

# **TAMDISO:**

A Very Old Strategy

For Leadership in

The Way of Life

*Colin McDougall, Jr.*



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## Authentic Discipleship

In over 20 years of pastoral ministry I have never met a church leader who was not “committed” to discipleship. On closer examination, of these many who talk about disciplemaking, few are actually making disciples.

I have also read just about everything written on the subject. Again, a disconnect. With elaborate and comprehensive plans and programs, I often remarked, “This guy is a theorist; this stuff will never work in real life.”

Colin McDougall Jr. is neither a boaster nor a dreamer when it comes to disciplemaking. He has consistently been about the Great Commission and the agonizing process of making disciples. His plan is simple, biblical, and doable...for those with the passion and grit necessary for mentoring for life change.

He and his wife, Becca, are veterans of the trench warfare I would call authentic discipleship. Following their Father’s simple plan and their Savior’s simple command, they have witnessed the power of disciplemaking on two continents and among extremely diverse people groups.

If you truly desire the fruit of disciplemaking in your work for Christ, listen to him. We do...because he knows what he’s talking about and he lives it.

Until all hear,



Ed Underwood  
Senior Pastor  
Church of the Open Door

## **Why We Say Every Christian is a Missionary**

The point has been made in countless Sunday School classrooms, that every believer is a missionary. But it would be truer to say that we believers share equally the same Great Commission. We are ambassadors, sent out with the commission of Jesus into the world; nevertheless the sad fact is that most modern Christians are not fully involved in fulfilling Jesus' commission; we are not living the mission.

Do you wish your life was better ordered to fulfill this mission? I know I do, and I know our Father wants to make it so. He has given each of us three major assets to invest: energy, spiritual gifts, and material. By energy I mean the dynamism of God at work in His children to live the mission of Christ—only believers have this energy. The spiritual gifts are capacities for meeting spiritual needs, capacities that no human being comes by naturally. Material includes not just the money we earn but every material resource we control—cars, houses, computers and phones. Though unbelievers have material resources, they cannot acknowledge them as gifts from their Father like we can, gifts for use in His kingdom. When we think realistically, we realize that although our resources are limited, we are only investing a minute fraction in the mission of Christ. We wish we had a tool to evaluate the many good causes and focus on our central mission. We want to invest our lives. We want to live the mission.

The tool that I am presenting here builds on the work of the missionary-scholar Dr. Ed Murphy who taught me the Acts of the Apostles at Biola University. The yardstick he found in Acts has guided me in living the mission for the past 20 years. I present my version of it below and hope it will help others as much as Dr. Murphy's teaching helped me. I call it TAMDISO.

## Praying the Lord of the Harvest

It has always captivated me the way that Jesus initiated His missionaries in the first commission. Though I love to look at the end of Matthew to read Jesus' Great Commission, I also keep coming back to the first commission at the close of Matthew 9. Jesus being moved with compassion over the lack of spiritual leadership for the multitudes told His disciples to pray that God would send forth laborers to bring in His harvest.

The disciples are not called missionaries until Matthew 10:2, but they already have their first missionary assignment in 9:38. Their assignment is to pray God to send missionaries. Why should it be necessary to pray God for this? It is logical that since the harvest is His, He should take care of sending out laborers without having to be asked. The answer is simply that God would have it so. Jesus was already burdened with compassion for the multitude, but He was inviting His friends to enter into His burden and share with Him the mission. Many who say, "I am open to missions if God calls me" are not responding to the very first command. If we would move from being disciples to becoming ambassadors, we must obey and pray.

We should not be amazed to discover that those who are first called to pray are later called to go out. It is Jesus' mercy that He does not give important assignments to servants who have not learned to pray. If we do not know how to pray, then He will model prayer for us. If we do not know what to pray, then will He intercede at the right hand of His Father. If we cannot find the right words, then will He send His spirit to intercede for us with unutterable groanings. But if we will not pray, then we have no right to expect any great blessing, any significant assignment from the Lord.

