. Not that he doesn't believe anymore, but he's got no spiritual pulse. And we're sitting around just saying, like, what do we do? What do we do about this? You know, that the disappointment of like, and this guy was going somewhere, and last night he was just like, Man, I don't see God in my life. I don't even think about God. Like, I still I still believe, but he's just like not a part of my life anymore. My question to you is you're talking about disappointment. How do you protect yourself from tying your identity or your sense of purpose to other how other people are doing spiritually?

Contemplative Practices That Renew Faith

SPEAKER_00 6:14

Yeah, this is a I think a really important question. And I think it's a huge part of the line of work, right? Because the the sticky part, and and it's kind of crass to think of it this way, but the sticky part is that the spiritual growth of other people are your, they're your career outcome. They're like the thing you point to, as this is this is this is why I'm here and this is why I did this, you know, and they're the thing you want to be able to report back to supporters, you know, and and all that stuff is like, ooh, like we know on a theological level that's not who we are and what we're about. But you cannot, you, you cannot live this life without that being part of the emotional reality that you deal with. And it's good to normalize that. Like, we're all looking for validation of why we did this crazy thing. And so other people's well-being are is part of our identity, it's part of our self-worth, it's part of our sense of success, other people's spiritual growth. And man, I think that it definitely doesn't go away just by like pretending like

you don't feel that way or telling yourself you don't feel that way. Like, I think that probably workers have to deal with this at some point. There's a whole thing on like life stages that I uh was part of a leadership development thing that we talked about. And there's this whole thing about as you transition 30s to 40s, if you've been in like lifelong discipleship and leadership development, there's like this, you hit this wall somewhere in your 30s, late 30s, where the things that worked for you in the past stop working. And some of these things we've already been talking about, your disappointments, your frustration, these your attachments, they all kind of come to the surface and it starts to get real sticky. That's the invitation, I think, to go someplace deeper with Jesus than we've ever been before. You know, someplace where we really begin to take some of the truths that we believe in and experience them, you know, this idea that apart from you, I can do nothing. This idea that my true self is hidden with God in Christ. I think that those truths have to, until we feel the pain and the like pressure, how can we live them? How can we press into them? You know? And so they're the invitation, right, to spend more time alone with God, I think is the number one thing. I'm not gonna untangle it. I think that silent solitude, pressing into a place where we are submitting to God's work in us. So that we come out and hopefully, I mean, to me, I think that's part of what renews the faith to hope again is when I'm not feeling the pain or the embarrassment or the shame. I mean, the emotions we start to feel related to how other people are doing are weird, right? We feel we feel embarrassed because I was invested in someone and they went off the deep end. Well, I didn't go off the deep end, you know, like they did, but I feel shame or something like that. And the underlying belief is that I'm the one that's making them who they are in the first place, you know. Man, I think that's such a big deal. And I think I would probably, I would probably want to frame it as the invitation to explore someplace new and deeper with God.

SPEAKER_01 8:54

If somebody was sitting across from you and they said, man, I want to do that. I'm in my late 30s, early 40s. What's what worked before is it working now? I'm feeling the pressure. I'm really feeling the despair, the disappointment. I want to, I want to accept that invitation. Now, what do I do? What would you say to that person?

Why Silence Feels So Hard

SPEAKER_00 9:14

I would first of all encourage that person to engage in some learning around contemplative spirituality, which may or may not be a part of their tradition or something they're comfortable with at all. I mean, a lot of it comes from like very old liturgical Christian tradition, but there's a lot of really great Protestant writers and evangelical writers that are very invested in bringing to life some of those practices for us, kind of in more in our stream. And so I'm thinking about Pete Schizero, Ruth Haley Barton. But some of these writers have really done great work. For me, it's sort of like I was kind of, I had just sort of had a spirituality of noise. And what I mean by that is when I felt bad noise in my heart and my head, I tried to drown it out by turning up the Christian noise, listen to more sermons, listen to more worship music, pray, turn on worship and pray really loud. You know, it was sort of like if I could get my, if I could fire myself up, if I get my inner noise loud enough, all those like uncomfortable thoughts would just kind of disappear. And that's kind of going to be one of the things I mean when I say, like, well, that that worked great for my 20s. It really did me well. The resolve, you know, the commitment to not just give in, but to fight. In many ways, that's part of our, that's who we're supposed to be when we're young, you know, resilient, scrappy, whatever. But then as you get older, you your internal energy levels change and your accumulation of some of these pains, you just have to deal with it. And it's well, you have to let God deal with it. And so that's

where the contempt of spirituality, which is much more about being with God rather than presenting something to God or producing something for God, that's where I think they're really helpful. So, so, so investing in some of that learning, the practice that I would suggest would just be figure out how you practice kind of, you can call it centering prayer, silence, you know, an intentional quieting of yourself before God. Start at 10 minutes, 15 minutes a day, work your way up to 20. I don't know, I've never gotten much farther than that. Take a learn to take kind of in your rhythm, take day retreats of solitude where you are like out somewhere by yourself, no one's around. You're not going to try to finish that book you haven't finished. You're going to try to like bring all the noise down and let God move, speak, do what he wants to do in you. I think that would be my biggest recommendation.

