



Urban Movement Insights

15 Common Urban observations

"For you to study Disciple Making Movements in cities, you must listen to its stories."

- Dr. Liza van der Merwe

We have done this by interviewing and listening to the experiences of a wide variety of fruitful city disciple-making practitioners and identifying repeating practices across various city centres patterns.

1. FOSTER OBEDIENT LIFESTYLES THROUGH DISCOVERY LEARNING

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should seek to model, teach, and replicate lifestyles of loving obedience to God through discovery-based, adaptive learning methods.

It made sense that if we want to see people making disciples in the harvest through discovery, then we felt we need to be training people through discovery.

S, Cities in East Asia

Listening to the pastor is fine, but what is God telling you? What does God require you to do? Some people, they really don't know. Actually, most of them.

AB, City in East Africa

2. EMPHASIZE AFFINITY GROUP ENGAGEMENT IN CITIES

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should seek to identify and strategically engage with cities at the affinity group level as the concept of affinity to be more relevant and precise in describing the way that urban populations interact.

Disciple-making leaders will need to be raised from every segment of our city; from seats of power to the most unlikely fringes of our broken city.

V, City in Southern Africa

Help people understand that there are spaces where they have reasons to exist. R, Cities in North America

3. BEGIN WITH THE BROKEN, MARGINALIZED AND POOR

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should seek to identify and strategically engage with the broken, poor and marginalized in their city.

Many of those we interviewed also shared that they are seeing greater fruitfulness and efficacy among the poor and marginalized when compared to other populations. We identify “marginalized” as those who are ignored or treated as insignificant and peripheral in society.

4. INVEST IN HIGH-COMMITMENT, DISCIPLE-MAKING RELATIONSHIPS

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should seek to invest heavily, intentionally, and long-term into those that they disciple.

Many expressed deep feelings of love, loyalty, and commitment for those that they disciple. Some went further, stating that their disciples are 'family' and that they would "give up everything else before giving up on these relationships."

Most expressed that these disciple relationships are very 'challenging', with many 'hurdles' and 'failures'.

5. INVEST, ONE-ON-ONE, IN DISCIPLE-MAKING RELATIONSHIPS THAT MULTIPLY

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should establish and maintain clear one-on-one disciple-making relationships that are encouraged to reproduce and multiply.

These disciple-making relationships appear non-territorial or exclusive: they encourage others to interact. Often a disciple in a growing movement is being disciplined by more than one person in different ways (i.e., in marriage, family life, vocation, etc).

6. DEVELOP SERVANT-HEARTED LEADERS WHO REPLICATE

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should prioritize developing leaders like Jesus.

God is sick and tired of the big names. Sick and tired. Now God is using ordinary people.

Cities in Southern Africa

So, the thing is that I release early, and I pass on the values quite quickly.

N, Cities in Eastern Africa

Jesus is not looking for people who are very strong. He is looking for weak people who are available, and this is what I am going for.

W, City in Africa

7. PRIORITIZE INSIDER LEADERS

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should seek to prioritize (emphasize, engage, focus on and support) local and/or indigenous leaders

*But I've just realized that their own people need to reach them because then they can really understand. Because culture has eaten our strategy up for breakfast over and over and over and over. **AW, City in Southern Africa***

*So, when a new believer comes, the youth disciple the youth. This is very important for them: themselves making disciples, which is pretty unusual. **M, City in Southeast Asia***

8. MOBILIZE THE EXISTING CHURCH TO (RE)FOCUS ON ENGAGING THE LOST THROUGH DISCIPLE- MAKING

HYPOTHESIS

Urban churches must (re)focus on disciple-making and engaging the lost.

We have observed that fruitful urban disciple-making churches appear to adapt existing or traditional church models away from central, Sunday-gravitational, single meeting-place, attendance-based membership structures and toward decentralized, full-week, adaptable gathering-place, disciple-making, outward-focused structures.

9. FOCUS ON A FEW TO REACH THE MANY

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should give a large portion of their available time toward a few key disciples and leaders, between 3 and 12.

