

GENERATIONAL GROWTH

One of the best examples in the Bible about discipleship and multiplication, is the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Paul met Timothy in his first missionary journey, in Lystra. Even though Timothy was already born again and having an effective role in his community, Paul decided to take him along in his journeys and train him further as a disciple and apostle.

Paul also went to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish wife whose husband was a Greek. Timothy was highly regarded by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him, so he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who lived in that region, because everyone knew that Timothy's father was a Greek. As they went from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for them to obey. So the churches continued to be strengthened in the faith and to increase in numbers every day.
 Acts 16:1-5 ISV

When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he asked Timothy to remain in Ephesus and help replacing the elders who had gone off path. With that purpose he wrote the two epistles of Timothy that we have in our Bibles.

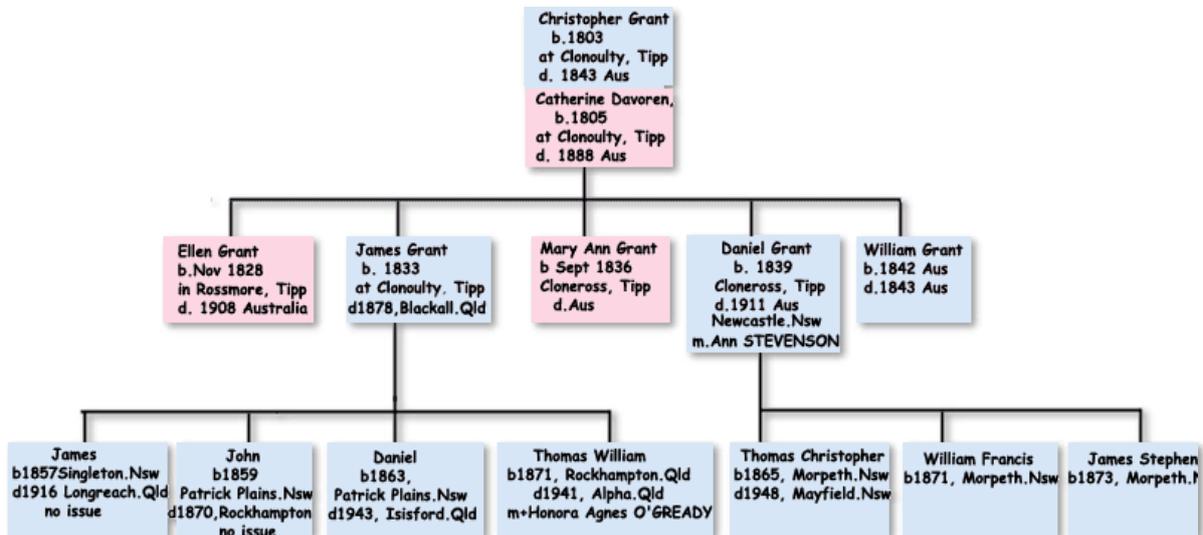
These two letters are extremely rich in basic church dynamics and discipleship relationship. And the second letter has this beautiful passage that shows the key of a multiplication of disciples:

What you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.
 2 Timothy 2:2 ISV

This single verse contains 4 generations of discipleship. So let me explain briefly what I mean by that, and how this can become a powerful revelation to you that will make your efforts effective for the Kingdom.

THE CONCEPT OF GENERATIONS

In the natural multiplication of human beings, we have exponential growth of family members. If you see a family tree, for example, you can notice how two or three generations after the parents (two people) there are a large number of individuals. Take this family tree I found online as an example:



The first generation in this family tree was one couple, which I will count as generation zero, since they were the ones from which everyone else descends. Their first generation were already five children, from which only two had children. On the second generation we see already 7 people. From one couple to seven in just two generations. This would have never happened if the parents had not raised and empowered their children to eventually become independent and self-sufficient.

How does this play out in discipleship? Precisely on the same way. The spinal chord of discipleship is to “raise up” spiritual children to a level of adulthood (maturity) in which they don’t need us anymore and are capable of raising their own spiritual children.

In the verse we read from the letter to Timothy, we see four generations with clear goals:

- Paul – generation zero
- Timothy – generation one
- Faithful people – generation two
- Others – generation three

Paul is instructing Timothy: what you received from me, entrust it to others who will be faithful and capable to transmit it to others as well. This is the generational concept.

KEEPING ALIVE, OR RAISING UP?