SPEAKER_01 11:21

Why do you think silence is so hard for us?

Sabbath As A Sign Of Trust

SPEAKER_00 11:23

It undeniably is. Like, think about when you're in a conversation with someone and they're saying something like when you're when, you know, may hopefully we've we've gained some emotional intelligence with age, but you know, we're you're in college or whatever, and you're your buddies saying something hard and your instinct's like, oh gosh, what do I say? What do I say? There's something in us that needs to make some noise, that needs to say something. And ultimately, I think that we have this underlying fear that it's up to us to find the right answer, to say the right thing, to do the right thing. When we start to struggle in the back of our mind, we think that God disappointed or something, and it's up to us to shift the dynamics. And silence is like, it's kind of like the ultimate acceptance of grace, right? It's

this thing where it's like, I got nothing. I don't have a thought, I don't have an idea, I don't have a verse, I don't have, I've just, I'm just here, I'm present, I'm submitting myself. So it's kind of in a way a form of death. I think that that's the chat, the the real, the real challenge of it. And for me, it's not until I finally began to turn off, like to recognize how many voices beneath my voices, how many, how many my wife always gets mad at me because I've got a million tabs running on my computer, which drives her nuts. She just starts closing my tabs when she gets up. When you have my computer. So like there's just like 18 tabs, and I'm like, no, but it's like that's our that's us. Like we've got a lot of tabs open. And we don't even realize the the interference they're creating or the drag that they're creating. And silence is like the part of silence is is like you close one tab, and then another one, you're just, oh wait, what am I thinking about now? Okay, Lord, I give that to you. Help me return to silence. And every time you try to quiet yourself, use recognizing there's another tab. For me, it was like until I could close about maybe 75% of those tabs, still working on the other 25, I couldn't even recognize this sense of what God wants to say. You know, this it's almost like this clarity begins to just, it's nothing dramatic, just this clarity begins to arise as everything else gets quiet because God's present. He's there, he dwells in us. That journey for me, it was about like nearly a decade ago. When we started to hit some walls, we started to hit some really difficult spots. Both my wife and I began to press into some of these practices, silence being kind of like for us the cornerstone of a kind of a broader package of contemplative practices. I would say it's kind of saved our life on the field.

SPEAKER_01 13:37

I was reading Exodus, or I am reading Exodus, and I got to Exodus 31 the other day, and it's the end of God giving the law to Moses, and right before he goes down and finds the people of God dancing around a golden cast. And the last, the very last law that God gives to Moses, after he gives him all these laws and all

these detailed, highly detailed instructions, the last law he gives them is the Sabbath. And this is what he said He said, I want you to keep the Sabbath, and it will be a sign between me and you that I am the one who sanctifies you. So he says, After all these laws I give you, and all these ordinances I give you, and all these detailed plans for my worship that I give you, I want you to do to take a day a week and do nothing. No sacrifices, no feasts, no festivals, no work, no nothing. Just be silent, and that's a sign that I'm the one doing everything in you. I'm the one sanctifying you. I was like, boom. Man, God wants to use my doing nothing as a sign to remind me that he's the one doing everything. And that's beautiful.

SPEAKER_00 14:43

And I think that that's that nails it, you know. I think that I know Ruth Haley Barton, for example, she has a book called Sacred Rhythms. She explores a number of contemplative practices and tries to make them accessible to a modern audience. And the Sabbath is one that she includes because I think, in many ways, we're talking about a Sabbath spirituality. One, because the whole idea, right? The God who commands the Sabbath, who would have thought, you know, that God Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, reveals his covenant to mankind and says, You got to rest one day a week. It's just insane. But it's that idea. There has to be a spot where we let everything go quiet because that's our act of faith, that he's the one, he's the doer of the action. That's beautiful. Yeah.

From Resistance To A Middle East Calling

SPEAKER_01 15:20

Amen. All right, take me back to 2008, before you came out on the field. What was going on? You were married, and was that before you had kids? Like, how did you get out into the field? How did you get to the Middle East?

