

Understanding the language of Discipleship

Introduction

Language is key and a clear language helps us to understand one another, helps to define who we are as a community and what it is we stand for and value. The words we use are only useful if we all understand what we are trying to mean by using them. What follows is a brief outline of some of the key words and concepts that you might hear being regularly used by us.

Learning Community

In 2012/2013 the HBC Leadership Team completed a learning community with 3dmeurope. The purpose of a Learning Community is to support and resource leaders and their church on their journey of missional discipleship. It is based around four gatherings which take place every six months over a period of two years. Each gathering has a different theme. The gatherings include prayer, prophetic, worship and devotional times as well as opportunities for the church teams to connect, share experiences and learn from each other. There were four key themes in the Learning Community process we have experienced. In March 2014 we started a second 2 year process based on the same principles with the same themes called a Community of Practice.

Gathering One: Creating a Discipleship Culture

This covered the key principles, values and learning points that help to create and establish a strong culture of missional discipleship. We look at how shared culture, mind-set and key values (covenant and kingdom, invitation and challenge) can help people take personal responsibility for their own discipleship by developing a life style that reflects: upward relationship with God; inward relationship with fellow believers; outward relationship with not yet Christians (UP, IN OUT).

Gathering Two: Multiplying Missional Leaders

This gathering looks at how we could identify, develop, train and release leaders. It included looking at vision and values, training, infrastructure, intentional discipleship environments (IPODs) and principles (Lifeshapes) eg. the triangle. We explored creating a culture of innovation & allowing freedom to fail.

Gathering Three: Launching Missional Communities

This gathering focused on how we could create, value, and release Missional Communities that impact neighbourhoods or network of relationships. There was input on developing a balanced three dimensional lifestyle of 'up in & out' and how that life can be expressed in many different ways.

Gathering Four: Leading Kingdom Movements

We looked at the principles and practices of establishing a strong resourcing centre — how to establish prayer, develop training, practice hospitality, and ensure strong Life Support. We explored how HBC could become a 'strong resource centre' into which 'missional communities' could orbit in and out on a regular basis with different rhythms.

Discipleship

What is a disciple?

A person who is learning to be like Jesus and learning to do what Jesus could do

Discipleship is the process of becoming who Jesus would be if he were you!

To be a disciple of Jesus you have to learn what Jesus taught. But more importantly you have to do what He taught and did and then seek to replicate it in others. It is intentionally following Jesus throughout your life, through the ups and downs, and faithfully trusting that you will progress forward in your relationship with God over time. It is how we can determine if we have really committed our lives to Christ, we start taking seriously His commands and actually doing them. Once we have learned Christ's teachings, we have to pass them on to others. Each one of us should become a discipler, whilst remaining a disciple ourselves. We all look like sheep from the front and like a shepherd from behind!

One of the key revelations that we want everyone connected to HBC to understand and personally reflect on and apply in their lives is the following simple statement: Disciples make the church it is NOT the church that makes disciples.

Covenant and Kingdom

Covenant and Kingdom are the two central concepts of the Old and New Testaments. In covenant two become one. As we enter into covenant with God we enter into our God-intended life: all I am belongs to God and all that is His belongs to me. The Kingdom is simply the expression of the rule of King Jesus, in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Covenant is the way in which the Bible describes and defines relationship: first our relationship with God and then our relationship with everyone else. There are 3 essential elements of covenant: Father; Identity; Obedience
Kingdom is the way in which the Bible describes and defines our responsibility to bring God's Kingdom to earth: first our responsibility to represent (re– present) God to the people we know and then to everyone else. There are 3 essential elements of kingdom: King; Authority; Power

2 new vehicles

What is a Missional Community?

A Missional Community is an extended family of relationships, centred around Jesus, who go and make disciples amongst a specific group of people.

There are 5 key ingredients that make up a MC (Acts 2: 41-47):

Friendship

Authentic community occurs, so people can belong before they believe, and will experience an extended family atmosphere and share resources.

Focus

There is a common missional vision to a specific group of people (this is a 'who', not a 'what') e.g. a specific neighbourhood or network of relationships. This is the glue that holds the MC together.

Fun

Everyone gets to contribute in every area and has fun on the way

Food

Eating together is a primary activity of the community

Fired Up

There us a sense of excitement and adventure as we seek to live our lives filled & empowered by the Holy Spirit as individuals, families and friends.

