

Celebration of Our Journey

I have been looking over the Kingdom Apprentices WhatsApp chat since March 2022. What an incredible journey we have travelled over the last 18 months! On 26th March 2022 I posted a "dream" which has shaped our journey together since.

I want to celebrate with you how much of that dream has now become a reality. This is how that post began:

"I dream of West Africa shining with a myriad of flames of Kingdom light, where each flame is a community of disciples, loving each other, and loving their communities through practical help, sharing the Good News of Jesus, healing the sick and exposing evil. And where each community multiplies themselves in outreach as they go to others in obedience to Jesus."

I think we can say that this is beginning. Your Missional Communities are those shining lights, and they are starting to multiply.

Next I described what it might look like:

"As I have thought about what this might look like, this is what I dream of:

Four young people, two girls and two boys, have been part of a Mission Apprenticeship for the last six weeks. Each week they have gone out on mission into their own community, healing the sick and sharing stories about Jesus. They are now ready for the next stage in their apprenticeship.

They set off on a three hour walk along forest tracks to reach a distant community. They arrive dusty and thirsty and ask at a house for a drink. They explain they have come to share with the community some stories about God's love for them. They are directed to the home of the village chief. They are quickly welcomed and the word goes around the community to gather to hear their stories. The first story is about Jesus sending His disciples to go into the villages and heal the sick. The four youngsters act out the story, and then explain that they are here in the village because they heard the story and are being obedient to Jesus. They then ask for those who are sick and start to heal the sick in Jesus' name.

After this they tell more stories about Jesus. They are offered food and shelter and over the next few days they teach the stories and demonstrate the love and power of Jesus. They tell the story of Jesus' last supper with His disciples, and they share in the meal together and teach them how to pray and give thanks to God.

Over the next few weeks, as those four youngsters continue in their apprenticeship they revisit the community, teaching them more stories and showing them how to depend on Jesus and take the good-news stories to all the other villages around them."

You have been training up apprentices in mission, teaching them the D-Path and taking them into your communities to put it into practice. They are excited to see what Jesus is doing through them and are zealous to go out in mission.

But for this to happen we had to develop the story-telling training. This is what I posted:

"I am convinced that we need to use bible storytelling to achieve this. Stories are memorable and can be passed on faithfully from one community to another. So we need to develop a series of Bible stories that could be used to multiply communities of disciples in communities that have little or no knowledge about Jesus, and where people may not be able to read the Bible themselves.

The stories need to cover several aspects of our faith:

1. Personal life as a Disciple (including listening to, and obeying Jesus).
2. Family life as a Disciple (including GG's).
3. Community life as a Disciple (including MC's).
4. Training others to become Disciples(Including Story-telling)

5. Taking the Good News to the Nations (Including Discovery Groups)"

You all responded very enthusiastically to this, and together we have worked hard to develop training using story-telling. We have had regular zoom conferences where we have gone through a huge amount of training together. You have trialled the training with your church members and have given really valuable feedback which has shaped the development and improvement of the training materials. The point of all this work has been to raise up obedient apprentices. My post ended with:

"Then I want to work out an apprenticeship-program where we can recruit and train people who want to learn how to be obedient disciples and respond to Jesus' call to Go... We might start this as a program within some of our churches. Once we have tested it out and improved it, I hope that we can actively recruit people from across the nations to be trained in mission-discipleship and sent across the nations, establishing many other discipleship-apprentice programs."

You have worked so hard and faithfully at recruiting and training apprentices. You have experimented with different approaches and together we have improved our approach and become more effective. Our whole thinking about church and teaching and discipleship has changed as we discovered that church-based large group training tends to produce enthusiastic but short-lived responses, like rocky soil. Mission-based hands on training has been so much more effective.

Whilst we continue to learn and improve our training, we are now approaching the final stage of this dream; recruiting apprentices to multiply disciples across the nations. You are sharing your experience in apprentice training through story-telling, GGs and MCs in other communities, in other regions of Liberia and beyond and I am looking for other nations where we can share our discoveries in mission.

Thank you all for being such faithful partners in this great endeavour to share Jesus with the nations. Each one of you have been faithful in listening to Jesus, open and generous-hearted in trying new approaches and patient as I have changed the materials in response to your feedback. You have struggled with practical, spiritual and personal difficulties, and persevered. You have been honest when things were not working well and listened to and been obedient to Jesus all along the way.

I want to conclude by reminding you of the training pathways we have so far:

Apprentice Training:

Y-Path "*Young Disciples*" to help young disciples become inspired to listen to and obey Jesus.

D-Path "*Discipleship Landmarks*" to help a person progress from curiosity about Jesus to become a fruitful, confident and obedient disciple of Jesus.

P-Path "*Prayer*" going through Jesus' teaching on prayer from Matthew 6.

G-Path "*Go To the Nations*" to help an obedient disciple of Jesus become effective in sharing the Good News with other communities, cultures and nations. This training has two supplements: "*Good News for Muslims*" and "*Taking the Gospel to a New Community*".

E-Path "*Evangelism Stories*" to help people to see how relevant Jesus is to their lives.

Leadership Training:

S-Path "*Simple Church*" considering some of the ways that church tradition has replaced the commands of Jesus.

N-Path "*New Wineskins*" to help people understand Kingdom Culture, and how very different it is to much of our inherited church culture.

M-Path "*Multiplying Disciples*" to help an obedient disciple of Jesus become effective in multiplying disciples in a community.

What next?

We have not been through all of this training together. Since I am away for the next three Mondays, I suggest we take a break from the conference and give you time to reflect over our 18 month journey. Perhaps you could meet together during this time to share your experiences face-to-face, and to discuss what would be most helpful to you in the next few months.

Would you like to go through one of the newer pathways together, or re-visit some training from D or G path? Or press on with new material, such as

I-Path "*Introducing Kingdom Apprentices*" to help pastors understand what we are offering.

F-Path "Family Life",

L-path "Listening to Jesus"

H-Path "Holy Spirit" receiving and walking in the Holy Spirit.

K-Path "Kingdom of God" What is the Kingdom? How to seek it.