The Away Kit



The Away Kit

Jon Paul Witt
Dignity

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English

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Preface: Life Springs

The image on the cover of this book, *Tree in Deadvlei* was taken by myself in August 2015. Deadvlei and the surrounding area Sossusvlei are situated in the Namib desert in Western Namibia. The regions sees incredibly rare rainfall meaning it is one of the driest places on Earth.

You would be forgiven for thinking that there is no life there at all.

Yet, when the rain does come, either as a storm or as mists from the sea, the most amazing thing happens. Flowers start to bloom in the desert. Whole tracts of land that were dead and barren suddenly bloom in colour and life. The photograph above is taken in the same area when the rains have come. It is amazing.

All throughout the dry season the seeds are ready and waiting for the water. They are dormant, not dead. It does not look like it, but they are there.

Jesus said, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few' (Luke 10:2). I wonder if some of the problems we face are caused because we look around us and we simply do not have the same vision that Jesus had. We see the dead desert, when there is actually life all around.

Jon Paul Witt



Welcome to The Away Kit

The Away Kit is designed to help you to train people who can pioneer a form of church which we call Life Groups. We have written these materials with sub-Saharan Africa in mind but you could use them in many other parts of the developing world. You can run this training in any area you are visiting as part of short or longer term visit or if you are working with organisations present in the same types of areas. The lessons can also be used to teach people the important contribution that radical small groups can bring to urban and rural settings elsewhere..

When people think of church planting, they think of buildings, the structure, the finance and many other concerns. **For Dignity, the work of the church is concerned with people.** For us, this is expressed as Life Groups, groups of 10-30 people meeting together, learning about Jesus, loving their community practically and planting other groups.

We intentionally do not call the groups 'Churches' or 'Dignity Groups'. We believe that it is important that a group is solely owned by the community and those within it. We have

found that calling such a group a 'church' can cause unwanted friction with other groups and also 'put off' those who do not attend church at all.

That is why we settled on the term 'Life Groups', simply groups that bring life in all its forms to the wider community. Life Groups reach people, disciple people, unify the effort of the wider church and provide practical support to people. What is not to like?

You may not feel that you are a pioneer or a church planter. That is ok. In the same way Jesus sent simple fisherman out in to the world to reach it, so he can send you. We have seen people with no education change their communities. As God has helped them, we know that God will also help you to pioneer groups that can really make a difference in the spiritual and practical lives of many people. Feeling under qualified or not gifted is actually a great place to start.

As you read *The Away Kit* you will discover that it describes a team effort where the aim is to equip others. We have assumed that you already have connections in the area where you plan to use *The Away Kit*. Maybe you have visited before and have already partnered with people, maybe you have a host person or organisation in the area or maybe you live there. *The Away Kit* helps you to plant, reach people and transform community by giving practical details, training materials and useful hints and tips drawn from a wealth of experience stretching back over 10 years.

It is designed to be used alongside *Plant*, a short training course we have written. Find out more about *Plant* and our other resources in the next chapter.

We can do this together. Go for it!

Jon and all the team at Dignity



Resources to use with The Away Kit

The resources that Dignity produces have been developed over years to help people in remote, financially or educationally challenged areas learn to know Jesus and the Christian faith as well as understand God's calling to show love to our communities.

Plant



Plant is the companion book to The Away Kit and you will need a copy of it as you work through this kit. Plant was written to help villagers teach one another how to start and run Life Groups. It is written to be accessible to anyone wanting to train others. You can also use it to train yourself! It is a condensed version of Dignity's Living the Light training that has been run with thousands of villagers in sub-Saharan Africa.

Foundations



Foundations is a series of ground breaking discipleship materials designed specifically to be used with Life Groups. It helps people to explore and grow in their relationship with God and encourages them to serve their community. The material is presented over a series of 4 books giving structured lessons for at least one year. Many groups use the material one week and then revise it the next, giving material for 2 years.

Love Your Village



Love Your Village is a 10 week study course designed for Life Groups that are more mature and have grown into their relationship with Jesus and their community. Love Your Village helps a group to understand 'why' and 'how' practically being involved in the community is critical for their own relationship with Jesus and the wider community.

The Journey Course



Studying *Journey* will give you an opportunity to learn about working with God, starting in your own village or community. You will be able to do the learning right where you are, even with the friends around you. As the course progresses you will share the message and everyday love of Jesus to the villages and communities around you.

Obtaining Resources and Online Training Sessions

All our materials are specifically designed for Life Groups but could be used with any small group. Our materials are available digitally or in print.

You can view sample sessions and order our resources online at www.dignityonline.org.uk/
publications or by contacting our UK office:

Email: hello@dignityonline.org.uk

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Dignity's Story is My Own

People often ask me how Dignity began. I answer this using three stories.

'God's power does not trickle down, it flows up.' Solwezi, 2005

Around 2005, I found myself in Solwezi, North Western Zambia. Today it is very much the up and coming bustling town. A huge growth in local mining has seen to that. Back in 2005 this was not the case. It was a dustbowl of a town and for better or worse was a base we used in training leaders from bush churches in the surrounding 200km or so. We had been doing this for a number of years and if I am honest I was frustrated. There is an orthodoxy within the church that you always start with the leaders. If you want to train a wide group of people, start with those in the highest position. The idea is that the training and ideas will trickle down to the 'bottom'.

