

Disciple Making Movements In East Africa



FEATURE ARTICLE

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Dr. Aila Tasse founded Lifeway Mission International in Nairobi, Kenya, a ministry that has worked among the unreached for more than 25 years. Aila trains and coaches DMM in Africa and around the world. He is Cityteam's Regional Coordinator for East Africa.

CITYTEAM INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES has been catalyzing Disciple Making Movement (DMM) in partnership with Lifeway Mission in eight countries in East Africa for the past twelve years.

The eight countries in which Disciple Making Movements are developing are Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan and Sudan.

In this region, the Lord has enabled us to engage 89 people groups and nine urban affinity groups.

Since the day we started the faith journey of disciple making 12 years ago, we are awed by God for the thousands of new churches that His Spirit has birthed, and the hundreds of thousands of people that have become Christ followers.

Over these 12 years God was pleased to bless us with the planting of 7,571 churches with 185,358 new disciples. Fourteen generations is the largest level of multiplication we have yet seen in any single people group.

It is our pleasure to share a few of the recent narratives of what God is doing and what His fingerprints look like in this region—because He is worthy of much glory!

For security reasons, we have used pseudonyms and have refrained from revealing locations.

A Drunkard Becomes A Disciple Maker

Jarso is the leader of a stream that has planted 63 churches in two years among a least reached people group in East Africa. Four months ago Jarso was baptizing new Christ followers from that people group. Jillo, who was not a follower of Christ, was watching from a distance while Jarso was conducting the baptism.

With a beer in his hand, Jillo observed the proceedings and began to make fun of the baptism preliminaries. Before conducting the baptism, Jarso read the story about Jesus' baptism and began to talk about it. Now within the hearing distance of the preaching, Jillo found himself deeply absorbed with what he heard. At the end of the story, he knew he needed to follow Jesus. Right away he decided to stop drinking and even threw away the half-finished bottle of beer he was holding.

He went home early that evening. His wife was amazed to see him sober and empty handed because he usually brought home a couple of bottles to drink. His wife offered to bring him a bottle of beer which she had

bought for him earlier in the day. Jillo shocked her by telling her that he had stopped drinking, and she should take the bottle back to the shop and get a refund.

Jillo, who did not read or write, then asked his wife to bring the Bible that they had in the house and read for him the story of Jesus that Jarso had read at the baptismal ceremony. The wife came with the Bible and when she finished reading the story, Jillo shared with her what he had heard from Jarso.

That evening, Jillo and his wife made a decision to follow Jesus. The next day, Jillo contacted Jarso who showed him how to do family Discovery Bible Study. From the next day onward, Jillo and his wife together with their children began to do a DBS every evening.

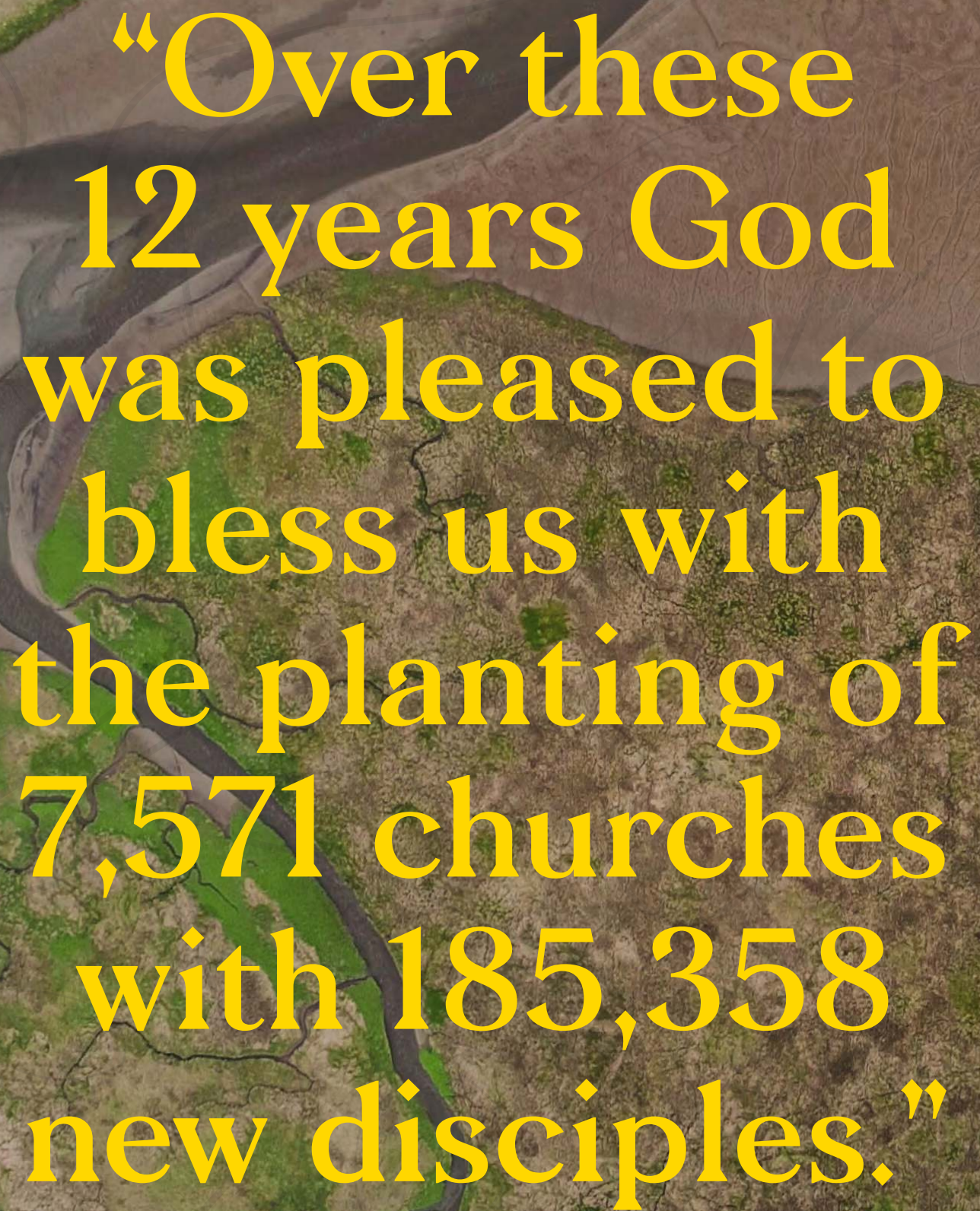
Two weeks later, Jillo, his wife and some neighbors who joined their Discovery Bible Group were baptized.

Jillo and his wife have continued this journey by facilitating the launch of eight more Discovery groups.

A DMM Skeptic Starts A Strong Movement of Disciple Making

Agali gave Disciple Making Movements training to a group of pastors in 2015. From those who took the DMM training, a pastor named Roba came to him and expressed serious doubts that existing churches could make this kind of change. Agali did not argue but challenged Roba to start the process in his community. Roba took the challenge and went to his community in search of a person of peace. The community was predominantly a Muslim community where the men like to gather in the public square in the afternoons to drink tea and to socialize.

Roba went to the public square one afternoon. He greeted the men and offered to buy them tea telling them he had come to get to know them. He told them although he is a Christian and they are Muslims, they have been neighbors for a long time and as people who honor God maybe they should know each other better. The Muslims invited Roba to sit with them. As they were chatting together, Roba got an opportunity to tell them a story from the Bible. He told them the story of Zacchaeus. The men were attentively listening to the story and when he reached the part of the story when Jesus said "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham," his listeners became more

An aerial photograph of a river delta, showing a network of channels and distributaries. The water is a dark, muddy brown, and the surrounding land is a mix of green vegetation and brownish soil. A semi-transparent dark grey overlay covers the entire image, providing a background for the text.

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attentive when the name of Abraham was mentioned. After finishing drinking tea, and as they were parting they invited the pastor to come again with more stories.

A few days later, Roba joined them again for tea. After the usual greetings and talking about current happenings in the community, Roba asked them if they remembered the story he had told them in his first visit. They told him they did. He asked them to repeat the story for him, which they did. After repeating the story, a lively discussion followed. One of them asked Roba if he believes that Jesus is God. Roba threw the question back to the men and asked them, “if Jesus in the story of Zacchaeus was able to give salvation to men, does this not show that Jesus could have divine attributes that are not found in men?” Some of the men responded in agreement by nodding their heads.

These meetings over tea became frequent and regular. In a natural progression of the relationships, many Discovery Bible Groups and churches were established among these Muslims, resulting in 32 small churches.

A New Testament Rahab

Our church planter, Wario, met a young woman two years ago named Rahab. This woman was very beautiful, and when Wario first met her, she was, like her Bible namesake, a sex-worker.

Wario began to tell her the story of Rahab from the Bible including the one quoted about her in Hebrews 11. He told her how the life of Rahab was transformed from a life of prostitution to a woman of faith and how she entered into the genealogical line of Jesus.

Rahab had never read the Bible for herself. But she knew that in the Bible there was a woman who was called Rahab and that she had been a prostitute. This she had learned from various people who heard her name.

But when she first heard the full story of Rahab from Wario, she was touched and asked Wario if she could be like the Rahab of the Bible. Wario said “yes” and offered to pray for her. In that process she was eventually delivered from demonic bondage. After that her life changed dramatically.

She became a very strong follower of Christ and a disciple maker. She married a Christ follower and the couple became committed disciple makers. Over the last year they have planted six new churches in their community.

New Wineskin For New Wine

When Pastor Kamau was invited to conduct a DMM training among a group of pastors from a particular district, he did not expect much to happen. They were skeptical because the people of the district were known as very nominal Christians and the existing churches had lots of strong church traditions that did not advance the gospel. Pastor Kamau saw little hope that the pastors of these churches would take up the challenge of Disciple Making Movements and apply them among their people.

But happily, Pastor Kamau was proved to be mistaken. Just four months after the DMM training, that region had seen 98 new Discovery Groups, four generations deep in some streams.

Pastor Ado shared that the DMM training which he took from Pastor Kamau changed his mindset. Ado reported that immediately after he took the DMM training, he replaced the Sunday preaching with Discovery Groups to see what would happen, if any of the people would report back about how they obeyed God.

He relayed that his members reported renewed joy in their relationship with God and with each other. Some members reported being healed of sicknesses during the prayers of the Discovery Group.

Pastor Ado says the members of his church were also coached to start Discovery Groups in their homes and in their neighborhoods and 42 more groups were started in just a few months.

One Catholic lady by the name of Christy came to be a follower of Christ as a result of attending one of the Discovery Groups and she started another group which kept multiplying to the fourth generation. A Catholic church began to use Discovery Groups to read the Bible and discovered how to obey God’s Word.

Pastor Jillo concludes his testimony that if the current trend continues, it is likely the whole district will be transformed through the gospel. 