SPEAKER_00 15:31

How did you end up where you are? Yeah, for me, it starts a little bit before that, 2003. It's a funny, a little bit of a funny story because when I was in college, I was in a sort of a church that practiced kind of a house church fellowship in addition to a Sunday-gathered fellowship. I was a part of leadership of a college house church. I loved the concept of kind of the familial community of the church. That was a really powerful idea, formative idea for me. And I thought I was going to be an educator in my home country and plant these type of familial fellowships among communities, you know, that were not unreached per se, but less Christianized. I really was annoyed with like the perspectives people. Like they annoyed me.

SPEAKER_01 16:09

The perspectives on missions people?

SPEAKER_00 16:11

Yes. Okay. Why is that? Because I, for whatever reason, was very intimidated at the idea of cross-cultural missions. But there were these people on my university campuses that were constantly trying to tell people about the nations and the unreached. Out of ignorance and out of fear, I was just resistant. I was, I was like, not, I was, they were my friends. I wasn't like nasty. But personally, deep down inside, I had like a, all right, let's talk about something else type of attitude. But then I had this moment where I felt just a nudge from the Lord that it would be important for me that I would just at least give him one summer to go to the nations. It was not like a biblical conviction. It was just like a strange and a moment of prayer. I just felt like it was something I was supposed to do. So I ended up going to on a trip to the Middle East, very intimidated, not particularly excited at all. And I think deep down inside I just thought, I'm gonna be terrible at whatever it means to do this, I'm gonna be bad at it. Like this is not. So I went and I was meeting people engaging Middle Eastern culture for the first time, and I just fell in love with

it. It was just such an adventure. People were so wonderful. I found myself talking about my faith more comfortably than I ever had back in my home country. All my expectations were flipped. And so I then, about five days into the trip, we were taken up to this spot where we could look over the city we were in. And it was on that spot that I had just this very profound moment with the Lord. And I felt in a way that I can't really explain, it didn't make any sense at the time. I felt this tremendous sense of vision and promise for the for the Middle East. I connect it to like the Habakkuk 214 where it says the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as water covers the sea. There was this sense of inevitability, like this place belongs to Jesus. Like, what is it gonna be like? And you know, and then the visionary thing we're talking about, what is it gonna be like when the kingdom comes here? Like, what are those stories gonna be like? Just the sheer wonder that I totally didn't see coming of what it meant just to feel God's heart for this place. It just it made in that moment, I went, I went straight to an internet cafe, I started changing my enrollment for the next term in university. I started studying Arabic. I just felt gripped. I was like, I think this is my life. Whatever that is, I want to be a part of it. And so, yeah, that was the the beginning for me. That was where it started. The rest of that trip, I had a wonderful experience. I can say that you know, despite the fact that at that time in the early 2000s, the reports of what was happening in the region were not encouraging. Like it was very minimal what people were reporting that they could testify that God was doing among the majority of the people.

SPEAKER_01 18:36

There wasn't much fruit back then, was there?

SPEAKER_00 18:38

Nothing. I mean, it was very like people, uh, you know, one or two people coming to faith was the biggest news that anyone knew. Like the most connected people, the big orgs and whatever. Despite that, I felt this sense of like, well, all the more I

want to be a part of praying and believing for the thing I just know that God wants to do. And it was kind of, I mean, it was innocent and naive in a lot of ways to have that excitement, that energy. But I went back and I started sharing it with my friends. I was, I was 21 years old. I came back and started sharing with my close friends, this is what I feel excited about. I think this is what my life's gonna be about. And then a number of those close friends, uh, one of them eventually I ended up marrying, uh, but a number of those friends, yeah, a number of those friends who, you know, kind of heard that debrief were like, well, we want to we want to do this with you. And so we began organizing short-term trips, ended up taking three short term trips to the country I currently live in. A majority of the people on that first trip ended up living here long term, and true of some of the subsequent trips. So there was a real just momentum and excitement out of that first trip and the sense of faith and vision it stirred. And you know, the beautiful thing is, I don't want to segue too much to something else, but the beautiful thing is that like it's helpful for me to remind myself as much as we still want to see in this region, there's so much more we want to see. Man, God has done so much in that time frame. Things stories that are normal now, they were the things people were praying for 20 years ago. So yeah, that's the that was the beginning for me.