The reason I was frustrated was very simple. Despite spending many occasions over years with this group of church leaders, I did not believe anything was changing. I cannot

actually remember an occasion where a benefit trickled down to someone. So I thought, 'Hey! This seems like a complete waste of time.' The effect of what we were doing was restricted to the individuals who we gathered time after time.

In short, I thought we could do better. Praying outside of the church venue, I told this to God with a fair amount of passionate frustration thrown in. I really felt God say to me, 'Yes, you are right. We can do better.' In particular I felt very drawn to the beginning of Isaiah 61, specifically verse 3.

'They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.'

This was it! I felt God saying, 'My people, those that will be my people, I have planted them in every place, every village. Who is helping them to grow, realise who I am and take hold of what I want them to do?' I have got be honest, there really was not and still is not many people or organisations trying to work in the more rural, remote and difficult parts of Africa. So the answer in my mind was well, no-one is.

Thinking back now, God was communicating the opposite of the trickle down idea. He was saying start at the bottom and these men and women can change their own world with me. On reflection that is not surprising is it? God has always seemed to esteem and favour the poor, the victim, the oppressed and led them to do wonders. From the historic nation of Israel coming out of slavery and being chosen to show God's light, believers in a foreign land like Esther, or Joseph the youngest brother sold into slavery by his brothers becoming the Prime Minister of Egypt, God's power is always seen though the weak. Why would he be any different now? **God's influence does not trickle down, it flows up.**

There was a sense of, 'Well there you have it.' God had spoken and that set me and what was to become Dignity on a radically different path to where I had been before.

'Nothing we do lasts': The need for strategy Mwinilunga, 2007

Despite being what would be called a 'missionary' myself, I have never found it particularly easy to get along with some of my fellow missionaries. I am sure this applies to me too, but I have always thought that many have been in the bush for far too long. I think it is so easy to lose sight of what you are called to do when you are away from 'home' for so long.

So despite my misgivings, I felt like I should visit a mission station in a very remote part of Zambia. With my friends Mark and Andy, I went to meet a few church planters who were working in Zambia and some of the surrounding countries like Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Over two days I listened to the stories and exploits of this lovely bunch of people. Their stories were amazing! People had been raised from the dead, healed and many people had become Christians. They had travelled to remote parts of Africa, fantastic people of God who had vision.

However, after listening for 2 days, they seemed a little discouraged and downcast. This struck me as quite strange. Their reason was simple, they all said, 'nothing we do lasts.'

They had vision, they had ability and they had passion. They did not have strategy.

What is great is that we can learn lessons and strategies from church history. One such lesson can be drawn from John Wesley, a 18th Century powerful evangelist.

'John Wesley was not the greatest preacher of his day. His occasional friend and sometime nemesis George Whitefield was that. "My brother Wesley acted wisely," Whitefield said. "The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in societies, and thus preserved the fruit of his labor. This I neglected, and my people are a *rope of sand*."¹

Both John Wesley and George Whitfield were responsible for bringing many people to Christ. It could be argued that whilst George Whitfield was the better speaker, John Wesley saw that people needed long term support, teaching and encouragement to follow Jesus properly. With this in mind, he started what became known as 'Class Meetings'. Those learning to follow Jesus would meet week by week in whatever room they could find. They would pinpoint areas of each others lives where each needed help. They would learn about Christ and they would seek to serve those around them. It was the 'class meetings' that made the difference. George Whitfield did not do this and in his own words, the people he worked with were 'a rope of sand'.

In contrast, Wesley's work caused transformation across society and became the foundation of the Methodist movement. The effect was so great that some historians have

¹ Jason Byassee, 2009, Methodists & Microcredit, First Things, viewed 27 July 2018 < https://www.firstthings.com/article/2009/11/methodists-microcredit>

commented that perhaps the profound social and spiritual change that occurred in England at the time, saved the country from a bloody revolution like the one that took place in France.

It begins Lufwanyama, 2008

In 2008, there were no Life Groups, no people involved, nothing. We had a huge mind-map and a lot of ideas. A few of us spent some time thinking, praying and strategising but there were no guarantees and nothing tangible.

We had about 4 months in Lufwanyama, Northern Zambia to explore and execute a plan to start what later became know as Life Groups. These would become the backbone for a movement that has brought God's word and life to thousands of people.

We spent time in the bush, partnered with some people, overcame challenges and managed to help five people to start Life Groups. These groups met in mud churches, schools and even under a tree!

It was a fantastic time, but I cannot underline enough the fact that it was really hard and we really were following a leading from God. We were not far away from not knowing what we were doing ourselves!

Today Mkushi, 2018

At the time of writing, ten years after Lufwanyama, there are Life Groups in six countries: Zambia, Namibia, Angola, Tanzania, Kenya and the UK. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are nearly 600 groups with over 11,000 people attending them who can impact around 33,000 people. Pause there! Wow! I could never in my wildest dreams have believed that things could have grown so much. I still cannot. **Thanks be to God.**

People have asked me how this has happened. Of course the correct answer is, 'God has done this!' That would be correct. However, I do believe there is a specific reason why God has done it.

Right from the very beginning, Dignity sought to believe in the power of ordinary everyday people to do extraordinary exploits for Jesus. We decided at every opportunity to give away, to trust, to empower, to honour, to believe in every person that we met no matter how lowly, normal or unqualified they were. We worked from the bottom up. Just like

Isaiah 61 verse 3 says, 'They [not us] will be called oaks of righteousness.' We decided to take God at his word and trust him. We have been amazed by what people have done. To us they are 'oaks of righteousness.'

