

Book Review

Aychi B. R. with Dave Coles, *Living Fire: Advancing God's Kingdom in Challenging Places*

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Aychi B. R. with Dave Coles (2025). *Living Fire: Advancing God's Kingdom in Challenging Places*. Richardson, TX, USA: Beyond, 240 pp., \$12.99, paperback, ISBN: 979-8-9870207-5-3, \$7.99, ebook.

Abstract

Living Fire: Advancing God's Kingdom in Challenging Places presents a detailed framework for initiating and sustaining Disciple Making Movements (DMM) among Unreached People Groups (UPG) in African contexts. The work builds upon themes introduced in Aychi B. R.'s previous article "Factors that Multiply Movements" in *Fruit to Harvest* (2019), while offering fresh insights into movement sustainability and leadership development. The book expounds on key factors for successful disciple-making movements. It provides both biblical foundations and practical implementations, supported by real life examples.

Key Words: church planting, disciple-making, DMM, indigenous leadership, movement dynamics, multiplication, sustainability

Introduction

Unlike Dave Coles' previous collaboration with Aila Tasse in *Cabbages in the Desert*, which focused on case studies (reviewed in *Global Missiology*: Naylor 2024), *Living Fire* presents a systematic analysis of DMM principles and practices as revealed through a family of disciple-making movements initiated by Aychi B. R. in Africa. The book provides a description of processes, principles, and practices illustrated by numerous impacting examples of ministry development over years of field experience. While many of these principles have been explained elsewhere, what distinguishes this book is its demonstration of how these principles and practices have been employed for effective disciple-making multiplication. Valuable lessons are offered about both successful movements and potential failure points.

Content Analysis

The book's three sections—"Ignite," "Accelerate," and "Sustain"—develop fundamental elements of successful disciple-making movements, beginning with the author's (Aychi) own spiritual journey and calling to DMM ministry. At its core, the work emphasizes the essential nature of conviction and commitment in DMM ministry. This commitment manifests through dedicated prayer, access ministry, and significant engagements with communities.

Aychi stresses the importance of maintaining a healthy dissatisfaction with the condition of a lost world—a dissatisfaction that leads to a God-sized vision, coupled with passionate perseverance and love in the face of persecution. Such faith is often generated and strengthened through supernatural experiences, leading believers to bold proclamation and selfless service. These DMM principles are not merely theoretical constructs but are demonstrated through real-life examples of sacrificial dedication to the cause of Christ despite personal loss and opposition.

The chapter organization follows a logical progression from foundational concepts through implementation and sustainability. Beginning with healthy dissatisfaction and extraordinary prayer, the text moves through relationship-focused ministry approaches and access strategies before addressing more complex topics such as indigenous incarnation of the gospel and multiplication strategies. The delineation of the concepts is not an algorithm for ministry promising a guaranteed outcome, but a challenge for all DMM practitioners to evaluate their own priorities and values in disciple-making—what to adopt and what to avoid.

Implementation and Practice

The real-life descriptions demonstrate which practices lead to spiritual fruit, multiplication, and the ongoing establishment of churches. In discussing obedient relationship to Christ, Chapter 17 explores the indigenous incarnation of the gospel, emphasizing how Discovery Bible Studies (described in Chapter 13 and Appendix B) keep people “rooted in Scripture,” leading the groups towards practical application of biblical discoveries. This approach prioritizes divine guidance over personal or cultural preferences, creating a framework for authentic spiritual growth.

The concept of sacrificial servanthood receives particular attention in Chapter 23, “Every Believer Active.” Here, the author explores “the power of prayer, the power of obedience, the power of listening to God, the power of courage to go wherever he leads, and the power of relationship—going to serve with no title” (161). This chapter includes powerful testimonies of perseverance through persecution, illustrating the practical costs and rewards of committed discipleship.

Miracles, healings, dreams, and deliverance are all experiences that have been a bridge to the gospel. Aychi explains in Chapter 16, “Supernatural Manifestations,” how these “occur quite commonly in these movements” (109) and are interpreted as God confirming his truth. It may be that this dimension of God’s revealed power is a key condition in the establishment of disciple-making movements, emphasizing the moving of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith.

Ecclesiological Framework

Chapter 24, “Church Redefined,” presents Aychi’s ecclesiological framework and defines church as “a local group of baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who gather regularly for worship, nurturing, and fellowship. Then they depart the gathering, seeking to obey all the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ” (166). This definition intentionally emphasizes function over form, advocating for small group sizes (averaging 25 people or two families) and focusing on movement DNA rather than structural elements.

The essential elements of a biblical church are not specifically listed, but there are hints that reliance on the Bible and the Holy Spirit for ecclesiology leads to a move away from the authority of established church structures and practices. The Holy Spirit guided the first believers “to acknowledge that believing in Jesus and obeying the word of God, with cultural sensitivity, was sufficient. This way, all can grow within their cultural context as part of the larger body of Christ” (167).

