

5 IN 12 Learning Community — Zoom Call Summary

Host: Don Waybright **Primary teacher:** Troy Cooper **Participants:** A global mix of practitioners and leaders currently running or considering the 5 IN 12 rollout, including Alex Buchnea (Toronto), Samuel (Germany), Russ/Russell (London), Caleb (New Zealand — Wellington), Brad (Houston), BK, Winda (Houston), Zach, Brett & Patti Butler, and others joining from across the U.S., Europe, and New Zealand.

Quick Recap

The call centered on the 5 IN 12 framework — a systematic approach to disciple-making, church planting, and leadership development built around five trainings spread over roughly 12 months. Troy Cooper walked through the structure and reasoning behind it, stressing that the real goal is identifying and equipping local leaders who can form reproducing apostolic bands. Participants from Germany, New Zealand, and across the U.S. shared their own case studies and in-progress rollouts. Don Waybright's central contribution was naming the **critical success factor: not the trainings themselves, but whether people move into a sustained weekly community of practice between sessions**. The group also worked through real implementation challenges — securing ongoing commitment, structuring the "Commands of Christ" weekly rollout between trainings, and balancing relational ministry against the temptation to over-focus on curriculum. The call closed with prayer and an open invitation to keep learning together as a global community of practice.

What Is 5 IN 12? (Origin and Core Concept)

The framework grew out of what was originally called "Three Touch" training. When German partners tried to adopt it, the name didn't translate well ("three touch" didn't make sense, and the framework is actually five trainings, not three). The team renamed it "5 IN 12" — five trainings across roughly a 12-month period — because numbers translate across languages and cultures in a way idioms don't.

The underlying concept comes from missiologist Jeff's framework of the three activities of a missionary: **pioneering, networking, and training**. Troy described 5 IN 12 as a systematic way to do all three at once — a strategy that finds leaders, equips them in those same activities, and bands them together around a shared vision. The premise: if a single church-planting or disciple-making movement hinges on finding the right leader, it's worth training a thousand people to find that one leader God will use to catalyze it.

5 IN 12 is especially suited to pioneering new work — entering a place with no existing movement, whether as a non-resident missionary or someone newly landed who needs to find and band together local leaders.

The Five Trainings, Step by Step

Precursor — Vision Meeting. Before the five trainings begin, the catalytic team casts vision with prospective partners, usually through case studies (their own or others') and Bible stories of what God has done elsewhere. The ask that follows is for five training dates on the calendar within roughly a 12- to 18-month window. There's no strict biblical formula behind the numbers — it's a practical commitment device.

Training 1 — Model (4–8 hours). The outside team (often 4–8 trainers) "swarm trains" this first session, modeling the whole training live. Content covers foundational vision casting, gospel-conversation / Great Commission basics, tools for disciple-making and church planting, and a "counting the cost" moment — helping people face the brutal facts of lostness and respond the way Nehemiah did. After this session, participants are sent out to practice: go make disciples, go obey the commands of Christ.

Training 2 — Assist (~12 weeks later). Identical content and schedule to Training 1, but now local trainers help lead it, and the outside team begins identifying who the emerging local leaders are. This stage can be pushed out to multiple local sites to build local ownership — in the New Zealand example, the second training ran simultaneously in three towns (Timaru, Wanaka, and Queenstown) instead of the single original location (Queenstown).

Training 3 — Watch. The outside team steps back and simply watches locals lead the training themselves, continuing to send people out to practice. This is typically where true local leaders become visible — not everyone who attends the first training returns for a second or third, and the ones who keep coming back are the "hungry" ones worth investing in further.

Training 4 — Four Fields Intensive (ideally 4 days, minimum ~2). This session shifts from best practices to biblical principles, digging into the Four Fields language (especially Field 4: church health, and Field 5: leadership development) directly from the Gospels and Acts, paired with case studies. It equips people to start churches if that's part of their calling, and participants leave with a concrete strategy and plan for the next stretch of ministry.

Training 5 — Problem Solving (typically a weekend, Fri–Sun or Sat–Sun). The final training addresses real obstacles participants are hitting. After this, committed leaders typically move into ongoing coaching rhythms — sometimes formalized as a residency inside an existing church, or as a leadership-development band (the Koblenz, Germany group referenced a "1:39" leadership band that formed this way).

Trainings 1–4 function as **on-ramps** — open to anyone interested, regardless of readiness. Training 5 (the mid-level / problem-solving session) is intentionally restricted to actual practitioners, not the merely curious, because — in Troy's words — people who are only interested tend to talk the most while doing the least. Troy explained he prefers organizing all

five as distinct sessions specifically because it creates a systematic leadership-development process and makes it easier to plan ahead and invite the right people to each stage.