That is why I am not the next chapter in what God is doing through Dignity.

You are.

You must enter the story for yourself.



What are Life Groups?

The ideas behind Life Groups are nothing new. They are simply groups of between 10 and 30 people that meet week by week and work together. Most people in the church are used to that idea. However there are a few important differences from a normal church small group.

Life Groups work cross-denominationally across the church spectrum. They may act as a church in places where there is not one, whilst in other places they act as a group that can unify and make effective the work of the existing churches. Either way they reach the wider community with the Gospel and bring transformation through community involvement.

- They are a community where everyone is welcome.
- They disciple people in the Christian faith and work practically to help their communities.

They seek to reproduce themselves and plant new Life Groups.

Maybe the best way of thinking about them is as small mission groups for a community, a workplace or an area. We believe they are the face and the future of the church.

Why Life Groups?

We have already looked at the example of John Wesley in the 18th century. In more recent times, the Pentecostal movements of Latin America have used small groups to evangelise and disciple whole areas. These areas would be known as 'favelas' (poor slum or high density areas). People living in these areas usually have little education and little material hope in life. A striking feature of these groups is that they seek to interpret and apply the Bible for themselves and have a focus on being taught by the Holy Spirit. During the late 20th century these groups grew like wild fire, leading to Pentecostalism becoming the fastest growing type of church in the world.

This was not simply a Pentecostal phenomenon. In the 1970s the Catholic church explored what became known as base communities. These 'communities' were simply small groups of people learning to live and act like Jesus together. Two ideas were very important:

Believing Right and Living Right. They called these two ideas Orthodoxy and

Orthopraxis. The large names do not matter, what is important is simply the idea that true church is when you combine the two ideas together. It is not simply good enough to believe correctly. That belief is always shown in living correctly and being like Jesus to those around us.

The book of James in the Bible puts it like this, 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27).

We could recite hundreds more examples throughout church history. For example, the monastic movements in the middle ages sought to combine living humbly, helping the poor and learning together. This at a time when many believed the mainstream church had lost its way.

In the book of Acts in the Bible we go back to what people call the early church and read that believers met in peoples homes, in the marketplace, community or wherever else they could. There were no church buildings as such (although early Jewish christians met in the synagogue).

Now of course, we do have church buildings, structures and organisations. If we are being honest, could we ask whether we have actually lost our way in terms of these powerful examples of reaching out, evangelising and discipling people?

Life Groups give us a concrete way to recover a dynamic that the church has in the main lost. They help us to unify the effort of the church, learn together, reach out and serve together with the result of transforming our community and fulfilling the will of Jesus.



Setting Off...

If you are reading this it probably means you are about to be jetting off to participate in a short term trip or that you already working in a mission situation in some part of the world.

Whoever you are, your or your host's proximity to people who can make a difference is key.

The aim is to pray, identify, gather and train a group of people in your target community. These people will be the ones who can plant and run Life Groups in and around the area you are working in or are visiting.

The effect of what you are about to do could outlast your visit or project for years. That is a very exciting thought! Hold onto it.

So what do you need to do before you go? This part of the kit will help you to think through that. There are 4 important foundations to lay before you go. They are all about laying spiritual and practical foundations that are to do with people.

- **Pray** for the people and areas you are visiting or work in.
- Identify people with a heart for community in the area you are visiting or working.
- **Mather** the correct people in the area.
- **Mathematical Prepare and run the training** with the people who are gathered.

Why a movement of people is so very important

We have learnt in Dignity that the best way of making a difference in a community for Jesus is through the people. Many focus only on projects and processes, but we have found that if you want change to last, it must be planted in the hearts of the people who comprise the community in the first place. That way, what you give to the people through Jesus can last for generations. It can be passed form person to person, group to group and the effect can be huge.



Foundation 1: Pray for the people

As part of your mission trip or work I am sure that you already have some people praying for your mission. That is great! Below are some suggested items for prayer. We have also found it helpful to use social media and technology to help spread the word!

We would suggest that you pray for the following:

- Thank God that he has given you (your team) the opportunity to plant his word in the heart of the community.
- Pray for the people in the area where you are visiting. Pray that God will help them to be open to starting something new.
- Pray that those who do not know Jesus yet will have their eyes opened and understand the change he can bring.
- \mathbf{M} Pray the verses of Isaiah 61:1-4 over the area you are visiting.

- Pray for the unity and witness of God's people, that the church would begin to move as one, not as many separate parts.
- Pray that God would bring specific people who will be oaks of righteousness to your training course.
- Pray for any social issues in the area that you are aware of. If there are any issues of evil (social or moral), pray that God would restrict this and root them out.
- Margine Pray for yourselves that God would give you vision and hope for what he can do.
- Pray for any cultural issues that you are aware of. For example, you may wish to pray that people would have hope and enabling for themselves rather than a sense of being hopeless and dependent upon the outside world. Another example, may be that communities tend to be suspicious of anything new and would label any training you bring as wrong, simply because of this. Bring any of these issues before God in prayer.

As to how you pray, that is completely up to you! There is not a correct way to pray. Each of us either alone or with other people should feel free to pray in whatever way we see fit. The key is that we worship God and ask for his help with the different areas of the work we will be doing.