Not only is prayer essential to our commissioning but it undergirds all of our work. In fact, I have come to believe that prayer does not only enable Christian ministry—prayer is the ministry. How can we imagine that we will ever save anyone by our own words of human wisdom. The missionary's role in the world is to be the fragrance of Christ among both the saved and the lost. And who is sufficient for these things? God alone has the

power to change men's minds, and only to the extent that we are interceding with God for them are we co-laborers with Him in the ministry of reconciliation.

While I was still a student in Bible college, I was introduced to one particular unreached people, the Daasanach. I began to pray for them in 1980 and by 1981 I became convinced that I would be Christ's ambassador to them. That conviction led me to pray for an interpreter who would know Swahili (the only African language I knew) and would teach me Daasanach. Contrary to my great plans, our family did not actually arrive among the Daasanach until 1989. But I found that God had been answering my prayer almost from the day I first began praying (Daniel 9:20ff and 10:12ff).

In 1981 a Daasanach warrior went on a raid with his buddies to steal cattle from the Gabbra and murder anyone who got in their way. They got the cattle they wanted and committed the murders, but on the way home, Lokomeri was wounded by an AK-47 round through the forearm. The wound incapacitated him and would have killed him, but in the end he turned himself in for treatment at a government clinic. He was treated and recovered, but he was also convicted of his crimes and imprisoned for seven years.

During his imprisonment from 1981-88 he was forced to learn Swahili in order to communicate with his guards. Once he learned the national language he was able to understand the words of the prison evangelist who spoke each week and came to trust in Jesus. I met him in 1989 just months after his release. He said to me, "You are the one God has sent to evangelize my people. I have been praying that you would come." I'm so glad I could reply, "You are the one I have been praying for these past nine years!"

The angel encouraged Daniel, "At the beginning of your supplications the command went out..." (Dan. 9:23). Prayer is God's primary means for us to participate with Him in the great work that only He can do. Prayer first; prayer ever—TAMDISO to measure effectiveness.

## *Tabernacle Among* **Them**

The first two letters of TAMDISO remind me that the first measure of effectiveness in living the mission is the degree of tabernacling, relational closeness to people who do not know Jesus. “Tabernacling” (*σκεινω*) is a New Testament word that describes moving into a caravan of travelers and sharing their pilgrim life as a close neighbor. Jesus says, “Go into all the world” (Mark 16:15), and “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). This is the first step in fulfilling our commission and is essential for all authentic Christian ministry.

The prayer of our family, that God would give us a tabernacling relationship with the Daasanach of northern Kenya, was answered dramatically when we moved to the village of Il-Gele. Our temporary house for the first six months was just a one-room kitchen and we slept in tents outside. We truly became a spectacle for our curious neighbors who would come by and look through the kitchen windows and offer commentary on whatever was going on inside our house. Talk about a high-stress living situation! Talk about a great opportunity to get close to people who do not know Jesus!

When we seek to live close to others we imitate our Father in heaven, because God is by nature a tabernacling God. “I will dwell in your midst” is one of the consistent promises in all of the covenants. Jesus is the tabernacling Savior, named Emmanuel, God with us, because “He became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us.” The Spirit is a tabernacling Helper who was sent “in order that He may abide with you forever.”

Read God’s big idea in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. God’s big idea for demonstrating His grace is reconciliation, and He doesn’t do it from a distance. His means of reconciling the world to Himself was to be there in Christ, and His idea for pouring glory on glory is to keep on being there in Christ in you. He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation, and He really is in Christ in us. But for the big idea to work, we have to be in the world—that’s why Jesus did not ask that we be taken out of the world.

Turn the page and take a moment to sketch a map of where your tabernacle is pitched in the caravan.

