



THERIVERNETWORK.ORG

The Overflow

An e-newsletter from The River Network International, dedicated to helping you multiply disciples, leaders, and churches.

"...so where the river flows everything will live"
-Ezekiel 47:9

No ministry model “works”; the Holy Spirit works through yielded people.

by Rev. Dr. Steve Cordle

The Secret to What Works

There is one question I have heard in many parts of the world as The River Network trains leaders to make disciples who make disciples. We teach biblical principles and offer some field-tested ways to implement them. However, the question is never far from the surface in the minds of the participants:

“Will it work here?”

Sometimes those asking the question have already answered it themselves: “That might work in South America/Asia/United States/Africa/Europe [fill in the blank], but you have to understand that this is South America/Asia/United States/Africa/Europe [fill in the blank]. We are different; it won’t work here.”

The question is so universal that I preempt it by sharing a key value of The River Network, which is:

“No ministry model ‘works’; the Holy Spirit works through yielded people.”

Disciple-making is not about learning a technique. The key is not finding the right format, curriculum, or philosophy. Ministry models do not make disciples. Programs do not make disciples. Curriculum alone does not make disciples. Jesus did not give us a formula for disciple-making; he gave us his Spirit and his example. He guides and empowers each of us to fulfill the Great Commission in our unique contexts. The Holy Spirit is at work, and Jesus’ relational discipleship ministry model will help us cooperate with what he is doing.

Ministry models are like furnaces; they all may produce heat, but some are more efficient than others. God works through people using a variety of disciple-making strategies, but some strategies are more efficient than others. We teach methods that are biblical and have proven effective in a wide variety of contexts. However, we do not trust the method; we trust the Holy Spirit to work.

John Wesley’s life is an illustration of this principle. At the university, he was so focused on methods for doing God’s work that they were derided as “Methodists.” But when he took his methods to the American colony of Georgia, he failed miserably as a missionary. He returned to England defeated and discouraged. Then he attended a meeting at Aldersgate Street, where his “heart was strangely warmed” as someone read about justification by faith from Luther’s preface to the book of Romans. As wonderful as that assurance of salvation was for Wesley, his Journal shows that it did not eliminate his doubts and spiritual turmoil. It was seven months later at Fetter Lane that the decisive moment came for him. While praying with others at 3 a.m. on New Year’s Eve, Wesley encountered the Holy Spirit in such a powerful way that he and his colleagues could barely stand. That is when Wesley’s life and ministry changed. His doubts and turmoil vanished from his Journal. His ministry began to be marked by supernatural happenings.

He changed his ministry method, preaching in the open air. He began to preach the gospel in fields and at coal mines—wherever people gathered. Wesley was filled with the Holy Spirit at Fetter Lane, and that launched a revival that transformed England and the United States.

It was not Wesley’s method that “worked”; the Holy Spirit worked through a yielded man who was willing to use any method the Lord empowered him to use in order to extend the Kingdom.

Resources

The Supernatural Thread in Methodism: Signs and Wonders Among Methodists Then and Now
by Frank Billman

The Supernatural and the Circuit Riders: The Rise of Early American Methodism by Rimi Xhemaklik

Training Opportunity

Multiplying Disciples Practicum

8-week online practicum

Equip your church team to make disciples who make disciples—by the end of the course.



INTERACTIVE LEARNING & COMMUNITY



PRACTICAL DISCIPLE-MAKING TRAINING



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Making disciples of Jesus Christ and spreading scriptural holiness across the globe.



What to Expect

- Deepen your own discipleship
- Practice a simple, tested approach
- Instill the DNA of groups that multiply
- Reproduce disciple-making leaders



Upcoming Cohorts

July 6 - 7:00 PM EST
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