A couple of helpful suggestions would be to produce a small prayer letter that you can use for each member of the team and their friends to pray throughout the week. You may want to organise a few prayer meetings specifically to pray for your trip and what you are hoping to achieve. You may even have an online prayer conference by video. It does not matter how. It does matter that we pray!

Get the Word Out

- You could set up a social media page or use group messenger app to keep people involved in real time.
- Let us know at Dignity what you are doing and where you are going. We would love to get people to pray for you as well.



Foundation 2: Identify people with a heart for their community!

Often when people think of gathering people for training they think of the leaders, the gogetters and the trend setters. We overlook many people who are in plain sight right in front of us. We are not simply looking for the correct ability, we are looking for the correct heart.

In the story form Solwezi shared earlier I said that, 'God's influence does not trickle down, it flows up.' Remember that it is important to consider everyone who is part of the Church.

One of the most important questions is simply, 'How do you identify people with the best heart?' Another biblical word for this is discernment and it is a gift that does not always come naturally to us that we must pray for and practise.

Sometimes it is a gut feeling, a prompting of the Spirit about a particular person or group of people. Aspects of discernment can also be learned and applied. If you, together with your host or contacts, think and pray about these measures, it will help you to identify the correct people. Here are some questions that are great to consider when inviting people. You are looking for pioneers, those called to reach their village.

- **M** Who is already displaying a heart for the villages.
- **Mat is their reputation?**
- Mow has this person acted over a period of time?
- Mo you or your host feel that anyone in particular should be invited?
- ☑ Do not do everything for people. Leave space for people to make their own effort to attend the training.

Over many years experience I have learnt that if you leave this matter un-broached or skip this step you simply end up with with the people who were available last minute to come. These may well not be the best people.



Foundation 3: Gather the correct people!

Once you or your host have identified people that have a heart for the community, the step is to get them on board and to actually start. This happens through a process of visiting, praying with and talking to people in the community. This process culminates in gathering these people together to train them in how to run Life Groups in community where they live or work.

Ideas and pointers worth remembering

You are looking to gather a small group of representatives from the community. ■

If there are a number of churches in the village, you want to unify their effort before they begin. One way of doing this is to ask the contact in the village whom you or your host know to invite up to 3 or 4 individuals from other church groups that they know. They then attend as a group and hear everything for the first time together. There may not be a church or any Christians in the community that you are reaching out to. In that case,

speaking to the community leadership as a first task can be helpful to identify others who would want to learn about God and serve their community.

It helps to visit each community and explain what can happen.

Within Zambia, we developed a system where every village that was going to receive training from us would first be paid an initial visit from a Dignity team member. There was no magic formula to this, it was simply a friendly visit to explain to the person we had identified what would happen. We would normally ask them to invite those in their area from different churches who may be interested, that way we could explain to a larger group of people to begin with. We would also take this opportunity to pray with the group and more importantly get them to begin praying for their village.

Get a List. Be prepared and invite people early.

We have found that in many of the places we work that everything tends to happen on the last day. Try not to let this happen as more often than not, it does not allow the correct people to come, you simply get the most popular or the most available. Asking for a list of attendees that have been contacted and have confirmed they are coming helps the process to get organised early.

You are ideally looking for a maximum of 40 people, with 3 - 4 from each village or community area.

We have encountered situations where people wanted to invite 200 or more people. As well as expensive, I would argue that this is ineffective. Remember, the central idea of this approach is to equip those whom God is calling to reach their community. As you train these people, they in turn will gather others in their area and impact them.

In terms of minimising a sense of dependency, I have also found it is best to work this way. Whether you like it or not, if you visit a village area, you will more than likely be placed on a pedestal. We want to try and avoid that situation. After all if someone places you on a pedestal, they place themselves below you. We do not believe God sees these people this way. We take every opportunity to magnify a villagers contribution and to minimise focus upon our own. This is simply so a small group of people feel empowered and enabled to reach and serve their community for themselves.

Mathematical There are many ways to do this.

You will read in *Plant* that there are actually a number of ways to start groups in villages. In *The Away Kit* we have concentrated on the method which uses a team coming from the outside to train people. There are however many instances where groups can plant other groups.



When you see this image in the following sections, we are referring you to *Plant* which you will be using alongside *The Away Kit*.



Foundation 4: Prepare and run the training

You are standing in a mud church, an African city or under a tree. This is the time where you have identified everyone, you have got them together and you are actually going to deliver the lessons to the people we have begun to work with.

This is the part that most people get nervous about. There really is no need to be worried. God has used many others before you, we are absolutely sure that he can use you.

The key for successful training is preparation. We have done all of the hard work and the heavy lifting for you. We have made loads of mistakes over the last 10 years and continue to do so. Our mistakes are your gains!



We have written *Plant* to be used by people who often have minimal education so it is intentionally simple to use and really easy to follow. Many Life Groups are planted by villagers themselves using the material. *Plant* is a reduced version of the *Living the Light* Life Group training.

Plant focuses on the practicalities of running Life Groups (the what and how) and omits some of the theory behind them (the why). This is deliberate. Whilst we want people to understand as much as they can, for people from backgrounds with limited education, there is a high degree of 'instruction' required to help people to know what to do and how to do it. We have found that this works well because at the end of the day, people will understand the why for themselves after running Life Groups for themselves. If you wish, and if you have the time, you can integrate some of the additional conceptual or understanding sessions that are included in our full training manual *Living the Light*.