How DMM Became Ubiquitous

SPEAKER_01 20:00

That's absolutely incredible. And it's good to be reminded of that. I remember when I was out here, 2000, when I was new, 2008, 9, 10, 11, it was like a graveyard. It was like I say, I say an MDB was like was like a Bigfoot sighting, you know, where it's like somebody's got a grainy picture of one somewhere, you know, but is he gonna is he real? Nobody really knows. And now it's like by God's grace, people are coming to faith and people are being disciplined. I had a guy tell me he came out 30, 40 years ago to the

Middle East. He said the biggest difference is that when I came out, there was a bunch of countries, Muslim countries, where there was no Christian witness whatsoever. And he said, and today we can't say that about any of them. So it's an amazing thing what God is doing. I think maybe this is a great place to pivot to DMMs. This is where you and I were sitting in your living room a few weeks ago having a conversation about DMM, and I just saw the passion and excitement in your eyes. I thought, man, it would be awesome actually to talk to you because I think I think you actually have a lot more experience than the average person. You speak fantastic Arabic, you've raised your kids in the Middle East, you've been in the region long enough to go through a lot of the stages that most people never get to just because they after four years they take off or whatever it is. So I thought it would be really helpful uh to have a conversation. So you know, and and also another thing is like I've realized that DMM is ubiquitous in missions talk now. So it's it's a term that no longer needs explaining, although we will explain it. It's just kind of something that's taken for granted, which when you and I came out, I don't know what your circles were like, but it was just starting. People were just starting to talk about DBS and some of the obedience based discipleship stuff. So, my question to you is with the DMM movement, how did we get to this point where it is ubiquitous? And what are some of the issues DMM is trying to solve?

SPEAKER_00 21:54

So, my kind of vantage point where I come from, shortly after moving to the country I live in now, we had the privilege of getting. Trained by one of the real pioneers of DMM, David Watson. That was a gift, a huge gift, and he had a huge influence on us. For my team, receiving that training was we experienced it maybe differently than some people do. It was sort of like a breath of fresh air for us because for whatever reason, some of the values and things we were trying to do, he almost gave us like a broader template to do those things, a broader strategy

that they fit in. And so it almost brought a sense of clarity rather than, I know for some people it it feels it can be a bit jolting or jarring, or some of the principles can come a little heavy-handed. And I know that some of those, some of those early trainers were quite heavy-handed with some of those core principles and the way they they would train them. But for us, we didn't experience that way because it was deeply resonant with some of the questions we were asking. And so I think it was just the right fit at the right time to get us started. So then imagine there was a long period of about 10 years of practicing it, practicing it in urban context, primarily with youth, in rural contexts with refugees primarily. And then in recent years, I've had a little bit of a pivot where my primary involvement now is kind of trying to support the local leaders who have a movement vision that God is raising up. So these would be, you know, locals from our country or surrounding countries, building networks, expat and local, networks to not just talk about movements, but to actually bring the grace of what we all carry to support and sustain healthy movements, recognizing that like it's not a one-size-fits-all process. And the body of Christ is full of diverse giftings. And so, how do we, how do we function in this kind of unity and diversity that is, that brings the full grace that God wants to give to his people? Along with that, this is kind of maybe the last piece of context. I've been invited in recent years to participate in a large movement coalition that is global that includes the largest movements in the world. So if you've read books about DMM movements, this would be these people, you know, like the Bajpuri in India, uh, Ilatasi in Kenya, Shananka Johnson, Sierra Leone. I've gotten to participate that just as a kind of a placeholder and representative for our region, as a learner, and sit in the room as these kind of fully developed movements. So, so not, you know, people like you or me out there looking for a person of peace, sharing with the guy who runs the grocery store, but like local leaders who have now who are now leading streams of indigenous disciples in contexts similar to ours and also context quite different. So even that journey has changed,

has broadened my sense of like, okay, it's helpful to see not just the theory of a movement, but what do real movements look like when they have real pastoral problems and real New Testament issues at work. So that journey has kind of shaped me and where I come from with this. I think you when you when you talk about how did how did DMM become such a broad concept, you know, I think there's a few like kind of cornerstones in that movement. One is David Garrison's book, came out in 2004, Church Planting Movements. I know I read that book before I even understood the strategy or what the or the principles, I'd rather say. Uh strategy is a bit narrow, but the the principles that define disciple-making movements. But that book blew my mind kind of more on the vision piece of wow, God's doing tremendous things in really difficult places. Book of Acts type things, in places where we would be inclined to think, well, that's impossible. That book had a huge impact on lots of people. I think that's like point number one. It kind of spread. David Watson, who pioneered the Bajpuri movement, which is now like millions and millions, the largest single movement in the world. There's a book called the Bajpuri Breakthrough that kind of tells their story. It's it's it's excellent. You know, David Watson, after he stepped out of his involvement with that movement, kind of went on tour, did a number of trainings, trainings across our region, trainings across Africa. And some of those African leaders that he trained, they're currently movement practitioners and now oversee families of movements. So movements that have started movements. And those guys are the ones who kind of actually coined the phrase disciple-making movements. So that would have been about 2011. And so at that point, the the fruit they were seeing, the book Miraculous Movements had another another also had quite a big impact. But I think, I think overall, this kind of constant rise in the awareness of movements, I think that the latest stats on what God is doing through movements in the world indicate that in the last 20 years, in this century, 2% of the world's population has entered the kingdom through disciple-making movements.