This ecclesiology contrasts with the practices and assumptions of traditional churches, raising the question of how these emerging “groups of baptized believers” relate to the existing traditional churches. Aychi suggests that developing relationships in a spirit of love with local traditional churches on the level of a kingdom vision of the great commission will create goodwill. Because

the DMM focus is to reach the unreached, the existing local churches do not feel threatened. The goal is to establish shared definitions of “church” and “disciple” that will encourage the traditional churches to support the movement of disciples making disciples. Strategic partnership with traditional churches allows for “freedom [for DMM practitioners] to minister contextually while still offering oversight [by traditional churches], ensuring both boundaries and permission are in place” (171).

The collaboration with a wide variety of church traditions to plant new groups among the unreached outside of those traditions seems fraught with potential tensions. I speculate from my own experience in Southeast Asia that cultural distinctions hamper assimilation and so allow for comfort with ecclesial separation, while permitting affirmation and support between the communities. Whatever the case, the fact that many traditional churches in the region have embraced this disciple-making vision and set apart leaders to play a key role in the establishment of DMM groups indicates that the impact of this multiplication methodology has, to a large extent, outweighed the demands of traditional practices. Nonetheless, it does raise the question about the nature of current and potential tensions with traditional churches that can hinder movements.

Leadership Development

The leadership development model presented in the Chapter 24, "Church Redefined," creates a clear hierarchical structure for Aychi's DMM model while maintaining flexibility and local autonomy. From Area Managers through to Church Planters/Disciple Makers, each level serves specific functions in maintaining movement health and multiplication of both groups and leaders. This structure is complemented by the Strategy Coordinator Leaders' Training (SCLT) framework, which emphasizes peer-to-peer interaction and the sharing of fruitful practices. What is notable is the stress on a non-hierarchical dynamic—a "shared priesthood circle"—that eschews personal power dynamics and encourages participants to ask questions, challenge concepts, correct problems, and offer suggestions. The focus is on the content because of a common commitment to the mission, not on personalities.

Sustainability and Financial Independence

Chapter 28 of *Living Fire* offers essential insights into fostering financial sustainability for thriving movements. The author emphasizes the importance of community ownership rooted in biblical generosity, firmly rejecting dependency on external funding. This approach does not mean completely rejecting outside support but recognizing that dependence on external wealth and influence can undermine a movement's vitality. Aychi's approach encourages local responsibility and ownership through practical guidelines that discourage fully funding initiatives from external sources, ensuring participants actively contribute to the movement's sustainability.

One important contribution this chapter makes is the insistence on teaching biblical generosity. This approach helps participants develop a sense of ownership and accountability before God as they discover their role in his mission. The chapter also provides a valuable collection of biblical principles and verses that can be used to guide disciple-making groups and leaders in cultivating a practice of generosity that aligns with God's will, character, and mission.

Critical Evaluation

Living Fire has many strengths for guiding DMM practitioners, such as clear practical guidance for starting and leading movements and a strong leadership development framework. However, there are some areas that call for further elaboration.

Contextual adaptation: The book describes an African ministry context where the Bible is deeply respected as a holy book, religion and spirituality are taken seriously, miracles are not seen as unusual, and there is a strong reverence for God. Such spiritual openness creates a fertile ground for disciple-making movements. However, these principles and practices may not directly apply in more secular societies. While there may be less opposition and greater freedom for ministry, receptivity and resonance are often much less. Practitioners using this book as a guide will need to adapt its principles and practices to fit their specific cultural and spiritual contexts.

Theological bases for DBS: The discussion of Discovery Bible Study (DBS) in chapter 17 and Appendix B is practical and aligns well with DMM practices in other parts of the world. However, the discussion would be even stronger with a deeper exploration of the theological foundations of DBS. These include a high view of the Holy Spirit's role to guide the process (rather than a teacher), confidence in the Bible's clarity and accessibility (the perspicuity of Scripture), and a hermeneutic that views the Bible as a revelation of God's character, will, and mission. The discovery dynamic ensures that the Bible is not treated as a religious icon, a manual of instructions, or an inaccessible source of wisdom. Instead, it is to be embraced as a call and pathway to pursue a relation with God through Christ.

Conflict resolution: The book acknowledges potential tensions in working with traditional churches, but including more detailed case studies on conflict resolution would make the presentation even more practical. The book would also benefit from additional examples of leadership development challenges, especially around balancing oversight and autonomy, and how these issues are being addressed. These added details would be valuable for other practitioners involved in disciple-making movements.

Conclusion

Living Fire is a valuable resource for understanding and applying a Disciple Making Movement (DMM) approach to church planting in difficult settings. Its systematic approach to DMM implementation, supported by extensive field experience and concrete examples, makes it valuable for both practitioners and scholars. Some aspects would benefit from deeper exploration, particularly regarding contextual adaptability and conflict resolution. Nevertheless, the principles and practices presented provide essential guidance for those engaged in or considering DMM ministry. The book successfully bridges theoretical frameworks with practical application, offering a robust foundation for DMM initiatives in contexts where traditional church planting approaches have proven ineffective.

References

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