We would also recommend giving as much time as possible time for people to plan and to practice actually leading the Life Group at your training event, making sure that they understand the open community nature of the group.

You should **read** *Plant* and familiarise yourself with it. It is best if 3 or 4 (minimum 2), people run the training so there is not too much load on anyone.



Plant: Ways to work through the material

This session outlines two possible ways to run the training, with 4 weekly meetings about 2 hours each or with 2 half day training sessions. It could be run in a small group setting taking 2 hours each week/day. The length of the Plant training is around 8 hours in total. You can chose whichever method works best in your circumstances.

We recommend running the course in a way where people can attend from home in shorter sessions. Remember, people may be walking or cycling many kilometres to come, so it is important that you and your host take this into consideration. Over time, we have developed shorter sessions simply because of expectations of hospitality and allowances that people sometimes have.



Plant: Training and prayer, Using this Material, Ways to work through the material, How to use the training notes

These sessions provide an overview as to how the material works. **It is simple!** There are different sections each identified with an icon which signifies a different part of the session. It is as easy as following the book!

On the next page is a diagram to summarise the actions we have explored.



Gather People

It is important to gather the correct people.

Try and find the people that God has called to make a difference in the community. Some may be Christians already, some may not be.

We recommend 3 or 4 people come from each village area, up to a total of 40 people.

They should come from different church and community backgrounds. This means that a Life Group starts from a broad base in the community.

Any member of a church, not only leaders are welcome. Ask yourself of everyone coming, 'What is their heart for the community?' If they have the correct heart, it will already be shown in their life.



Train

There are 2 versions of the training material for Life Groups.

Plant is a shortened version designed for use by Life Group members wanting to plant more groups and suitable for short courses.

Living The Light is an extended course also teaching the principles behind Life Groups, church planting, multiplication and more.

Plant can be delivered in 8 hours, **Living The Light** in 2-3 days.



Resources

Once Life Groups are established, there are various resources that they can use.

We recommend using the **Foundations** or **Rooted in Jesus** courses which provide material for over a year and focus on knowing Jesus and community responsibility.

Optional courses like **Love Your Village** can be used for a period to encourage particular skills.



Send Out

The *Planning* session in both the *Plant* and *Living the Light* material gives a practical foundation for Life Groups to begin.

It's important to pray and send out the people you have trained.

They are being sent out as missionaries and activists to their own villages and communities.

Seek the help and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in praying for these people.



Resilience

The tree above is situated in the Namib desert. Desert trees are quite incredible. They can look dead on the outside and have no vegetation and yet when it rains all kinds of flowers and leaves burst into life. It is no good planting into the poor rural regions of the world if the seed that you plant simply dies out the moment you leave. They need to be resilient.

Part of our original mission was to ensure that the groups and people within which we planted seeds would be able to be resilient, able to grow and fend for themselves.

Our observation was that if these groups of people depended on someone else, an outsider, for their life then they were doomed to fail from the outset.

Dependency

Another way of talking about this is dependency. People often ask why we do not pay money to run the groups, or to the people that comprise them. The key reason is that one

day the money will stop and then so will the groups. We do not want to makes groups dependent upon us.

You may have noticed that we have tried to encourage people to start Life Groups themselves in their communities. Why do we not simply start another ourself? Again the reasoning is the same. One day we will not be there. Once started in a particular way, it s very difficult to change direction.

Translation into local languages

I am sure that you will have noticed that not everyone speaks English in this world. You would be forgiven for thinking that they do as the majority of resources that people use in remote parts of the world are resources written in English or another European language.

We at Dignity think it is really important that people can study and understand the Bible and think about community transformation in their own language. Not only is this the right and most respectful way, it means that people can connect with God in the language that they use everyday.

In terms of resilience, the closer we can get to someone's language and understanding the better. If understanding is easy then people are far more likely to build a strong understanding and try something. It is one less barrier for people to cross.

As part of this we want to provide our materials in different languages and adjust them for cultural context. This is obviously a process that takes time but your visit may be able to help us with this.

If any of our resources need translating to a particular language then we would love to work with you in making this happen. In the first case it would mean you finding translators to make it happen. We would also need to find the modest funds to make this happen and then we could help with typesetting and printing.

Talk to us and let us make it happen together!



You Are Back, So What Happens Now?

Returning home is possibly the hardest part of planting new groups. When you have been on a short term trip it is hard to leave because once you do there is nothing physical you can do, you have to trust what you have planted to those you have been working with.

You have worked to identify people for training in how to plant groups, you have prayed, worked and spent time with them. This is the point at which it will either fly or come crashing down to the ground.

To be honest, it is exactly the same if you live somewhere in Africa too. I spend many months a year in Zambia and we travel great distances to plant Life Groups and hubs in far away places. Whilst we may be closer and not have to travel by plane, the reality is that we can be 2000 miles away.

This is important to hear. There have been places where Dignity has directly pioneered, trained and sent out and then nothing seemed to happen for a couple of years. We kept in

touch, encouraged people and one day a person got in touch and told us that they had been running a group or were about to. A small seed planted sometime back had been germinating and was beginning to show a green shoot!

We live in a society that wants instant results. I have learnt that these results can take time to appear. Whatever happens, you should not take it personally. We are to be obedient, to do the best we can and then trust to God for the outcome. However, let us assume that people do start Life Groups in their villages. What then?

We have put together five principles with related ideas that will help you to stay involved, keep relationship and guide the people you have inspired from afar.