## Assignment #1: Developing a Relationship Map

This is a quick tool that will help you see what “caravans” you are already tabernacling with. Think of the different categories of relationships in your life. You might use the following categories (and sub-categories):

- Family (spouse, children, parents, cousins, etc.)
- Church (small group, Sunday School, Ministry team)
- Work
- School
- Neighbors
- Sports groupings
- Others

Label the circles on the next page with the categories you listed above. The circle in the center represents who you are in Christ, and the family circle has already been labeled as an example.

Think about all the people you have contact with in these categories and list their first names in the circles.

Use the following abbreviations to indicate their spiritual state:

Lost = L

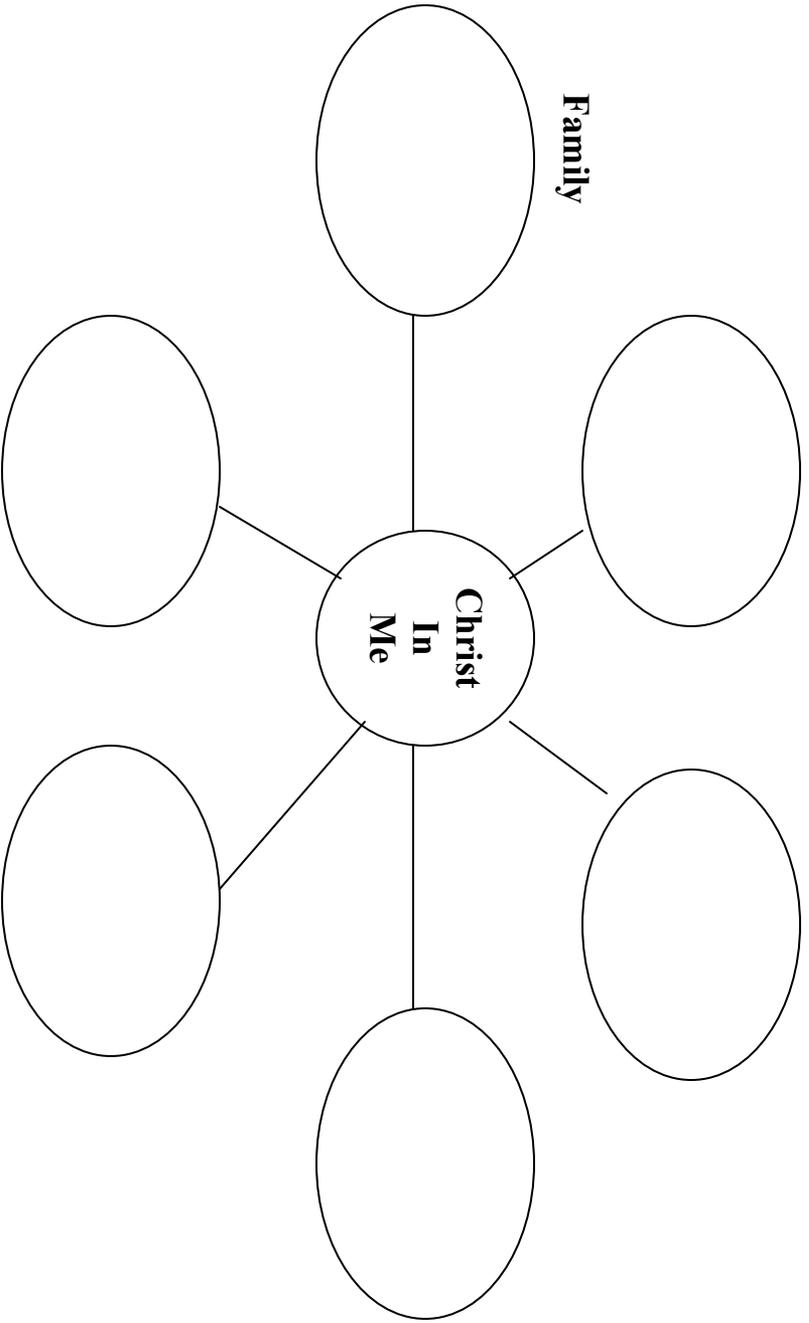
Seeker = S

New Believer = N

Carnal or Wayward Believer = C

Mature Believer = M

Do you notice a pattern emerging? Are you mostly tabernacling with believers or with unbelievers? Where do you need to be actively looking for opportunities within the network of relationships God has given you?