SPEAKER_01 26:12

That's a significant statement.

DMM Explained With Simple Pillars

SPEAKER_00 26:14

It's a big statement. And some of the guys uh who do this research, you know, they're professional researchers, they would say that healthy movements, the healthy movements they're primarily leaning on, which you know tend to be the larger ones anyway, for reporting, take more rigor in the way they do statistics than traditional denominations. They have more clarity about what they track and what they don't than you know, the average denomination in the West. And so these numbers aren't a mat, they're not imagined. They're representing a an enormous shift that's happening in the most unreached places or the historically unreached places of the world, parts of Asia and Africa primarily. So I think that that to the conversation around that is beginning to impact all of us at some level.

SPEAKER_01 26:54

Just I'm just thinking about maybe the person listening and they're like, what is DMM? We kind of never actually uh clarified that. So let's just go back two steps and you know, just imagine. I've never heard of it before. I'm like, yo, what is DMM? What's kind of the uh kindergarten explanation for what a what DMM is?

SPEAKER_00 27:12

So DMM is a specific approach to movement within kind of the broader church planting movement category. So DMM is disciple-making movements. And maybe the distinction of DMM is that in it envisions, it is also about planting churches, but it's the idea that the discipleship process produces the church process rather than the other way around. So if you think of Jesus birthed the church, but he did it by making disciples, right?

Jesus engaged in a discipleship process, and the fruit of that discipleship process was churches. Now, if you came from a Western environment, you imagine discipleship, you might imagine discipleship as a program, as something that churches offer. More of an interpersonal aspect of the, of the, of, you know, your church might even not ever actually talk about it, but someone, some group or some parachurch ministry might have invited you into a discipleship group. So DMM is actually taking that discipleship experience in a group and saying, no, that's the that's the foundational piece. We're going to build everything else on that. Discipleship in a DMM context is discovery-based, meaning we are coaching groups to read the scripture together through a process in which they become mutually accountable to the word first and foremost and to one another, with instead of an emphasis being on a teacher who's explaining, as the foundational process, they discover you they engage a passage of scripture and are discovering it together as a group. And then there's an obedience aspect to this. So it's obedience-based discipleship. So everything that's read or discovered, there's a question, which is how do we apply this in our lives? How do we live what we are learning? DMM movements, the expectation is that everyone is an active student of scripture and competent to reflect and to share what they're learning in a group. Everyone is a doer of the word. Everyone's thinking, okay, God is speaking. How does that impact me? How does that shape my life? Uh, and then the third piece is that we we make disciples. So there's an aspect of this in every group. People are sharing what they're learning. So this, the, the, the, the, the sort of unit of disciple making movements, the initial, most simple unit. And I say most simple because most people, I think because we don't have most people don't have access to a fully mature movement. It's easy to imagine that this is all that DMM movements ever are. But the simple unit is the DBS, the discovery Bible study. I don't know if that's basic enough or if there's elements I might have left out of that, but yeah, I heard three things.

SPEAKER_01 29:28

I heard discovery based around the word of God. So group learning based around the word of God, obedience-based discipleship, so an expectation that you're actually doing what God's word tells you to do, and that you are sharing God's word with other people. Are those kind of the three main pillars?

Empowering Locals To Lead And Multiply

SPEAKER_00 29:48

Yeah, and of course, it's there's more to it than that in terms of like, you know, the how the process works. But at the heart of it, those are some of the simplest principles kind of embedded in there. And I think that kind of the, you know, one of the things for me, this isn't necessarily what you hear at every DMM training, but for me, one of kind of what captures me about the whole idea, for me, I see this really resembling Jesus' approach with his disciples. When you think about discovery, like Jesus asked 300 questions in the Gospels and he gave direct answers to three. So his discipleship model was not, I've got answers, you need to learn those answers, right? It was one aspect of it was that he asked questions. Who do you say that I am? I mean, that's a that's a great gospel pitch. The other one is that discipleship with Jesus was active, like you were doing things with Jesus. It was, it wasn't let's go live isolated on the mountain. It wasn't sitting in a philosophical school. It there was real life learning happening all the time. They're actively living together. And Jesus was not afraid to put a challenge in front of someone that says, Hey, it's you can't be my disciple unless you're willing to do something, give up something, let go of something, get up and and walk after me. And then, of course, you know, his disciples were very active in mission with him. So, so those kind of three principles, the heart of it is the empowerment of ordinary people. Tell me more about that. Well, I'll just tell a quick story about an MBB friend of mine from a number of years ago. I was attending a local church in this country. We kind of had one of those moments where you're like saying hi to the people around you,