Local church vs. citywide — the framework supports both, deliberately. When Zach asked directly whether to start 5 IN 12 with a single church or the broader city, Troy's recommendation was to push the program out locally wherever possible, keep the first four trainings as open on-ramps, and keep the mid-level training selective for practitioners rather than the merely interested. Alex's Toronto rollout illustrated a working variation: they started with a Four Fields Intensive (because of who was already gathering), then moved to a local-church touch point, after which different groups — a micro-church network and a separate, unrelated church — each took ownership of their own subsequent trainings and are now running independent rollouts.

Core Principles

Leader-multiplication over event-multiplication. The strategy exists to find the rare leader God will use to catalyze a movement — training many is worth it to surface that one person.

Success is measured by community, not attendance. Don's key contribution on the call: the critical success factor isn't the training sessions themselves, but whether people move into an ongoing, weekly community of practice where they're living out the principles together. That sustained rhythm — not the training curriculum — is what should be measured.

Assess at 12 months, not after each session. Troy explicitly discourages evaluating each training's logistics or content in isolation. The only question that matters is: over the full 12 months, did we find leaders and form one or more bands? Over-assessing individual sessions leads teams to second-guess a process that is actually working.

Shrinking attendance is a filter, not a failure. Christian ministry culture often equates numeric growth with success (30 people, then 60, then 90). In 5 IN 12, attendance typically shrinks training to training — and that's expected. Troy's Koblenz, Germany example: by the second training, only one outside person showed up. That one person turned out to be a Syrian Arab leader now central to their 1:39 band. The instruction to leaders: commit to the dates regardless of turnout, "even if it's just you and me."

Follow the Great Commission's built-in progression. Troy pointed to the Acts pattern — disciple-making leads naturally to church planting (Acts 2), which leads to missionary sending (Acts 13). Rather than imposing an agenda, serve whatever vision a group currently holds (disciple-making, church planting, or sending) and let it expand at the Holy Spirit's pace. The Tulsa case study illustrated this: a disciple-making vision (1,000 disciples) grew organically into a missions-sending vision (50 missionaries), which a year or two later matured into a church-planting vision — each stage prompted by the group itself, not pushed from outside.

Relationship happens outside the curriculum. Much of the framework's real value is the accumulated time together — roughly five multi-day gatherings a year with the same people. Troy described the training content as almost "the excuse to be there"; the deeper trust and friendship built alongside it is what sustains the work. Later in the call the group returned to this point: expectations should be introduced gradually, with real relationship built through ministering to and shepherding people both before and after each training session — not just during it.

Sustained prayer and fasting for laborers. Troy described an ongoing discipline of praying and fasting specifically for leaders with a God-sized vision bigger than themselves, who are broken for the lost and actively asking for help — and then serving those people once found.

Trainer conduct matters as much as content. Troy shared three principles for anyone leading a training: come prepared, keep the content simple (don't over-complicate it), and lead with humility rather than expertise.

Case Studies Shared on the Call

Bogotá and Houston (Don Waybright). Don presented detailed citywide case studies showing how gathering key stakeholders, casting vision broadly, and then running the 5 IN 12 framework citywide led to multiple church plants and the formation of several apostolic teams. He noted similar citywide vision-casting efforts are currently underway in Jacksonville and Atlanta.

Wellington, New Zealand (Caleb). Caleb described rapid growth from the first touch training in Wellington, with additional local trainings now scheduled in his area as ownership spreads.

Germany (Samuel). Samuel shared that rolling out the training in Germany brought like-minded believers together across different churches and regions who wouldn't otherwise have connected, creating a real sense of shared community. He also outlined a plan to specifically target youth in schools at the start of the next school year, aiming to help students make a kingdom impact in their own communities.

Germany mid-level training (Russ). Russ reported positive results from Germany's mid-level (Training 5) session specifically, noting it has produced dedicated, committed apostolic leaders — evidence that keeping that stage selective for practitioners is working as intended.

Houston — Commands of Christ multiplication (Brad). Brad shared a Houston example where Commands of Christ groups multiplied organically through relationship-building and networking rather than top-down organizing. The result: 8 of 10 targeted unreached people groups (UPGs) in the area ended up being adopted by apostolic bands that emerged from the process.

Residencies and long-term community (BK). BK observed that this overall training approach tends to lead naturally into local residencies and deeper community development over time, reinforcing Training 5's role as a bridge into ongoing coaching rather than an endpoint.

Commands of Christ: The Weekly Rollout Between Trainings

A significant part of the discussion focused on the practical challenge of keeping the ~10–12 week "Commands of Christ" group rollout going in the gaps between the five formal trainings — since this weekly rhythm, not the trainings themselves, is where the real disciple-making happens.