Bringing people together for mutual support

Where people have started Life Groups in and around a particular region (for example 20km²) we have found it useful to form 'clusters'. Clusters are simply a group of people organising or running Life Groups who commit to meet together regularly. This creates a space for peer support, encouragement, learning and prayer. We suggest clusters meet monthly, starting 1 month after the groups begin.

☑ Communication

It is really important to keep in touch with the people who are running Life Groups. It is good to know that someone cares and you cannot underestimate the encouragement good communication brings.

Everyone needs encouragement. We know from experience that sometimes effecting change in people and the community takes guts and commitment. Prayer, encouragement, words or just a chat can help make the difference between success and failure.

Melp the groups to multiply

Between 6-12 months, we encourage every Life Group to try and plant another Life Group near to them. Having an outside influence to talk, plan and help to chart the way forward makes this so much more likely.

☑ Link Up

Dignity has a vast network which we call the Dignity Family. We want to connect people, leaders and communities so that they can learn from one another. Please keep Dignity in touch and let us know who is working in what areas and making a difference. We will try to connect them with others wherever we can.

Timeline of events



Training Happens (Day 0)

As part of your trip you will have spent some time training people to start and run Life Groups. Around 30% of people trained go on to plant Life Groups of their own.



Cluster (1 month)

Through your friends/contacts encourage the group of new Life Group Organisers and helpers to meet up every month, starting one month after they begin. We call this a Cluster and provide encouragement, support, and a group for further training.



Multiply (6 - 12 months)

When the groups are stable, through your friends and contacts encourage some group leaders to *Plant* to train some group members in how to plant new groups. These new leaders can join or form clusters. This training could also be done on a subsequent short term visit.



Keep in Touch (1 month on)

As part of your communication with your friends and contacts, **keep in touch and** ask how things are going. Things like the number of groups and number of people attending are useful indicators of how things are going. Encourage testimonies of how Jesus is transforming people.



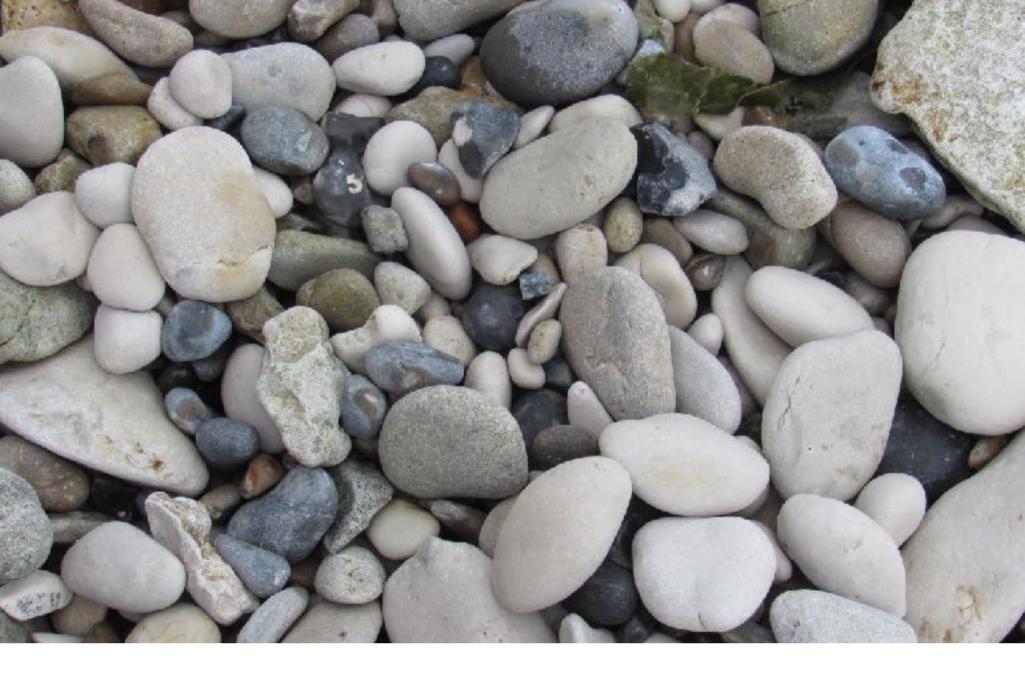
'Oaks of Righteousness' (12-15 months)

People will emerge who are dedicated to ensuring Life Groups run well and plant further. It is very important that these people are gathered together and encouraged. This could be done by your host or again on a subsequent visit. Dignity can help to run an EQUIP course which will train these people further.



Family

The wider Dignity Family network exists to support the work of Life Groups and their transformation spreading further. Through inspiration, shared learning, translation, prayer and training we want to connect. As more people get to know Jesus, so the transformation grows.



Bringing it All Together...

As part of a family working with a common goal Dignity would love to get to know you. What we do not want to do is take away the initiative and faith that you have shown and somehow make it part of our own. We think it is brilliant that you have taken a step of faith on your trip and that God has used you as a pioneer. You have started a movement that has potential to grow and far outlast you. You have made some heroes of the faith!

As I have already said, it is great for you to maintain relationships and stay in touch to encourage the people you have trained whilst away. With their consent, it would also be great if you could connect them with Dignity. We would love to be able to encourage them with stories from other places where people are doing what they are doing, and maybe even share their story. We can also keep you and them up to date with anything wider that we plan to make happen.

