



# The discipleship programme for Africa



**Alison Morgan** writes

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

*Matthew 28.18-20*

**R***ooted in Jesus* is a discipleship programme for Africa which began in 2002 with a word from God to Stanley Hotay, diocesan missionary and regional director of the Jesus Film in Tanzania: 'I want you to make not just converts, but disciples.' God spoke to others too, and, to cut a long story short, the result was a two year group discipleship programme first piloted in the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro, and now spreading rapidly all over the continent.

*Rooted in Jesus* is currently in use in 23 Anglican dioceses and three denominational groupings in ten countries, and has been translated into some 27 languages. It has become a remarkable example of how God takes the initiative in providing for his people.

## **Apprenticed to Jesus**

The word 'disciple' or 'learner' is a translation of the Greek word 'mathetes', which means something like 'apprentice.' And whereas we, influenced by our own school and university education systems, have all too often understood discipleship as the acquiring of Biblical and theological information, that doesn't really seem to be how Jesus understood it. Jesus did not teach His disciples in a classroom, and He did not teach them to engage in theological debate. He taught them, apprenticeship style, to do the things which He did – things which He in turn had seen His Father doing. And then He charged them to teach others to do them too. So it seems that true discipleship, as Matthew suggests, is about encountering the Father, obeying the Son, and

learning to live in the power of the Holy Spirit; and it's about doing all that, as Jesus did it with His first disciples, together – for it should not escape our attention that the word 'you' in the New Testament is normally in the plural. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be engaged, with others, in a process of growth and change which brings life both to those involved and to all those with whom they come into contact. Discipleship, it seems, is not about what we know at all; it's a much deeper and more dynamic process – discipleship is about who we are becoming. And – good news for the poor – it's the same process whether you are a university professor or a subsistence farmer.

## **Remarkable stories**

*Rooted in Jesus* began in the Tanzanian town of Arusha and in the scattered rural communities of the Masai steppe, as small, interactive groups of would-be disciples of Jesus met under the leadership of a pastor or evangelist to deepen their faith. Soon we were hearing some remarkable stories. There was Simon, known for his quarrelsome nature, turning to God and asking for forgiveness; astonished to see him transformed by inner peace, his wives promptly joined the group. Elizabeth, discovering for the first time that God does not require her to offer her body to visiting preachers, is now set free to live another way. Abraham was released from his overwhelming fear of the local witchdoctor. Leah, barren for years, soon became pregnant. Paulina was catapulted from nightmares about

nightmares about snakes into dreams of angels.

And, as time went on, there were others. Dorisia, illiterate but now learning about prayer and prophecy, stood up in church announcing that there was someone present with a problem in her abdomen. A woman stood, explaining she had for years been suffering bleeding for up to 21 days each month; she was prayed for then and there and was healed. Or there was Japhet, an evangelist, telling how one day as his group was meeting in the church a passing Muslim rushed in, overcome by the sudden sensation that his feet were 'on fire', and saying he had no idea what they were doing but could he join in? Or Rebecca who shared how challenging it had been to meditate, during a time of severe food shortage, on James 1:2, 'whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance' – and how the more she meditated, the more the Lord had filled her heart with peace.

### Catalyst for change

*Rooted in Jesus* is introduced to a diocese by a joint UK-African team of experienced practitioners, through one or more four-day conferences. Each conference has three elements: teaching, training, and ministry to those attending. Through a mix of plenary input on discipleship, the work of the Holy Spirit and the challenges of Christian ministry, through interactive small group workshops, demonstrations and practice sessions, through times of worship and direct prayer for repentance, healing, renewal and the anointing of the Spirit for ministry, a *Rooted in Jesus* 'seminar' is designed to act as a catalyst for change in the life of those attending and in the life of the diocese as a whole (and it is often, of course, also a catalyst for change in the lives of the facilitators!).

### Follow-up conferences

We offer a follow-up conference a year later, and a third one when the first groups complete the programme and are ready to train a new generation of leaders. But the real work comes within the diocese itself, under the leadership of the bishop and through the commitment of the appointed diocesan coordinator; and it comes as a long, slow

determination, often against all the odds, to avoid what Mark Russell, Chief Executive of the Church Army here in the UK, calls 'the shrinking and wrinkling which comes to the Church when we teach people to be Christians and not disciples.'

### Basis for ministry

The Diocese of Niassa, Mozambique, is a case in point. Helen Van Koevering, Director of Ministry, writes, '*Rooted in Jesus* is the basis for all our ministry and mission training, supporting as it does our diocesan vision to become a communion of communities in Jesus, through small groups studying, discipling one another, church planting and rooting, growing in faith and changed lives together.'

Once isolated and starved of training during 30 years of war, the Church in Niassa is now growing rapidly. A team of 325 young leaders or 'adeptos' look after several groups each, working in every congregation of the diocese; group members are actively involved in caring for the community, and in five years the number of both priests and churches has doubled. Helen muses, 'We are looking for clues to this grace of God. Perhaps it's through our desire to be the church in new places, a new approach to training leaders as 'training the trainers' to reach and empower more people, offering new life through healing and development, new rootedness for believers and new belonging for communities.'