For me, the number one first sign of fruit is that they are influencing other people's lives towards Jesus... and if they are, then I will give them all my time.

J, City in Southern Africa

So, I always encourage churches by saying, 'Hey, start where you are. Then just really disciple well, pouring out your life for these (few) kids.'

M, City in Southwest Asia

10. BUILD SIMPLE AND AGILE STRUCTURES AND TOOLS

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should seek to build light, flexible organizational structures and teams that reflect together often, innovate, and apply emergent practices.

I can literally say it's taken us 25 years. Getting to that simplified (DBS) version that you've seen in front of you has taken 25 years.

J, Cities in Southern Africa

If you open your eyes in the city, what does Jesus want to do? So I live with this open mind. N, Cities in Eastern Africa

11. COACH DISCIPLE-MAKERS TO SET AND PURSUE THEIR GOD-GIVEN GOALS

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should practically apply disciple-making coaching as an important function of reproducible disciple-making.

I'm totally convinced DMM, and movements happen because of coaching, not training. Training just sows the seed, but it's the constant, constant training, constant mentoring, and constant coaching that brings fruit.
J, City in Southern Africa

My ears are always listening for potential leaders that I can say, hey, can we spend a little time together? Can I come and serve you through coaching?
K, Cities in Southern, Eastern and Northern Africa

12. LEAD BY EXAMPLE INTO THE HARVEST

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-making leaders should continue to engage actively and go to the lost and broken themselves. They should not outsource the task of engaging the harvest to others, but rather lead and influence the movement to engage as a regular disciplined life rhythm.

*We need to spend more time out among the lost. **G, City in Southwest Europe***

*But as we have focused on the lost rather than trying to collect Christians, we have found that people are very open. **J, Cities in Western Europe***

13. BEGIN WITH UNDERLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO BUILD ADAPTIVE PRACTICES

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should focus on applying and teaching biblical principle-driven disciple-making rather than continuing to adopt new, ever-changing models and methods.

It's something we hammer in the training process. DMM is nothing and DBS is nothing except the wineskin. No, the wine of the Kingdom is what matters. We hope that people get that because if they don't, then none of it is going to go anywhere.
SL, Cities in South and SE Asia

14. CREATE ONGOING TEAM LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WITH APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-making ministries and networks should seek to create and integrate consistent rhythms of learning together into their yearly schedule.

'This week, how did you care for the community to further the cause?'...Together we would share the past, the present and the future: where were we, where are we and where are we going.

B City in Southern Africa

15. CREATE INTENTIONAL AND CONSISTENT RHYTHMS OF CONNECTION

(At Every Level of Engagement)

HYPOTHESIS

Urban disciple-makers should meet, pray, and interact very regularly and consistently with their teams, groups and disciples.

The majority of those we interviewed spoke about the importance of consistency in meeting with their teams, groups, disciples, and gatherings for ongoing growth, training, and building trust.

Break Into Groups

1. Pick a person to facilitate the discussion group.
2. Pick 1 observation that most surprised you, and discuss why it surprised you.
3. If this observation happens to suggest a good strategy for city disciple-making, what adjustments might you make?

TOP COMMON URBAN OBSERVATIONS

1. Foster Obedient Lifestyles through Discovery Learning
2. Emphasize Affinity Group Engagement in Cities
3. Begin with the Broken, Marginalized and Poor
4. Invest in High-Commitment, Disciple-Making Relationships
5. Invest, One-on-One, in Disciple-Making Relationships that Multiply
6. Develop Servant-Hearted Leaders who Replicate
7. Prioritize Insider Leaders
8. Mobilize the Existing Church to (Re)Focus on Engaging the Lost through Disciple-Making
9. Focus on a Few to Reach the Many
10. Build Simple and Agile Structures and Tools
11. Coach Disciple-Makers to Set and Pursue their God-Given Goals
12. Lead by Example into the Harvest
13. Begin with Underlying Biblical Principles to Build Adaptive Practices
14. Create Ongoing Team Learning Environments with Application and Reflection
15. Create Intentional and Consistent Rhythms of Connection