The wider strategy

Within Zambia and other countries where Dignity's movement is more established, over time we saw the need to pull together people from different areas so that they could be trained and support one another. A decision we took in 2014 was of particular significance. We started to support those who had stepped up to local leadership and were helping others to plant and run Life Groups. We formed these people into what we call 'Impact Teams.' The resultant growth was exponential as people on the ground took the movement forward. Many more people came to Jesus and many communities were served practically.

Imagine that all of the training in various places that has been done are like a number of pebbles or stones all lying around on the ground. Our job is to arrange and bring together all of these individual stones so that they can become a strong building. A single stone is easily thrown away, a wall is not so easily thrown anywhere.

The strategy is the same in two different types of situations.

1: You may be the first in a particular area or country. That is why your encouragement is so very important. Without you, the small seed you have planted may die out. We would love to talk with you about how we encourage that new beginning to plant seeds in others around that location. This way we can slowly build a family 'hub,' bringing traction and helping create a movement so that many villages can be reached. Together we can find others in the same country who can train and pioneer. We can then bring those people together.

2: Dignity has decided to target a particular area of a country. If we believe God has called us to pioneer our work in a new area we would specifically look for people to do this as a kind of 'campaign'. This may mean sending a specific short term trip or finding people already visiting and working within a particular area. Once the training is done and the seeds are planted, we will work to bring those strands together and establish a hub which can train and establish the work further.

It is really exciting!



Home? A Wider Vision

The Away Kit began with a story of how we found a way to grow 'oaks of righteousness,' people in the villages of Africa to do the will of God. Life Groups teach people about Jesus and importantly put that faith into practice within the community. They allow Christians of different backgrounds and churches to come together to be the witness in the community that they should be.

Our next question to you is, 'Should these groups only happen on your mission trip or do they have an application within your home community?'

Dignity is called to reach the remote, the weak, the poor, the lowly, but what about you? Who are you called to reach? You may live in a rural or an urban setting. Nomatter where you live there are people who need love, people who need help and people who need Jesus.

In many urban settings we (the church) get away with acting in a divided fashion. We have the money and people to do so. That does not mean this is the correct way! In many rural settings across the world there are simply not the people or the resources to act this way. I spend part of each year in rural Wales and the church is getting very old, very small and very close to not being there at all!

Many people in the poorer sections of the world are migrating away from their homes. This is a trend we have seen throughout recent history and we know that people often move towards cities where they hope to find work. This means many rural areas suffer from a decreasing populations and a shrinking economy.

The world is now more interconnected and mobile. There needs to be a method of church planting, of reaching people that can move with people. **We need everyone to be** pastors, evangelists, apostles, prophets and teachers. If we keep to our centralised model of church and church planting, there are going to be an awful lot of people we cannot reach, an awful lot of empty churches and an awful lot of communities that do not receive the practical love of Christ.

We need to work to be church in a way that allows everyone, everyday people, to be the 'oaks of righteousness' (Isaiah 61:3) that God has called them to be.

Only then do we unleash the potential of the church to be what it really is.

People come to Jesus, the lowly are lifted up, the needy are helped and the love of God overflows into a society that seems to have banished God altogether.

So what can you do?

There are three main ways you could take the ideas that you have put into practice and apply them in your home situation.

- 1) You can 'retrofit' your existing small small group with the ideas and principles you have learned during your mission.
- 2) You could plant an entirely new Life Group in your community.
- 3) You could go wider, inviting people from different communities around you to discuss, learn about and start planting Life Groups together on a wider scale.



Is it Time to Re-Tool?

Within manufacturing you create a system of machines and processes that allow the factory to produce a certain set of products. Our church small groups are a bit like this factory. We have a set of tools that we use; we meet together, study the Bible, encourage one another, pray for each other and share our lives to support each other. That is the most common way of doing what we call 'church'. If we are are honest though, we very rarely have any effect on anyone or anything outside of the small group setting.

Yet in looking at some historical examples of small groups within the church we saw that they were often a lot more radical than this.

When a particular factory wants to change the product that is produced, the factory is retooled; a whole set of new machines and processes are introduced to change the output. Do we also need to re-tool and introduce new ideas and thoughts to change the way we relate to people, God and our wider community? Could the ideas that you have been teaching on your mission trip be your new tools? Here we have tried to reduce these ideas

into five key principles and practices that you can apply in your existing group, plant in a new group or train a wider group of people to follow.

Principle 1: Oaks of righteousness

The key principle to understand is that unless we reach others and help them to take hold of the calling that God has for them we will not have a major effect upon our community.

Instead of thinking, 'How can I make a difference,' we need to think, 'How can I reach others and help them to make a difference?' This is how you multiply and create a legacy within the community.



Plant: Session 6 Planning

This session and in particular using the 'Make Plans' activity using circles can help focus minds, prayers and action towards specific people in the community. Whether this is re-focusing your existing group or planting an entirely new one, the process is the same.

If you wanted to train others to start Life Groups in a number of communities, you could use the same exercise to identify people from different churches and communities who could be unified to start community Life Groups.

By doing the exercise and acting upon it, you have started to think of growing people rather than doing it yourself. That is the Dignity way!

Principle 2: Together



Plant: Session 2 Life is through the family

The story of the chief focuses the minds of your listeners on a kingdom that had many people but was split according to tradition and what they felt about their tribe. Think about your village, community or workplace for a moment. Is that the case where you are? Whether you know 2 or 20 Christians, there is a good chance that you attend different churches and do little together in your

shared sphere of influence. Has God placed us in the community, workplace or village we are in so we can try and do everything on our own?

