



# Reproducing this life

This tutorial looks at the fifth question under the area of *Life*: ‘Are they growing in their commitment to reproducing the life they have in Christ, are they equipped with the resources and skills to do so, and are they prioritizing opportunities where there is real need and hunger?’

John 15:8: When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

That verse brings us to what we're wanting to focus on in this session. As we're talking about life, you may be thinking, “Okay what kind of life are we actually talking about?” When we go out and follow the Great Commission in making disciples and seeing people come to Christ, what are we looking for? And when bodies of believers come to know Him and follow Him, what is it that we're looking for? Are we just happy that they know Him? Or is there more to it? We see over and over again in Scripture that God really wants us to be believers who are bearing much fruit.

We'll be discussing discipleship in the next section. But here the focus is on fruit. We need to see the fruit and see where's there's real life, whether that be from an individual or from a group of believers in a church.

## Last time

We looked at the fourth question from the WILD outline in the area of Life. We discussed how a group of believers learns to shape the form of what they do to serve whatever function they believe will lead to the fulfillment of God's purposes. In this tutorial we will discuss the fifth question in the WILD outline in the area of Life.

**Are they growing in their commitment to reproducing the life they have in Christ, are they equipped with the resources and skills to do so, and are they prioritizing opportunities where there is real need and hunger?**

Bill talks about how the elders from one of the churches faced challenges as they looked for more young men to bring into the teaching and outreach ministry:

The elders brought up early the whole idea of how they train other people. They started realizing this job was huge, and they needed more help. And that was just in the one church there. And so we talked to them about bringing young men or other men that were able to be teachers. They would be trained in the whole process. It was really hard for them because in one sense they're just learning themselves how to do this. And at that point to bring other men in and try to change them was really difficult. So we didn't push on that a whole lot. We were watching the elders grow. But over the last couple of years we've really seen them turn a corner in that once they'd been established and they realized what the Lord has been able to help them do. They're really excited about looking towards some of the young men and bringing other men on and training them.

Lots of questions have come from them in this last year really, such as, "Can we bring this guy on, let him teach a little?" Yes! You know, we're just always trying to encourage them to do that. I think, on the broader perspective of not just in the village itself but in the neighboring language groups, we've seen a huge desire because there's family in some of the other villages. They have a huge desire on their part to want to see the Gospel be taken over to the different churches or to the different villages. And that has resulted in other churches that have been born in other languages, not only in our language group but in the bordering language group. So we're watching them take what they know and want to transfer that to other people.

And it's not just about the identity of having a church. The drive has really been the hope. It's one of the things that just really drives the people where we're at, this whole thing of hope. What are we hoping for? What's going to happen to us when we die? Where are we going? And so when they start realizing that, they start getting this huge desire to want to see their family members understand this. And so there's been a huge drive for the church to branch out into the different places and see the Gospel taken over to the different areas.

**Are they realizing that their willingness to associate with Jesus' death is directly linked to them having a part in His life being reproduced in others?**

**Are they seeing that, whatever other helpful relationships are involved, the primary accountability structure for equipping, caring for and guiding members in ministries should come from their local church?**

**Are they evaluating and aligning their efforts to share Christ's life (local or international) with the priorities, values and ministry strategies that the leadership team has clarified for the church as a whole?**

Greg talks about the believers' desire to reach out to other communities, and to be better equipped to do so:

The challenge for us wasn't teaching them to read and giving them a worldview perspective. They actually had a perspective that there was a world out there that didn't know Christ, especially in their own country. And so they've actually now begun to really look for opportunities and ways that they can reach into communities around them that they can reach out into, not just in their own villages where they are, but actually reach into other areas of the world.

They're actually planning right now. They're going to even other countries and sending out some workers to other countries, and so part of their interest right now is in the area of training and the area of discipleship. How do they actually train guys up? How do they prepare people now to walk into other countries? How do they get them to enter into these areas? The heart that they have and the way that they understood church planting came from a perspective that they can become a part of the community, learn to grow in the community, learn to build relationships in that community.

They've actually been wondering now about the process of cross-cultural communication. How do they actually learn that? How do they understand how to build and present that message clearly to the other places?

John describes how the church developed forms that were appropriate for the culture there as well as being profitable for God's work:

Well, as far as forms within the church, their meetings were on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Then we cut it down to twice a week. And then we eventually moved it to Sunday. We were slow to do that because of the whole Sunday thing that was so fearful to them. But they didn't have a problem with that. As we taught the book of Acts, they started to see how the early church functioned. And so things like baptism were introduced, as they encountered it in the book of Acts. Communion, the Lord's supper...for that they went and they cut down bamboo and made little bamboo cups. And we just colored the water red. And so we made sure that we did things in a way that they could continue on. It wasn't dependent on us bringing in anything for them all. It had to be something that they could do and replicate in other places as we anticipated churches would be planted in other places.

For Bible study times they would get together during the evening or sometimes during the day, depending on who they were and what they were involved in. And as more and more Scripture was translated, Bible teachers started to develop who would lead people and lead these Bible studies. But at the same time there was this awareness that there's still a lot of people from that language group who don't know Christ and who need to know Christ. And to reach some of those people was very, very difficult. So evangelism was always something that was in the forefront of their thinking. We had some young men who were very, very capable teachers. And they were usually guys who had been involved in the translation process or lesson development. That was tremendous grounding for them in learning God's Word and being able to share it with others.

In the last case study, John touched on the theme of the previous tutorial to do with form and function. But then he talked about how that then moved into the outreach of the church and the function of it. The church doesn't exist as an empty form or a religious tradition. The function, or the reason it exists is to be a place for the believers, for protection and for them to have this place of coming together to be fed God's Word and to worship. But it shouldn't end there, should it? That is what John is describing. They developed these forms to serve those functions of celebrating Christ's death together and to sing and to meet together. But then it flowed into the reaching out of the church. And we don't have the time to go into all the forms that might develop in the outreach of the church. It's just another part of the church functioning.

The question for this tutorial is, "Are they growing in their commitment to reproducing the life they have in Christ? Are they equipped with resources and skills to do so? Are they prioritizing opportunities where there is real need and hunger?" And that's what we want to see. That would be the real evidence of whether the life of Christ is now existing in a community. That is born of the conviction that the best representative of Christ here on this earth is the corporate body, the local group of believers together, not just as individuals, but as the whole. And together we grow to reach that level of maturity where we are reflecting Christ as a corporate body.



## **DISCUSSION POINTS**

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1. In your view is Western-style seminary training ever something that would be appropriate for new leaders and

teachers in a minority-group church planting situation?  
What would you see are some of the advantages and disadvantages?

2. A comment was made in the video directly linking a local church being genuinely indigenous in its form and function, and that church being able to reach out and reproduce itself throughout their people group and beyond. Please share any thoughts you have about this connection.
3. Research at least six mission agencies online. Note particularly whether they describe any strategies for church planting and for seeing churches grow on to maturity.