**Family**

**Christ  
In  
Me**

God's chosen means for reconciliation is costly. Philippians 2 shows what it meant for Jesus to tabernacle with us: he had to empty Himself and humble Himself; He had to look like us and associate Himself with our unattractiveness; He took on Himself our shame so much so that He died the shameful death that we deserved. To tabernacle in this world as He did we must "have this attitude in ourselves." Our holiness (which we received undeservedly) will not prevent us from associating with the ugliness of those around us. We will redeem all that we can of their lifestyle and culture without sinning and we will wear it with them so that we can "by all means save some."

Living the mission means that when we change jobs or relocate, our first question is whether the new work or location will bring us closer to people who need Jesus. We will look for like-minded partners all over the world who are also living the mission. When we share material wealth we will ask, are my charitable gifts enabling me and my partner to be ministers of reconciliation or just turning the crank of a misery-reduction machine? When we pray for those brothers who are our partners in living the mission, we will ask God to give them new and more powerful relationships and boldness to speak the gospel. We will want to encourage them into high-contact, deep-immersion situations where they are abiding in Christ and tabernacling in the world, not spending most of their time on an insulated compound or a no-contact office. We will encourage our partners to join a lost caravan near them and assure them that we are doing the same.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them (2 Corinthians 5:19)." This is the standard; this is the tabernacling measure.

## ***Make Them Disciples to Jesus***

The second part of our commission according to Mark's Gospel is to "preach the Gospel;" in Luke-Acts Jesus says, "you shall be My witnesses." Both of these activities are included in Matthew's version: "Make disciples of all nations." The middle letters of TAMDISO remind me that while I am tabernacling among the lost I am to make disciples. Not apprentices to my own methodology, but disciples to Jesus' Way of Life.

If the tabernacling measure is of relational closeness, the disciple-making measure is of faithful representation. It is not enough for us to live moral lives and demonstrate grace in our relationships and hope that people will somehow see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. We must faithfully and unashamedly confess the family Name, and offer to share our glorious inheritance. Jesus has not called all of us to stand up on a soapbox and preach, but He absolutely expects all of His followers to be outspoken representatives and advocates for friendship with Him (Matthew 10:32-33). We Americans are a cowardly race when it comes to this part of living our mission. We often say, "Well I'm not allowed to talk about my faith on the job." God helping me I will never accept or make this lame excuse again—it is the very antithesis of living the mission. When Paul was in prison for preaching the Gospel he gave the Ephesians one primary prayer request: "that I make known with boldness the secret of the Gospel, that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak" (6:19-20). Is there any modern American who is in prison for preaching Jesus? Let him keep preaching boldly. Is any in danger of being imprisoned? Let him preach boldly. Is any in danger of losing his job? Let us pray for him so that he will keep boldly making known the Gospel. But modern Americans are not in danger of prison or unemployment. What we mean when we say, "I'm not allowed" is "I may fail to advance in my career." Fellow-disciple, we have already lost our career. When we forget to count our careers lost for Christ, we have ceased to live the mission.

I once attended a service in Kenya where a missionary

was bringing greeting from an underground church in an Islamic community. He explained that the new believers could not testify for fear of being beaten or disowned by their families. One church member stood to reply to the missionary's greeting and said, "Tell your friends that we too are a persecuted church, but we know that the world has never allowed Christians to speak in the name of Jesus. Our advice is: Preach Jesus anyway." I cannot with credibility offer advice to persecuted Africans, but I can say to my fellow countrymen in America, "Preach Jesus anyway." Once you have counted your career as lost for Christ, you have nothing to fear.