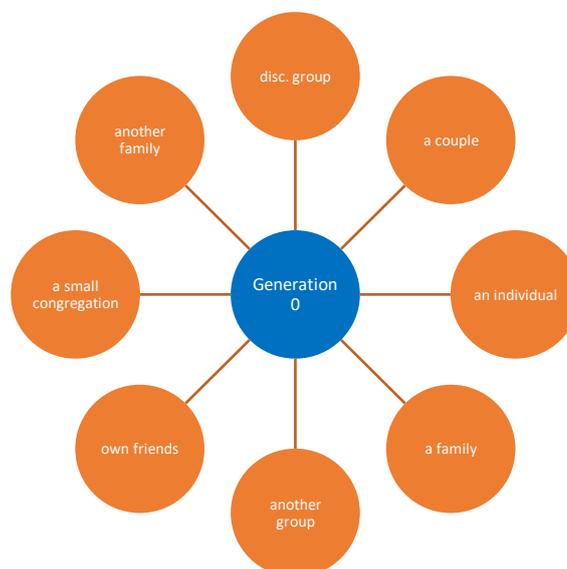
There is a big difference between keeping children alive and raising them up. A person in comma is very different from a child at home. The Lord explained that making a disciple is, among other things, to teach someone to carry out everything He had commanded.

That means that a younger brother we are serving as disciple-makers should learn to do everything we are able to do. That is much more than simply teaching what the Lord said, or teaching the Bible. It means to teach them to do and to train others, to teach them to be “parents” of new generations.

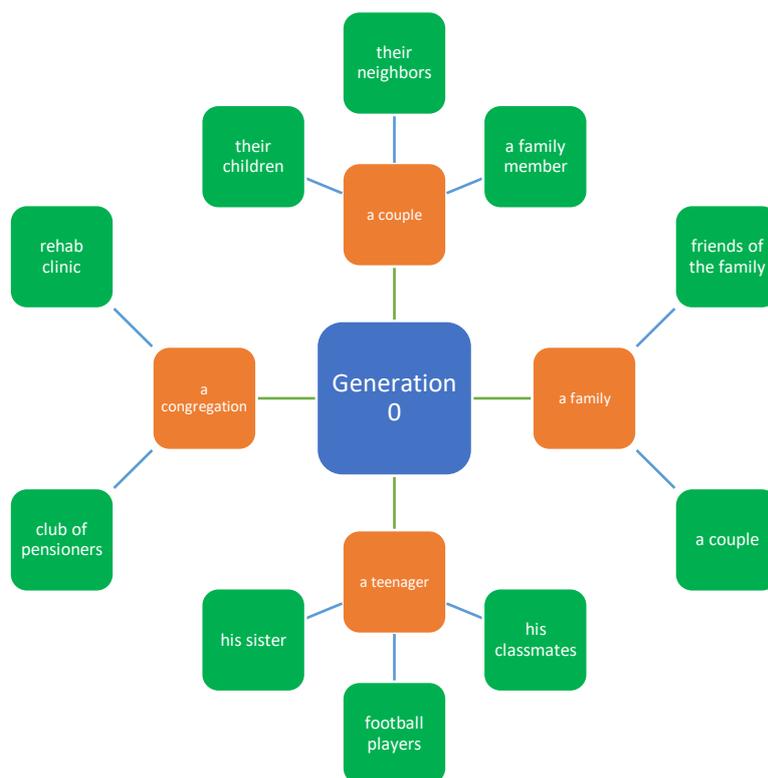
THE PROBLEM OF THE FIRST GENERATION

A common issue among disciple-makers is their inclination to serve so much that they forget to train. When they forget that, the result is that every new believer is attached to them instead of attached to the ones who actually reached him or her. In that way, we have a person who will be over-stressed, trying to help more people than he is able to, sacrificing therefore his or her own family life, for example.

To illustrate this, compare the following two charts:



On this first chart, there one disciple-making unit (an individual, a team, a couple, etc.) that is bringing a lot of people to faith. Nonetheless, there is no multiplication. The first generation of disciples is not bearing more fruit, or if they do, they don't disciple them themselves. They let the disciple-making unit take care of them. It's like letting your parents raise your children.



On this second chart, the disciple-making unit (DMU) has discipled only 4 new units. These four units have, at their own time and speed, discipled 10 other units who will be in turn also capable of discipling more units.

We could support this vision by addressing its effectivity in numeric growth and other positive factors, as the better impartation of the DNA from the DMU, or the lower burden of the DMU. But the best support for it is actually the Lord Jesus. He designed His church to work this way, so there is no much to argue about it. The disciples that worked with the Lord did it this way too, and if we are faithful to Him, we should do it like this also.

THE ISSUE WITH TRADITIONAL CHURCHES

One of the most recurrent issues concerning the implementation of generational growth is that the current church structure does not really work this way. Because of much enthusiasm and little wisdom, many new disciple-makers start arguing with their churches, and try to convince their church leaders to organize this as a new program.

Of course, it is never wrong (even recommended, most of the times) to discuss this with the leadership of your church, if you attend one. But mostly, the leadership will not venture in a project that risks their entire system for an idea that they have never seen work before.

A good way to proceed would be to try to do it organically. That is not through a program, but rather brother to brother, sister to sister, family to family. Seek one person or unit that is in need of discipleship, build a relationship with them, and serve them. For a reference I suggest you should follow the lesson on how to start making disciples, on [this page](#) of Kingdom Focus.

Of course there are many different situations that can come out of this endeavor. Be wise, think well before acting, and seek God's direction in case you feel you are in need to take radical choices.