and I met this guy. I immediately just had a sense that I wanted to pray for him. I just felt some, I just felt something in my heart for this guy. He did not fit in with the typical demographic of the church just by appearance and dress and language. Uh, you could tell he was most likely a refugee from a neighboring country. And I just took him aside and I said, Hey, when I saw you, like I just want to encourage you with this. I feel like God wants to give you tools because he has a purpose for you that's different than you might be asking what your purpose is, but there are things that you can do that no one else in this room can do. He said right back to me, Thanks for saying that. I feel like since I became a believer, that I'm in the kingdom of God, but I'm unemployed.

SPEAKER_01 31:47
Wow.

SPEAKER_00 31:47
As I got to know him and understand what he meant, the idea was he came to the Lord through a very passionate foreign evangelist whose boldness for cultural reasons he could not imitate. This guy could get away with things he couldn't get away from, get away with, whose knowledge of scripture he couldn't keep up with. And then that guy, that that evangelist, plugged him into a local church where he was, as an MBB, he knew less Bible than everyone else in the room. He had less of a social status, you know, a lower place in society than any of these people in the room. And he's listening to sermons that are like, wow, this guy knows so much stuff. And so everything he's communicating is, man, if I'm ever going to be useful in the kingdom, it's gonna be years from now. I remember the first time I did a discovery Bible study with him. You know, technically we try to do it in groups, but the real, maybe later I'll come back to this, but the, you know, the real goal is to for us, people outsiders like us, to give ourselves to the locals who have a vision for their people because they're the ones who will really be able to start

discovery Bible studies. The ones I start are gonna be a little bit of a stepping stone to the real thing. And I'll we can talk about that later because I do think that's a misconception when a lot of people picture themselves practicing DMM. But this guy, we had one DBS together and he's like, and he just was, he was so pumped. He was so excited. He's like, I want to do this with people. And he turned in, he had some of the most brilliant ways of starting groups, of getting groups of men. I've never seen anyone do exact precisely what he did. He be this boldness came out of him and he really became this catalytic guy. You know, I think about that, that's the beautiful thing is that when the process, especially on the on the ground level, when the foundation is simple enough, when you make it not about what they know, but about what the scripture reveals to people, suddenly people who never saw themselves as influential, they're carrying the most influential thing in the world. You know, it's exactly like the disciples.

SPEAKER_01 33:34

So it tears down the barriers to entry when it comes to serving God through getting involved, discipling others. Instead of needing a platform, you can just gather your friends around. I like what you said about empowering because we do want God's people to be empowered. I had a guy say to me the other day, he said, Man, this guy's not coming to church. This guy's an MBB going to a CBB church. And he said, Man, this one guy stopped coming. And I asked him why. And he said, I just feel like an outsider at the church. I feel like nobody really welcomes me or wants me there. And I said, uh, hey, why don't you text him and say, It would be great to see you. Why don't you come? And he said, Yeah, I will, but it would be even better if it was coming from the pastor because the pastor has more authority, the pastor has more, he speaks for the church. And I said, But if I was the pastor and I know that my people were texting other people saying, Hey, I haven't seen you for a while, why don't you come? Why don't you join us? I said, That would be success for me. You know, I'd

be like, man, my people are reaching out. It's that empowering every good discipleship movement wants to see the empowerment of the people. That's one of the things that DMM is trying to overcome. What one of the questions I wanted to ask you was what are the problems it's trying to solve? So, what are the roadblocks or the barriers to entry that that were seen or identified? The DMM says, Hey, we can actually do a better job at this.