When Jesus showed us how to make disciples, He said, "Follow Me!" He invited men to come and see where He lived; He ate lunch with His disciples' mother-in-law. He said, "How about let's take a trip in your boat to the other side of the lake." He did not schedule one-hour sessions and weekend seminars on "Practical Preaching in Parables." Jesus entered deeply into the lives of His friends and taught them how to live, always inviting them, "Come with me and live My mission."

When Jesus commanded us to make disciples He said, "teach them to observe all that I commanded you." He is speaking of a long-term obedience requiring long-term discipleship by committed followers. He is speaking of faithful representation of His Way of Life. When Jesus' disciples make disciples, they say, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). The disciple-making measure asks: have I prepared myself so that in every situation I can clearly represent the Way to Life in Christ? Do all my friends and associates know that Jesus is the central commitment of my life? Do I invite people into my space to hear Jesus' instructions for them? Are my partners around the world intentionally and faithfully representing Jesus? Are they also entrusting Jesus' instructions to faithful men who will teach others?

Living the mission requires by definition a lifetime commitment to following Jesus and learning from Him. The disciple-making measure goes beyond knowing Jesus and strives to make Him known.

## ***Incorporate Them into the Local Church***

The **I** in TAMDISO reminds me that the third measure of effectiveness in living the mission is the depth of committed fellowship. Jesus' Way of Life is not lived in independence, every man under his own vine or fig tree. When He commissioned His first missionaries He sent them to baptize in His name.

The modern spirit does not like to recognize any authority, particularly in matters of religion. Many modern Christians even feel that every man should be free to either join a local church or not, to either regularly fellowship in a church or not, and to determine from his own study of the Bible what he will choose to believe and how he will choose to live the "Christian life." This is pride on a satanic scale, a scale not even known among the carnal Corinthians. The Corinthians at least chose parties, but the modern believer belongs to a party of one! No one with such a prideful heart knows anything of discipleship. I know this from bitter experience.

I was in Christ for 13 years before I took the very next step in discipleship, being baptized in His name. How my slow heart grieved Him in those days! And there was so much He wanted me to participate in, had I only obeyed Him. Within one month of my baptism on May 20, 1980, Jesus introduced me to my mission agency, to my first mentor in disciple-making and to the Daasanach who have been my mission field ever since. Who knows what lost opportunities those thirteen years have cost me?

From the first day that the first missionaries made the first disciples to Jesus, they baptized those disciples—three thousand in one day. The result was not that those new disciples went off in a corner and developed their own individualized theologies, but that "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship" (Acts 2:42). The incorporation measure asks us: am I in fellowship in a local church? Am I under the authority of the elders of that church? When I lead someone into relationship with Jesus, do I feel free (even compelled) to introduce them immediately into the fellowship of my local church? Are my partners in ministry around the world integral members in a local church where they are? Are they men under authority? Are they making

disciples to themselves or are they making disciples to Jesus, incorporating them into His Church?

In this day many who call themselves missionaries are not truly disciples, living the mission in fellowship with other members in a local church. The Church is God's Big Idea for summing up all things in one body in Christ Jesus. The Church is the hidden treasure for whom Jesus rejoiced to pay the debt of the whole field. Do we imagine that we could look Him in the eye and claim, "We are your friends, but we just think your wife is ugly and mean"? We cannot love Jesus and despise His bride; He simply will not stand for it.

We know that all believers are baptized in the Spirit by Christ Jesus Himself without the need of any human mediation. So why does Jesus command us to perform water baptism in His name? We know that we have the mind of Christ and are one in Him who is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. So why does the Bible command us, "Obey your leaders and submit to them" (Heb. 13:17)? Why should younger men be subject to the elders (I Peter 5:5)?

The answer to all of these questions is simply that our Lord Jesus would have it so. He desires to tabernacle with us without taking us out of this wicked world. He desires that we call men to follow us as we follow Him, teaching them His commandments instead of letting them reason it out on their own. He desires to start the process of bringing all things under His authority by first bringing all of His people together in one body, the church, of whom He is the Head. Are you pulling together with Him as a functioning member of that body? Are you adding to the integrity and unity of that body? Are you incorporating others into that body? Living the mission means growing deeper in committed fellowship in the body of Christ; these, therefore are the questions of the incorporation measure.