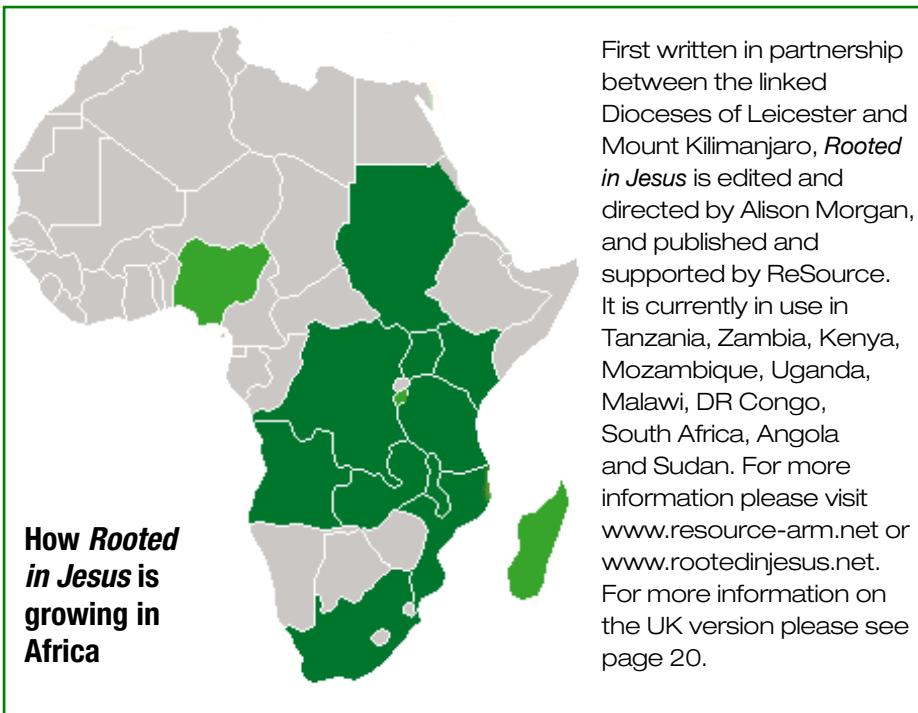
### Anointed for Africa

Similar stories are told in other places. Initially introduced into the Diocese of St Mark's in South Africa, *Rooted in Jesus* has now been adopted as a primary tool for discipleship throughout the province as part of the 'Growing the Church' initiative directed by Trevor Pearce. In St Mark's the programme has been running for 18 months, and Bishop Martin Breytenbach writes 'I have no doubt that God has commissioned and anointed this course for Africa in much the same way as he is using Alpha in more urban and 'western' settings. We are already starting to see remarkable things in this Diocese as people and congregations are set on fire with the love of Jesus.'

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*Rooted in Jesus* is published  
and supported by ReSource



**How *Rooted in Jesus* is growing in Africa**

First written in partnership between the linked Dioceses of Leicester and Mount Kilimanjaro, *Rooted in Jesus* is edited and directed by Alison Morgan, and published and supported by ReSource. It is currently in use in Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Malawi, DR Congo, South Africa, Angola and Sudan. For more information please visit [www.resource-arm.net](http://www.resource-arm.net) or [www.rootedinjesus.net](http://www.rootedinjesus.net). For more information on the UK version please see page 20.

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As ever, growth is coming where it is most needed: ‘St Andrew’s Church exists in the very heart of extreme right wing Afrikaner nationalism – some of the strongest resistance to the New South Africa has been in that area. They have formed one group comprising people from the (formerly white) church in Modimolle and the (black) church in Phagameng. The *RinJ* material is helping them to find each other and share deeply.’

Hearing the news from St Mark’s, Bishop Dino Gabriel of Zululand said to the diocesan synod: ‘I am convinced more than ever before that spiritual renewal and growth in our parishes is directly proportional to the intentional development of small faith-sharing groups. I dream of the Diocese of Zululand of the future as a dynamic network of cell groups where brothers and sisters are nurtured in their spiritual and human growth and equipped for mission.’ *Rooted in Jesus* was introduced to the diocese in November 2010.

**Growth of discipleship**

And so it is that *Rooted in Jesus* continues to spread from one diocese to another as discipleship increasingly surfaces as God’s priority for his people. It’s an exciting challenge to be involved in. For me, the highlight this year was returning to Eastern Zambia and finding that a young woman we had prayed for in Mfuwe two years previously, then suffering from genital sores and AIDS, had

been completely healed, and has now tested HIV negative. Or the more recent testimony of ten prostitutes in Chipata who have turned to Christ and who now form a *Rooted in Jesus* group; or the story of the woman from Nchelenge who joined a group, committed her life to Christ, noticed as if for the first time the growing number of orphans in the village, and promptly took some of them into her own home.

**Rooted in Jesus Junior**

But there have been many, many encouraging stories – the UK team member healed of a three month illness on the plane as he flew out to Tanzania; the excitement of Sunday School teachers beginning to use the new *Rooted in Jesus Junior* in Uganda and Tanzania; new invitations to work in Burundi, Madagascar and Nigeria; the sparkling eyes of the UK team members who return to their churches spiritually challenged and refreshed; the remarkable ways in which the intercessors here pick up the reality of what is happening in the heavenly places as they pray for the seminars. Nobody planned *Rooted in Jesus*. It just happened – and I thank God for it and for all those who have responded to His call to be part of it, and for the glory which is His as his purposes are worked out through the inadequacy of our own human capabilities.

**Discipleship in the UK**

Finally, what of the ‘developed world’, and in particular what of us here

in the UK? Perhaps unsurprisingly, God seems to be speaking here too about discipleship. The vision of the Diocese of Carlisle is ‘to see our Churches growing disciples of all ages’, discipleship being understood as a life of faith, prayer, service, evangelism and relationships. So many people have asked us if *Rooted in Jesus* can be used here that we have produced a UK version, similar in its relational, small group style to the African original, but adapted to deal with the particular challenges faced by Christians in the West.


One of things I notice about Jesus and his disciples is that they were always travelling. We too are always travelling – not just between continents but, more importantly, inwards, upwards and outwards as we learn together what it means to be apprenticed to the Saviour of the world. **r**

**about the writer**

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