

My study leave was initially to undertake directors training with Global Disciples in Jakarta, Indonesia. It soon became apparent to me however, that there were wider issues involved for me.

I happened to be reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book = The cost of Discipleship and, as I was reading it I became aware that there were wider issues that I wanted to explore.

I have been aware that there have been a couple of problems that I have observed over the years that have made me uneasy about discipleship studies and, in some ways discipleship programs in general.

I will try and outline the difficulties or perceptions that have swayed me.

1. I have discovered that good Bible studies and good biblical teaching have not, in the New Zealand context at least, always produced disciples prepared to self sacrifice to advance the Kingdom of God. This is, of course, a generalization but I have become suspicious of people who are anxious to study the latest thing in teaching, preaching or study but have not dipped their toes into the water of the cause of world evangelization. When I hear of a great teaching going on sometimes I groan within because of the lack of what the scriptures call "signs following"

2. I have observed a number of people who have gone off to a number of residential and experiential courses who simply have not continued to be contributors to or even remaining as participants in the church

These two observations have caused me to take any discipleship course both cautiously and with due prudence. Further, any such course should contain the kind of components evidenced in the lives of the disciples that followed Jesus.

Admittedly, Judas was crushed on the rocks of his own poor character, but eleven others, including the impulsive, at times errant Peter, proved to be worthwhile followers of Jesus Christ. Given that they perhaps typify the character mix we might find in the average church, you could be left to conclude that most of us provided with the same kind of discipling processes that the early disciples were provided with could expect an emerging breed of Christian able to change, not only the landscape of the local church but also the community and culture that surrounds it.

Could it be that the church has confused its role?

Have we substituted teaching discipleship for providing discipleship?

If so, we should be celebrating those who have emerged as great Christians not because of the process of discipleship but despite it.

I think we have to be careful here, however not to deal in absolutes to prove some point. But rather to use these observations to allow ourselves to be stimulated to increased excellence in discipling.

With this background I undertook the Directors training with Global disciples in the city and district of Bogor in West Java Indonesia.

It is not possible to do other than outline the key factors of this course here in what is a report on a course.

My own observations contain over 60 pages of handwritten notes.

The GDT Alliance provides a way for like minded discipleship training programs around the world to work together and benefit from a broad network of relationships and resources.

For example program Directors from Switzerland/Germany, Canada, Kenya, Indonesia and the USA all co-operate together despite the wide range of geographic and cultural settings found in this representative group of nations.

Key factors that I think set this program apart.

1. Attempting to imitate the discipling methods of Jesus by combining teaching, ministering and living together in a way that helps people not only to learn but to have modeled for them authentic Christian discipleship.
2. Undertaking the mission phase in a cultural setting that is quite different to it's own. At the time of writing the USA team were carrying out mission in Madagascar and Canada were in the Ukraine. The Riversdale program are planning to undertake it's mission phase in Tonga.
3. A high sense of accountability to other Discipleship programs who are in mentoring and collegiate relationship with programs throughout the world.
4. A deep concern for the 1.9 billion people, worldwide who have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel.
5. A proven track record of having enabled genuine Christian advances throughout the Globe.
6. A very worthwhile vision:-which is *To see the Body of Christ around the world equipping this generation as disciples who will go make disciples of all peoples so the world will know Jesus.*
7. A worthwhile mission: *Connecting globally to multiply locally sustainable and reproducible discipleship-mission programs that equip and mobilize young adults as effective co-labourers with Jesus Christ in the mission of the church.*

8. Essential Elements of discipleship Training

The GDT Alliance have identified eight essential components for effective discipleship-mission training programs.

These components are.

- Intimacy with God
- Holy Spirit empowerment
- Christ-like relationships
- Biblical truth
- Dying to self and living for Christ.
- The Church and the Kingdom
- Evangelism and compassion
- World Missions.

A history and Conclusions.

In terms of relating belonging to Global Disciples to our own setting it may be helpful to look at where we have been over the past twenty years in the Riversdale Waikaia Presbyterian Church.

My own journey started in Riversdale in late 1988 and we were soon taking teams of church members to a variety of places in order to be involved in either outreach or to carry out teaching and encouragement programs in other churches. Over the twenty years we have taken people to a variety of places and have seen people growing in



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the responsibility of being a disciple of Jesus.
to them experiences that would better equip them
to serve in their own church setting.

Somewhere during the 1990's another Presbyterian minister, Roy McKenzie and myself began to plan a Discipleship course to be held at the hub in Riversdale. As an outcome with our church's association with YWAM's Mercy Ships we saw them run in about 2000 two Discipleship Training Schools at The Hub which resulted in a major refurbishment of our training facility at that time. Unfortunately YWAM shifted their training fully to Fiji which meant we had to re vision what we were doing. Our next development was a partnership with YWAM, but using local people in water projects on the island of Ambrym in Vanuatu. This partnership had a strong impact on the participants on the course and underlined for me the value of taking people out of their home setting into a mission setting where they could express their gifts. YWAM are by nature a para-church organization and it was while teaching for them in India in 2006 that I first encountered the Global Disciples Alliance. A visit to their Annual meeting in Mumbai in 2008 convinced me that their courses were a fuller expression of what we have been moving towards at Riversdale over many years.

Conclusion

We already are advertising a course to be run in June 2009. the outreach phase is in Tonga.

I have concluded that this course will be the important beginning of what will hopefully be a strategic training tool for churches in New Zealand.

The call for the Church in New Zealand is to Multiply disciples and it appears that the Global Disciples provides a vital tool in helping a new generation become vital tools in helping the world to know Jesus.

The Directors Training course has been a very vital tool in helping me to understand and internalize what is trying to be achieved here.

Bonhoeffer says, *"faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience."*

The Global Disciple Alliance is a vital tool to help the church move beyond survival into mission and Christian advancement well into the 21st century.

The big question facing the church today is = *How can we encourage and equip each member to play their part in helping the church fulfill the Great commission?*

The future of the church in New Zealand and in fact Globally depends on a credible answer to this question.

My conclusion is that the Global Discipleship training program is part of that answer.

My thanks go to The Riversdale – Waikaia Presbyterian community church and the Presbytery of Maitai in enabling me to undertake this study leave.

Reading resources

(not a bibliography)

Global disciples training resources.

The cost of discipleship – Dietrich Bonhoeffer
McMillan Publishing Co., New York. 1961