Misconceptions About DBS And Movements

SPEAKER_00 34:54

I think that what we describe right now is number one, like that that empowerment piece. I remember reading Rodney Stark's Triumph of Christianity, his book about the early church. And he talked about how one of the reasons that the early church spread the way it did was because of the empowerment of women compared to, relative to ancient Roman culture, ancient Jewish culture, Christian women. I mean, these were Jesus' disciples. These were the witnesses at the tomb. These were, you know, the Paul, the the Paul's sending his letter, the letter of Romans, you know, is like carried by Phoebe, you know, the we the these women are active carriers of the gospel. And so there's something about when you, when the systems of society tell a certain group of people, you've got nothing to bring. Just be a cog, do your part, be a spectator to the people who have something to bring. That leaves such an opportunity for the gospel. And so, like with DMM, for example, you know, we talk about discovery. Sounds simple, right? We read a passage, we have everyone kind of repeat back. We have someone that kind of retell the story in their own words, we have everyone check them. Is that what it said? Did he miss something? Did he add something? And you're trying to teach the group accountability to the scripture. Like we're not, we're we're trying to stay on this techno and make sure we're gonna we actually understand it.

And then you ask each person what they think. I cannot tell you how many people have told me, how many, you know, first-time seekers in a DBS have told me, why do you want to hear what I have to say? And that invitation, like women, Muslim women from low-class, uneducated backgrounds, saying, What do you think about this? What stands out to you? What do you discover about God? No one has ever asked them that a question. No one's ever asked them a question. They might ask them questions like what's for dinner, but no one's ever asked them what do you think? I'm a little overstating it, but not very much. And that in and of itself is so dignifying, so powerful. So we've seen some of these very, I mean, illiterate, some of the most catalytic, one of the most catalytic people I work with in terms of she has started groups in my country, in the neighboring country. You can't stop her. I mean, she's a force. She's illiterate. She had no real sense of purpose or empowerment in her life before this. And so, like the the gospel of the kingdom come, you know, I just I even just think about like you'll be clothed with power from on high. I know that's spiritual, but it's a real way in which the kingdom brings brings a type of power that is of God that only comes of him and of his kingdom. I so I think that's a big one. I think I think the empowerment of people, it's definitely not the only one, but I think that's that's a really big one.

SPEAKER_01 37:21

You mentioned misconceptions about DMM or DBS. What are some of those misconceptions?

SPEAKER_00 37:27

So a lot of times, and this is really, you know, so here's this here's a fact that I think a lot of people have heard, but I for myself, until I began to actually interact with some larger movements, it didn't really click for me. The majority of movements, so so within the DMM broader coalition that I'm a part of, a movement is defined, you know, has specific metrics, and it relates to generations of churches planted. There's a definition of church, there's lots of

details we don't have to get into, but it's we're talking about, you know, over a thousand believers, talking about four generations before we would consider something a mature movement. When I began to interact with mature movements, it became very real to me. So that the fact is over 95%, and that it might be closer to 99%, of all mature movements at the foundation of it was a local who is either already Christian or had been in the faith for maybe around a decade before they were trained in movement. And I say that because a lot of our our when we picture movements, because you know, you and I were foreigners, and a lot of people we talk to are foreigners, a lot of these conversations we have are among foreigners. What we're picturing is like, you know, maybe we've attended a DBS that we saw a foreigner leading with six people who didn't really know why they were there. Or, you know, we we see it's hard for us to get out of the idea of us, of what it looks like when we do it. But the truth is the most effective role we can play is just being in the corner of a local who's doing it. And a local who's got the maturity to do it with integrity. You know what I'm saying? Like it's not this, like at the heart of it, like I think a lot of people just picture, they they picture a very immature DBS and then they picture that multiplying like 10,000 times. Like, do we want this? Do we even want like 10,000 of these kind of, you know, sort of seemingly surface-level Bible studies? And that's and we're gonna replace like the whole history of the Christian faith with uh with this. You know, movements they grow wide, but they also grow deep and they grow tall. Like if you go to Sierra Leone, you visit Shedanka Johnson and the movement there, they have universities that their movement manages. You have disciple makers in every position of a university where they're training, they have theology degrees at this university alongside economic development degrees. They have military bases that are also discipleship hubs. I mean, I I've uh coming from the era world, I couldn't believe it. We come into this military, they give us on a tour, we go up into this military base, and these guys in uniform welcome us, and they're like, we welcome you in the name of Jesus Christ.

SPEAKER_01 39:48

Wow.