## ***Send Them Out***

The last two letters in TAMDISO remind me that my job is not complete until my friends are also living the Great Commission. Sending is the final measure of effectiveness in living the mission, the degree to which we are able to fire others with our passion. It was another missionary-scholar, Dr. Ian Hay, who first showed me the importance of this measure, and it also comes from a study of Acts.

Acts 13:3 tells us, “when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they *sent* them *out*.” This sending is the first of its kind, but flows naturally from all that Jesus taught regarding discipleship: the Father sends the Son and the Son sends the first missionaries (Jn. 20:21); the Son sends the Spirit (Jn. 16:7), and now the Spirit sends this next group of missionaries (Acts 13:2). So who was it that laid hands on them and *sent* them? A few local church leaders! There was Barnabas who was not one of Jesus’ original missionaries but had been sent to Antioch as a missionary by the local church in Jerusalem (11:22). There was Lucius who apparently trusted Christ in Cyrene when some persecuted Christians ran away from Jerusalem and began preaching in his home area (11:20). Then there was Saul whom Barnabas had personally recruited (11:25-26). In fact it appears likely that the whole group that waited upon the Spirit in Antioch were fruit from the discipling ministry of Barnabas (11:23-26), a man who was himself a second-generation disciple of Jesus. Nevertheless, Barnabas did not make his missionary travels on his own initiative, but was *sent out* by the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of his fellow-disciples. He was a man under authority; he was fully incorporated in the body; he understood discipleship.

Paul also understood that sending was part of living the mission. He was not satisfied merely to plant a church in Corinth, but also told the disciples there that as their faith would grow they would enlarge Paul’s sphere of influence and cause Paul’s preaching to extend into regions beyond (2 Cor. 10). If the Corinthians would grow to a mature faith, they would extend the reach of the gospel and carry the gospel that Paul taught them. The preacher

to the Hebrews (5:12) was frustrated because he had hoped that his disciples would by this time be teachers instead of again needing to be taught the beginning principles all over again. Many of the New Testament missionaries found it frustrating that they were unable to fire other disciples with the passion they had for Jesus, but they still recognized *sending* as their goal.

It was a great day for me when Ed Underwood, the pastor of my home church, came and brought greetings from Church of the Open Door to the Ileret Church in Kenya. He told the whole story of how I grew up in the Sunday School and learned the Bible at that local church. Then he told them of my commissioning under the hands of our local elders and how I was an ambassador not only of Jesus Christ but also of the people of our home church. Then Ed gave the Ileret Church a challenge that still reverberates, “Go and do likewise.” Today the congregations of Ileret Church send out an average of twenty short-term missionaries a year in answer to our prayers.

I heard one of the greatest radio preachers of our generation lamenting that though his church had grown out of three buildings and now numbered in the thousands, they had never successfully planted a daughter church. He has good reason to weep! And what about me? Am I praying that Jesus will send me His disciples so that I may train them? Those whom He does send, do they find me wholehearted in my passion to bring men to faith in Jesus? If they follow me, will they also be living the Great Commission? Do my partners whom I have chosen to join in ministry share this ultimate goal?