Key points raised:

- **Getting commitment is hard.** Multiple participants noted that securing genuine follow-through on the weekly group between trainings is one of the toughest parts of the whole process.
- **Vision-cast the time commitment explicitly.** Don emphasized that local leaders need to be told clearly, up front, what the weekly commitment actually looks like — roughly 4–6 hours per week — rather than letting people discover the workload after they've already said yes.
- **Shepherd people through it, don't just launch it.** Don stressed the importance of actively shepherding participants through the weekly activities rather than handing them a curriculum and stepping back.
- **Introduce expectations gradually.** As noted above, the group agreed that high expectations land better when they're built up over time through relationship, ministering, and shepherding — both leading into and following each formal training — rather than delivered all at once.

Practices and Logistics at a Glance

Vision casting is contextual, not scripted. Troy varies the pitch by season — sometimes a 15-minute opportunistic share at a youth breakfast, other times a fuller vision-casting session — and leans increasingly on the team's own case studies rather than borrowed ones as the work matures. Brett Butler's question surfaced that the 12-month, five-date ask is a genuinely "big ask," and functions partly as a natural filter for commitment rather than a hard qualifying gate up front.

In-person is the norm. Nearly all rollouts described are in-person; only one team member has experimented with running it online.

Training lengths at a glance:

- Trainings 1–3: 4–8 hours each (longer if "harvest time" practice is built in)

- Training 4 (Four Fields Intensive): ideally 4 days, compressible to as little as 2
- Training 5 (mid-level/problem-solving): typically a weekend (Friday–Sunday or Saturday–Sunday)

Action Plan — Next Steps

Named next steps from the call:

- **Caleb** — Continue with the second and third touch trainings in New Zealand, trusting the process and serving the people where they currently are.
- **Don** — Register for the next learning community call in late September via the website link shared in the Zoom chat; continue vision casting and supporting the 5 IN 12 rollout in Jacksonville and Atlanta.
- **Samuel** — Roll out the 5 IN 12 framework targeting youth in schools starting at the beginning of the next school year.
- **Troy** — Asked that anyone hosting a 5 IN 12 training let him and Don know, so the wider learning community can track, support, and learn from it.
- **All participants (collaboration)** — Consider inviting experienced practitioners to help host and roll out future 5 IN 12 trainings, rather than running them solo.

General action plan for anyone actively running or preparing to run 5 IN 12:

1. **Assemble a catalytic team** and hold a vision-casting meeting using story- and case-study-driven communication rather than a formal pitch — lean on your own case studies where you have them, borrowed ones where you don't yet.
2. **Lock five training dates onto a calendar** within a 12- to 18-month window before doing anything else. The date commitment is the actual ask — treat it as a filter, not just logistics.
3. **Recruit 4–8 outside trainers to swarm-train Training 1**, covering vision, gospel-conversation basics, disciple-making tools, and a cost-counting moment. Release participants afterward to practice for roughly 12 weeks before Training 2.
4. **Shift leadership gradually across Trainings 2 and 3** — from outside trainers modeling, to local trainers assisting, to outside trainers simply watching locals lead. Use this window to identify who is actually hungry (the people who keep returning), and consider multiplying Training 2 across several local sites to build local ownership early.
5. **Explicitly vision-cast the weekly Commands of Christ time commitment (4–6 hrs/week)** to local leaders before they agree to it, and actively shepherd — don't just launch — the weekly rollout between trainings.
6. **Schedule Training 4 as a 2–4 day Four Fields Intensive** anchored in the Gospels and Acts (especially Fields 4 and 5), and make sure participants leave with a written strategy and plan for the following weeks.
7. **Keep Training 5 invite-only for practitioners** — people who are actually doing the work, not merely interested. This is the one training worth being selective about.

8. **Decide deliberately between a single-church and citywide model** — or a hybrid, running Trainings 1–3 inside individual churches and pooling Trainings 4–5 across a broader network — based on what's actually generating traction in your context.
9. **Transition committed leaders into ongoing coaching** after Training 5, whether that's a residency inside an existing church or a standalone leadership-development band.
10. **Set attendance expectations with your team in advance.** Attendance will likely shrink training to training. Agree now that you'll assess success only at the 12-month mark — based on whether leaders were found and bands formed — not after each individual session.
11. **Build sustained prayer and fasting for laborers into the whole process**, not just at the start.
12. **Notify Don and Troy when you host a training**, so the broader learning community can support and learn from it.
13. **Register for and attend the next Learning Community call in late September.**

Closing

The call closed with Troy leading the group in prayer, expressing a shared desire to see a Spirit-empowered movement of multiplying disciples and churches take hold across the Western world. **Don confirmed the next call will be held in late September, with registration available through the website link shared during the session.**