There is a tradition within the church, that people work together when there is a 'special' mission going on. Well, I have got news for all of us; we are on mission all of the time.

It is really difficult to act out the gospel in your community on your own. It is also really hard to resource change on your own. Maybe it is time that changed?

If you have a small group why not open it up to the wider Christian community and begin to learn and act together?



Plant: Two ways to plant a Life Group

Why not plant a Life Group in a new location? Plant suggests two ways that this could practically happen. Consider how you can do this in your community.

Principle 3: The correct fruit



Plant: Session 1: Water, trees and sky

In this devotional session we take a look at Psalm 1 which is a comparison between the life of those who know God and those who do not. According to the Psalm, the oaks of righteousness that we plant are like 'a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season' (Psalm 1:3).

The key question is what is the fruit that we are meant to display to the surrounding community? The book of James in the Bible helps us with this. 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27).

To put the ideas together from Psalm 1 and James 1 we can say that the gospel is to help people to be planted near the river of God's Spirit so they can grow spiritually. How else can we not be polluted by the world, unless we are fed and watered by God himself? The whole of the book of James talks about combining this with the action of the gospel. You literally cannot have one without the other. So the fruit that Psalm 1 talks about is two fold where true faith is validated by acts of charity, love and kindness.

In my experience, people from backgrounds that are more secular are far more likely to want to use our *Love Your Village* resource that leads to practical expressions of faith than a resource like *Foundations* that explores faith. In secular societies is more palatable to talk about loving people than it is to talk about bringing people to Jesus. That shows an imbalance in our thinking. The fact is that if we try to be 'trees' without being planted by the water, we will dry up and wither away.

We would recommend being brave, stepping out and seeking to introduce and disciple people in your community using a resource like *Foundations*. Of course, as a group, you can also seek to love your community in the first place using a resource like *Love Your Village* to help you.

Principle 4: Open community



Plant: Session 4 Everyone has a place

This session was originally written because in the villages of sub-Saharan Africa the church often can be very exclusive. People outside of the church are seen as wicked sinners and can be actively shunned. There also tends to be a focus on the leader or 'man of God' and we wanted to help people imagine a community where everyone was equal but with different roles. The children's

story of 'The Enormous Turnip' (which became the Enormous Cabbage as turnips do not really exist much in sub-Saharan Africa) we saw as a fantastic example of the biblical principle of the least being honoured and needed within the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12).

We also wanted to underline that Jesus himself spent time with his disciples but was known as the 'friend of sinners.' Whilst certainly not pulling any punches in his dealings with people, he was known as someone who was close to people and regularly spent time with those far from God.

It is time the church was the same. Starting a new Life Group in our own community or sphere of influence is an excellent way to begin to act more like Jesus.

This means that anyone should be welcome at our gatherings, whether or not they attend our church, whether or not they agree with us, whether or not they are someone we would usually have attending, whether or not they are a Christian.

Now of course there may be situations that need an innovative approach, for example around safeguarding children or vulnerable adults, or when dealing with people who have specific addictions or problems. However, the principle remains. Within our community we are to be open, practice hospitality, explain our faith and more importantly **do** our faith in the 'marketplace' in full view of our community.

If you have an existing small group, why not have an open invite to anyone in the community? Why not start meeting in a public place that is accessible to all? Why not host community dinners where everyone is welcome? You get the idea!

Principle 5: Be brave and have faith

Another word for faith is simply trust. It does not matter how strong or weak we are as an individual or a group. It matters how strong the one we trust in is. Does our ability to reach our community, to train others to reach their community depend upon ourselves. The answer to that is no!

When Jesus sent out the disciples he gave them specific instructions not to take their possessions with them. Why? That seems like a very strange instruction indeed. Maybe the reason is that they simply did not require their worldly possessions. They required trust in the one who was sending them.

We have seen the poor, the needy, the uneducated and the lowly people of this world rise up to be people called by God. By doing the training on your trip, you have seen this as well. If God can use these people, can he not also use you in the community where you live?

Step out as a group and have faith in the God that sends you.



Remember, Life Springs

Over the last 10 years I have really had to fight to keep hold of the vision of what God was doing in the remote places within Africa. I wonder if we also need to do the same in our homeland? I simply do not accept that God is doing nothing in our cities, in our rural counties and provinces. I believe change is needed and as in Deadvlei in the Namib Dessert it simply takes a little water, faith and bravery to make the ground bloom again.

Isaiah 61:4 speaks of the people of God, oaks of righteousness, rebuilding the ancient ruins of the nation. That is exactly what the people of God can do. Practically, emotionally and spiritually we are to rebuild the millions of lives in our nation, bringing the promise of heaven into the here and now so everyone can experience it.

The God that you encountered whilst pioneering is the same God that is in your home area. As you look around you, look for the life that God will bring. He may just bring it through you.

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The Away Kit

The Away Kit equips you to share the simple approach of Life Groups in any mission context. Packed full with practical advice and spiritual guidance it will teach you why and how to partner with others to inspire transformed lives and communities, bringing freedom from poverty through relationship with Jesus.

Drawing on 10 years of experience *The Away Kit* shares valuable working methods and lessons learnt as Dignity has partnered with hundreds of communities and thousands of people to help them live **amazing lives** and be part of **everyday miracles**.

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