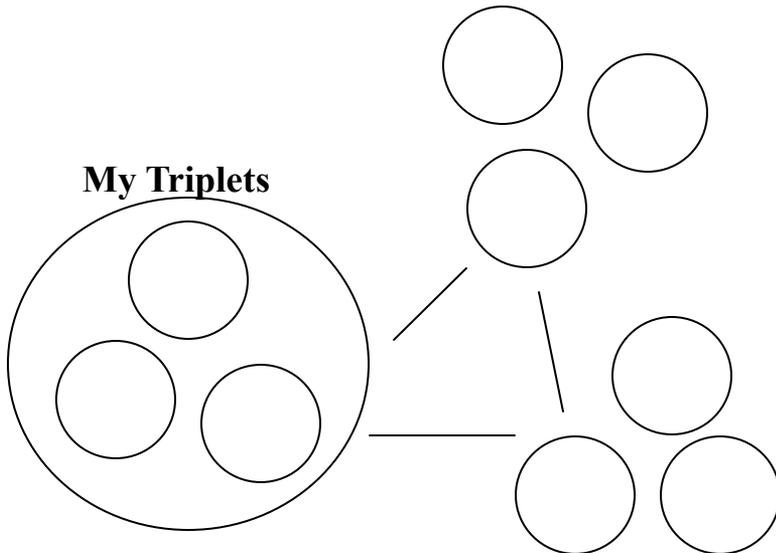
Am I merely “open to missions” if God should happen to take me up by the hair and drop me among an unreached people group? Or am I actively pursuing Jesus and alertly praying for every opportunity to make Him known? Is my faith contagious? These are the questions that measure our sending capacity, the degree to which we fire the passion of others.

Before you move on to read the conclusion of this book, take a few minutes to review Assignment #2 on the next page. This is a powerful tool that can expand your discipling ministry exponentially.

## Assignment #2— Prayer Triplets

Prayer triplets is a tool to help you *send out* disciples that are finding tabernacling difficult.

1. Begin with two other disciples to form a group of three.
2. Each of you use the quick tool in Assignment 1 to identify the various “caravans” you are traveling with.
3. Each of you choose one relational caravan to concentrate on in prayer.
4. From that circle of relationships choose three people to specifically pray for. These are your “triplets”. Write their names next to the circles below.
5. Write down the names of the triplets that your two partners are praying for next to their circles.
6. The three of you should commit to praying daily for these nine people and specifically for opportunities to disciple them.
7. Whenever you meet with your partners, share progress reports!



## The Foolishness of TAMDISO

In conclusion I must say that the Way of Life described above is not a sensible program for producing a world Christian movement. A world-wide movement should have some central planning and a well-orchestrated international network. The first step should be to get accurate accounting, then to do some cost-benefit studies to determine the most effective methodologies, and finally to make sure that all of the members of the network accept and employ the approved methodologies.

TAMDISO on the other hand seems hopelessly ineffective. It has been demonstrated that the very best maker of disciples could train a maximum of eleven or twelve men over a period of three years. No central planning or international orchestration is apparent, and while budgets are surprisingly low, there is a huge investment of man-hours to reap a benefit that is almost entirely local and individual.

The great folly of TAMDISO, however is that even the most educated and powerful preachers cannot do it with excellence. For the Way of Life to be effectively presented requires men and women who smell like Jesus to get close enough to others to be smelled, and nobody does this well (2 Cor. 2:14-17). For one thing the smell is offensive to many! If this is your objection, you are on solid ground; but I have good news.

The fragrance doesn't come from us but from God (3:5). It doesn't come from the letters of our learning but from the tabernacling Spirit (3:6), and as long as we are following the Lord Jesus and keeping our eyes on Him, He takes charge of transforming us into His image (3:17). We discover that there actually is central planning, and that even missed appointments find their place in an internationally orchestrated network (2:12-14). And the great advantage to TAMDISO is that Jesus does the part we could never do, taking away the veil that blinds our neighbors, changing them from the inside so that they can breathe in His aroma with pleasure.

Brethren, let us face squarely the fact that men's minds are already made up and no methodology, no persuasive argument can change them. Why do we strategize according to the world's

ground rules where we can never win? Let us fight where we have leverage and wrestle where we hold the advantage, engaging the world forces of this darkness in the agony of effectual prayer. Let us sell all lesser pearls, so that we may possess that One of great price. Let us follow the example of the Author and Finisher of faith, enter fully into His Passion, and join Him in living His mission.