SPEAKER_00 39:49

Uh mission that the people who come to this base are not just protectors of the civil peace, but they are proclaimers of the gospel and fulfillers of the Great Commission. Everyone who came from our part of the world is like, I can never imagine this in my life. All that to say, we're trying to find the seed that will actually grow and multiply and bear fruit. But the seed is not the full-grown tree. A DBS is a seed, it's not the tree. So I think one of the misconceptions is that a DBS is all a movement ever is. A discovery and obedience-based discipleship that is actively being shared is the culture of movements at every level. So you can go to the catalyst camp in Nairobi, Kenya. You are invited. Everyone's invited. You can go and sit with the movement leaders in Africa and they'll sit around a table and they will do DBS as leaders. But it's obviously very different than doing it with non-believers. It's just the idea that they never want to get to the point where we are expert driven and not scripture driven, or where we believe that one voice determines direction rather than the clarity that emerges when the body of Christ sits together, listens to what God's doing in one another. So there's a, there's a there's a preference there, but it doesn't then exclude all that other stuff. You know, some of these movement leaders, they're phenomenal preachers and they can preach. They just, in a movement, the Sunday sermon is not seen as the primary vehicle of growth. The weekly meeting, discipleship meeting is the primary vehicle of growth. It doesn't mean that teachings are forbidden, but it just means that if I show up to that group and I start teaching every week and everyone's like, well, this is nice, keep doing that. I like what you say, then part of that DNA gets lost and the ability of that group to reproduce begins to go down. So I'm a little bit spraying misconceptions at this point, but trying to paint a picture that I think the big misconceptions relate to

where most of us are at in the process versus what movements are meant to become. So maybe one last thing I'll say is if I were to point at an embryo, and I would say, well, that's not a human. It can't think, it can't philosophize, it can't do art, can't write symphonies. Well, it's not a mature human, it's the beginning of a human. The goal is that the DNA of DBS is the beginning of a mature church. But the goal in movements is that we are not just maturing a church, but maturing a culture of disciples and churches that both multiply and mature.

SPEAKER_01 41:58

I definitely see the problem in reducing Christianity to a service on a Sunday. That's also not helpful when we think that church is from 9:30 to 11 on a Sunday Sunday morning. That's not what God has intended the church to be. There is the aspect of community, of discipleship, of being known, of living out, of daily living with people. And I suppose that's another hurdle that DMM is trying to overcome is this idea of like, I come, I watch, I go home, I did my thing.

SPEAKER_00 42:33

Yeah, I think that's fair. I think a pitfall in any practice of Christianity, evangelical church, DMM, whatever it is, is that we can reduce the practice of our faith to the refining of technique. You know, if you think about an evangelical service, thinking about assessing the service, how was the service today? The music was incredible. Man, the preacher was on. He was on, you know, and it's sort of like if you're the preacher, you want to hear that every week. You are then feeling the pressure to to sharpen your technique. But technique, you know, technique has its place, but obviously it's like it's externalizing the faith into into a very, you know, an external work, if you will. You know, worship leading, the same thing. The DMM version of that is gotta ask the questions exactly. Kind of thinking that the that if I get the if I get and okay, so like when I first got trained, I took the idea. It wasn't given it to me. It wasn't given to me this way, but but I

internalized the idea. Man, if we get the questions just right, the culture of this group just right, boom, we're gonna have a movement. It's gonna multiply. Lo and behold, the great the greater variable is what God is doing in the heart of the person across from that's right, right? Like the the questions, the wording of the questions is secondary. So I think in any case, what I think DMM is trying to do is to simplify the practice of discipleship, the practice of church. Again, there's room for everything else somewhere in the ecosystem at different points in the journey, but to Lay the foundation. Well, the foundation is that we come together and we authentically engage the scripture. We ask God to show it to speak to us and to and and we seek to respond to what he's saying and to share it with others. That is not, it's not a technique, it's a lifestyle, right? It's uh it's it's the practice of my faith, you know? And so that's the essence, I think, that DMM is trying to recover. But we as humans are always, we're always gonna have this drift towards control and technique.

SPEAKER_01 44:25

There's always going to be the drift towards follow the method, regardless of if it's mega church or house church, just follow the method and you're gonna get the results. But I like what you said that's the Holy Spirit at work in people's lives that regardless of what method you're using, that's what we're ultimately depending on. The spirit gives life, the flesh profits nothing. Hey, I've really enjoyed my time with you today. I've learned a lot, I've been challenged. Thank you for your perspective on these things. And hopefully, uh, again, I haven't got through all my questions, you know. So hopefully, again, we can have another conversation.

SPEAKER_00 45:00

Oh, I really enjoyed it. Very honored, and I'm constantly learning on this journey, and it I pray it's an encouragement.

SPEAKER_01 45:06

Amen to that. Well, I feel encouraged, and I hope you feel encouraged. I love having these conversations with so many awesome Christians doing amazing things, and regardless of what method you're using, we're all on the same team together. We all want to see Christ exalted and those who have never heard the gospel before be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Well, before we go, I just want to remind you that it's okay to be normal.