To summarise:

- A MC is a group of 15 to 30+ people (these numbers include both adults and children) It can start smaller but always needs a core of 6.
- The group's focus is defined by a missional vision to a specific neighbourhood or network of relationships
- It is a disciple-making culture.
- There is an expectation of multiplication from day 1; thus team is built, and everyone gets to contribute
- The group has a rhythm of a healthy mixture of Up, In and Out
- Up = Creative worship + prayer + bible
- In = Eating + "One anothering" i.e. putting into practice the one another statements in Paul's letters
- Out = Demonstrating the works of Jesus as we serve, as we are 'naturally supernatural' and we declare the words of Jesus.
- Small groups will naturally form as sub-sets of missional communities, particularly as we do one anothering properly. They could follow the pattern of Discipleship Cells.

What is an IPOD? (Huddle)

An IPOD (Intentional Place of Discipleship)

If you make disciples, you will grow the church. If you make disciples who can make more disciples, you will build a movement. What we need is a discipling culture, where those we disciple into covenant identity and kingdom responsibility can do the same for others. A discipling culture truly is the engine for long-term sustainable mission. This was Jesus' only method; there was no backup plan. This "God plan" rested on His disciples making more disciples who would together, as communities on mission, change the world. But how do we do discipleship that's life on-life when our time, energy and resources are limited? How can we raise up several key leaders in order to see missional disciples multiply and build a movement? At HBC Chester we shall use the "IPOD" (Intentional Place of Discipleship) to help us do this. The IPOD is a great vehicle for discipling key leaders in a variety of contexts. The IPOD supports and challenges leaders to grow in their personal discipleship and kingdom responsibility - it facilitates leaders hearing what God is saying to them and responding to His voice. This enables leaders to grow in character and competency as well as providing a structure of accountability within our church leadership.

3 primary areas you will explore in an IPOD are:

1. Recognising and using the "kairos moments" in life as opportunities of learning and growth by going around the learning circle.
2. Listening to and ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit to discern what God is saying and doing. You will reflect on two questions each time you meet: What is God saying to me? What am I going to do about that?
3. The UP/IN/OUT dimensions of your life and being willing to work on all three as you follow Jesus.

Lifeshapes – A Brief Introduction

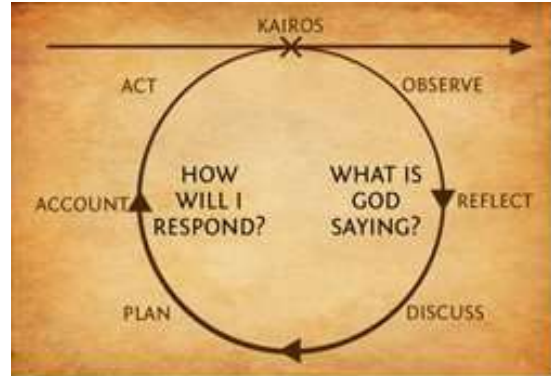
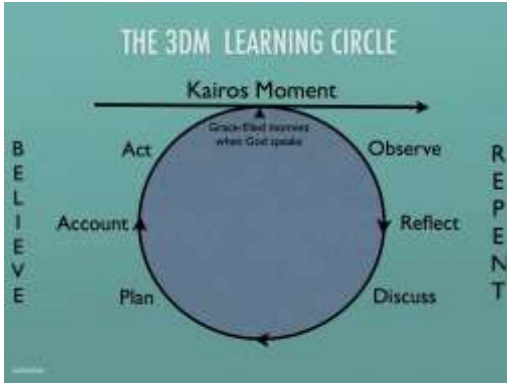
Lifeshapes are tools to help us live out a life of discipleship and mission. They are taken from biblical principles and teaching and put into simple 'shapes' to aid us in living out our Christian faith.

The 2 we are using at present are:

The Circle

The Circle is all about identifying the events in our lives that affect our emotions and actions. These represent an opportunity for learning and growth. The Circle is a key tool in discipleship, whether used personally or in discipling others. In Mark 1:15 Jesus describes the process for us:

“The time [kairos] is here. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”



The Triangle

The Triangle is all about getting our balance of relationships right. There are three dimensions: Upwards, in our relationship with God; Inwards, in our relationships with other Christians; Outwards, in mission and relationship with the world.

Up/In/Out

As we see in the gospels, Jesus had 3 great loves and thus 3 distinct dimensions to his life:

- Up: deep and connected relationship to his Father and attentiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- In: constant investment in the relationships with those around him (disciples)
- Out: entering the brokenness of the world, looking for a response individually i.e. people coming into a relationship with Him and his Father, and systemically i.e. systems of injustice being transformed.

