

CASE STUDY

NORTHERN GHANA, AFRICA

This case study is about a group of believers whom God has used to start a discipleship movement in Northern Ghana among the Gonja people who are Folk Muslims (meaning they have mixed Islam with spiritist/animist beliefs). Over the past 3 years, they have started over 500 groups with about 5,000 people, over 2,000 of which are baptisms from the harvest.

2008

- Terry and Amy, an American missionary couple, moved to Northern Ghana to study language and begin using an oral approach to church planting among the unreached tribes.
- During this time, they met Isaac, a local Gonja tribal believer, who had a passion to reach his own people. They decided to partner with Isaac to reach the tribes around them.
- The methods they use were similar to a western church building model though, as they gathered together in larger groups of 20 – 50 people under a tree to sing songs, pray, share testimonies, and listen to a Bible story. There was no accountability (check up) to see if the believers were obeying. The believers were also not taught to share their story or God's story with the people they knew or to reproduce the group. Not much fruit was born out of this approach.

2014

- In July of 2014, they started using a different method called TRT (Training for Rural Trainers), which resulted in more baptisms (114) and groups started (30).
- This approach introduced them to the 3/3 Discipleship Group approach and the Creation to Christ story set, as well as a long gospel presentation for believers to share. This helped equip all of the believers to start sharing the gospel, as well as start a discipleship group using the 3/3 approach.
- The manual was quite long though, and was still a little too complicated for oral learners.

2015

- In February of 2015, Terry and his two key leaders, Isaac and Moses, attended a training led by Curtis in Burkina Faso on multiplying disciples and simple churches.
- The training gave them some simpler tools to use, in addition to what they already had, as it was very similar to the TRT training method.
- The training also included a lot of real life modeling and assisting. Isaac was able to start a group with some people in the city that week, and then that group started another group.
- They immediately came back to the Gonja tribe and implemented what they had learned.
- They came up with a goal of 25,000 groups in 5 years, which was a lofty goal, as it would mean 1 group for every 10 houses in the Gonja tribe.
- By the end of 2015 they had 321 new baptisms and 130 new groups had been started.

2016

- By the end of 2016, they had 422 new baptisms and an additional 81 groups were started.
- Leaders were meeting together often to pray, learn new skills and talk about how the work was going and give reports.
- Terry was also meeting with Isaac and Moses once a month.

2017

- By the end of 2017, the work exploded and increased by 4 times the size it had been. 380 new groups were added and 1650 new baptisms were performed.
- There were multiple streams of disciples with 10+ generations, including one stream that was 26 generations deep. This stream of disciples also had 17 new generations created in 2017 alone!
- At least 37 tribes had been impacted by the gospel by the end of 2017.
- Work was also begun in the country of Ivory Coast in the middle of 2017. Within 7 months, 60 groups were started and a few streams of disciples were down to the 6th or 7th generation. Four tribal groups were also being impacted by the gospel. This work was also being sustained by the local believers from the moment it arrived, without financial assistance from outside.



EFFECTIVE METHODS USED TO START THE DISCIPLESHIP MOVEMENT:

- Simple, easily reproducible and sustainable methods were used.
- The introduction of the 3/3 discipleship group process played a big part in the reproduction of simple, easy to lead discipleship groups.
- Every person was expected to make disciples and share the Gospel. The simple tools they used equipped every believer to do this.
- The oral component was also critical to seeing success. They partnered with Bible translation organizations to put the Bible story sets on memory chips for phones so believers could listen to the story sets in their mother tongue, since they couldn't read or write.
- Most of the translations were done by reading the English Bible and then having a person translate what they read in English verbally into their mother tongue.
- Already existing social groups played an important role in the fast reproduction of groups. Many of the Gonja people like to drink Chinese Green Tea in groups of 5 or 6 at night. Once the gospel was introduced to a group and some or all of them accepted it, they were then taught to share it with others, and they brought it to other tea groups in other villages.
- Contextualization by wearing tribal clothes instead of a suit and tie; celebrating the culture instead of trying to make it a western "Christian" culture.
- Writing songs in the local language. One set of 50 stories had a song to go with each story.
- Financial aid was only given for key projects to expedite the expansion of the movement by buying a few motorcycles and helping to pay for some of the key leader's travel expenses.
- The movement is led by ordinary farmers and workers who are not helped financially.
- There is an emphasis on obeying what you learn and passing it on right away.
- If God opens the door, they walk through it.
- Short-term missionaries are key. They learned not to send people to other areas as long-term missionaries. Thus money is saved and families don't need to relocate to different cultures.
- They learned to redefine partnership so that it is nationally led instead of being led by a western missionary.
- They received good trainings and advice from practitioners of disciple making movements.
- Pouring into key, fruitful leaders and meeting them often.
- Contextualizing worship to reflect cultural styles that are not western.
- Focusing on lost people, not on trying to only train people in church buildings.
- They didn't focus on building church buildings and didn't introduce western church

models.

- There were no white/western people going into the villages to reach people, so as to make the movement appear to be locally led and not tied to westerners.
- No centralized trainings (they didn't pay for people to come to them and be trained). They went to people in the villages and modeled and assisted in real life with no 2-3 day trainings.



OBSTACLES LEADERS FACED:

- Heavy persecution and spiritual attacks (robberies, health problems, deaths, etc...)
- National leaders falling into sin or other difficulties, and needing to restore them once they repented and showed they wanted to disciple people again.
- They learned not to target or try to motivate western-minded national church leaders. Over the past few years, they have trained over 100 pastors in a missions perspectives course, and then in how to make disciples using the 3/3 groups and by sharing their story and God's story... but none of the pastors have done any thing with it. *Note: This is why one should only focus on pastors or churches of peace, who are discontent with what they currently are doing and want to try a new way.*
- Ghanaian culture that does not save money, because if you have money, your family expects you to help pay for other family members bills or houses. Thus believers have constant money problems, and it is also difficult for them to fund the movement.

What the 3/3 Discipleship Group format looks like:

